

a brief history of
REDEMPTION



Dr. Jay Worth Allen

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Dr. Jay & Miss Diana Ministries, Inc.

www.drjaymissdiana.com

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for diana.

introduction
The Prelude

*“Though your beginning was small,
yet your latter end should greatly increase.”*

Job 8:7

The inauguration of the Christian faith began with the phrase “This is My blood of the New Covenant which is shed for the remission of sins” - concatenated by our Lord Jesus Christ during His last Passover supper on earth, satisfied upon His cross; attained with His resurrection and finalized with His ascent into the heavenlies there to wait by the throne of His Father until He collects His bride - a span of 2000 years or so. This is a period of time comfortably longer than that which separates us from the reign of the Emperor Diocletian, who began the last of the great state persecutions in 303-11 A.D. or the Crusade against the Albigensian heretics of southern France in 1209-29 or the final American conquest from England in 1776 or when, in 1943 Stalin, needing the backing of the Russian Church to resist Hitler, stopped killing believers and allowed the Russian Church to revive and again have a patriarch. For everyone, except astronomers and geologists, 2000 years must be considered a very long time. And if you allow the time of, “In the Beginning” to be 6000 years or (use your preferred number here) million years as some suggest, my task is even more daunting considering the vastness of the Covenant record; and if anyone considers me to be foolhardy enough to attempt to cover any part of the Christian faith in such a way as to explain all to all - given the time and doctrinal scope of our faith - I must say, I agree.

When a few years ago I began to write as a profession, copywriter to be more faithful to my work at the time, I had no such idea in mind. I loved to write and writing paid my bills. This, at the time was pretty much the scope of my concern. But as I read more, prayed more and wrote more, the Holy Spirit began to do a work in me. He began to show me that there was more to this Christian faith than I realized, and certainly more than I had been taught. So I came to a mountainous conclusion, “Maybe I should write this stuff down.” So I suppose one could say that I placed this intimidating task in my own lap. Be that as it may, I will do as I have always done with any chore set before me, I simply follow the admirable advice of the King of Hearts in Alice in Wonderland, “*Begin at the beginning, and go on until you come to the end: then stop.*”

When I became a Christian I had no idea what I had gotten myself into or rather what the Lord had gotten me into. I remember thinking, “Now that I’m here, what do I do?” I had such limited knowledge of the Christian faith, discipline, and doctrine, I felt like a young suckling who had just been given the keys to a ‘67 Chevy SS convertible. I

had heard the stories about baby Jesus in the manger, David killing the giant, the man in the whale (great fish) and the like, but what the purpose of this thing called Christianity was, was a mystery to me. I knew the gospel came to me as good news, but beyond that, I hadn't a clue what to do with it.

During my formative years in many of the finest Bible believing churches in Texas, doctrines of the faith seemed to be the victim of a conspiracy of silence. I cannot honestly remember the word *doctrine* being mentioned from the pulpit in the first years of my walk; far less studied and so complete was my ignorance that I should have been hard pressed to define the word even in general terms. Many people, I suspect, feel similarly vague today. It's for them that these narratives have been written.

The idea of scripting these treaties, formally, and hopefully systematically, originated a few years ago, as I said, with a nudge from the Holy Spirit - "You, therefore my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others" (AV) - and a few suggested words from my dear bride, Diana. (I need to pose kudos to my truelove here. Diana has read over these pages so many times, using so much red ink, she can now quote great portions of these texts - much to my chagrin. I am forever indebted to my lovely bride and editor for her stouthearted persistence.) Anyway, I remember feeling a little daunted by the magnitude of the task set at hand, but I don't recall any real hesitation. For over the years I had already been captivated by the truth of the Holy Words; the reality of its coverage of human thought, actions and history and the inspiration given its writers . . . so I thought, "I'll have a go at it." Little did I know.

It was no coincidence, when I began to earn my living by the pen, that I eventually turned to the Word of God, to the one place which, more than any other, breathes the very Spirit of the One true living God. For that reason alone these studies have been a constant pleasure to write; but they are also, in their modest way, a tribute.

Our civilization has never adequately acknowledged the debt it owes the Word of God and the men and women who follow its ways and teachings. Were it not for that great bastion of doctrinal truth given us by the Holy Spirit through the pens and lives of His followers, what chance would our history have had against the armies of our enemies? What language would we speak? What god would we worship? In the cultural field too, our indebtedness is great. Much of our cherished literature and art of antiquity would have been lost if it were not for the men and women of the Christian faith who save them. These tremendous services, however, have long since been taken for granted and forgotten. In our day there remains at least two continual reminders of the genius of God: the splendor of His people and the unchanging truth of His word.

The length of this book may suggest that I have set about to write a complete treatise on the doctrines and history of our faith. I have not. It is at best a series of small studies of great subjects, some of which first appeared in abridged article form, some were given aloud in local assemblies. In this printed version I have made a few additions and a few subtractions to what I have already written on paper or said, on those occasions, over the microphones, otherwise the text is as it was when written or given aloud. When I speak, I occasionally use contractions and colloquialisms particular to my southern American roots. In this version I have chosen, on many pages, to reproduce the flavor of the spoken text. I hope the taste both appeals to and blesses you.

The reader should also be forewarned that I will offer no help to any who are wavering between denominations. You will never hear me suggest you become a Presbyterian, a Methodist, a Baptist, a Roman Catholic, a Pentecostal . . . I have omitted this intentionally. There is no mystery to my background. I am a very ordinary guy, who dearly loves the Lord Jesus, His church and His word. In these texts I am not trying to convert anyone to any certain denomination. But rather, I am, to the best of my ability endeavoring to show the love the Father has to the lost, the care, love and comfort the Holy Spirit has to and for the people of God (the found), as well as the love and relationship the Lord Jesus has with His Church (His Body) - giving evidence of that love through the history, words and work of our redemptive faith. If you desire something more deep and full, you must go to men greater than myself.

The nouns, "son, sons", and the pronouns, "he, him" or the like, will be used, at times, throughout the text when a reference is made to a believer, a Christian, anyone who is within the Church, the Body of Christ; the Catholic faith of Christ Jesus (the word *catholic* simply means *universal*, so at times I may refer to the whole of the Body, the Church as *catholic*) the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ universal. If this offends you, I will make no apologies. The Scriptures are clear, all of the believing ones are called, "sons of God." And it should be said "to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance," that all of us, be we woman or man, are being made into "new men" in Christ. To God's maleness everything is female anyway. So none of this should bother any of you dear readers. Remember, in the Holy Writ men, as well as women, are referred to as "the bride of Christ." Political correctness has no place in the Church of the living God!

Finally, let me emphasize that I make no claim to academic scholarship. Any professional preacher perusing these works will find little indeed that he does not already know - though there will probably be many a statement or opinion with which he may disagree. So be it. The years of Greek and Hebrew that constituted an important part of my development have not enabled me to read the simplest Greek or Hebrew text without a lexicon and an Oxford dictionary at my side. Among primary

authorities, I have consequently been obliged to rely almost entirely on those whose work exists in translations, commentaries, and works of expositors. But this has been less of a hindrance than I expected particularly because the sources are so copious that the difficulty has been less one of obtaining information than of selecting it. Because of the instrument with which I have chosen to use to convey this “stuff” (Genesis 31:37; 1 Samuel 10:22; Ezekiel 12:4; Luke 17:31 AV), the writing must be kept moving at all cost, and so I make no pretense of doing more than skating over the surface of many of the subjects - an activity which is, by its very definition, a negation of scholarship.

But I am unrepentant. I have never presumed to cast a new light on God’s Word. All I am hoping to do is to make small amends to that conspiracy of silence which has left so many of us with virtually no knowledge of the longest lived - and, arguably, the most continuously inspired - way of life in the history of the world; and, in the process, to tell what I have been told.

The New Testament references are taken from the original Greek text, except where indicated, and are my own translations. Most of the Old Testament references and some of the New, are taken from the Authorized (AV) or King James Bible translation, 1967 edition and the New King James, New Testament with Psalms and Proverbs, 1982 edition.

Before I end this prelude allow me to emphasize a few imports regarding the book itself, the Bible. It was originally called the Canon. The Greek word *kanon* meant simply a rule for measuring, and so as a metaphor, any sort of rule or norm. The “canonical books,” which we now call our Bible, were the books which established “the rule of faith,” which made up these books or Book as we have now, distinct from other books, which, at the time might have been very good books, but did not have the same authority, or rule of faith, found in the Bible. Thus, what we have been given is a book which is Holy - separate from all other books. Holy and infinite. A book which, comprehensively, tells us the God-ness of God, everything about Him which sets Him apart from man, and His desire to reconcile that separation through His only beloved Mediator.

The first Christians didn’t have a complete Manual - old and new witness - so they used the opus they had: the Old Testament; a title used first as a description of the Book in about 175 A.D. in a book by Melito Bishop of Sardis in Asia Minor. The early Church (first century) really didn’t need a New Testament because many of the people who eventually wrote it were still alive and could remember what had happened – and they wanted to tell! So their accounts were passed on by word of mouth, then later by letters to the churches scattered throughout the known world of the time. Christians have always had the idea of a covenant between God and man (*diatke* which was used to describe both a covenant and a will and testament), but the term Old was never used. The early church simply referred to these writings (our Old Testament) as “the

scriptures” and later as “*the Holy scriptures*”; “*the Law*,” as a moniker, was used at times because the believing Jews considered that part of the canon as the most important. But no matter what they called it, they used it daily; it made a lasting effect on their lives and ideas - and ours too!

As the witnesses of the life of the Lord began to die, the believers realized the need for a collection of their memories in written words. Thus, the written Gospels. To them were added the writings of Paul, Peter, etc., which were simply letters written to churches they helped birth or lead. At first their letters would be read aloud during a believing assembly and then copied and sent to other churches and read there and so on; so their letters passed on into what we now know as “*scripture*.” The first suggestion that these letters would become “*scripture*” comes from the apostle Peter, “even as our brother Paul, also according to the wisdom given to him has written to you: as also in his epistles (letters) speaking in them of these things in which are some things hard to be understood which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also other *scriptures*” (2 Peter 3:15,16). The apostle Peter considered the letters of the apostle Paul to be “*scripture*.” We, as the Church came to that same conclusion some years later.

The real separation of a book called the “New Testament” took its time in coming, some 350 years by the end, yet most of it was a settled matter within the second century. The earliest finished collection of New Testament books are known as the Mauration Canon because of the document found at the Ambrosian Library by the historian Lodovico Muratori; which was not exactly as our Book stands today. But from then on there was one Bible in two parts: one Old, one New. The church was also in two parts during those early years; the Eastern Church, which loved the letter to the Hebrews, and the Western church, which would not read Hebrews as part of the canon, but insisted on the Revelation, which the Eastern Church would not have. But by 400 A.D. or so the East accepted the Revelation and the West approved the Hebrews; so the New Testament was agreed upon. The Bible had become one complete book. And so it has endured.

Father,
I ask that Your Spirit of truth guide us into all truths.
I acknowledge even now, that I am no infallible interpreter of what You have said.
So give us the privilege at this time, of considering together,
the things which You have spoken to us.
Grant to each of us the anointing to hear, to see and to understand;
so that we all might come to comprehend,
the heights, the depths, the lengths and the breadths of You.
To know the love of Christ which passes all knowledge.
Thank You for the tenderness of Your love,
Your mercy, Your compassion and Your faithfulness,
to us and to what You have said.
In that greatest of all names,
the name of Jesus I pray.
Amen.

chapter one
The Man of God

*“He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you,
But to do justly, and to love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God.”*

Micah 6:8

A warning has come to me from some of my dear, intensely analytical brothers not to tell you what I am about to tell you. “The regular Christian, doesn’t want to hear a bunch of theology,” they say, “only simple religion.” I have rejected their advice. My primary task in surveying the history of this our Grand Redemption is based on theology - the study of the nature of God. Theology is not God. Theology is only a type of design, a map about God - a blueprint of sorts, based on the experiences of countless individuals, who were themselves in touch with God. If we do not at least taste theology, it will not mean that we have no idea about God. It will mean that we may have a great deal of wrong ideas about Him - damaging, confused, antiquated ideas.

God has presented Himself to us in His Bible. The one Book, which presents the inestimable treasures of His divine wisdom and the knowledge-surpassing manifestations of His love to His people. It sets forth “the riches of His grace” and “the riches of His Glory.” But we must read His Book to at least catch a glimpse of His eternal glorious nature, His depths, which no finite mind can fathom and His heights, which no imagination can scale.

We all may believe in God, but to never examine His Book to clarify why we believe in Him, is like believing the earth is round and never bothering to look at a globe. This may seem totally unnecessary, but it is tremendously critical that we first recognize that the Bible is the Word of God. It’s His Book. He wrote it. It’s God breathed. It can be believed in. We can cast our life and our all upon it. We can have absolute confidence in it. In the words of the Psalmist, “It is tried in a furnace of fire, purified seven times.” And the promise of God, respecting His Book is: “He will preserve it from this generation even into forever.” So what we have, in our Bible, is the Word of God.

Those who want to find contradictions and difficulties within the Bible simply don’t, or rather can’t understand what God is saying. It is most interesting to consider on those occasions when the word of God seems to be contradicting itself - some part of the Word does not seem to be reconciled with other portions of the Word - when we genuinely understand what God is saying, and make comparisons with the rest of the

revealed truth of God, it becomes evident that God hides truth from the eyes of unbelief - He reveals truth to the eyes of faith. As Peter confirms, "He deliberately cast a stumbling block before the mind of unbelief."

God is the God of mercy. He is what He is. And because of His never changing mercy, if you, as an individual, want to be stubborn and grope for every rotten tidbit of rations you can get your hands on, God will see to it that you eat. But, if you desire rather to search for nutriment which is clean, good and healthy, God will see to it that you are given the desire of your heart, a meal more "necessary than (your) necessary food." One provision makes you weak, one makes you whole. But everyone is fed.

As we approach the Word of God expecting it to have life in it - life that is to be obtained from it - we will obtain life. If we are without life it is because we are lacking in our pursuit of His Book. In the words of Job, "I found Your words and I rejoiced over them as one that finds great spoil." As one who finds a meal more "necessary than my necessary food."

Two Essentials

There are two essentials every child of God needs. One is faithful warnings and the other is compassionate encouragement. Both are found in the words of the Bible. One is given to bridle our sinful propensities, the other to quicken our spiritual graces. Both are given so the man of God can function within his specific responsibility.

In 1 Timothy, Paul is concerned as to how the man of God behaves himself within "the house of God" - the Church of the living God - "the pillar and ground of the truth." If there is any truth, it is manifest in and through the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, the systems of this world notwithstanding, the wisdom of this world notwithstanding. Truth is manifested through the Church of Jesus Christ, which has its foundation in the Gospel message, which Jesus began both - to do and to teach - which was further done and taught by His disciples - which Paul is elaborating on in 1 Timothy. More on this subject, regarding our behavioral responsibilities within the Church, is in chapter 3, *Forgive Me For Being Dogmatic*.

In 2 Timothy, Paul emphasizes the man of God with respect to his responsibility to dispense the truth of God as it is revealed through the Spirit of God, by the Word of God. "If the foundations be destroyed," says the Psalmist, "what shall the righteous do?" There must be a solid foundation by which we move - on which we are built. "No other foundation can any man lay than that which was laid, which is Jesus Christ." Anything that departs from the revelation of the person of Jesus Christ, which is given to us, in and by His Word, is a lie. And what His Book declares about the person of Jesus Christ is the truth. So the second Epistle of Timothy addresses our responsibility to what God has said.

Responsibility

“For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and love, and of a sound mind. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner; but share with me in the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God” (2 Timothy 1:7-8). Let that sink deep into your heart. “Do not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner.” If I may draw an application here, while we are not to be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord Jesus, we are also, at the same time, not to be ashamed of our brethren who He has called into Himself. If, as the epistle to the Hebrews states, “He is not ashamed to call us brethren,” perhaps I should not be ashamed to call you brethren - that is, if you also belong to the Lord. I would hope you would be able to identify with me, with all of my faults and failings, since I belong to the Lord. Since He has chosen to redeem me, you accept me - in all the mess that I am - as I do you. Love, acceptance and forgiveness. This is the Believer’s way.

The Offense of the Gospel

“But share with me in the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God.” The afflictions, or sufferings come when individuals are not willing to acknowledge the truth of the gospel. That is, the Gospel is good news for bad people. If the Gospel were good news for good people, there would be no affliction. No offense. There is an offense in the Gospel. There is not an offense in the law. If we obey the law, everyone will speak well of us. If we walk dignified and righteous in the world, the world will speak well of us. But, if an unrighteous person finds grace by the shed blood of Jesus Christ, therein lies the offense. Paul refers to it as *the scandal*. The Greek word translated *offense*, is *skandlaon* - our English word for *scandal*. Paul said, “If I preach works then the offense (or *the scandal*) of the cross ceases.” What is the scandal of the cross? Simple. God loves and redeems bad people. That’s the scandal. If you don’t believe me, try impressing upon the world’s people, and some church people as well, that God is taking individuals, who really don’t have it all together, who are not very dignified, not entirely law abiding - into His glory. They will utterly reject what you’re saying. The truth is, none of us have it all together. “There is none righteous, no not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God; they have all gone out of the way; there is none who does good, no not one . . .” So the scandal is: God saves bad, sinful people. In fact, He only saves sinners. “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” A sinner is the only person who can be saved. Yet, we still spend so much unnecessary time trying to make our unredeemed church members look and act like Christians.

A friend of mine told me a story of a missionary couple who came upon a people in the African jungle who, because of the intense heat in that region of the world, lived completely naked. After the shock wore off, the couple began sharing the Lord with their newfound, albeit uncovered, acquaintances. Within a year or so many of the tribe

members, including the Chief, had become Christians. As time went on these new believers began to mature in their faith and the Holy Spirit began to deal with them concerning their lack of apparel. Their solution? Twist a small beaded, fringed belt around your waist and you won't be naked. Men, as well as women begin wearing these belts - and that's all. "They were convinced," my friend said, "that no one should walk around naked." And as far as they were concerned none did. That's what those Christians looked like in that torrid spot of the world.

No good work, or law keeping, no matter how good the good worker looks, will justify him before the Lord if he is an unbeliever (an unredeemed sinner). And no evil work or rotten deed will make an unbeliever more or less badder. Terrible grammar I know, but whether a person is good or bad, this is effected, not by appearance or performance, but by their belief or unbelief in Christ Jesus. "Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad (corrupt), and its fruit bad (corrupt)" (Matthew 12:33). If we want good fruit, we plant good seed. If we want bad fruit, we plant bad seed. If we want to do good works, we don't begin with good works, we begin with believing, with faith in the "One whom He sent," which will make us good for good work doing. No matter the clothes we wear.

Paul continues, "share with me in the afflictions of the Gospel . . ." Recognize that God redeems unrighteous people. ". . . according to the power of God" - which changes people. I do hope some of us who have been walking with the Lord for a number of years have recognized changes taking place in our life. Some changes took place on the day we were born again, others demanded a little more time. Since it is the purpose of God to drive the enemy out of our land, "but little by little, lest the beast of the field multiply against you. Unless the land go waste." God leaves some problems in our life to keep us humble until He works His complete work of righteousness in us. God is changing His people by His power. The power of God. "Little by little." Justification is a quick work. Salvation and sanctification is not. It takes time for the Lord to make us into the image of His Son. Holy. Sanctified. Those two English nouns represent a single word in both Greek and Hebrew. In English we do not have an adjective from the verb *sanctify*, nor any verb from the adjective *holy*. Which is not a great tragedy; *sanct* and *holify* would sound so dreadful that hardly anyone would want to use them anyway. But we employ two English words to say what God says in one. "Be ye holy . . ." God is making us, changing us, calling us to *hagiamos*, holiness (sometimes rendered *sanctification*). It means that God is changing us from the state of being associated with the practice of sin, to the state of devotion to the life of Godlikeness. He is making us holy. He is sanctifying us. But, if we must change our self first, to come to Him, or to remain in Him, then all is lost.

"Who has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our work, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus

before the world began" (2 Timothy 1:9). "For which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless, I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12). Who's able? He's able. We commit it. He keeps it. How wonderful. "Hold fast the form of sound words, which you have heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13). If we are going to hold fast sound words we must understand what Paul taught.

We have four gospels and all too many of us live on a diet of those four gospels and therefore never mature beyond babyhood - the four gospels function in the sphere of "manna." Some exceptions may be found in the gospel of John, but if we are to move on into the "old corn" (AV) of the land of Canaan - to move away from manna which belongs to the wilderness - and come into the experience of that land - the promise of Canaan - the promise of the Holy Spirit, then it is essential that we embrace the teachings of the apostle Paul.

Paul is the revealer of that "pillar and ground of the truth," which is the Church of Lord Jesus Christ. Without the writings of the apostle Paul, we would have no understanding with respect to the Church. We wouldn't understand the Church as the bride of Christ, as the body of Christ or that Christ is head over His body, the Church. Everything we know and understand about the Church we know from the pen of the apostle Paul. God set Paul uniquely aside to give him that revelation concerning the Church - which is why Paul was not numbered with the twelve - which is another subject. But if we are to understand "the pillar and ground of the truth," we pursue Paul's teachings.

Impostors in the Church

"Hold fast the form of sound words, which you have heard of me, in faith and in love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto you keep by the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us. This you know, that all they who are in Asia turned away from me, of whom are Pygelus and Hermogenes. The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day; and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, you know very well. You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13-18).

"But evil men and seducers shall become worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13). This sentence is important. Evil men are deceiving, but they are also being deceived. It isn't that these men are merely going about to deceive people deliberately, they are themselves deceived, and therefore spread deceit. The word translated *seducers* is the word *impostors*. So evil men and *impostors* shall become worse and worse deceiving and being deceived.

If there are impostors, deceiving and being deceived within the Church, we must ask ourselves, "Who they are?" When we reflect on that query, the possibilities become very interesting. If impostors are functioning within the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, who are they? In the words of the prophet Isaiah concerning prophesy and doctrine, "if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." If what men speak does not agree with what God has said in His Book, it is because there is no light in them. They are deceived and are going about deceiving.

What then is our responsibility as men of God when we hear the word preached - no matter who preaches it? To "search the scriptures to see whether these things are so." Have you ever wondered why the Lord gave so many orators to the body of Christ? "The Lord gave the word and great was the company of them that published it." Why? Because He wants everyone to hear. There's an abundance of men preaching the word of God today. Some have a higher profile than others, but none is less important in the scheme of God than the other. The good-fellow who is unknown in the jungles of South America, preaching faithfully the word of God day in and day out to 20 believers, is no less important than the godly fellow who has a high profile American ministry and preaches daily to thousands over whatever available mass media he has access. It is an issue of faithfulness in Christ Jesus and to what He has said. Nothing more. "There are those who are first who shall be last. And there are those who are last who shall be first." There are those who obtain their reward now and lose it then. There are those who lose their reward now, and obtain it then.

Judge what you hear. Surmise. Search for truth in the words addressed. We have a responsibility to evaluate the words preached to us, in and by, the light of the Word of God. If a man does not speak according to the word and testimony of what God has said in His Bible, it is because there is no light in him. So we reject completely what he says. That's our responsibility as men of God. But our responsibility comes from our scholarship - from personally knowing what God has said - not from our personal likes or dislikes of the preacher.

We should never get into our heads that we have become a one man or one woman committee to set straight everyone in the body of Christ. There's such a thing as hearing with an open heart. "They received the word with all readiness of mind," etc. (Acts 17:11), speaks to us of hearing with an open heart. But it is difficult to preach to a gain-sayer (AV). A gain-sayer will not hear anyone else - the word *gain-sayer* means, someone who stands against the word. A gain-sayer doesn't believe anything which disagrees with his own standard of belief. He will search and search until he finds a teacher with whom he can embrace as his mentor - it matters little to him if the teacher is a charlatan or not. He believes everything his teacher says, because his teacher agrees with his own standard of belief - right or wrong, lapping-up everything his mentor claims - giving him the quality of infallibility.

At times I feel the TV, radio and web ministries are a curse. Not the people per say, but the particular agent itself. My feeling comes from what the viewers of these programs say to me: "I was watching TV last night and Brother So-N-So said. . ." "Well, Brother So-N-So said it this way, . . ." etc. So when I arrive, and begin to teach, nobody wants to hear what I'm teaching unless my precepts agree with what their Brother So-N-So said on TV last night. Not that I'm the only one with the Word of the Lord, but they want to hear what the other brother, whom they have deemed infallible said and if I can't say what their guy says, then I don't have very much to say - to them anyway. I'm no authority. Brother So-N-So's no authority. The Bible is the authority. If I teach what the Book teaches, then you have a responsibility to believe what I have said. I do as well, if I hear the Word from you. If I don't teach what the Book teaches, you have no responsibility to believe what I've said. But, if I teach the Word, you have a responsibility towards God. Not me. If I preach Jayology, take it for what it's worth.

Unfortunately there are many people who oppose the truth with all their power and cunning. The result of their message is that nothing remains certain. Certainly not your place in glory. And with their messages, a great deal of serious abuses have crept into the church. The main abuse is that the word of God has been silenced and replaced by the rewriting of history, the revival of fables, antidotes and at times, even lies. This is done through the use of urban legends and old mythology of which most cannot be proven, and sermons which introduce a type of exhibition Christianity which is said to be from the Spirit of God, but the fountainhead I question.

The epitome of this teaching is evident in many Orthodox, as well as, in a great number of free-wheeling and Protestant churches and can be seen by a vast number of TV voyeurs. The "good news" has been replaced by "good works" - which is no better than the law. And, "no human being will be justified in His sight by the works of the law" (Romans 3:20). So the proof of salvation by means of faith in Christ Jesus and the obvious change of attitude and desires that He brings to the believer, has been replaced by huge amounts of property and coinage. Thus, making the world as the end and faith the means.

As a result, true faith begins to disappear and everyone presses into becoming professional preachers, prophets and evangelists and building giant churches, endowing them with simulated gold and fake stone - and being congenial to everyone (everyone who agrees with them, that is). It must be that Christ Jesus (set as a stumbling block and a sign that is spoken against) will be an offense and a cause for the fall and also the rise of many.

Today we are made so sensitive by the delirious congregation of flatterers that we cry out that we are offended as soon as we meet with disapproval. But truth offends. Truth disapproves. When we cannot ward off the truth with any other pretext, we flee from it by ascribing it to a fierce temper or impatience. Truth is offensive. The

Word is the sword. The sword which cuts through the words and works of men. It is the Spirit, within the Sword, which gives life through grace - that glorious grace - beyond our merit - with which He brings us lawbreakers into His glory.

Rather than embracing a person, how about embracing the Bible. Let the Bible judge what men say. Otherwise, we create bristles against anyone who teaches what the Bible is saying, if his words don't agree with what we have been told. We judge what this man says against what that man taught. And that's wrong! Judge what every man teaches against what the Bible declares. With that judgment we become safe learners. If we don't use the Bible as our judge, we're in trouble. Without the Bible as our judge, we will become disciples, not of the Lord Jesus Christ, but disciples of our own special guru.

Die Heilige Schrift

"And from a child you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). Do you know how Timothy knew the scriptures from a child? His mother. Do you know how his mother knew them? From her mother. Timothy's mother and grandmother are both pointed out in the word of God. A high honor indeed. But I've always wondered where Timothy's father was? Where's daddy? I was forced to consider that. How about granddaddy? Eunice reads the Word and follows what it says. Shouldn't she have a godly husband? Maybe she did. I don't know. The Book doesn't tell us. I don't have the answer. But I have always wondered. Oh, for faithful fathers. I'm glad Timothy got the message - out of Lois and out of Eunice came a Timothy. Glory to God.

"From a child you have known the holy scriptures." Literally, *holy letters*, *holy writings*. The Greek word is *graphe*, which means *writing*. The German language reproduces this: where we use Holy Bible, German uses, *Die Heilige Schrift* - the Holy writings. The apostle Paul considered the writing of the Bible sanctified words, holy writing. Don't put your feet up on your Bible. The words are Holy Words - *die Heilige Schrift*. Men still die for those words. Men still give their lives to gain one page from that Book. [Pray for the believers in China and America, for that matter. "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them who suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body" (Hebrews 13:3).] We have homes, churches and libraries full of Bibles and don't read them. - "To whom much is committed, much is required." Don't pitch your Bible on the floor. Count that Book for what it is. Regard it as important as God regards it: Holy.

"From a child you have known the holy writings which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Now verses 16 and 17. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." God did not *say* everything that is written in His Book - but everything that is written in His Book is an accurate record of what was

said. If Ahab spoke, that's what Ahab said. God has told us what Ahab said because there are lessons to be learned from what Ahab said. What God says about Ahab is true. What God says about Job is true. What God says about Satan is true. What God speaks is truth. So we learn lessons on the basis of what God tells us. He speaks in such a fashion to give us lessons - "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." For *chastening into righteousness* is the literal term there. "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it," says God (Psalms 81:10).

It works. The Word of God does the work of God in the man of God. When doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness are embraced, it works. All of what comes from the Bible makes the man of God, a man of God. The Word of God does that work.

Psalm 119 is that great Psalm which addresses itself to the Word of God. Psalm 119, is the longest Psalm of all of the Psalms. There are only four verses (depending on your English translation) in the whole of Psalm 119, which does not refer to the Word of God - law, word, words, ordinances, commandments, precepts, testimonies, statutes, judgments, et cetera, are all translations of the same Hebrew word. The word "way" is also used through out as an equivalent for all these terms. Only verses 90, 121, 122 and 132 do not use a synonym for the Word of God. If you consider each Psalm as a chapter - which is technically not true, but we will do so for the sake of conversation - then Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible. This should give us the impression that God finds something very important in Psalm 119. He is exhorting us in regard to His word - to the importance of getting into His Book, reading, eating His words.

Don't complain about the misery of your spiritual life if you are not spending time in His Book. You have no right to complain. Like the old saying, "If you don't vote, don't complain about who was elected." The Bible is our source of life. "Remember the word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope." If you have no hope it is because you are not spending any time in His Book. "This is my comfort in my afflictions; for Your word has given me life" (Psalm 119:49,50).

"I will never forget Your precepts; for with them You have given me life." Where does life come from? His precepts. His words. Life comes from what God says. If we want to walk upright in life, if we want to be a man of God, we must hear what God says. If you want to have a reputation for anything, be known as a person who adores the Bible. One, who loves what God says - "Thy words were found and I did eat them." Do you follow this exhortation from Job? There was nothing more important to Job than what God said - he used them as his nourishment.

Nothing is more important, nothing will give as much nutriment to the people of God than the Word of God. I don't care if it comes from Calvin, Luther, Wesley, or

whomever your favorite author is - nothing is more essential to a man of God than the Bible. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that there's anything wrong with reading the words of these and other great men of faith, but their words are not the Bible - they are not the precepts of God. The words may be good words, Christian words, but they are not infallible words. The Bible contains the only infallible words. Words which bring life. Precepts by which we live and have our being. How do we remember His precepts? His words? By repetition. We absorb them into our person, into our daily life - simply read His words over and over again. The Word of God declares to the man of God how to dispense and live in the truth of God as it is revealed through the Spirit of God. The Bible tells us how to live - "and that more abundantly."

When I was young in the Lord, a well-versed friend told me: "the best way to understand the Bible is to read one entire book over and over. Don't try to memorize it, just read it. Read the book of Romans or the Gospel of John, whatever. Pick one book and read it every day, the complete book, every day for a year. Some books are a little long, so you cut them in half. One-half one day, one-half the next. But the same book, for one year."

So I set forth one day to see if his method would work. And you know, it does. I started with the book of Romans - reading the first eight chapters one day, then the second eight chapters the next - each day for a month, not a year, just 30 days. (I'm not as disciplined as my friend.) At the end of that month I found myself quoting, unconsciously, great portions found in that book. Try it. It works. One book at a time, one time a day for 30 days. Repetition is the price of knowledge. Remember His precepts. We approach the Word as a laborious task, when all it takes is just giving ourselves to it. That's all. Give yourself to the word of God. Just read.

Our young people remember the names of most contemporary Christian musicians - and some secular - but most do not know the books of the Bible. What have we done with our children. Where are the Loises today?

"I have seen an end to all perfection, but thy commandment is exceedingly broad" (Psalm 119:96). Isn't that a wonderful statement? All perfection has a terminal point. But His commandment, His word is without horizon. No end to it. As a result of this, Paul could direct Timothy, "I charge you, therefore, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom: Preach the word" (2 Timothy 4:1,2). Don't preach opinions. Don't focus on poetry. Preach the Word. There is nothing wrong with poetry or expressing an opinion which is predicated on something which is true, but it's the gospel that saves - not a good tale.

Preach the word. "Be diligent in season, out of season." Even when you don't feel like it. "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine but, after their own lust, shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. And they

shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For now I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." The time of my exodus has come Paul said. Now here is the conclusion of Paul, as regarding his walk. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:2-7 AV).

"This I know, also, that in the last days perilous times shall come" (2 Timothy 3:1). Paul said it is necessary that he fight the good fight; there are dangerous times to come. "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses." Have you ever wondered how Paul knew those two guy's names? I have always wondered - they're not named in the Old Testament. "As Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth, men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith" (2 Timothy 3:8). It is necessary to fight the good fight. There are occasions when you must stand for the Word of God in the face of contradiction. We have had it very comfortable in this America for a number of years now. We have not faced great contradictions. Perhaps God in the future, for our sake, will fix that.

"Therefore, I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; If we suffer," (the word *suffer* is the same word *endure* in verse 10) "we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him He will deny us: If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself. Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers" (2 Timothy 2:10-14 AV).

"I have kept the faith." The faith Jude said was "delivered unto the saints." Paul was keeping the faith. "For which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless, I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day. Hold fast the form of sound words which you have heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13,14). Keep the faith. The word *keep* here, means to *hold dear*. Hold dear the faith which has been delivered to you.

I have been addressing the Word of God, the bedrock of faith in which we stand. The faith in which we are made into men of God. If it were not for the truth of God, in the Word of God, we would have no faith. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." So if we are to hear, the word of God must come. If we are to have faith, we must hear that Word. So it is the words of God coming to us, words which create in us the experience of the Word of God. We hear His words - and believe. By His Word we become men of God. The word of God does the work of God.

“Then answered Jesus, and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever things He does, these also do, The Son in the same manner” (John 5:19 AV). “I can of mine own self do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father who has sent me” (John 5:30).

Jesus was the manifestation of all that God is and yet, He was totally dependent on hearing the Father in order to move - i.e. seeing the Father work before He worked - because He was 100% moving by faith - by what He heard from the Father. By so doing, He was moving in the same manner we move. He had subjected Himself to the same principles of operation by which we move. In so doing, He could also be a faithful high priest in things pertaining to God.

The scriptures tell us that in that day we are going to be conformed to the image of His Son. We’re going to look like Jesus Christ. The scriptures do not state that we are going to be like God. But the scriptures do tell us that we are going to be like the Son of God, who is the image of God. This distinction is very important. If we are conformed to the image of His Son, then we become as Jesus was - a part of the whole of the Son of God - that manifestation of the character of the Father. It is the Father which Jesus came to manifest. “No man has seen God at anytime.” But, “the only begotten Son of God, He has manifested Him.” How did He manifest Him? He manifested God as the Father. That is, the nature of God was brought out of God and displayed in the person of Jesus Christ. And we all, as His sons, are going to be conformed to that image. We are going to display the nature of Jesus Christ, and hence, the nature of the Father.

“As the Father raises up the dead, and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom He will . . . For as the Father has life in Himself, so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself.” The Father has life. He has given that life to the Son and the Son has given that life to us - the believers. How does He give that life? “And the Father Himself, who has sent me, has borne witness of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time” (We must hear.) “nor seen His shape. And you have not His word abiding in you; for whom He has sent, you believe not.” That’s the seed. The Word is the seed. The seed is what germinates into life. The seed wasn’t in them; the people listening to the Lord at this time. So they couldn’t see Him when He worked. They didn’t have eyes to see. That was the problem with the Pharisees. They had embraced what God said, but not the God that said it. And so the Word - the seed of God (Matthew 13; Luke 8:5-15) - was not in them. So it is with many in the church today.

“He that commits sin is of the devil;” (or, *out of the devil as a source*) “for the devil sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). Isn’t that wonderful? Literally, Jesus Christ was manifested that He might loose us from the works of the devil. “Whosoever

is born of God" (or, *out of God as the source*) does not commit sin;" (or, *persist in sin* - it is in the continuous, in the Greek verb: *we do not pursue sin*), "for His seed remains in Him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9). Did you catch that? His seed remains in him. His seed is something which never leaves. Once you're saved by His blood, His grace; His seed remains in you forever.

Jesus said to the Pharisees, "You can't hear Me because My word is not in you." They were full of good works, but no faith. No seed. "What must I do to do the works of God? Believe on Him whom He sent." When the Word - the seed - comes in us, what does it begin to do? It begins to change us. It germinates. It begins to change the way we think and move. It gives us a whole new frame of reference. A new value system - "not of works that any man might boast" - but of hearing the Word, and believing the One whom He sent. It is the word of God that does the work of God - the establishing, the forging, the building of a man into a man of God.

So Paul exhorts us to, "pursue doctrine. For in so doing you shall both save yourself and them that hear you." (2 Timothy 4). The word of God does the work of God. "Faithful is He that called you who also will do it." (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

chapter two
Forgive Me For Being Dogmatic

*“But you speak
The things which are suitable
To healthy doctrine.”
Titus 2:1*

God exists in the fact that no cause other than Himself produces His reality. No external obstacle impedes His being. He is the root from which “all things seen and unseen” originate and mature - His own omnipotence - the atmosphere in which His universe “brings forth fruit.”

“I admire the boldness” wrote Pascal, “with which these persons undertake to speak of God. In addressing their argument to infidels, their first chapter is to prove Divinity from the works of nature¹. I should not be astonished at their enterprise, . . . and to claim to have concluded the proof with such an argument, is to give them grounds for believing that the proofs of our religion are very weak . . . It is an astounding fact that no canonical writer has ever made use of Nature to prove God.”²

To position nature as the focus, is to place man as the key. Man is not the quintessence. God does not exist for the sake of, or because of, man. Man was created, yes, all things were created “by Him” and “for Him” and “for His pleasure.” We were created, primarily for God to love us. “And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold it was very good.” God loves all His creation. But, to suggest that we should ask God to love us in the sinful state in which we are naturally born, is to ask God to cease being God. “God is love” - He is what He is - and His love is repelled by the stains on our natural-born, sinful character. So His mission, if you will allow, is to make us lovable. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” What a marvelous thing: He loved us “while we were still sinners!” Our belief in the Son makes us lovable. “Whosoever believes in Him.” We in turn, then love God. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He first loved us, and sent His Son to be the satisfaction for our sins.” We love Him because He loved us first. For, love begets love. We are then given our mission: Go, tell everyone else that God’s loves them - “Go ye therefore and teach all nations.”

The apostle Paul declared, “Speak the things which are suitable to sound doctrine.” If we “teach all nations,” we are speaking “sound doctrine.” If we “speak sound doctrine” “to all nations,” we are “teaching all nations.” *Teach* and *doctrine* are the same word.

The word, *doctrine* comes from two Greek words - *didaskali*: teaching; *didaskalia*: that which is taught, [correct] instruction. The former of these stresses the authority, the latter stresses the act. Therefore, the word *doctrine*, simply speaking, means, teaching. When the apostle Paul told Timothy, "Speak the things which are suitable to sound doctrine" - take heed concerning healthy teaching - Paul was repeating, or restating our Lord's words, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations." What are both passages saying? Teach the truth! Speak the truth! Declare to all nations, to all tongues God's love. God's truth. In that we will be fulfilling our Lord's command concerning doctrine - "to all nations."

Dogmatic Doctrine

There seems to be a category of trepidation floating around the Church today, concerning the word *doctrine*. You may be experiencing that anxiety yourself. This is due to the confusion we have with the word used in the vernacular, *dogmatic*. Although there is no reason for anyone to panic, both expressions seem to strike trepidation in the hearts of many believers. In fact, when most of us hear the word *doctrine* or *dogmatic*, we tend to think of some church system or ritual. Yet there was a time not so long ago, when all Bible colleges and seminaries taught, Christian Dogmatics: the study of the grand beliefs of the Christian faith; a doctrine or a corpus of teachings relating to matters such as ethics, morality and faith, set forth in an authoritative manner. It was called *dogmatic*, because it is and was *dogmatic*.

Now we use the term *systematic theology*. The trouble with the term *systematic theology*? . . . the Bible is not *systematic*! Solomon said, "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, and the honor of kings to search it out" (Proverbs 25:2). "God hides His word from the eyes of unbelief" and "reveals it to the eyes of faith." It's not *systematic* scholarship, it's faithful searching - with eyes of belief.

Forgive me for being *dogmatic* about being *dogmatic*, but as my grandfather always said, "If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything." The study of the basic doctrines, or teachings of the Christian faith is the very structure on which the church of Jesus Christ is built. To change any part of the structure is to destroy the whole thing! There are principles in the Scriptures which must be adhered to when putting together the Church of the Lord Jesus, and if we fail with these principles, we destroy the entire structure. Either we build it the way God wants, or we might as well not bother to build it at all.

"As a wise master builder," the apostle Paul said, "I have laid the foundation and others are building thereon, but watch how they build thereon. For no other foundation can anyone lay other than that which was laid in Christ Jesus." The building must conform to the foundation, and if the Lord is the foundation, then the building must be erected consistent with His character and His nature.

Many are familiar with the revelation the apostle Paul was given concerning the church. For those who do not know, and for those who may have forgotten, permit me to “stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.” The fourteen letters God gave to the apostle Paul are absolutely imperative to the church. (I believe the apostle Paul wrote the letter to the Hebrews. You may agree or disagree - a paradoxical point.) Notwithstanding, there is no understanding of Church truth, of Church structure, of Church doctrine, without the letters of the apostle Paul.

The apostle Paul is a parallel to the man Moses, to whom, if you will recall, God gave, not only the revelation concerning the Law, but also the revelation concerning the Tabernacle. “And God said to Moses,” when He had given him the pattern concerning the Tabernacle, “be sure to build it according to the pattern which you saw in the mount.” Twice He advised Moses, “build it according to the pattern.” And after the children of Israel had completed building the Tabernacle, the Lord was very careful to tell them that they had built it “according to the pattern shown in the mount.” If they had not built it - “according to the pattern shown in the mount” - the glory of God would not have fallen, and the cloud would not have filled the Holy Place. So it is with the Church today.

Figures & Analogy

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing where he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:8-10 AV).

The church of Jesus Christ is seen in the New Testament in a number of different analogies. It is seen as the bride of Christ, as the branches in the vine, as a building, as a field, as a pearl of great price. There are any number of different qualifying terms. One prominent is, “the body of Christ.” And we, that Body, are members one of another. We are the Church.

If we are going to deal with one analogy - teaching a truth using any fixed metaphor - it is important to be consistent. Don't hop back and forth between figures. Don't teach one paradigm with another; bringing in two separate issues to come to one unrelated conclusion; otherwise, the issue is confused entirely. If, for example, we confuse the analogy of the Body with the parable of the vine, of which we are the branches, all of a sudden we're lopping off fingers (branches of the vine). The Lord spoke the parable of the vine for one occasion, for one teaching, and He spoke the parable of the Body for another. Literally. We must be consistent. Whatever analogy is being drawn, the intent of the analogy, is speaking to a specific truth in a specific area. If we move from one analogy to another, we move from one area of truth to another.

Both are true analogies, but each may, and often do speak to a completely different situation - different issues of truth. We don't mix metaphors in our daily conversations if our desire is to be understood, so why do we mix analogies when teaching the Word of God? Mixing scriptural analogies - to come to one truth - many times confuses the hearers - and all of our good intentions are misconstrued. If we confuse or mix two different analogies, we confuse the truth. And therefore the truth will not come forth in it's purity.

The Artificer

The analogy addressed in Hebrews chapter 11, is that of a building. Abraham is looking for a city which has foundations, "whose builder and maker is God."

The Greek word translated "builder" is the word *artificer* - a dreamer of sorts. He's the one who thinks up what's going to be built - what we call an architect today. The architect dreams up the structure and lays out the plans. Then the builders use the architect's plans to put the whole structure together. So God, as the *artificer*, may have meditated in His mind, "I would like to have this kind of city which has foundations." He formulated His design - laying out the plans in His mind. Which is why Abraham said, "this building" and this city, of which we are an inextricable part, "the builder of this building," or this city, is God. God is the *artificer*. The architect. God thought it up.

This same Greek word, *artificer*, is found in the book of Acts - concerning the silversmiths who fashioned their various idols. "For a certain man, named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, you know that by this craft we have our wealth. Moreover, you see and hear that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are no gods which are made with hands; so that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought, but also that the temple of the great goddess, Diana, should be despised" (Acts 19:24-27 AV).

The apostle Paul and the Gospel were killing their idol business. Literally. And silversmiths were teed-off. These artificers would dream up icons, mold them and sell them to the local idol worshipers - which is why the apostle Paul got into so much trouble when he came preaching the Gospel. The idol worshipers were converted. That's what made the idol makers so irate. They didn't mind so much the turning of the people to Jesus - they didn't want the people turning away from their trade. If the people became Christians, who would buy their icons? Later on, as you know, their problem was solved when the silversmiths and artisans introduced little Jesus, Mary, and Christian Saint icons - their trade resumed and is flourishing even today.

The builder is God. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Right? Who is the *artificer*, the architect of this building, the Church? Who thought it up? The Father thought it. The Son spoke the word. And the Spirit wrought it about. But, the artificer is the Father.

The Public Worker

The word translated “maker” in Hebrews 11, “who is God,” is the Greek word which would suggest a public worker. So if the Father is the designer, the thinker-upper of this building, who then, is the public worker?

The Pharisees came to the Lord Jesus and claimed He cast out demons by the prince of demons. What did the Lord do? He warned them. He didn’t tell them that they *had* blasphemed (which is another subject). He warned them *about* blaspheming. Blaspheming who? . . . The Holy Spirit. How were the Pharisees in danger of blaspheming the Holy Spirit? They were seeing the works of the Holy Spirit and not recognizing those works as the works of God - God, the Holy Spirit. They were saying instead: “the works are the works of the Devil.” Those works - the works of God done in public - were seen by those Pharisees as works of the devil; not as the works of God. Jesus said that because they were calling these public works, “works performed by the Devil”, instead of works performed by God, the Holy Spirit, they were in danger of blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

Who then is the public worker? The Holy Spirit. He is the public worker. His works are the works which are seen. Even today. He is the One, in the Godhead, seen functioning around us each day - visibly, physically. We are bound together in one spirit and the deeds of God that are wrought in the individual members of the Body of Christ are wrought by the Holy Spirit. So the demonstration of the public Worker - as the works of God manifested in the world - is the Holy Spirit.

Paul states this very beautifully in 1 Corinthians, “we are laborers together with God.” God who? God, the Holy Spirit. He’s building the wall (building the Church; making us into the image of Christ Jesus) and we’re laboring in and with the Holy Spirit in building. So the works which are seen are the demonstration of God through the Spirit.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and the earth became without form and void and the (Spirit) God moved on the face of the roaring deep.” The very first member of the Godhead who is introduced to us in the scripture, individually, is God, the Holy Spirit. Why? Because He was functioning in something, evident from without. We can look upon His works. We can see Him work. So God, the Maker, is the public worker. He is God, the Holy Spirit.

Have you ever wondered if all those guys who claim that the earth was created from and by something other than the Holy Spirit is blaspheming the Holy Spirit? "God created the heavens and the earth." Creation did not create itself.

This building is built by God - obviously one member of the Godhead never involves Himself in any work in which all members of the Godhead are not involved; "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son . . . No man takes My life from Me I lay it down of myself. . . He was delivered up through the eternal Spirit" - there is never any singular activity of any one member of the Godhead in which all three members of the Godhead are not thoroughly and perfectly involved. The Three act as One. It has been said, "not, 1+1+1=3, but rather, 1x1x1=1." A vast difference.

The Speaker

"In the beginning *ELOHEEM* (the Hebrew word for GOD in this passage) created the heavens and the earth." This is a unique word. It's plural. It is a plural noun used with a singular verb. Not very good English, but marvelous inspiration. Hebrew uses the plural to obtain the superlative. Not: Big, Better, Best - but rather, a pluralized noun - to state the whole - which obtains the superlative. *ELOHEEM* points to the function of the Godhead collectively in that singular act. "In the beginning the greatest and only GOD - the Three in One, together GOD - created the heavens and the earth" - the totality of the Godhead functioning together.

But some may ask, "John tells us that all things were made by Jesus Christ and without Him there was not anything made that was made?" Correct! The Father is thinking it. The Son is speaking it. And the Holy Spirit is working it without. We must find the Son in the midst of every operation. "All things were made by Jesus Christ," working within the operation of the Three as One. He is in the midst of the Thinker and the public Worker. Jesus is the Speaker. He is "the Word made flesh." *ELOHEEM*: Father, Son, Holy Spirit - One plural.

In Matthew 16, Jesus is speaking to the apostle Peter, individually, and the others collectively, "Whom say men that I the Son of man am?" And they replied, "Some say that You are John the Baptist risen from the dead, others say you're Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets." So the Lord confined His question, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus turns and says, "Blessed are you Simon Barjona," which is a wonderful observation. Barjona: Bar means *son* and Jonah means *dove*. Barjona, *son of the dove*, not *child of*, but *son of the dove*. The dove pictures the Holy Spirit. Jesus was saying, "Simon you are indeed son of the Holy Spirit. Because revelation comes through the Holy Spirit" (paraphrased). "For flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you but my Father who is in heaven. And I say that you are Peter and upon this rock I will . . ." what? . . . "build My church. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The word, *build*,

in that passage remarkably just means build. That's all. The Thinker has thought it up. The Word has spoken it. And the Public Worker will "upon this" little "rock" He, "will build His church." The city "whose builder and maker is God".

The builder is God. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Father thought it. The Son spoke the word. And the Spirit wrought it about.

Jesus, the Two Doors

The Apostle Paul has been given the revelation of the Church. He was a wise master builder, and as the wise master builder, he has given to us, the Church, the whole pattern of how the structure of the Church is to be constructed. If we do not assemble it the way it was shown us, the glory of God will not fall, and the cloud will not fill the Holy Place; our hearts! His Church.

How did the Hebrew people enter into the Tabernacle of Moses in the wilderness? They entered through the gate of the Tabernacle - through the front door. But why did they want to enter through that gate? They wanted to enter through that gate because they believed there was something inside the Tabernacle - on the other side of it's front gate - which they needed and which could not be possessed, unless they entered through that gate.

Jesus, parenthetically, is that Gate³.

Jesus is revealed in the Gospel of John as a two-fold door (gate). First, He is seen as "The Sheep Door," whereby we find access; and second, as "The Door," whereby we find fellowship. We can go in and out through Him and find pasture.

The Gospel of John, as the record begins and indicates, is a setting forth of the tabernacle of God with men. The testimony of Jesus - God being made man - is the reason John was written. "The Word became flesh" and literally, *tabernacled*, or pitched His tent, among us - in us.

From John 1 through John 21, we have a declaration of the tabernacle of God, which is with men. The entire gospel of John can be divided into the three divisions, which are found in the Tabernacle of Moses - from the sacrifice, to the place of communion, to the place of fellowship. It is "the doors," which are located in John 10, that we are concerned with at this point.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To Him the porter opens, and the sheep hear His voice; and He calls His own sheep by name, and leads them out" (John 10:1-3).

There are three doors in John 10. Jesus is two of them. He is not the other. The first door is the door through which Jesus entered. The sheepfold.

Through the Door of the Sheepfold

It has been suggested that the one entering through the first door is referring to the believing sinner seeking salvation, to the believer who has entered into the kingdom by the proper door - which is not what this passage is saying; that's not what's involved here.

Jesus said that everyone whoever came before HIM was a thief and a robber. That's what the text goes on to say, does it not? Everyone that ever came before HIM was a thief and a robber. All of the others who came on the scene before the Lord Jesus, climbed-up some other way. The Pharisees were climbing-up some other way. They were coming up over the wall. They were not coming through the door of the sheepfold - **through the lineage of David.**

The door of the sheepfold is the Levitical law through which the Messiah had to enter. The One born of a virgin had to fulfill every just requirement of that Law. Jesus came fulfilling the Law. He came through the door of the sheepfold. He came through the passage, the door, if you will allow, of His earthly mother, Mary (Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38). He came to fulfill the sacrificial necessity before God. Jesus came *through* the first door, the sheepfold, and He *is* the second and the third door. He is not the "door of the sheepfold." He is the "Door of the sheep" and "the door." "Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (John 10:7-9).

Three doors:

1. A door *into* the sheepfold - through which Jesus entered.
2. A door *for* the sheep - which He supplied.
3. And *a* door - which we, the redeemed, (believing sinners) *enter* and *find fellowship*.

We have been given this representation in the Tabernacle of Moses:

1. One door for entrance, which brought Israel to the sacrificial altar.
2. Another door, which brought Israel into the Holy Place.
3. And a third door, which brought Israel into the Holiest of all, which was the place of fellowship, communion, and prayer.

There is a conjoint unity in the Gospel of John with the Tabernacle of Moses: the altar of incense in the Tabernacle of Moses is a parallel to the high priestly prayer of the Lord Jesus; and both are said to “come up before the Father as sweet incense into His nostrils.”

One more thing before we leave this subject, I think it interesting that through the Law of the Old Testament scripture, the Golden Altar was always seen outside the veil - the veil which separated the Holy Place from the Holiest of Holiest - the dwelling place of God. But when the apostle Paul deals with the positioning of the furniture in the Tabernacle of Moses, all of a sudden the Golden Altar is on the inside of the veil (Hebrews 9:1-4)⁴.

The Golden Alter

The Golden Altar prior to the day of atonement was outside the second veil. On the day of atonement it was brought inside the veil. Now - from that day forward - at this time, everything has changed. What happened? Why did the Apostle Paul update the Hebrews concerning the Golden Altar of incense, which is now *inside* the veil?

Why was the epistle to the Hebrews written in the first place? To teach the Hebrews how to stop being Hebrews.

Paul’s message to the Hebrews was, “Hey guys! We’ve got a better system now! We’re not outside of the veil anymore. We’re within the veil. Prayer (burning of incense) is not offered outside the veil anymore. Prayer is offered within the veil. We’ve been seated in the Heavens in Christ Jesus. The Lord Jesus, our forerunner has entered into the Holiest, in the Heavens (a forerunner is someone who makes the way for us to follow), so you Hebrews need to understand where you are in Him! In the Holiest of Holiest with the Lord! All you guys can offer up prayer to Him now, within the veil. You’re all believing priest!” The position of the believer is always *inside* the veil - in the Holiest of Holiest with the Lord. Don’t let that scare you.

Jesus: The Door of Entrance an abundant entrance into an abundant life!

The Golden Altar was the place of the offering of incense, the place of prayer, of fellowship, of worship within the second veil: in the Holiest of all. That’s where God wants to bring us: into the Holiest place of all - to Him. But He had to provide the access. And that access was provided when His Son entered through the sheepfold door - to give entrance to the door of entry into the Building of the Lord. Jesus is the door of entrance.

We are given evidence of this entrance given in 2 Peter. “But he that lacks these things, (these exceeding great and precious promises by which we are sharers of, the divine nature) is blind and cannot see afar off, and has forgotten that he was purged

from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if you do these things, you shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."

I like Peter's expression, "so an entrance shall be ministered unto you." He didn't say an entrance shall be provided you. The word goes much beyond just providing. "Ministered" has the idea of furnishing. "An entrance shall be [furnished] for you." So we can enter in; into His presence: Into the Holy Place in the Heavens. The verse goes on to say *how* we enter in: "Abundantly!" So we enter in "abundantly!" Such a joyful word, "abundantly."

The theme according to the Gospel of John is: "I am come that you might have life and have it more abundantly." It is an abundant entrance into an abundant life - a life, which God has provided through His Son, which is the access into His presence: the Door into the place of the dwelling of the Lord God of heaven. The entrance, the door of entry, is Jesus.

This abundant life we have in Christ Jesus is taught in many circles as a life filled with an abundance of cash, jewels, cars, houses and the like; as an entrance given to the believer, which takes the believer into a new car showroom with enough cash in hand or enough credit in tow, entitling the faithful believer with the authority to purchase the car of the believer's dreams, or the house, the fur coat, the diamond ring or whatever the believing heart desires. This is so far from the truth of the Word of God it's laughable. To teach that the abundant life given us in Christ Jesus is a life filled with all the fleshly desires the believer can imagine (or go in debt for) is to speak against the message of the entirety of Holy Writ itself. Jesus is the "life," (John 14:6) that the believer possesses, not the equity. I'm not saying there's anything wrong with having lots of spiffy stuff, but our life is more than our mortal holdings. Our life is hidden in Him, not in our bank deposits or credit scores.

We believe Him; we enter in Him; we are given abundance through the entrance given by Him - "That we may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." "Fellowshipping in His sufferings" and "being made conformable unto His death" is a little different than having faith for a new car. The former is "pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The latter have "their appetite as their god, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." We, as the Church, have gone from: "Silver and gold have I none, but what I have, I give to you. Stand and walk." (*Peter to a crippled beggar*), to: "Silver and gold have I some. Now go and believe for your own!"

“Our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our lowly body, that it may be fashioned like His glorious body, by which He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself. Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord my dearly beloved” (Philippians 3:14,19; 4:1).

I love that word, “stand.” We live in two realms: spiritual and physical. We need strength in both. Physical strength comes from daily bread and body conditioning. Spiritual strength comes through daily Bread and spirit conditioning (the real you). Be “strong in the Lord and the power of His might.”

Many texts have been written; many sermons have been given regarding “the armor” of the believer in Ephesians 4, but little has been said, to my hearing, concerning the word, “stand,” which is the command given to the wearer of the armor. “Stand.” Not: “fight” - not: “wage war against the devil” - Just: “stand.”

Standing. Occupying. Clad with this wonderful armor, we “stand” and occupy until He comes. Three times He says, “stand.” Not advance. Not go. Not fight. Not run around like a crazy person, screaming at the devil to release his prisoners - prisoners, whom the Lord has already released by resurrection - not running or rushing. “Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it” (Colossians 2:15). “Resist the devil,” don’t wrestle with him. When you’re in conflict with the enemy of your soul, “stand.”

“Stand, therefore having your loins girded about with truth.” What is “truth?” “My word is truth.” “I am the truth.” Truth is the word and “Word” of God. What is “gird?” Gird is the opposite of sloth, to be at ease, lazy in your walk with the Lord. What is “loins?” Our mind. Satan is the liar of liars -the father of such. So we “stand” against him with the word of our Father, the truth of God, girding our mind. And where do we keep His truth? In our heart. And the word flows from our heart (Spirit) to our mind (soul) and we no longer do the things we *feel* like doing (our flesh, Romans 7). We now do the things we *want* to do (our spirit, Romans 8). God in Christ Jesus is changing our *want-to’s* through His word.

“Rejoice in the Lord and again I say rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:4-7).

So the believer enters through “The Sheep Door” and receives the provision of “The Door.” From the gate through to the Holy Place, the whole of the Tabernacle of Moses figures in the incarnation of Christ. “So the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us.” The Tabernacle was a picture of that which was to come. The Father gave

His people (Israel) the Tabernacle to show us (the Church) what the Son was like. The Son gave us a Tabernacle (Himself) to show us what God (the Father) was like. The Holy Spirit is now dwelling in our tabernacle (our body), so we can manifest what the Holy Spirit is like. And the Holy Spirit does what? He speaks of Jesus. So the whole of God is made manifest to the world through the Son, Christ Jesus.

The Word of God

The only real substance is Spirit. Once we know Him, the Holy Spirit, we can have relationship with Him, Christ Jesus. What a marvelous awakening! So what does the Word of God, the printed page do? It confirms what has happened to us. The printed word is an artificial light. In the outer court of the Tabernacle of Moses in the wilderness, we have the sun, natural light, what Romans 1 calls the witness of God's creation to the pagan world. But we enter into the Holy Place of the Tabernacle, where there is no natural (sun) light. There we must have another light: the Lampstand, the burning oil.

The Lampstand was a wonderful Old Testament picture of the Holy Spirit illuminating our New Testament believing hearts. The Lampstand was not the Holy Spirit; it was a portrayal of the real article. That's what the printed word is: a portrait of the real item: Christ Jesus. The printed word - the Bible - is a type of illustrated assembly instruction book - so we'll build the church (corporately and individually), according to the pattern Paul was given. God has given us a pattern, a plan; don't set the Bible down. God has presented the Bible to us, to manifest to the Church how we are to walk in Him. God does not, nor will He ever, speak contrary to His written Word. Never! If you have an experience, or if you hear of an experience, which is not consistent with the word of God, don't weigh the word of God by the experience, but rather weigh the experience by the word of God! Again, God does not, nor will not speak contrary to His written Word. The Word of God and the word of God: they are "Spirit and life."

The Father has given us His Word, on the printed page, for our accommodation. Let me digress here to explain what I mean by that.

The Bible is printed for our accommodation. We still have, unfortunately, a very finite mind. It is my personal opinion, and I do not have chapter and verse for this, it's only my opinion, but this thing we call our subconscious mind was, I believe, Adam's conscious mind. Before Adam fell he did not have the problem of forgetting. Of that I'm sure. But after he fell, he was blessed with a forgetter. Yes, *blessed* with a forgetter. And Adam passed that blessing down to us. To be able to forget much of what I went through before I became a Christian - for that matter, after I became a Christian - is a real blessing. Paul exhorts us "to forget those things that are behind, and press forward towards those things that are before, toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of

God that is in Christ Jesus.” We have the ability to “forget those things that are behind” because we have been blessed with a forgetter.

God has given us His printed Word in order that He might accommodate our miserable memory. He plants His Word (seed) in our heart and brings it to remembrance, by whom? By the Holy Spirit, who dwells within. What then is the printed Word? It is an artificial revelation of life. The printed Word of God is an artificial light much the same as the Lampstand gave artificial light to the ministering priest in the Old Testament Tabernacle.

I think it goes without saying that I have the highest regard for the printed page, the printed Word of God. God has given us His printed Word to show us how to walk in Him. It is His instruction Book. God has given us a perfect, illustrated assembly instruction book, so we know how to put this whole thing together. But we’re like children with a new unassembled toy. We sit with our new toy, with the assembly instructions in front of us, which explains how to put this new toy together, and what do we do? We take the instructions and memorize them perfectly, expecting the toy to put itself together. That’s what we do. We have perfectly memorized what the Word of God says. Vast multitudes of believers, can quote the entire New Testament, and some can quote a great portion of the Old. But what have we done with it? We say this part is not for us today, and that part is not for us today. And we’re sitting there waiting for the toy to put itself together. And the toy is not going to do it.

The Father has given us the written Word in order for us to act on what He says: building according to the pattern seen in the mount. A teacher of mine said, “The book of Acts is God’s book on how to get things done. God has given us a pattern on how to perform with what we’ve got.” Have you ever noticed how the Lord Jesus taught the disciples? He first of all told them. Then He showed them. That was His pattern. A very over-read, over-worked friend of mine said he was so full of theology that “I can’t think anymore.” So he read through the four Gospels and the Book of Acts. He read them over and over, again and again. He did this for a day or so, “to find out” he said, “how the Lord Jesus did it.” He wanted to get back to the basics - back to the pattern he saw in the mount.

So the Lord has given us the word of God, the written word, the Bible as an artificial light. Whereby, He can bring us into the real light - Himself. Remember, the only real substance is Spirit, and the Spirit of God dwelt in the Holiest. All other lights, natural light, artificial light, was given to us to bring us into the light of His glory, into the Father - the real light. Once we have learned of Him, we can enter into His presence, and we can have a personal revelation of Him, which is a marvelous awakening.

What does the word of God do? It confirms what's happening to us. Don't ever set the Bible down. It confirms what's happening to us. I'll say it again, if you ever have an experience, or hear of an experience that isn't consistent with what's in that Book, you better not weigh the Book by that experience, you better weigh the experience by that Book. God will never speak contrary to His written word. No matter what you hear. Look in the Book "to see if these things be so." Check out what's been said, even if it's from your favorite teacher or even me.

It ever stands, that our revelation is to find His illumination; in His presence. God is bringing us first of all to two things that agree in one: The Spirit and The Word. There are two that bear record in heaven, the Spirit and the Word. And these two agree in one. God sent forth His Word and created the heavens and the earth. Every time God speaks He creates something. Today He is in the process of creating, of building, His Church: The house of God.

The Enemy Of Our Faith

We need to remember that the enemy of our faith speaks, as well. The devil speaks, but with the goal of destroying what our Father is building. Each time the devil speaks, he destroys: faith, trust, belief, etc. The enemy can not create. He cannot build. He can only try to tear down what God has created in hopes of building a counterfeit, illusory structure in it's place. Satan's concern is for destruction - our destruction. He is *the* demolition expert. And he has a wrecking crew whose only job is to carry out destruction in your life. He will never be able to accomplish it - but he unceasingly tries. He speaks words of doubt: mocking you, making fun of you. He and his minions try their best to make you stumble; tempting you to do evil - tempting you to act contrary to the Word of God - to lose faith; to give up; to doubt.

He does this more often with doubt, than he does with sin. Doubt is the number one enemy of our faith, not unbelief. Most of us will never fall into unbelief - but we all have the capacity to fall into doubt. Temptation is the devil's greatest weapon of attack to bring us into doubt - because it is so subtle - so indistinct.

Brother Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes very wonderfully how the devil tempts:

"Sudden temptation," he says, "comes upon the pious man. 'Suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear at a time when he least expected it. The Christian recognizes the cunning of Satan. Suddenly doubt has been sowed in his heart, suddenly everything is uncertain, what I do is so meaningless, suddenly sins of long ago are alive in me as though they had happened today, and they torment and torment me, suddenly my whole heart is full of deep sorrow for myself, for the world, for God's powerlessness over me, suddenly my vexation with life will lead

me to terrible sin, suddenly evil desire is weakened, and suddenly the cross is upon me and I tremble. This is the hour of temptation, of darkness, of defenseless deliverance into Satan's hand.

Are we in God's counsel? And if - in virtue of a divine bond which is incomprehensible to us - temptation is bound to come, then Christ, the most tempted of all, summons us to pray against the divine bond - not to yield in stoic resignation to temptation, but to flee from that dark bond, in which God lets the devil do his will, and call to the open divine freedom in which God tramples the devil under foot. 'Lead us not into temptation,' Lord.⁵

Many people ask me how to ascertain the voice of God. There are certain earmarks of the Lord's voice: God ministers peace, faith, health, and the like. The devil ministers turmoil, confusion, doubt, misunderstanding, and infinitum. We may not understand exactly what God means when He speaks, but it will minister peace to us. We can act on what He says, and it will be acted out in the peace only He can give.

We are the stones in the house of the Lord. He sees us as glorious stones. And He is building His house - the Lord Jesus being the foundation, the "Rock" - with us, His little building "rocks". We are called upon to assist in erecting this building, from His master plan according to the pattern He has shown us in His Book (our mount). And how do we know what His plan is, His pattern? "Seek ye out the Book of the Lord, and read" (Isaiah 34:16 AV). There we find the pattern, the plan for this city, this building. There are the living words of God our Father. There is the "Rock" on which we "stand" - the "Rock," foundation on which we, together - with the management and directive of the Holy Spirit - build His church.

I say all of this dogmatically.

¹ A traditional argument of the Stoics like Cicero and Seneca, and of rationalist theologians like Raymond Sebond, Charron, etc. It is the argument from Design in modern philosophy.

² Blaise Pascal, *Penées, Section IV: Of The Means Of Belief* 242, 243, 1600 A.D. (paperback edition 1958, E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.) pp. 71-72.

³ see *The Tabernacle of Moses* Illustration at the end of chapter 3: "What Shall The Righteous Do?" pg. 60

⁴ [see Leviticus 16:12; and also Exodus 30:1-10]

⁵ *Letters and Papers from Prison*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, edited by Eberhard Bethge, translated by Reginald H. Fuller (The Macmillan Company, 1960).

chapter three
What Shall The Righteous Do?

*“But he who heard and did nothing
is like a man who built a house on the earth without foundation,
against which the stream beat vehemently,
and immediately it fell.
And the ruin of that house was great.”*

Luke 6:49

“If the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?” (Psalms 11:3). The apostle Paul was concerned, as was Moses, and so, we too, should be concerned with the structure, the framework - the foundation - of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. God has given us His revelation concerning the manner in which we are to build His Church, and He intends that we should proceed with the construction of His building, according to the pattern He has established. We have the Foundation. And “the Foundation of God stands sure”.

The Only Foundation

“According to the grace of God, which is given unto me, as a wise master builder,” said Paul, “I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let every man take heed how he builds upon it” (1 Corinthians 3:10). We build the church (of which every believer is an integral part) of the Lord Jesus, of which He is the Foundation, according to the pattern given the apostle Paul - according to God’s plan - and if we built it according to what God has said, then His glory will fill the Church.

“For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this Foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble - Every man’s work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall test (try) every man’s work of what sort it is (1 Corinthians 3:11-13).

In the 1950’s, we were liberated by well-paying jobs, cars, lyrics and music that gave rise to the term, “the generation gap.”

In the 1960’s - a decade of protests - we lost our authority. Church, state and parents were called into question and found wanting. Their authority was rejected, yet nothing replaced it.

In the 1970’s, we lost our love. It was the decade of nihilism, dominated by hyphenated words beginning with “self” - self-image, self-esteem, self-assertion - which made a lonely world. We learned everything there was to know about sex and forgot

everything there was to know about love, and few had the nerve to declare the difference.

In the 1980's, we lost our hope. Stripped of innocence, authority and love, large and growing numbers of us stopped believing in the future.

In the 1990's we lost our ability to reason. The power of critical thinking went from induction to deduction and very few were able to think clearly. We became a people who listen with our eyes and think with our feelings.

Ohio State University's Wexner Center for the Performing Arts¹ was America's first post-modern building. The building's architect designed it with no design in mind. When he was asked, "Why?" he said, "If life itself is capricious, why should our buildings have any design and any meaning?" So he has pillars, which have no purpose. He has stairways that go nowhere. He has built a senseless building and someone else has paid for it. My hope is that he didn't use the same capricious design technique with the building's foundation. Any of us can fool around with an infrastructure, but we dare not tinker with the foundation, because it will call our bluff every time.

Today, in the 2000's we are told that there is no such thing as real truth; no such thing as real meaning; no such thing as real certainty - we have no sure foundation - or so we've been told.

The New American Religion

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism

*"The prophets prophesy falsely and the priest bear rule by their means;
and My people love to have it so" (Jeremiah 5:31).*

When researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill took a close look at the religious beliefs held by American teenagers, they found that the faith held and described by most adolescents came down to something the researchers identified as "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism."²

1. A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life, except when God is needed to resolve a problem.

5. Good people go to heaven when they die.

That, in sum, is the creed to which much adolescent faith can be reduced. After conducting more than 3,000 interviews with American adolescents, the researchers reported that, when it came to the most crucial questions of faith and beliefs, many adolescents responded with a shrug and said, “whatever.”

The researchers, whose report is summarized in *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Eyes of American Teenagers*³ by Dr. Christian Smith with Melinda Lundquist Denton, found that American teenagers are incredibly inarticulate about their religious beliefs, and most are virtually unable to offer any serious theological understanding. As Dr. Smith reports, “To the extent that the teens we interviewed did manage to articulate what they understood and believed religiously, it became clear that most religious teenagers either do not really comprehend what their own religious traditions say they are supposed to believe, or they do understand it and simply do not care to believe it. Either way, it is apparent that most religiously affiliated U.S. teens are not particularly interested in espousing and upholding the beliefs of their faith traditions, or that their communities of faith are failing in attempts to educate their youth, or both.”

The researchers found, “For most teens, nobody has to do anything in life, including anything to do with religion. ‘Whatever’ is just fine, if that’s what a person wants.” This proves again, that corrupt nature is thoroughly in love with error and will more readily and eagerly receive false, rather than true doctrine.

This casual “whatever” marks so much of the American moral and theological landscapes and is a substitute for serious and responsible thinking. More importantly, it is a verbal cover for an embrace of relativism. Accordingly, “most religious teenager’s opinions and views are vague, limited, and often quite at variance with the actual teachings of their own religion.” The kind of responses found among many teenagers indicates a vast emptiness at the heart of their understanding. When a teenager says, “I believe there is a God and stuff,” this hardly represents a profound theological commitment.

The researchers found that teenagers are not inarticulate in general: “Many teenagers know abundant details about the lives of favorite musicians and television stars or about what it takes to get into a good college, but most are not very clear on who Moses and Jesus were.” The obvious conclusion: “This suggests that a strong, visible, salient, or intentional faith is not operating in the foreground of most teenager’s lives.”

The researchers, conducted thousands of hours of interviews with a carefully identified spectrum of teenagers, discovered that for many, the interview itself was the

first time they had ever discussed a theological question with an adult. What does this say about our churches? What does this say about this generation of parents?

This study indicates that American teenagers are heavily influenced by the ideology of individualism that has so profoundly shaped the larger culture. This bleeds over into a reflexive non-judgmentalism and a reluctance to suggest that anyone might actually be wrong in matters of faith and belief.

Many of the responses fell along very moralistic lines - but they reserve their most non-judgmental attitudes for matters of theological conviction and belief. Some go so far as to suggest that there are no "right" answers in matters of doctrine and theological conviction - a belief system that appears to characterize the beliefs of vast millions of Americans, both young and old.

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is about inculcating a moralistic approach to life. It teaches that central to living a good and happy life is being a good, moral person. That means being nice, kind, pleasant, respectful, responsible, at work on self-improvement, taking care of one's health, and doing one's best to be successful. This appears to be true of the American faith communities' commitment as a whole, insofar as this can be described as a faith commitment - this belief is held by a large percentage of Americans. The Moralistic Therapeutic Deist, whatever their age, believes that religion should be centered in being "nice" - a posture that many believe is directly violated by assertions of strong theological conviction.

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is also about providing therapeutic benefits to its adherents. As the researchers explained, "This is not a religion of repentance from sin, of keeping the Sabbath, of living as a servant of sovereign divinity, of steadfastly saying one's prayers, of faithfully observing high holy days, of building character through suffering, of basking in God's love and grace, of spending oneself in gratitude and love for the cause of social justice, et cetera. Rather, what appears to be the actual dominant religion among U.S. teenagers is centrally about feeling good, happy, secure, at peace. It is about attaining subjective well-being, being able to resolve problems, and getting along amiably with other people."

Further, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism presents a unique understanding of God. As Dr. Smith explains, this amorphous faith "is about belief in a particular kind of God: one who exists, created the world, and defines our general moral order, but not one who is particularly personally involved in one's affairs - especially affairs in which one would prefer not to have God involved. Most of the time, the God of this faith keeps a safe distance."

The deity behind Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is very much like the deistic God of the 18th century philosophers. This is not the God who thunders from the mountain, nor a God who will serve as judge. This undemanding deity is more interested in

solving our problems and in making people happy. "In short," Dr. Smith explains, "God is something like a combination Divine Butler and Cosmic Therapist: he is always on-call, takes care of any problems that arise, professionally helps his people to feel better about themselves, and does not become too personally involved in the process."

This Moralistic Therapeutic Deism belief system has no denominational headquarters and no mailing address. Nevertheless, it has millions and millions of devotees across the United States and other advanced cultures, where subtle cultural shifts have produced a context in which belief in such an undemanding deity makes sense. Furthermore, this deity does not challenge the most basic self-centered assumptions of our postmodern age - particularly when it comes to so-called "lifestyle" issues. This God is exceedingly tolerant and this religion is radically undemanding.

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism constitutes a dominant civil religion that embodies the belief system for the culture at large. Thus, this basic conception may be analogous to what other researchers have identified as "lived religion" as experienced by the mainstream culture. Although in even deeper issues, these researches claim that Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is "colonizing" Christianity itself, as this new civil religion seduces converts who never have to leave their congregations and Christian identification as they embrace this new faith and all of its undemanding dimensions.

All true believers need to seriously ponder Dr. Smith and his researchers' assessment: "Other more accomplished scholars in these areas will have to examine and evaluate these possibilities in greater depth. But we can say here that we have come with some confidence to believe that a significant part of Christianity in the United States is actually [only] tenuously Christian in any sense that is seriously connected to the actual historical Christian tradition, but is rather substantially morphed into Christianity's misbegotten step-cousin, Christian Moralistic Therapeutic Deism." This distortion of Christianity has taken root, not only in the minds of individuals, but also "within the structures of at least some Christian organizations and institutions."

These researchers assert that Christianity is either degenerating into a pathetic version of itself or, more significantly, Christianity is actively being colonized and displaced by a quite different religious faith. The language, and therefore experience, of Trinity, holiness, sin, grace, justification, sanctification, church and heaven and hell appear, among most Christians in the United States at the very least, to be supplanted by the language of happiness, niceness, and an earned heavenly reward.

This radical transformation of Christian theology and of Christian belief have replaced the sovereignty of God with the sovereignty of the self. With this therapeutic age, human problems are reduced to pathologies in need of a treatment plan. Sin is simply excluded from the picture, and doctrines as central as the wrath, holiness and

justice of God are discarded as out of step with the times and unhelpful to the project of self-actualization.

All of this shows teenagers have been observing their parents and the larger culture with diligence and insight. They see just how little their parents really believe and just how much many of their churches and Christian institutions have accommodated themselves to the dominant culture. They sense the degree to which theological conviction has been sacrificed on the altar of individualism and a relativistic understanding of truth. They have learned from their elders that self-improvement is the one great moral imperative to which all are accountable, and they have observed the fact that the highest aspiration of those who shape this culture is to find happiness, security, and meaning in this life.

This research demands the attention of every Christian. If we dismiss sociological analysis as irrelevant, we will miss the point. We must begin to look at the United States of America as our past missionary fathers once viewed nations that had never heard the gospel. Today, our challenge may be even greater than their confrontation with paganism, for we face a succession of generations who have transformed Christianity into something that bears no resemblance to the faith revealed in the Bible. The faith "once delivered to the saints" is no longer even known, not only by American teenagers, but by most of their parents. Millions of Americans believe they are Christians, simply because they have some historic tie to a Christian denomination or identity.

The Church faces a challenge of sharing the true Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ with a nation that largely considers itself Christian. Most Americans believe in some deity and consider themselves fervently religious, but their convictions have virtually no connection to historic Christianity. Dr. Smith and his colleagues have performed an enormous service for the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ in identifying Moralistic Therapeutic Deism as the dominant religion of this age. Now our responsibility is to respond in truth to this "new religion", understanding that it represents the greatest competitor to biblical Christianity. More urgently, this study should warn us that our failure to teach this generation of teenagers the realities and convictions of biblical Christianity will mean that our children will know even less and will be even more readily seduced by this new form of paganism.

"As one of the Puritans quaintly, yet truly expressed it, 'The face of error is highly painted and powdered so as to render it attractive to the unwary.'" Arthur Waddington Pink (otherwise known as A.W. Pink), *Sermon On The Mount* (Sovereign Grace Publishers, Inc., 2008) pp. 361

*"Let no man deceive himself.
If any man among you seems to be wise in this age*

*let him become a fool, that he may be wise.
For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God
(1 Corinthians 3:18).*

The Bible
The Sure Foundation

So, if we have no sure foundation, where then do we go to find, . . . to rebuild, . . . What is the sure foundation on which an individual, a family, a society, and a church can stand?

The answer is simple: the Bible.

The Lord has provided us with His written Word to help us understand what He said, why He said it, and how we are to build His Church . . . but do we read it? Most of us only skim through it's pages once a week in preparation for our group Bible study.

Sadly, when most of us good believers come together for the purpose of Bible study, we are not studying the Bible. Instead we study easy-to-understand books written in contemporary language, which seek to render in the simplest, easy-to-comprehend terms, what may or may not be Biblical truth - substituting, in some cases real theological truth with a poorer form of mythology - which will indoctrinate us into confusion, doubtfulness and division, rather than truth. This intrusion is evident in many assemblies: worship may be the major element or baptism or whatever, but the full truth of the Word is never experienced or expressed - instead, forms of tradition or contemporary logic is exercised and as a consequence, the believers never experience maturity. No matter how well written these books may be or how good they make us feel, we will never learn about the Lord, His Church, His foundation, without the scholarship He has established in His book, the Bible.

We have the Foundation. And "the Foundation of God stands sure." (2 Timothy 2:19).

Paul's visitation

The apostle Paul received a marvelous visitation into the third heaven, into the presence of the Lord, in order that we might determine accurately, from his teachings how we are to build the Lord's church. "I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago - whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows - such a one was caught up to the third heaven . . . into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Corinthians 12:2,3).

This building then, which we are presently building, into which we are presently entering, must be entered into, and built according to the expression God has defined.

God has instructed us, through the apostle Paul's teachings, concerning the manner whereby we must build His church. He has instructed us how we are to enter into His presence, the manner by which we enter into His Church and the manner in which He mandates His Church be put together. If we do not build His Church according to the pattern He has set down, then we will have an incomplete building, built upon an unsure foundation. And the glory of the Lord will not fill an incomplete, unsure structure. God has given us His plan. He has equipped us with His tools to guide us in facilitating His plan and He wants His church, "the house of God, the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth," built according to His plan with the equipment He has given.

The Entrance

The apostle Peter tells us that "an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." God has furnished an entrance, and we move according to the furnishings of that entrance, which is how we get into His kingdom. We will accomplish much when we get into His kingdom, but for our discussion at this point, we enter in according to the furnishings God has confirmed - the pattern given the apostle Paul as to the construction of the "house of God."

Translations

I may seem to be overstating the obvious here, but there is a reason for my concern. Recently, a situation was brought to my attention, which involved a small congregation of believers where Diana and I had ministered. These saints are very dear to the both of us.

Although these dear people appear outwardly to hunger for the freedom the Lord purports, the deacons - in their freedom-loving way - tacked a large sign on the entrance of their meeting hall which reads, "We preach, teach and read from the King James version of the Bible and nothing else." The leaders feel any "new" - or other - translation of the Bible is not only unbiblical, but offensive and should be considered blasphemous. The time-honored words of the King James Version (1611 translation⁴, if at all possible) should never be altered - according to them - whether the people understand its antiquated translation or not. This, it seems to me is a form of superstition rather than a truthful display of faith in the authority of the word of God.

The problem within this assembly is fear - a fear which is brought about by a lack of understanding. The leaders fear the people won't get to heaven without the right words and they're afraid that any change in the King James will push the people headlong into sin and therefore into hell. They're afraid of the freedom and liberty we have in the Lord - within their fear they refuse to alter their tradition. They are using the original King James as a talisman, not as an instrument for discovery.

I, in my kindness, taught them from my Greek New Testament on: “As saints, we are free to fail; but we’re not free to be irresponsible” - just to get a reaction. I did.

After the service I asked one of their leading brothers to define a few select words such as, *cieled* (lined), *thither* (there), *art*, *hasted*, *suffered*, etc. These words, along with many other 1611’s have completely different meanings today. Words which were then understood are now completely un-comprehensible - as far as their true objective is concerned. We need to be able to hear when God speaks - which is essential for us to judge ourselves and our situations as He Himself judges them.

This same objection, or fear, was addressed by the people of God in 1611 England. Many sincere pious believers shuddered at the idea of turning their time-honored Latin of the Vulgate (their Bible) into common English - common, being what we now know as the King James. They believed it barbarous. The sacred truth of the Bible seemed to them to have lost its sanctity when stripped of the polysyllabic Latin. This was the Roman Catholic’s fear as well.

What both of these groups of saints have forgotten - if they in fact ever knew - is the New Testament, in the original Greek is not a work of art. Neither is the Hebrew of the Old. Neither the Greek of the New Testament, nor the Hebrew of the Old, were written in a language of solemn, ecclesiastical visage; they were written in the language spoken by the people of that day - vernacular, pedestrian in some cases. By the time the New Testament was written, the Greek language had lost its beauty and subtlety. The language had become basal; rudimentary to the people of the land, utilitarian, commercial. This shouldn’t shock us. Just as the Lord was born to a peasant virgin, His word was preached and written in a prosaic, unliterary language - a language the people could easily understand. I love the old King James, but its words, which possess such antique beauty and charm, have rendered it in many passages unintelligible to our modern ear, especially in its early versions.

Our First English Bible

John Wycliffe was the most famous clergyman of his day (the early 1300’s) - a leading scholar at Oxford and a chaplain to the King of England; he spoke out boldly against the errors of the popes, the organizational hierarchy of the Roman Church, and the corruption of the clergy in his day. He criticized not only the organization of the medieval church, but its theology as well, and argued for a return to the Scriptures. “Pastors should live lives of simplicity and holiness,” he taught, “shepherding their flocks, not plundering them.”

He realized if the people in England were ever to know the truth, they needed the Word of God in their own language. Under brother Wycliffe’s direction, the Bible was translated into English for the first time. Although, the entire translation,

completed by his associates, was not finished until 1395 - eleven years after his death. Copies of Wycliffe's Bible continued in use for over a century until printed Bibles took their place. This work greatly influenced William Tyndale, who made the first printed translation of the New Testament in English.

Now, one might say brother Wycliffe's ideal translation of a Bible, "the people could easily understand," was a bit different than what we in this day would consider "easy". Here is how Wycliffe describes the transfiguration in the language of his day:

The brackets are added to help you understand the text - in today's language.

"And aftir [after] sixe [six] dayes [days] Jhesus [Jesus] took Petre, [Peter] and James, and John and ledith [led] hem [them] by hem selve [themselves] aloone [alone] in to an high hil [hill]; and he is transfigurid [transfigured] before hem. And his clothis [clothes] ben maad [were made] schynynge [shining] and white ful moche [much] as snow, and which maner clothis a fullere [cloth worker], or walkere [worker] of cloth, may not make white on erthe [earth]. And Helye [Elijah] with Myses [Moses] apperide [appeared] to hem, and thei [they] weren [were] spekyng [speaking] with Jhesu." (Matthew 17:1-3)

Easy? You decide.

I am afraid we are losing the most vital structure of what is necessary to bring the church of the Lord Jesus into maturity: i.e., the Word of God. The Lord has provided us with His written Word to help us understand what He said. But, if we can't define the words, we can't obey the words. A Bible translation is not something to be worshiped, it's a book to be read and understood. "Give me understanding, and I will keep Your Law." If you can't understand your Bible translation, find one you can.

However, beware of all fallacious transliterations, such as *The Message* bible. They must be avoided at all cost! Simply because they are transcriptional, abhorrent hallucinations of intellectual fools - not Bibles! They have been birthed from within popular professing Christianity, they invite the reader to learn more about Jesus from a pluralistic perspective - amalgamating Christ with the world. Their goal is to establish a Jesus (along with His Church) who is acceptable to people of all faiths - or no faith. Avoid! Avoid! Avoid! (For more information on *The Message*, Emerging Church fellowships and the like, visit: <http://www.drjaymissdiana.com/writings>).

God has given us the directions which will lead His church into maturity - according to His plan. But, if we can't make sense of His compass, or if we've got a compass which points us south instead of north, we'll never find our way. And eventually we'll shake and shudder during a strong wind and fall.

The Right Tool for the Right Job

I was blessed with a father who loved to build - sheds, stalls, extra rooms, barbecue pits, houses, barns, etc. My family lived in the country and my father worked in the city, so he had only one day per week to physically conduct his building projects - although it took him weeks to plan each project.

Every Saturday morning my father, my grandfather, Mr. Keaton (the man who lived on and took care of our land) and myself would begin one of my father's building projects. As the morning work progressed, my father would (predictably) realize his need for an additional tool. So he'd send me back to the toolshed for the extra tool. He needed the correct tool to complete the building project the proper way - his design. My father would say, "Buddy," that's what he called me, "you can shape a nice piece of lumber with an axe, but I think we have a better way." Without the right tool we couldn't build our building correctly. Without the knowledge of how to correctly use our tools, our building may, when finished, be unlivable or at least unreliable.

My father taught me a great deal of logic during those Saturday projects. He'd say things like: "No matter how thin the pancake, there's still two sides." "The best of us talk about ideas. The most of us talk about things. But the worst of us talk about people." I never forgot that one.

Mr. Keaton made sure my father's projects were completed during the week, with my father supervising over the phone. Most of my father's buildings are still standing.

The LORD's Tools

"And He gave some, apostles" - not only the 12 apostles, but rather, "He gave some apostles," a marked difference - "and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11,12). These four tools, if you will allow, are the equipment, the tools the Lord Jesus has given us for the building of His church. Many have said there are five equipping ministries given in this verse. But for that to be true, the word *some*, which comes before the noun *pastors*, would come again before *teachers*, which it does not. So there are four equipping ministries here, given by the Lord Jesus for the perfecting of the saint, for the work in the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ - for the building of the Lord's church.

The Apostle

The apostle is the first tool given to the church, to equip the church for the building up of the body. He's the first man the Lord sends in to begin the equipping work of the foundation of the house - to start the building process.

You may be asking, "Aren't our churches already established? Don't we have them on every corner? Why do we need apostles today?" There is a grave problem with this type of thinking.

It is the responsibility of the apostle to take a vital part in the establishment of the church. The great difficulty we see in many of our churches today is the cause and effect of the church not being established on an apostolic ministry. Some churches are established on an evangelism ministry, a prophetic ministry, a teaching ministry, the movement of the Holy Spirit (as the primary focus), some are established on the principle of humanism or the principle of embracing love and therefore loving the world into redemption. The one essential missing is the lack of a complete foundation; the lack of the apostle. The apostle brings in the word of God to shore up the stones of the foundation - the Lord Himself is the Chief cornerstone, we're the little stones. If the building is lacking a sure foundation (the way, life and truth of the Lord Jesus) those building stones (bodies) are lacking the vitality and the fullness of a well-equipped church. If they did not begin with a complete foundation, the fullness and the life of the Lord to His church is never realized. When those churches were established, there was something vitally lacking in their foundation. Sound doctrine.

Healthy Teaching

The four equipping ministries given in Ephesians 4 are the four-post or pillars, if you will allow, which hold up the entrance on the Foundation of the church. These men are given to the church by the Lord Jesus for the sure structuring of the foundation and the building of the church. He, the Lord Jesus is the foundation, the Great Rock Slab, the foundation, which His church is built upon - the Chief Corner Stone - the Word. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of the Lord." These four men establish the Lord's church with the sure foundation of His Word.

But the apostle is the first man on the construction sight. The apostle is the establishing post of doctrine. He is the beginning of the foundation.

God always inaugurates His work - no matter the work - with doctrine; sound teaching. The Lord said for us to first "teach all nations," then baptize. Begin with doctrine, sound teaching, then they'll want to be baptized without us having to tell them they need to. Doctrine first - sound teaching - is the reason the book of Romans falls first in the New Testament epistles - the book of pure healthy doctrine. God begins every work with healthy teaching. The other three equipping ministries will follow and complete the structure, but doctrine is the beginning. Sound teaching, doctrine, begins the work - then the Lord sends in His prophet, then His evangelist, then His teaching pastor, which completes the four permanent posts of the foundation of His church.

With that four-post foundation, you have a solid structure - on a solid foundation. The four posts, the four equippers, the four foundationers, if you please,

the posts and beams of the Lord's house (to use a building term) will give the sure strength needed for a secure dwelling - and the building will stand firm forever. The church must first be built on this foundation of doctrine or it will not be strong enough to hold up the structure - the ministries of the people of the Lord.

If the foundation isn't established correctly the building will begin to sag - to droop in some very critical areas. Usually in the areas of teaching, security and worship. A church, which is not founded on sound teaching, will disappear into every wind of new philosophy which comes down the pike. The teacher may be popular. The music may be celebrated. But the people within the structure will be unsure. Many times these leaders "are those who justify [themselves] before men, but God knows [their] hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men, is an abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15).

God is now sending back into His church the proper ministries, the proper tools, all of the equipment needed to shore up His building - thereby positioning under the structure, His church, the proper, complete foundation - doctrine. Then, and only then, can His church produce the proper fruitful ministries. If a foundation is healthy and strong, then a secure building can be built thereon. Then you have a church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Proper Growth

If a child is raised without the proper nutrition, the proper vitamins, when that child reaches a certain age the lack of those nutrients begins to show. Which is why children in certain areas of the world have rickets. They were lacking, as children, particular ingredients necessary for proper growth of their physical body. The same is true of the Spiritual body of the Lord Jesus. If the church is lacking any valid ingredient, during the laying of the foundation of the church, the lack of those ingredients, which were not available in the original diet, will begin to show as the church tries to mature. Because of that lack of foundational nutrition, we find, as a body, we cannot move into maturity. The foundation was not laid properly so the structure remains weak - as do the ministries of the people within the structure - which may be the reason we have so many bureaucracies and so few Churches.

A View from the Tabernacle of Moses

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh, and having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (for He is faithful that

promised), and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as you see the day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:19-25)

The entrance into the Holiest in the Tabernacle of Moses was marked by four posts. In New Testament terms, these are the four posts of Ephesians 4 - whereby we enter into the presence of God - in His Church.

From this Hebrews passage we encounter the whole of the Tabernacle of Moses. We enter through the first veil (door), from the outside, from the world, and as we enter through the first veil we enter the outer court - straight in front of us we see one of the two remaining entrances - veils - one into the Holy Place - and the final one, which will lead into the Holiest Place - the presence of God - which we can not see when we first enter the tabernacle through the first veil. A fuller description and illustration is given in length regarding the Tabernacle of Moses⁵ in my book, “Bless His Holy Name”, where I note that anyone could enter into the outer court. There was a reason it was called “the court of the Gentiles.”

Within any work of God, there are those who gather themselves to what God is doing. The Gentiles did this in the outer court of the Temple. This is illustrated even fuller in the Old Testament economy with the mixed multitude coming out of Egypt with the children of God, Israel. This mixed multitude realized the children of Israel were inheriting a good thing, so they thought it a good idea to go along with them - to share in whatever it was the children of Israel was going to inherit. Whatever the children of Israel was going to receive, had to be better than what was left for the mixed multitude in Egypt - after God had finished with Egypt. So they tagged along with Israel. They wanted to share in the blessing. They gathered themselves among the children of Israel, and left Egypt with the children of Israel, although they were never part of the children of Israel; they never believed. So Jude 5 tells us that after He had brought them out, He destroyed those who did not believe.

What is the basis for receiving anything, or rather everything from God? Faith! Believing! So Romans 5 and following, “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

It is always by faith. As we believe God, we appropriate His promises. When we believed God for regeneration, we appropriated that promise. The children of God, Israel, believed God for deliverance from Egypt and they exited the land of Egypt. Others also believed God and exited the land of Egypt. The mixed multitude just exited the land of Egypt. They saw it expedient to get in on what the Israelites were enjoying.

So they just tagged along. But they never believed. And God destroyed them that did not believe.

When Jesus said, "There are some of you who believe not." They, "went back, and walked no more with Him." Jesus then asked the others if they were also going to leave? Peter replied, "We believe and are sure that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And they remained with the Lord. Believers always receive the promise - they always remain. Those who do not believe always leave. This is Old and New Testament doctrine.

God is offering, in the outer court of the Tabernacle, where everyone is privileged to enter, an experience in Himself. Not everyone receives that experience, but it is offered. "It is the goodness of God that leads you to repentance" (Romans 2:4). God's desire is for everyone to experience a real, vital life-changing renewing experience in Himself. For the unbelieving, it is just a tagging-along, watching experience. For the believer, it is an authentic, life-filling, transforming encounter. It was appropriated, in the Old economy by the sprinkled blood of "goats and bulls" on the Altar and by the water in the Laver. It is appropriated today, in the New economy through Christ Jesus. "Our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscious and our bodies washed with a pure water." (Hebrews 10:22). God is sanctifying the whole man.

In the Tabernacle of Moses, the Laver was a picture of the Word of God and Jesus in John 15 said, "You are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you." Again, "The Words which I speak unto you they are Spirit and they are Life." They cleanse. They sanctify. Just as the water in the Laver was for cleansing then, now the word of God is used by the believers for the same function - for cleansing. In John 17 we read that it is the "washing of the water of the Word of God." Paul tells us in Ephesians 5 it is that Word which "sanctifies the child of God." We are sanctified spirit, soul and body. Cleansed. "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

God justifies and sanctifies the believing vessel in the outer court - which is where we become Christians. Glory! It is the place of the sacrifice - the blood. The place of forgiveness. The place of our beginning. But that is just the beginning. Our new birth. Our babyhood. Can you still go to heaven as a baby? Of course you can. But does God want you to go to heaven as a baby? No. He wants you to go to heaven in the fullness of the measure of the stature of Jesus Christ. That's what He's raising us to. "We don't know what we will be like, but we know, in that day, that we will be like Him," which is a mature believer, not a baby. God wants to move the believer from the outer court, which is our beginning, our salvation and baptism experience, seen in the blood and the water in the Old Testament Tabernacle, into the Holy of Holies, His presence, which is our maturity. He begins this work with the four sure foundations in the building of His church. This is a work of maturity, not of justification.

Jesus said that we have an entrance through the veil, His flesh, into the Holy of Holies. That Place, if you will remember, is a picture of what was in the Tabernacle, now in the church, where we have the four-post entrance into and on through the final of the three veils into the Holy of Holiest. The Holy of Holies, which is illustrated in the Tabernacle of the congregation of Moses, was the third area into which the believer entered. This is the saved - spirit, soul and body - baptized believer approaching God. These three baptisms of the believer - spirit, soul and body - is illustrated fuller in the chapter, *"One Baptism"*.

The only man in the Old Testament, who was privileged to go into the Holy of Holiest, was the High Priest. The people of God could not enter into the presence of God, only that one man, one time each year. The Lord Jesus is our High Priest - He has entered into the Holiest - He has sprinkled His blood before the true testimony in the Heavens - there to make an entrance for us - the believers - into the presence of God. Jesus is our High Priest. He is also the Son of God. Because of that entrance made by Jesus, the Son, we now, can enter the Holiest - the presence of God - "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin. Let us therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16).

When the Lord died on the tree, the veil of the Temple was torn "in two." God was declaring, by that tearing in two, by the tearing of the flesh of the Lord Jesus "an entrance had been furnished." Glory!

I have often wondered what the expression on the face of the High Priest ministering at the Altar of Incense was when that veil ripped "in two." I bet that was one surprised fellow. The veil was four inches thick. It was torn from the top to the bottom. The rip started from where God was and ended where man is. I wish I could have seen the face of that priest. There he was standing before the Altar of Incense, where there was a continuous offering before the Lord, (one of the courses of the priesthood was continually ministering in that sanctuary) then all of a sudden, that four inch thick veil ripped from the top to the bottom. It's a wonder he didn't drop dead on the spot.

God declares by that entrance - that ripping - that access has been made into His presence by the blood of Jesus - "by a new and a living way." For Christ is not made after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. We, because of the Lord Jesus, are now in the presence of God, our Father - always.

Thorny Trees

Let me digress momentarily. Bracing the entrance into the Holiest, God's presence in the Tabernacle, was marked by "four posts." These four posts were both wood and gold. Acacia wood overlaid with solid gold. (Exodus 36:20; 38:19).

The Acacia tree found in the Orient was a most plentiful tree and a tree much like the mesquite tree we see in the arid regions of southwestern America. It was a very common wood. It was everywhere. The Acacia tree is a very thorny tree, but its wood is incorruptible. That's why God used it. The children of Israel cut the wood from the Acacia tree, made the posts for the Tabernacle, over-laid them with gold and they wouldn't rot, because the wood was incorruptible. It's what my grandfather referred to as heart-cedar. Heart-cedar will not rot.

So the Hebrews over-laid those thorny trees, which wouldn't rot, with pure gold. What a lovely picture of the believer. Wood in the scripture is a picture of humanity. Gold is divinity. God singles out these thorny, twisted individuals, whom He cuts out to be useful instruments, over-lays them with His divine nature, and establishes them in His Temple. What a marvelous transformation. That's regeneration. If any man be in Christ he isn't Acacia anymore. He's a new creation. All the thorns are cut off and he's over-laid with gold - "we are in Christ," the apostle Paul says. And we won't rot. How wonderful!

There were four posts, which marked the entrance into the Holiest, the Holy of Holies. And one could say, in a broad view, the four posts figure the four Gospel messages: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. In like manner, the entrance into the Holy Place, where the first veil hung, patterns the Pentateuch - the first five books of Moses, The Law. ("The number four speaks of Creation and how the things of God relate to His creation; the number five speaks of Grace.) God gave the Law, then "grace came bringing salvation." The four gold posts were stuck into sockets of silver. The five gold posts, also Acacia wood, were stuck into sockets of brass or bronze - copper, more accurately, because it is not an alloy. I don't know if the children of Israel had the ability to effect alloys. Brass, bronze or copper, depending on your translation, is the medal of judgment: the Law.

Silver is a medal of blood or redemption: the Gospel. The children of Israel brought the silver in as redemption money into the sanctuary of the Lord ($\frac{1}{2}$ shekel of silver for every man). "The rich shall bring no more and the poor shall bring no less." (Exodus 30:13). Every man brought a $\frac{1}{2}$ shekel of silver. Every man came with his redemption money. This is pictured by the apostle Paul as "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

In this New Covenant economy everyone can approach God. Yes everyone. Why? Because He has reconciled everything unto Himself through the blood of the

cross of the Lord Jesus. But we, the believing ones, approach God as Father, because of our relationship with His Son. See the difference? We have passed from death into life because we believe. The others, the unbelievers, are still in death, although they can approach God. But they have only $\frac{1}{2}$ the standard of redemption, which is less than the whole. Whole is the standard of God. God's standard is always the whole price of redemption. He has furnished in Himself that whole standard abundantly in Christ Jesus - if we believe. The believers are in Him, the Lord Jesus, in the whole, so God the Father sees us as the Whole. He sees us in Christ Jesus. So we call Him Father. The unbeliever can call Him God, but not Father. We are "crucified with Christ; nevertheless I (we) live; yet not I (we), but Christ lives in me (us)" (Galatians 2:20).

The unbelieving Pharisees said to Jesus, "We have one Father, even God." Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Even because you cannot hear My words. You are of your father the devil, and the lust of your father you will do." (John 8:41-44). It wasn't that they couldn't *understand* His words, they couldn't *hear* His words - "you cannot hear My words." They didn't have "ears to hear." They had a different father and therefore different genetic ears. Believers have God as Father. Unbelievers do not. We are not children of God because of our humanity - our natural birth. We are children of God because of His call, our belief in His Son - our new birth. God deals in judgment according to His standard with the redeemed, as well as the unredeemed, which is discussed in the chapter, "*The Judgment Seat of Christ*".

So we have one entrance equipped with five wooden posts overlaid with gold, stuck into sockets of brass and one entrance furnished with four wooden posts overlaid with gold stuck into sockets of silver. We have, in a picture, the Law - given by Moses - and the redemption in Christ Jesus. "The Law was our schoolmaster to bring us to our teacher, that we might be justified by our faith in Him." We are brought through the Law (brass) to the entrance of redemption (silver) into the place of communion with the Lord (gold) - into the Holiest of Holy Places - the presence of God our Father.

God has furnished us an access into His presence. What is His purpose? To bring us into the Holiest - into Himself. Our Father doesn't want us to remain in the outer court, He wants us to be in His presence of divine revelation. He wants us to mature in Him. So we go to Him for that maturity.

In the outer court we have natural light: natural revelation. In the Holy Place we have artificial light: manufactured (a shadow of The Real to come) revelation. In the Holy of Holiest we have supernatural light: divine revelation. In the outer court we have the light of the sun, which is natural light. God has an abundant testimony in the natural. The natural abundantly testifies to His glory and to His grace. Paul said that

He left us not without witness, in that He gave us rain and blessed our crops. But our Father wants to move us from natural revelation into His artificial revelation, and on into His supernatural revelation.

Artificial Light⁷

The Holy Place, in the Tabernacle of Moses, was the place of the Lampstand - the artificial light. The light of the Lampstand came from the pure beaten olive oil, which is a type of manufactured or artificial light. The Lampstand was the vehicle and the oil gave the light. The Lampstand is a picture of the church of the Lord Jesus and the oil is a picture of the Spirit of God that gives the light. But that's artificial revelation. It is not the real item. The Lord is the real item. God has in these times given us His Holy Word, the Bible - given through His Holy Spirit to His men - but the written Word is artificial; it's not the real thing; Jesus is the real thing. The written Word of God, the Bible is factual, is perfect; it's what we need now; we'll never go wrong by it; we can appropriate all that is right through it, but it is artificial. It isn't the real thing, yet it is intended to take us to the real thing. Isn't it? "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." Where does my path consummate? - the Holiest - the presence of the Lord. His word, given to us by and through His loving Holy Spirit is the lamp that guides us through the path which leads us to Him - to *that* which is Real. We come into the Holiest, into the presence of God, where is His glory; where there is real Light, which is the only real light there ever was. "God said light be! And light was" (Genesis 1). Just that simple. God spoke it and there it was. That light was not the sun. The sun wasn't created yet. That light was the light of the glory of God. The same light He desires to bring us into - the real Light - Himself. And His word is the light which lights our path to His glory.

Paul warns about being taken up with what is temporal and natural. All that is natural is temporal: "Things that are." The things seen are all temporal. Everything that is spiritual is what is eternal - what's going to last - what is real.

The first image most of us envision when the term spiritual is used, is something nebulous or something we can't touch. The scripture tells us that angels are spirit-beings - but they are spirit-beings you can lay your hands on and they can lay their hands on you. Jacob wrestled with one of these spirit-beings all night. The spirit-being broke Jacob's hip. That angel was not so nebulous. One angel killed 185,000 Syrians in one night - substantial, indeed. Defining something as spiritual is not to say that it's a gas or a cloud floating out in the atmosphere with no form or shape. But rather, the spirit sphere is that area in which God dwells. God is spirit. And spirit possesses substance. Just because we don't understand what the spirit world is, we can't write it off as if it doesn't exist. Sometimes our philosophy is: "If I can't see it, lay my hands on it, it ain't so" - which is intellectual dishonesty. Augustine said, "Miracles are not contrary to nature. They are only contrary to the nature we know or understand." God

has a whole sphere I know nothing about. It's good to give God credit for knowing a few things we don't. Deuteronomy 29 declares, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."

Sweet Savor

We have gold posts in each case: the four post and the five post. This is the entrance out of the outer court, out of our babyhood into the beginning of growth; into the area of childhood and eventually into the area of sonship. But we must *go through* before we can *come in*.

"Now thanks be unto God, who always causes us to triumph in Christ." Isn't that lovely. He always causes us to triumph in Christ. "And makes manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are a savor of death unto death; and to the other, the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things. For we are not as many, who corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ." (2 Corinthians 2:14-17) We are a savor of life unto life and of death unto death. The change is not in the savor, the difference is in the person who receives the fragrance of the savor. In those who are being saved it is a savor of life. In those who are perishing it is a savor of death. It is the fragrance of the savor, and the reaction of the one who smells the fragrance - life or death. But where does the savor come from?

We see this first implied in the Altar of Incense - continually a sweet smelling savor before the Father. The Altar of Incense put forth the savor, the burning fragrance from inside the tent through the outer court. Everyone in the outer court could smell the incense which was burning within the veil - they couldn't see the smoke, but they could smell the fragrance.

Incense is more than just what the believer is. Incense is a satisfaction before the Father from the believer. Incense is more than prayer. The Psalmist said, "Let the lifting up of my hands be before You as the offering of the evening incense."

Why do we lift our hands before the Lord? Because He told us to. Paul said, "lift up holy hands," so we lift up holy hands. "I would that men prayed everywhere lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting."⁸ The lifting up of our hands before the Lord is incense. When we lift our hands up before the Lord it comes as a sweet incense to the Father. This may seem strange but, "God has chosen the foolish things of the world, and the things that are despised, and the weak things and the things that are not, to bring to naught the things that are. That no flesh should glory in His presence." (1 Corinthians 1:27-28). Great is the mystery of Godliness: God manifested in the flesh.

We're a strange, eccentric, unusual people in and to the world. We're the square pegs for the round holes - never really fitting in the system. We come from a different economy, with a different inheritance, with a different citizenship. We are altogether different. We are strangers and pilgrims. We confess that here we have no continuing dwelling place. We seek One to come. We are looking, as Abraham looked for a city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God. That's why we don't fit in this world. The astonishing thing is, our Father is going to change everything to suit us. Glory! We are being made to suit His Son, through the Holy Spirit - everything has to suit His Son - and everything that suits His Son, suits us. Everything will be changed to fit the Son. We are in the Son so everything will fit us too! That's the new Heavens and the new earth.

The fragrance of the incense came out of the Tabernacle then, but how does the fragrance come out now? Through His brethren. We have five posts in the inner court of the Tabernacle - in Galatians, the apostle Paul spoke to those who seemed to be pillars in the church. Paul said they added nothing to him. The names of three were: James, Peter and John. To those three he adds himself and Barnabas. Here are five prominent apostles, now this is only an analogy here, but we see five who have responsibility; one group to the circumcision, the other group to the Gentiles; to make known the sweet incense of the fragrance of God. The first five posts are the messengers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

"You gotta get a man lost before you can get him found," so says a friend of mine. So in Acts 9, the first message of the apostle Paul was the affirming from the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. What account did the apostle Paul use to prove this? The five books of Moses, among other things. He took the sockets of brass, the judgment or the justice of God in the scripture, related it to the Son of man and persuaded many from the Word of God that Jesus is indeed the Christ - letting out the fragrance of the Lord. We are not the incense ourselves, but we are letting out the savor. We are the point through which God passes the fragrance of the incense - to those who are being saved it is a savor of life, to those who are perishing it is a savor of death.

As we look at the veil, we see the flesh of the believers. Do you see that? If the second veil in the sanctuary is the flesh of Christ, the torn flesh of the veil in the Temple, then the first veil is that through which everyone comes to find Him. God has chosen to minister through men the truth of the Word of God. We are not that Word. We are not that Incense. We are not that Light. John testifies to that, "There was a man sent from God to bear witness of that light, he was not that light but was sent to bear witness of that light." I take great courage in that. "There was a man sent from God." Not an angel. Just a man. Just another man. It is gratifying to me, as I meet precious people of God, walking in the Spirit, loving the Lord Jesus, to realize they are just men. Just

ordinary people like me. I love that. All of us have clay feet. We all wiggle and tremble occasionally - we may tremble on the Rock, but the Rock will never tremble under us. God has given us a sure foundation in Christ. He is using men to make manifest the savor of His knowledge in every place ; to give us an access; to let the world smell the fragrance.

A couple of verses I really love are, "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip, tetrarch of Itureæa and of the region of Trachonitis and Lysanias, the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priest, the word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness" (Luke 3:1,2). Isn't that great? You have a Caesar, a governor, three kings (a tetrarch - governor over a fourth part of a province - was sometimes called a king), a couple of high priests and where does the word of God go? To John in the wilderness - which always gives me hope. The word of God didn't go to a king, a governor or a high anything, but to His guy in the wilderness. Wonderful. God works in mysterious ways. "For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Corinthians 1:16, 17). Queen Victoria was quoted as saying that she "was glad that it said 'not *many* noble' rather than not any." Glory.

When we are drawn into where the incense is, by the savor of it, we catch it's flavor. Every believer receives the fragrance of the knowledge of the Lord Jesus the same way - from someone else. As we inhale of the fragrance of the Lord given off by a believer, we want to partake of the savor of that fragrance, too. That's why Paul told Timothy to "preach the Word." It is the fragrance of life. People are drawn to the Lord by inhaling the sweet savor of His word. And the fragrance comes from our mouth - "flowing from our belly" - from the believers' flesh - the first veil.

The story was told of Dr. Harry Ironside's first visit to England around the turn of the 20th century. As he was being driven on a buggy tour around the streets of London, his buggy driver made a wrong turn and they found themselves in the middle of one of the grimier, industrial areas of London. As they made their way through the area, the good doctor said he suddenly became conscious of a lovely fragrance in the air - an aroma totally inconsistent with the environment. Right in the middle of these old coal burning industrial factories, suddenly there came through the air a lovely savory fragrance. He said he didn't understand what was happening. It was so out of color. So he asked the fellow driving him, "Whence cometh all this?" The fellow said, "You see all those people coming out of that factory there? Well, that's the perfume factory. The workers are coming out of the factory bearing the fragrance of that which they have been with all day." The savor of the fragrance drew the good Doctor in. The Word of

God is a fragrance that draws. The more we are in the word, the more we bear the fragrance.

God makes manifest the savor of His knowledge even when the vehicle that is manifesting that fragrance is not what it should be; "God always causes us to triumph." The believer is always testifying to the truth of God in whatever he's doing. Always. For Paul said, "We can do nothing against the truth." But only for it. When the believer gets out of the way and disobeys God, the chastening of the Lord comes upon him, yet he still manifests the fragrance. The truth is, God loves righteousness and hates iniquity. God chastens iniquity anywhere He finds it, but we will manifest the truth no matter what - you can be sure of that - one way or another, God sees to it. We become a savor of life unto life unto those who are being saved. And a savor of death unto death unto those who are perishing . . . no matter what.

In the Holy Place we share of the Altar of Incense (The Golden Alter). But now, in this present day, the Altar of Incense is no longer in the Holy Place, because the veil has been torn in two. The Altar of Incense has been brought into the Holy of Holiest, and is now present before the place of the sprinkling of the blood at the mercy seat in Heaven - in the presence of the Father. God has now brought His people through the veil, into the Holiest by the blood of the Lord Jesus, by a new and a living way.

We have passed through the four gold posts into the Holiest, through the veil, which is torn in two. But the posts are still there. The posts have not moved. They are still in their place, the entrance into the Holiest. We must still pass between those posts on our way into the Holiest. The veil is what is open. The torn flesh of the Lord Jesus did that work. So what are the posts for? Why are they still standing at the entrance? May I offer you a suggestion. They are the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teaching pastors given by the Lord Jesus for an entrance into the Holiest, for the equipping, the building of the foundation of His church.

The access that must be obtained into the Holiest, into the presence of God, into the building of His church - that access must be obtained. We obtain that access, that entrance through those four posts. If you remove one of those posts then the complete glory of God is no longer there. If you add an extra post - which does not belong there - then the unabridged glory of God is no longer there. The access we must obtain, must be obtained through the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teaching pastors. Those four equipping ministries are the foundation on which the Church of the Lord Jesus is to be built. "From whom" - from these four ministries - "the whole body" - the church - "fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:16). By their "perfecting, edifying work within the body of Christ" we enter in - without them we will not get there.

It is amazing to me that some of us will go to Ephesians 5 and quote, "Do not be filled with wine where there is excess but be ye filled with the Spirit." Which, is a true statement. But I rarely hear that we are to be filled with the fullness of Christ. From the same book, but hardly spoken. Why? Maybe there is a post missing in the assembly. In chapter 3 of Ephesians, we are told to be "filled with all of the fullness of God." That is where God has us headed - that is where we need to be headed: from the fullness of the Spirit (chapter 5), to the fullness of Christ (chapter 4), to the fullness of God (chapter 3). "That you might be a vessel," Paul prayed, "wholly filled and flooded with God Himself!" Yes, God works backwards - 5, 4, 3 - just as he does with us. First our spirit, then our soul, then our body.

We will never - as a body, singularly or collective - come into the fullness of the measure of the stature of Jesus Christ, . . . we will never grow up in Him, until we are ministered unto by those vital ministries in the body of Christ: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teaching pastors.

True Yokefellow

Some of us have a horrendous idea of what an apostle is. I was taught for years by Godly teachers, dear men and women of God, who all loved the word of God, but believed and taught that an apostle was someone who had seen the Lord Jesus in the flesh after His resurrection. This was their proof of apostleship - which was a neat little package. It was built from the apostle Paul's statement, "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen the Lord Jesus? Am I not free?" But Paul was no more trying to prove he was free by saying that he was an apostle, than he was trying to prove that he was apostle by saying he had the right to lead about a wife who was a sister (1 Corinthians 9:1-6).

Have you ever wondered where Paul got a wife (if in fact he did) - in the Lord - who was also a sister? I have.

Before Paul, "heard a voice saying, Saul, Saul, why persecutes thou Me?" it was said of him that he was a Pharisee of Pharisees, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a long time member - in good standing - of the Sanhedrin. One requirement, for being a member of the Sanhedrin was marriage. According to Jewish law, every member of the Sanhedrin had to be married - the head of a family. So we could conclude that Paul had a wife at this time. When Paul rode off to Damascus, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," he was a married man - or so we can extrapolate.

Most everyone knows the story how the Lord saved Paul on the road to Damascus and for a number of years schooled Paul in His New Covenant economy, establishing Paul as a believer and an apostle. Then we come to 1 Corinthians 7 and Paul - being a Christian for a number of years at this point - is instructing the "unmarried and the widowed," believers in Corinth, "to abide even as I." But I thought Paul was a married member of the Sanhedrin. How can an unmarried person live

(abide) as a married person? That will not reconcile with the rest of the Bible. Either we live as married people by becoming married people or we remain unmarried - in the Lord - and remain unmarried. So what happened from the time Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin until now? Apparently Paul is no longer married. That is why he could say, "abide even as I." But where is his wife? What happened to her? Did she leave him because of his new faith? Did she die? What happened? I don't know and Paul never says. Paul rarely mentions his natural family in any of his letters. If his wife died, maybe he would have said something about that, notwithstanding, apparently Paul is single by the time his letter to the Corinthians is written.

It is interesting that Paul tells the Corinthian married women, "Let not the wife depart from her husband. But and if she departs, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband." Did Paul's Jewish wife leave him? Is that why he wrote, "if the unbelieving" - wife or husband - "depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases." I don't know, but by all accounts Paul, in 1 Corinthians is single.

Now we come to Philippians 4 - four years have passed since the time of 1 Corinthians - "I entreat you also," Paul says, "true yokefellow, help those women who labor with me in the gospel." "True yokefellow?" What's a "true yokefellow?" According to Paul a "yokefellow" (*sunzugos* or *suzugos*) denotes coupling two things together, which we must assume is a wife. And a "true yokefellow" is a believing wife or husband. Paul has already told us not to "be unequally yoked with an unbeliever" - don't marry, as a believer, someone who doesn't believe - "for such shall have trouble in the flesh." "Yoke" and "yoke" are the same words - aren't they? Yes, they are. So now, apparently, four years later, Paul has a true wife, a "true Yokefellow" - a believing - "true" - wife, in the Lord.

I believe that's what happened to Paul. You may disagree if you like. But because of my belief, I understand why he wrote, "Are you loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife. But, and if, you marry, you have not sinned." I believe the apostle Paul was married before his conversion, he was loosed from his original wife and then he remarried - after some few years - a believing woman in the Lord, and according to him, he "has not sinned" by remarriage. This is also why I believe a deacon is to be "the husband of one wife" - at a time. The Greek will not hold to the teaching of, "only one wife," or "one wife only."

If a Godly man divorces and remarries a believing wife and after a time of witness - a time of evidence - shows himself to be a leader in the Lord's church and the Holy Spirit impresses upon the leaders of the church to make that man a deacon or an elder, if they do not make him a deacon or an elder they are the ones disobeying, not the true re-yoked in the Lord brother.

People have tried to condemn believers who divorce and remarry - in the Lord - for years, centuries really - setting them aside, making them feel like useless members in the body - this is a tragedy of the highest regard. I'm not saying that we should "sin that grace might abound," all I'm saying is, "You who are without sin . . ." David said, "In Your sight no one living is righteous" (Psalms 143:2). Since we "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" we need to stop using the Bible as a mechanism for beating the sheep. The word of God is the message of our loving Father to us His children. A message from the One who understands who and what we are. "Your eyes saw my substance being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them" (Psalms 139:16). Our Father has known all the quarks and bumps we carry around since "before the foundation of the world." Our behavior doesn't shock Him. Our sin doesn't jolt or traumatize Him - He knows what we're going to do before we do it. Our Father knows we live in sinful fleshly bodies. Our Father loves us and wants us to live as "freed men," in Christ, not as slaves under the Law. If believers divorce, give them time to heal. Love him. Love her. "Love covers a multitude of sins." And if a brother finds a believing spouse, love him, love her as "members one of another."

If you have divorced and remarried in the Lord - re-yoked with a believing mate, a "true yokefellow" - rejoice! You're in good company.

In the Old economy Moses gave the people of God a means to divorce and a refuge to remarry. "When a man has a wife, and marries her, and it comes to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he has found some uncleanness in her; then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house." We've all heard that, Jesus quoted it, but Moses goes on to say, "If she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife" (Deuteronomy 24:1,2). There was and is marriage, divorce and remarriage with the people of God. Divorce is not the way we as believers should conduct our life, but divorce and remarriage do exist - "His mercy endures for ever."

Wow, have I opened up a can of worms here or what? I'll leave the can open and you, my dear reader can empty it out and examine the contents yourself. Search the scriptures "to see if these things be so." Or you may choose to close the lid and walk away. The choice is yours.

The Wise Master Builder

Paul was an apostle. But why was he an apostle? What qualified Paul, Peter, James, Barnabas and the others to the office of an apostle? What is an apostle? An apostle is someone who is sent by the Spirit of God with a message. That's what an apostle is. That's also a missionary - someone who is sent by the Spirit of God with a message. *Missionary* and *apostle* are translations of the same word. So someone who is

sent by the Spirit of God with a message is characteristic of all apostles and missionaries. Look it up. All the apostles, we see in the Word of God, were sent by the Spirit to minister a message given them by the Lord. All of them.

As I said earlier, I was erroneously taught for years that an apostle was someone who had seen the Lord Jesus in the flesh after His resurrection. If the requirement for Paul to be an apostle was seeing the Lord in the flesh after His resurrection, then there were over 500 who would have qualified. Yet, the Word doesn't say there were 500 apostles, does it? Isn't 500 the number of people who saw the Lord in the flesh after His resurrection? But not all were called as apostles. Some were called as prophets, as evangelists, as teaching pastors, as deacons, as elders, etc. Do you see the point?

An apostle is simply a man called by God - now this is a very special call - sent by the Spirit of God with a message from the Lord Jesus concerning the building of, the equipping of His church. Don't be fooled. Just because a preacher, (though he may be a called, pastoring-teacher of God), standing in the church declaring Jesus is Lord, does not necessarily mean that he is an apostle. Neither is the man who has pinned a name tag to his lapel engraved with "apostle." Apostleship is a special calling, on a specific man, whose concern is for the whole of the body of Christ, not just a portion. An apostle is concerned with the whole of the church of the Lord Jesus. He is concerned with sound teaching, with doctrine, with the Word; for the entire body of his day. That's all.

It's really very simple. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof," which is conviction, "for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). What does an apostle do? He preaches doctrine. He sets down the teaching of the church of Jesus Christ. He lays out the structure. His burden is for the body; that the whole body would see the truth of the Word of God. That is why he's there. If you take him out, you have taken out one of the vital revelations in the body of Christ. "We know in part and we prophesy in part." We need each one of the four posts to build the church. If the apostle is taken out, the vital element of the revelation of truth of the Lord, the element which desires to see the body move on (mature) in Him, in doctrine, has been removed. If the apostle is taken out, the element of the burden of the Lord, which desires to see the body as one in Him is gone. The foundation has completely been ruptured and the structure will not stand together.

Have you ever seen what happens to a great slab of concrete that has been poured without iron reinforcements? When it's exposed to unfavorable weather it cracks - continually. And it will keep cracking, breaking apart until it is completely unusable. It must be replaced with a slab of concrete containing iron reinforcements. God has given reinforcement iron, if you please, to this building He's putting together. He has placed the reinforcement within His foundation to hold it together, permanently. The apostle is one of God's reinforcements - for the whole slab.

Apostles establish, which is their primary service - they minister doctrine. They set forth doctrine. "Wherefore, . . . consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus" (Hebrews 3:1).

A word of caution here: we must be careful of who is speaking to us. Some guy may stand up and proclaim himself an apostle - taking predominance over ministries and people he is incapable to lead. A group of guys in the church may get together and lay hands on some well-respected man (or pastor) who may have participated in great works within the church and proclaim him an apostle. All of a sudden the church is saying that all the new apostle does and says is divinely inspired. He's writing a book, starting a new church, wearing a robe - he's become divinely inspired. He can say and write whatever he considers truth and the people must follow. C. H. Spurgeon wrote, "There are men called by God. There are men called by God and man. And there are men called by men. The latter is laying empty hands on empty heads." Be careful and watch. "Judge righteous judgment."

Apostles are divinely inspired, but not necessarily in writing. There were apostles who didn't write anything in the Bible. Have you ever heard of a guy named Thaddæus? I don't see the first epistle of Thaddæus in the Book. He was an apostle, yet he wrote nothing divinely inspired. The Bible is divinely inspired. So all of the writers and all of the writing in the Book is divinely inspired. Thaddæus was a man sent from God with a message. Yes, he was an apostle, but he was just a man sent by the Spirit of God with a message - a spoken message, not a written message. God also used men who were not apostles to write His Book. Men who were divinely inspired, but not apostles. Was Luke was an apostle? The Bible tells us that Luke was a disciple of Paul, who referred to him as the "beloved" physician, but that's as much as I can find out concerning his call. An apostle did not have to write divinely inspired revelation to be an apostle. All that was required was that he was sent from God by the Holy Spirit to carry a message.

The Prophet

Next comes the prophet. Prophets minister conviction ("reproof" in the Authorized Version). I have not encountered very many prophets in my lifetime. Many true modern day prophets are afraid to purport their gift because of the general opinion floating around the church concerning prophets; it is regrettable that a man can't be honest about the ministry God has given him. Prophets have the ability of hewing, trimming the extraneous.

In contrast, the apostle looks at the whole structure apprising the bedrock. As an apostle, "a wise master builder," Paul said, "I have laid the foundation, but you all better be careful how you build on it." The apostle looks at the blueprint saying, "This is the way the whole structure is supposed to look," but he does not build it.

Many men come together with their varying gifts and begin to correctly put the building together. When they hit a snag, a problem in the building of the church, they call the foreman to come in to help with the snag. The foreman comes in and says, "This stone isn't shaped just right." So the foreman hews the stone into the correct shape, adjusting the entire structure to the proper form. The foreman doesn't throw out the misshaped stone, he reshapes it. The foreman is the prophet.

The prophet comes in when the building is coming together. The apostle has set forth the structure that is to be formed by the stones, and the prophet comes in and hews the individual stones. He corrects. He straightens that which is wanting. He corrects the problems with the individual believers. He ministers to the hearts of the individuals. He straightens out the difficulty, and corrects the misfits. The prophet doesn't throw the misfit stones in the rubbish pile. Rather, He corrects the misfits so they fit. Then all the stones come together correctly.

I have a friend in Austin, Texas who is a prophet. A real one. I must say here that real prophets are not synonymous with the so-called prophets we see on television. A real prophet never craves publicity. Their job is not predicting the future. Although future truths may come in view as the prophet reshapes a stone or corrects an entire structure. Limitation of time and pen would constrain me to write of Joel, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Obadiah, Haggai, Zachariah, Malachi and the list goes on, but all are real prophets, God's prophets and are worthy of mention.

Future forecasting is the job of false prophets - this is made very clear in the Old Testament. False prophets told the people what they wanted to hear. They were paid by someone to forecast the future so they predicted good stuff. If they didn't prophesy good stuff then their sponsor would - in most cases - kill them and hire a new prophet - so, to keep their job they told the people what they wanted to hear.

God's prophets on the other hand correct. Sometimes that correcting takes the form of a great and prosperous word, sometimes it is a correction in the form of a disaster. But the word is always one to edify and build up the body or the individual believer - to fit the stones together properly. "He that prophesies speaks unto edification, exhortation and comfort" (1 Corinthians 14:3).

The Evangelist

A few years ago, I was in a men's meeting with my friend the prophet from Texas. He was addressing a small group concerning some problems in the local assembly. As he spoke I thought, "He's really working me over." He was correcting. And I cried out, "Brother I'm bleeding out here." Another brother, a teaching pastor, said, "Send in the evangelist." Do you know why he said that? Because the evangelist

corrects too, but in a different way. The evangelist comes in to set the whole *activity* straight, not the person - in a happy, joyful manner.

Unfortunately, today we have the evangelist relating to the world. In many churches if we want to get the world saved we get an evangelist. But that's not the job of the evangelist. Evangelists are a gift given to the body of Christ. Not the world. Evangelists are not sent by the Lord to save the world, to preach the Roman road to the lost and dying - Evangelists are given to the body of Christ by the Lord Jesus "for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body." We need to stop obeying "the traditions of our fathers."

All four of these ministries (apostle, prophet, evangelist and pastoring teacher) are for the equipping of the saints - for the doing of the work of the ministry. They are not given to the world. The evangelist is the man who makes the church happy. That's what his name means - the one who preaches good news - and all the people rejoice. When you sit under the ministry of an evangelist, you feel good all the time. Joy runs over - everywhere you go. We're made happy with the good news he preaches. That is the job of the evangelist. Again, all of these offices overlap, but the primary ministry of the evangelist is to give the good news to the body of Christ. He comes in and begins to correct the church in a joyful way and the whole body ministry begins to flow correctly. The building is being set on a sure foundation. Then comes the teaching pastor.

The Teaching Pastor

The teaching pastor does just what the title says, he teaches the Word. He shepherds the sheep. He takes the flock into green pastures of plentiful food. He feeds us on the Word. "*He that is of a merry heart has a continual feast*" (Proverbs 15:15). The teaching pastor gives us our necessary food in the pasture of the Lord. The Word of God is continually sowed by the teaching pastor upon the sure foundation. Then the structure is properly built.

Conclusion

This is how we get in. If we don't come through this route, through these men we won't get in. We will come to a point in our growth where we're hitting our heads against a wall - and we wonder why can't we proceed farther. There's a segment of the foundational ministries missing.

Finally, in that day, when the Holy city, the New Jerusalem, which John saw in the Revelation, is already completed, in the foundation of that city are the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. That city will not stand without the apostolic ministry. It will not stand without prophetic ministry. It will not function without evangelistic ministry. It will never grow without the teaching ministry. But that city is on a sure

foundation and it will stand forever. The Lord has given His church the equipment to lay the foundation and the tools to complete the building of the structure.

There are teaching pastors who are local, Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12. Men gifted by the Holy Spirit with the gift of teaching - given to a localized body of believers - your particular local church.

There are teachers who are body, Ephesians 4. Men who hold the office of teacher, who are given to the entire body of Christ - not just a particular church - by the Lord Himself to instruct the entire church as a whole.

There are prophets who are local, 1 Corinthians 12. There are prophets who are body, Ephesians 4.

These ministries have parallel, but they are not to be confounded.

The apostle establishes. The prophet hews. The evangelist rejoices. The pastor teaches. We then come into the fullness of the measure of the stature of Christ Jesus. Without these men we will not get there.

*“Whoever comes to Me,
and hears My sayings and does them
I will show you whom he is like:
He is like a man building a house,
who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock.
And when the flood arose,
the stream beat vehemently against that house,
and could not shake it,
for it was founded on the rock.*

Luke 6:47-48

¹ **Wexner Center for the Performing Arts** : In November 1989, the Wexner Center for the Arts opened at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. The Wexner Center for the Arts is an art gallery, which emphasizes contemporary and performing art. The gallery was named in honor of Leslie Wexner, the head of the Limited Brands and a major financial donor to the Wexner Center.

Peter Eisenman was the architect who designed the Wexner Center for the Arts. The building, itself, is an art form. Towers symbolize the Armory, which used to occupy the site, while white metal girders

represent the street layout of the OSU campus and the City of Columbus. Unfortunately, the building had some inherent flaws for its original purpose as an art gallery. Skylights allowed too much light into the building, potentially causing damage to artwork in the gallery. The building also contained a poor climate control system. As a result of these and other problems, the Wexner Center for the Arts underwent a major renovation and reopened its doors in 2005. (*Taken from Ohio History Central - and online encyclopedia of Ohio History. <http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org>)

² **Moralistic**, being persons whose behavior conforms to standards of the society in which they live - which can be, and in most instances is opposite to dutiful ethical conduct. Moralists tend to do what is "right in their own eyes."

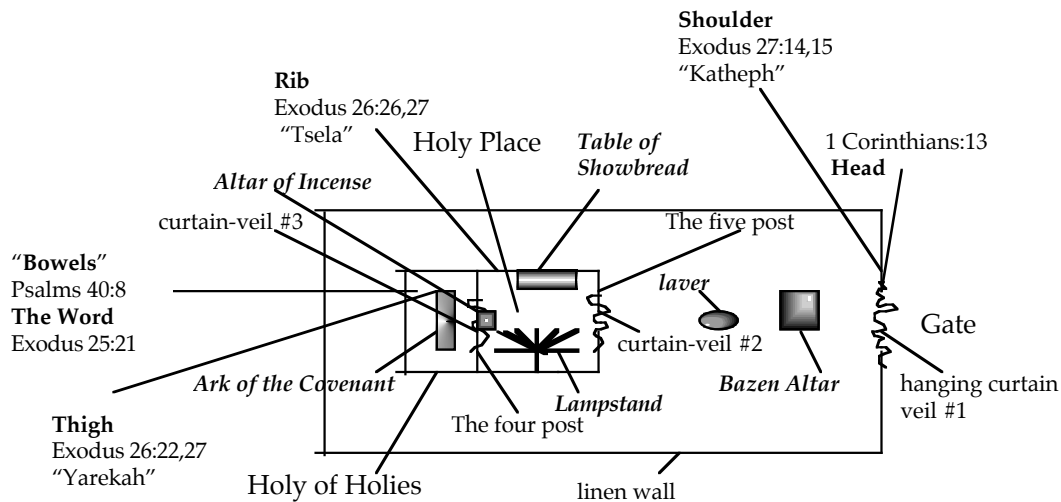
Therapeutic, is defined as a system of psychological theory and therapy that aims to treat mental/spiritual disorders by investigating the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements in the mind and bringing repressed fears and conflicts into the conscious mind. Thus, counteracting or eliminating something, which upsets or offends through solely emotional means.

Deists believe in the existence of a supreme being, specifically of a creator who does not intervene in the universe. The term was used chiefly of an intellectual movement in the 17th and 18th centuries that accepted the existence of a creator on the basis of reason but rejected belief in a supernatural deity who interacts with humankind.

³ *The Religious and Spiritual Eyes of American Teenagers* Smith and Denton (2005): <http://www.ptsem.edu/iym/lectures/2005/Smith-Moralistic.pdf>

⁴ Due to a few typographical errors, the original 1611 King James Bible was re-printed in 1612.

⁵ **The Tabernacle of Moses**: Illustration taken from "Bless His Holy Name: The Worship of God" *A Brief History of Redemption*, Dr. Jay Worth Allen, Dr. Jay & Miss Diana Ministries, Inc., 2nd edition (April 2007).



The Tabernacle of Moses

The whole of the tabernacle speaks of the incarnate Body of the man Christ Jesus.

⁶ See E. W. Bullinger's in-depth study on the meaning and significance of numbers in scripture. A great resource and fascinating work: E. W. Bullinger, *Number In Scripture: Its Supernatural Design and Spiritual Significance* (Kregel Publications, 1967)

FOUR

We have seen that *three* signifies Divine perfection, with special reference to the Trinity . . . Now the number *four* is made up of three and one ($3 + 1 = 4$), and it denotes, therefore, and marks that which follows the revelation of God in the Trinity, namely *His creative works*. . . . Creation is therefore the next thing - the *fourth* thing, and the number *four* always has reference to all that is *created*. It is emphatically the *number of Creation*; of man in his relation to the world as created; while *six* is the number of man in his opposition to and independence of God. It [*four*] is the number of the things that have a beginning, of things that are made, of material things, and matter itself. It is the number of *material completeness*. Hence it is the *world number*, and especially the "city" number.

The *fourth* day saw the *material creation* finished (for on the *fifth* and *sixth* days it was only the *furnishing* and the *peopling* of the earth with living creatures). The sun, moon, and stars completed the work, and they were to give light upon the earth which had been created, and to rule over the day and over the night (Genesis 1:14-19). (pp. 123)

FIVE

Five is four *plus* one ($4 + 1 = 5$). We have had hitherto the three persons of the Godhead, and their manifestation in creation. Now we have a further revelation of a People called out from mankind, redeemed and saved, to walk with creation. Hence, Redemption follows creation. Inasmuch as in consequence of the fall of man, creation came under the curse and was "made subject to vanity," therefore man and creation must be redeemed.

Thus we have:

1. Father.
2. Son.
3. Spirit.
4. Creation.
5. Redemption.

These are the five great mysteries, and *five* is therefore the number of GRACE.

If *four* is the number of the world, then it represents man's weakness, and helplessness, and vanity, as we have seen.

But *four plus* one ($4 + 1 = 5$) is significant of Divine strength added to and made perfect in that weakness; of omnipotence combined with the impotence of earth; of Divine favour uninfluenced and invincible. (*Ibid.* pp. 135)

⁷ See chapter two, *Forgive Me For Being Dogmatic* under the heading "The Word of God".

⁸ Exodus 17:11; Psalms 28:2; 63:4; 141:2; 143:6; 1 Timothy 2:8

chapter four
Men & Husbands

*“Husbands, love your wives,
even as Christ also loved the church;
and gave Himself for it.”*
Ephesians 5:25

If, in the words of Elihu, I would offer “flattering titles to men,”¹ the Lord would soon “take me away.” There is a vast difference between flattering words and Godly edification. Words of adulation puff up. Words of edification build up. So I will endeavor here, to offer words of edification for the building up of the saints of God.

There are women, to be sure, who express all the graces a man would cherish in a wife. And there are men who express all the humility a woman would esteem in a husband. “A good man obtains favor of the Lord . . . A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband” (Proverbs 12:2,4). The husband is esteemed. Honored. The wife is cherished. Loved. Two completely different genders. Two completely different responses. Two completely different endowments. Two completely different birthrights.

God created men and women to be distinct. In their distinctness, their responses to one another are manifested in unambiguous synergy. The interaction of a husband and a wife - the two having become one flesh - two agents or forces orchestrated in one cohesion - the effect of the one flesh - is greater than the sum of their individual effect. “If any two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them” (Matthew 18:19). The word, “agree,” (*sumphoneo* - to sound together) is a musical term indicating two different notes or instruments played together, at the same time, creating one harmonious sound. The husband is the medley, the wife is the harmony - in the Lord. Or as Paul writes, “Nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God” (1 Corinthians 11:11,12). When a believing husband and a believing wife come together in singularness (singularity) of heart, harmony of spirit and concert of soul - they agree together as one - they are in harmony - the joined sound of their individual instruments come up before the Throne of Grace as sweet harmony unto the Lord - their united spiritual cords are music to the ears of the Father. “Oh, come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.”

The husband and wife (not man and woman) are in a singular supernatural state, wrought by the mystical action of God, and no amount of human striving or coming together in the flesh before marriage can produce this state. There is a transportation

into the supernatural life - the example of Christ and the church - as the result of an outpouring of unmerited grace so that human and divine meet in a union of love. It is the marriage which is the holy union, not the coming together of the flesh. Jerome said, "He who desires to eat the kernel must first break open the shell." "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and be joined unto his wife (*not his girlfriend*) and the two shall be one flesh."²

So we have the husband and the wife, in the Lord. Since my expertise leans more to the former, the husband's roll in loving his wife will be the main focus of this and the chapter on *Women & Wives*.

*The Old Testament scripture is a record, in snapshot,
of what God is doing in New Testament redemption.*

Paul said, "For whatever things were written in earlier times were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope" (Romans 15:4); "Now all these things happened unto them for examples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (1 Corinthians 10:11). God was illustrating - by the history of the people of God (Israel) in the Old Testament - what He was going to do in the New.

When God created man (*Adam*), He sat him in the garden and He gave to him a woman (*Eve*). He intended by that relationship - between that man and that woman - to provide a physical portrayal of the relationship which Jesus Christ would have with His church. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church; and gave Himself for it."

One of the most wonderful allegorical books in all of the Old Testament scripture is the Song of Solomon or also known as: *the Song of Songs*. In it God reveals two characterizations: the essentials which the husband (*Solomon*) is doing for his wife (*the Shulamite*), so also is Christ (*the Bridegroom*) doing for His church (*the Bride*). In chapter 2 of the Song of Solomon we hear the Shulamite speak, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes." Here the relationship between Christ and the church is addressed in allegorical terms - showing the tenderness of that relationship and the little issues which enter into that relationship, frustrating that relationship. The Lord makes a special point of this relationship - the family of God's relationship between the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and his wife, Israel - Christ Jesus and His church - the entire household of God - in Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

The Household

The term Father, is no new bulletin to us by any means. But I am deeply concerned that we, in this day do not understand fatherhood as we should understand

fatherhood. Simply because we do not encounter many fathers in this day. We are witness to a great many sires, but we do not see an abundance of fathers.

God is called Father. Why? Because that is His nature. Jesus said, "He that has seen Me has seen the Father" (not God) "for no man has seen God at any time but the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has manifested Him." Jesus came to express the nature and character of God as Father. The reason He is called Father? Because fathers love families. And fathers therefore want children in their family upon whom they might express their love. So God, the Father looked out over the nations, and out of all the nations He took to Himself a wife: Israel. And through that wife, Israel, He begot a Son, the Lord Jesus. He is presently, out of all nations and tongues, taking a bride for His name.

"Now, therefore, you are no more strangers and sojourners, but fellow citizens with the household of God . . . Wherefore, I desire that you faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory, for this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Ephesians 3:13-15, 19).

God, as Father, is begetting for Himself a household. A family. The household addresses the greater part - which includes the wife, Israel, and the bride, His church. "The whole family which is in heaven and in earth": the heavenly family is His church and the earthly family is Israel. So what God had performed so dramatically - as far as personal relationship is concerned - in setting aside the husband and wife relationship - is a graphic example of what He yearns to do in relationship with His people. "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

"Wherefore, be not unwise but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, in which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit" - here is evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit - "Speaking to yourselves, in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody" - not just in the Church house - "in your heart to the Lord. Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:17-21). Give place to one another "in the fear of God." "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord" (V 22). Do you see His point? "As unto the Lord."

When Diana submits herself to me, she is not submitting herself just to Jay, but rather, "as unto the Lord." She is acknowledging another presence, another authority which is over me. I am responsible to that authority. She is responsible to that authority through me. As she submits to me she can pray very quietly, "Lord, You get him." And at times she does say those words to the Lord. I know she does, because at

times He does “get me.” Submission does not necessarily suggest inferiority. A. W. Pink remarked that, “it is no insult to the rose to say that it is weaker than the bush that bears it.”

A few years ago I worked as senior creative director for a large ad agency. I had a number of very creative people working under me. Twenty or so very talented and very capable people. Some were more talented in their particular field than I, but they all worked for me. They did what I wanted them to do in most cases. Were they inferior to me? No, but they were submitted to me, and the job got done. Because of order. Because they recognized the authority over me, they submitted to that authority through me.

Submission does not necessarily suggest inferiority. But submission is the order of God. And it works. Submission is essential for our on-going in peace. God has established an order. His order is established, if for no other reason, because Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, which is His body, “the fullness of Him that fills all in all.” And God blesses that - Christ and the church, husband and wife relationship - through His order. And the job gets done. I do not have the space here to elaborate on all the aspects of this subject. But allow me to reiterate: Submission does not necessarily suggest inferiority. But submission is the order of God. And it works.

Some of you ladies may be saying, “My husband isn’t spiritual.” I hear that a lot. I always wonder why he’s not spiritual. Maybe his example is warped. Perhaps what he’s been looking at for so long doesn’t make him want to be spiritual. Maybe, for the longest time he’s been looking at religion and not Spirit.

Religion will kill you, and everyone around you, every time. Religion is a stench in the nostrils of God. God has no interest in religion. Religion hung His Son on the tree. Religion is not the order of God. Religion is the order of man. The apostle Paul announced, “be not drunk with wine” - don’t be inebriated with anything that is not of the Spirit of God - “be filled with the Spirit.” Don’t be drunk with that “feverish restlessness of the flesh by which so many are intoxicated religiously.” Arthur W. Pink, *Practical Christianity*³. Religion is not the order of God.

Fruit of the vine.

I must digress for a moment here.

The word Paul used for *wine* - “be not drunk with *wine*” - is the same word used in John 2 - the occasion when Jesus turned water into *wine*. The word is *oinos*. The *wine* at the wedding was just as fermented as the *wine* in Paul’s illustration. Mankind didn’t inherit the ability to stop the “fruit of the vine” from fermenting until Dr. Welch figured out how to do it sometime in the late 1800’s. Dr. Welch gave us our first taste of real grape juice; the church hasn’t been the same since.

There is no indication in either the Old or New Testaments of the Lord forbidding intoxicating liquid to be drunk by His people. Just the opposite is found in Deuteronomy 14, where the Lord advises the Israelite who may live a great distance from the place of sacrifice that, "if the way be too long for you, so that you are not able to carry it (the sacrifice) or the place be too far from you, which the Lord your God shall choose to set His name there, when the Lord your God has blessed you, then shall you turn it (what would have been sacrificed) into money, and bind up the money in your hand, and shall go unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose. And you shall bestow (use) that money for whatsoever your soul desires: for oxen, or for sheep, or for *wine*, or for *strong drink*, or for whatsoever your soul desires; and you shall eat there before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice, you, and your household" (Deuteronomy 14:24-26). Even if the wine wasn't fermented, or mixed with water (as some maintain), certainly the strong drink was fermented. Although the Lord approves the drinking of wine or strong drink, He draws a hard line between thirst and drunkenness. The rebellious man says, "I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst" (Deuteronomy 29:19). It's okay to drink wine, but not to the point of drunkenness. Soberness is the key. Yet, soberness is not necessarily symbolized by abstinence.

End of digression.

The Order of God

Be "filled with the Spirit." Be "sober." Soberness is the characteristic which should identify the people of God. "Be strong in the Lord" - in faith, in hope, in love, in grace. "To be strong in grace is to be weak in sin." (Pink, *Ibid.*) - faith, hope, love, grace, soberness, etc. - is the order of God in the life of the redeemed.

Through the order of God we are submitted to the ways of God. God, our Father has set down that order: submission. Submission then addresses itself to the order of God, and He promises to bless through that order. God gave that characteristic order to provide peace and security. When that order is frustrated, peace leaves and chaos has an opportunity to enter.

The order of God in marriage provides through the husband, a "shield", an umbrella of peace and security for the wife. The husband is responsible to provide that protection for his wife - under which she might come and dwell - and that is the place of peace and security for that woman, the husband's wife, not the beau's fiancée. As the wife moves under her husband's protection, when the "fiery darts" of the enemy come against her personally and the family as a whole, it is the husband's protection - God's provision to care for the needs of that wife and that family - that she nestles herself underneath and is safe and secure.

The illustrations the Holy Spirit developed here: the “fiery darts” (*puuroo belos* - the fiery darts of the evil one) and “the shield of faith”- are descriptions of ancient warfare. Archers, in years past, dipped their darts or arrows in tar, which when lit and propelled skywards, blinded their foes to the oncoming army. They also burned a good path for the shooter. But, if the men being fired upon, seeing the glow of approaching fiery darts, bowed their heads and held their “shields” above their heads, they could avoid any harm from those flaming tar-dipped darts. Thus, Satan is constantly seeking to prevent our looking upward or rather seeking upwards. His weapons are “fiery darts.” We counter with “lifting our eyes” and raising our “shield of faith.”

“In the morning will I direct my prayer unto You, and will look up . . . I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from where comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth . . . Unto You lift I up mine eyes, O You who dwell in the heavens” (Psalm 5:3; 121:1,2: 123:1). Never fault the Biblical authors for using terms like, “I will lift up mine eyes,” when speaking of heaven or the Lord. Unless, in turn, you also fault scientists for declaring, “The sun rises in the East.”

A friend of mine, an impassioned evangelist from Canada, never bows his head when he prays. Because, “My God,” he says, “does not live in the bowels of the earth.” I like that.

“The Lord is our shield” (Psalms 91:4). The husband is the shield for his wife. The order of God provides that shield of peace and security for the wife. It is the design of the husband to cover his wife in such a manner so that the husband is willing to be responsible for his wife’s booboos. This is the same provision the Lord provides: He is the cover for and is responsible for us, His bride and her transgressions. If Diana overdraws our checking account, I don’t want the bank speaking to her. I want the bank speaking to me. I am responsible for our family’s misdeeds, not Diana.

Jesus is the Head and we are His body. Jesus is the bulwark - the wall or embankment raised as a defensive fortification, a rampart. We are His body, His bride. We are cohabitant within His walls of protection, because of His headship. And within His walls of protection, there is peace and security.

If a man breaks a jewelry store window with a brick, there is a feeling within the police department that he may not have had in mind the best of intentions. So they arrest the man. The brick is secured as evidence. The man is booked for intent, or for whatever the police sees fit. The man is brought before the judge. Does the judge say, “All right brick, why did you do that?” No. The judge is not interested in the brick, except as evidence. Neither does the judge say, “Sir, put your hand upon the bench. Now hand, why did you throw that brick?” No. The hand is not responsible for the crime. The hand is only a member of the body, not the facilitator of the act. The man, himself, is responsible for the crime.

The man is responsible for the crimes of his entire body - be they crimes committed by his hands, feet, eyes, etc. The man is entirely responsible for the sins of his body. We are members of the Lord's body. The Father is not addressing Himself to the members of the body, He is addressing Himself to the Son. The Son has become the covering for the members of His body - and for what the members of His body have done. He has expropriated our sins in His own body on the tree. He has taken the responsibility for our sins and our booboos. He has taken our sins upon Himself; "And you, that were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now has He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in His sight" (Colossians 1:21,22). The Lord Jesus has taken on the sins of His body, the Church.

The Husband, in like manner, needs to represent to his wife, in such an expression, that she will know, no matter what she has done, she can snuggle up underneath her husband's umbrella and he'll take the blame. No matter the infraction. There is the place of peace and security for the wife. If the husband has not conveyed that he is his wife's immunity, he has left her in a place of insecurity and fear. And we wonder why wives don't want to submit to their husbands. Maybe the husband needs to give his wife something to submit to. The wife needs a responsible individual who has manifested that he cares for the needs of her and her alone. And come hell or high water, he will do whatever is necessary, to sustain life and limb, to clothe, feed and to meet the emotional needs of his wife. Then she'll submit to him without someone telling her to submit.

If I overdraw the checking account, I want the bank speaking to me, not Diana. My wife is not responsible for my wrong doings. And let me say here, at no time, should the wife usurp the authority of her husband - taking on a responsibility that is not hers.⁴ Diana may feel the need to remove my dilemma, thinking she is helping me by fixing me, but my transgressions and misconducts are mine to correct, not Diana's!

A lady came up to me one day and said, "I'm having the hardest time with my husband. He doesn't know the Lord and he doesn't want to do anything that's required of him to do as a husband. I'm having a hard time accommodating him and following his leading."

I said, "Hold it! It doesn't matter what kind of man he is; God is not qualifying what kind of man he needs to be, the order of God still stands, whether he is an unregenerated man or not, you submit to him and God will bless you through him."

So she said, "All right, I'll try that."

She came back a few weeks later and said, "I've done what you told me to do and he's still not saved."

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. "You mean to tell me you submitted to him just so God would save him?"

She said, "Isn't that what I was supposed to do?"

I said, "No! You submit to him because it's right. Not because some good thing will come out of it."

Most of us are candy right. We do what is right expecting something good to come out of our right doing, when we should do what's right simply because it's the right thing to do. Simply because it's the word of the Lord. It's the order of God. And within that order is the manner in which God will bless.

I saw the lady in a shopping mall sometime later. "Jay, I want to share something with you, remember when . . ." She referred me to the two conversations we had months before. ". . . well, I submitted to my husband and I want you to know God has saved him."

"Glory to God!" I said, "Isn't it wonderful to know you were walking in the order of God even before He saved your husband? God was blessing you even before he saved your husband, because you were willing to walk in the order of God."

"Yes, it is wonderful." She said smiling.

The disorder and the chaos which we experience in many of our relationships would perhaps be clarified if we would stop and ask ourselves, "Am I out of the order of God?" Any frustration or rupture of divine order will have ripples, like a rock thrown into a calm pond. It doesn't matter if it's comfortable or not, God's order stands. There are many believers walking in the economy and blessings of God, who are not comfortable⁵.

A Great Mystery
(Ephesians 5:22-33)

"Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and He is the savior of the body." Did you catch that? The husband is the savior of his wife's body. "Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." Yes, wives that says everything. "Husbands love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it." (More literally: "Gave Himself up for it.") "That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves His wife loves himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord

the church; for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.” (The husband and wife relationship; “bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh.”) “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife, see that she reverence” - that is, have a divine respect for - “her husband.” “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” (Ephesians 5:22-33).

I have noticed, in my few years of serving the Lord, how easy it is for us to walk spiritually as long as God agrees with us. But when God doesn't agree with us, what happens? (I so appreciate the words of President Lincoln, after one of his generals questioned him, “Mr. President, don't you believe God is on our side?” Lincoln replied, “What I'm more concerned with, is whether I'm on God's side.”) It's easy for us to agree with the Lord when He is saying the same thing we're saying. But when we begin saying what He is not saying . . . look out!

We have in the Church today, a full-blown Christian women's liberation movement, not the National Origination of Women, but a Christian women's movement working today. A large strategic group hungering to frustrate the purposes and the order of God and confound the blessings of God which rest upon womanhood. Paul insisted a “woman should have covering” - authority - “on her head because of the angels” (1 Corinthians 11:10). Paul here is taking us back to Genesis, when “the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all whom they chose” (Genesis 6:2). There was a spiritual intrusion upon humanity, specifically upon womanhood before the flood. That same spiritual intrusion wants to take place, in the same way, and in the same manner today. Why? Because they (before the flood) - just like today - had a women's liberation movement. The women's movement before the flood gave occasion for the rending away of the covering of the woman - the order of God in the husband and wife relationship - which allowed the spiritual world to come in and intrude upon womanhood. Satan's chief attack is always against women. “Husbands love your wives.” Be a covering. A “shield.” Be the savior of your wife's body.

The Garden

“Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God made. And he said to the woman, Yea, has God said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.”

God didn't say that they shouldn't *touch the tree*. He told them not to “eat of it” but nothing was mentioned about touching the tree. This was the beginning of Eve's

deception. She added to the command and misinterpreted the requirement - which is why it is so important for us to hide the word of the Lord in our hearts so we will not sin against Him (Psalm 119:11). But at this point, the old Serpent had her right where he wanted!

“And the serpent said to the woman, You shall not surely die for God does know that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as God, knowing good and evil.” This was such a seductive challenge. Neither Eve nor Adam knew anything about death. So what was there to be afraid of?

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat” (Genesis 3:1-6 AV).

I won't debate Adam's location in the garden before Eve ate that fruit. The two may have been holding hands by the tree, I don't know or care. Adam, as far as we know may have been just to the right of Eve doing hand-stands with their pet monkey. The scriptures give little or no indication of Adam's location. I've read a variety of debates and teachings concerning poor Adam's location. “If Adam had been there with Eve,” say some, “then the sin would not have happened.” My question is: How many wives want their husband hanging over them, watching their every move, standing right beside them every place they go? I like to give Diana a little liberty to go outside without me. I like to give Diana a little liberty to buy something without requiring me to okay the purchase - because I trust my wife. She can go and consider a field and buy it if she wants (Proverbs 29). I have absolute confidence that she will not in any way frustrate the condition of our household. If she, out of a sincere heart, makes a bad mistake, it is my problem, not hers. Some have said, “Adam was way off on the other side of the garden.” I don't know if he was off on one side or the other. My goodness, people who care for small children know that you can turn your back for a second and one of the children may have fallen off a cliff. Adam and Eve may have been standing together, Adam may have looked behind him for a second to see what just fell off the banana tree and then BOOM! Conversations in the spirit world happen very fast! The next thing Adam hears is, “Hey that's not bad. You're right, that tasted pretty good! O, my goodness we're naked!”

Imagine the horror on Adam's face. If that had been me in the garden, I would have said, “You silly woman! Do you realize what you have done? God said in the day you 'eat thereof you shall surely die!' Now God is going to get rid of you.” Then, just like Adam, I would have eaten the fruit too.

Paul tells us in Romans 13 that Adam, the first, is a figure of Adam, the last. What was done in the first man, Adam, is a prototype for us to understand something

better of what was done in Jesus Christ, “the Last Adam.” God gave that woman to the first Adam. He created that woman out of the bone from Adam’s side. Listen to the words of Matthew Henry concerning Eve, “God took the bone to create that woman not from that man’s head so that he would rule over her; not from that man’s feet so that he would walk on her; but from the man’s side so that he might protect her and near his heart so that he might love her.” What God did on that occasion in the garden was to point us towards the Church which was going to come out of the side of the Lord Jesus as He hung on Calvary’s tree. God opened up the side of the first Adam and took out his wife. He opened up the side of the Lord Jesus and He took out His bride. “And there came forth blood and water.”

We did not fall in the woman, we fell in the man. Husbands register that well. We did not fall in the woman. It’s not Eve’s fault that we find ourselves in this sinful state. It’s Adam’s fault. “The man was not deceived.” Read 1 Timothy 2. Meditate on that chapter for a while. “The man was not deceived.” Adam knew exactly what he was doing. “The woman,” Paul said, “was deceived.” It was “the sin of Adam.” Not the sin of Eve.

So what do we have illustrated here? What is God saying in this narration - for us in the future?

Adam didn’t know anything at all with respect to the mercy of God. He didn’t need to know the mercy of God. Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve. Neither did Adam know anything concerning the grace of God. For Adam was already enjoying the fullness of the benefits and blessings of walking with the Lord. Grace is God giving to us what we do not deserve. Adam didn’t need to know the mercy or the grace of God. But Adam did need to know the love of God. So God loved Adam, and showed Adam His love continually.

Adam knew the love of God, and loved his wife with the same love God loved him. The love of God was the only love Adam knew; the only love Adam had ever been shown was the love God had for him. So Adam gave that same love to Eve. A love not fouled by sin, not selfish love, totally self-giving love. Are you hearing this husbands? It was totally a self-giving love. It was a love which would have given anything to and for that woman. It was a love which would have done anything for that woman. Now, all of a sudden, Adam is on the verge of losing the object of his love.

I was indoctrinated with a teaching which presupposes that God would have taken Eve out of the way - if Adam had not shared the fruit - and would have given Adam another woman. Maybe. But, maybe not. Let’s explore it from another perspective. If you come across an adolescent boy who has just lost his first sweetheart and say to him, “Son, there’s a lot of other fish in the sea.” He’s not interested. He

doesn't want another fish. He wants *that* fish. Not another one. Billy Graham said, "Puppy love is real to the puppy." Adam didn't want another woman. He wanted Eve. Adam's love towards that one woman was perfect. So he was set with a great dilemma. He could either refrain from the forbidden fruit and remain perfect, and alone in the garden, or, he could do the only alternative, eat the fruit and die with her - counting on God finding a way out. That is why I stated earlier that I would have eaten the fruit, too. I don't want another woman. I want Diana. My woman. The woman God gave me. No matter what she's done. So Adam ate the fruit and died with his woman.

Someone might say that that excuses Adam in the fall. I'm not interested in that aspect here. I understand something of the fall and what the fall brought upon us - I'm one of us. What I mean to address is the care of that man for that woman whom God had given him. Ephesians 5 addresses itself to the same circumstance: the circumstance which the Lord Jesus found Himself in. That is to say, "He loved the church and gave Himself up for it." For He "being in the form of God thought it not a thing to be held on to, to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:6-8). Why? Because "He loved the church and gave Himself up for it." He wanted to be with His bride no matter what she had done. Christ loved the Church.

Nowhere in the scripture do we read that God loves the church. And nowhere in the scripture do we read that Christ loves the world. But rather, God loved the world "and gave His only begotten Son;" Christ loved the church, "and gave Himself up for it."

"Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone; but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit" (John 12:24). May I suggest to you that Jesus Christ did precisely what the first Adam did. He saw the plight of His bride - the church - that He would lose His bride and He didn't want to lose His bride. He would rather die with His bride and count on the Father to find a way out - because He knew the love of the Father.

One of the great hindrances many of us face is that we do not believe the Lord loves us. If you believe the Lord loves you, then you will have a dependence on that love. Husbands, maybe your wife doesn't understand that you love her. Maybe she can't depend on your love. Maybe she's not secure in that love. Adam was secure in the love of the Father. Someone may say, "I can't believe that Adam would have thought something like that." Whether it's doctrinally correct or not, with or without chapter and verse underlined . . . it worked! God found a way out, He redeemed both of them. When the "grain of wheat died it brought forth much fruit." Adam the first,

became a pattern for Adam the last. "Husbands love your wives." Because you are sharing in a great mystery. The mystery of Christ and the church.

A Blood Covenant

When the two come together (Christ and the church, the husband and his wife) there is a dual commitment between them. Jesus Christ has consummated a blood covenant on Calvary's tree and there is a commitment of Him to us in that blood covenant. As we believe in that blood covenant, and we embrace that truth, God imparts righteousness to us and He seals us by the power of the Holy Spirit - promised to the day of redemption as the bride of Christ. This is a marvelous event.

Have you ever considered what it means to be the bride of Christ? It's a marvelous estate. We are involved in a promise, a covenant, with an oath in that covenant. Jesus Himself, *sevens* Himself, in the seven I AM's in John's Gospel: He *sevens* Himself to us, His bride.

"I am the bread of life. I am the way the truth and the life. I am the resurrection and the life," etc. Seven of those I AM's. That's what the word *oath* means in Hebrew - *Shabuwah* - to seven oneself. Ruth *sevens* herself to Naomi. She repeated seven actions, thus providing the oath of a covenant. That's what God did in the seven I AM's. He gave an oath. He *sevens* us. Paul gave seven unities: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism," - "For by one Spirit were we all baptized." Paul is not referring only to water here - "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:4-6). There are many sevens in the scriptures. Many *shabuwah*'s. "Search the scriptures," to see "whether these things be so."

Nowadays, we have couples who live together and never wed. "What's the point of getting married?" They say, "Marriage is an antiquated ritual." The point is this: When a believing couple - any couple, really - come together in marriage, they make a commitment - with their vows, their oaths - to each other - the words of engagement, which come from their mouth - an oath of a covenant, which God acknowledges in them. When they speak their oath, they make a promise to each other and to witnesses in the presence of God with regard to their personal relationship - and God seals their union in the heavens. All of which involves much more than sexual intercourse.

Any two people can live together - without the pledge of marriage if they choose, but there is no oath in that type of liaison - there is no commitment, no declaration, no *shabuwah*; so the couple can split, if they choose, and go their separate ways. Either participant can simply choose to woo another person and submit themselves sexually to another person, over and over, again and again and again, without any formal outward

recourse because there was no vow, no oath, no marriage, no shabuwah. "Marriage is honorable unto all and the bed undefiled. But whore-mongers and adulterers God will judge." There is an enormous spotlight fixed on sexually transmitted diseases today. God is visiting plagues on the nations. That's right. Let them have their fun, and thereby reap their benefits.

Two Husbands

When the Lord Jesus arrived on the scene, John the baptizer seeing Him, pointed and cried aloud, "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." This was a legendary announcement to the people of Israel. As the promise extended to us, the Gentiles, in subsequent time, the Apostle Paul said, "We who were without hope and without God in the world" - this is the most despairing passage in all of the Holy Writ: "Without hope and without God in the world" - "But God," the passage goes on to say, "What the Law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh. But God who is rich in mercy, for which He loved us, while we were dead in sin, has quickened us together in Christ, for by grace you are saved." We, who were without hope, now, in Him have hope. If you are without hope, you are most likely without Him.

Elijah and Elisha, give attitude first to the Old Covenant and second to the New. As Elijah emphasizes the message of the Old Covenant, so Elisha emphasizes the message of the New Covenant we have in Christ Jesus. As the ministry of Elijah was marked by judgment after judgment, so the ministry of Elisha was marked by blessing after blessing. As Elijah, in the course of his ministry worked eight miracles, so Elisha, in the course of his ministry worked sixteen miracles - addressing the Lord Jesus' mandate, "Greater works than these shall you do, because I go to My Father."

One of the most profound lessons we are given in the New Covenant economy is that "we who were alienated by wicked works, strangers from the commonwealth of Israel, and from the covenants of promise, are made near by the blood of Christ." Which is much more than just being brought into a relationship with God through justification by faith; we have been orchestrated into the whole of the family of God in a most unique way - in that we, the church of the Lord Jesus are referred to in the New Testament as "the virgin bride of Christ" - we have been espoused to Him; we are now anticipating that day when the wedding will take place in the Heavens - the whole of the family of God being gathered about - and we will be joined to Him in marriage - "For He is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, to make in Himself of two, one new man, so making peace" (Ephesians 2).

Thus faith and hope work together - "the substance and evidence of things not seen." We are no longer without hope in Him.

“Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and He is the savior of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for her.” Nowhere in the New Testament record (“I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder”) are we ever decreed to love God. I know the Lord said, “This is the first and greatest commandment, you shall love the Lord . . .” but that’s not New Covenant. That’s not New Testament. We are not in the New Testament until we arrive on this side of the torn veil and His blood shed on the cross.

“And Jesus handed the disciples that cup and He said, This is the blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for you.” So we did not therefore enter into that New Covenant until such time as the blood of Jesus, God’s only begotten Son, was shed on the tree and the veil of the temple was rent in two, from the top to the bottom and free access was made into the presence of the Lord of glory by that same blood, therefore “we come boldly into the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need”(Hebrews 4:16). What was in the Old Covenant a mercy seat, is now, in the New Covenant, become the throne of grace.

So what does the New Testament say? God loves us! Yes? “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the satisfaction for our sins” (1 John 4:10). Love can be known only from the actions it prompts. God’s love is an exercise of His Divine will in His deliberate choice, made without any assignable cause, save that which lies in the nature of God Himself.

Nowhere in the New Testament is a wife ever charged to love her husband. Be encouraged wives. Wives are told to have an affection for their husband (Titus). The word, *affection* is translated *love*, but in fact it is the word *phileo* (tender affection) and not *agapao* (which expresses deep and constant love and interest of another, producing and fostering a reverential love in them towards the giver of that love; it seeks the good of another). So wives are to be affectionate to their own husbands.

But the scriptures do charge: “the husband is to love his wife even as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.” So husbands, if we will love our wives, we will not need to worry about them loving us back. For love begets love. “So the love of God,” Paul said, “is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who is given unto us.” We love God because He first loved us. Our wives love us because we first loved them. For love begets love. Love seeks the welfare of another.

The Lord gave Himself to the church “that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word; that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that she should be holy and without blemish. So ought husbands to love their wives as their own bodies. He that

loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the church; for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and the two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” This is our anticipation. This is our great hope. The glorious appearing of our great God and savior; we look for the day in which we are going to be joined to our heavenly Bridegroom⁶.

The Marriage

The consummation of the marriage of Christ and the church as His bride is given according the oriental pattern of marriage⁷ in three stages:

1. The betrothal: legally binding the believer to the Lord; we are saved.
2. The coming of the Bridegroom for His bride: catching up of the Church.
3. The marriage supper of the Lamb.

“And he said unto me, Write, Blessed are they who are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said unto me, These are the true sayings of God” (Revelation 19:9).

Law and Grace

“Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha” (2 Kings 4:1). When an Israelite under the Old Economy had a spiritual or physical need, or simply a question, they went to the prophet: the man of God. Now, in the New Economy, God has spoken to us, by and through, His Son. “God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son” (Hebrews 1:1,2). “*In Son,*” is the literal phrase there. That is to say, in the Person of the Lord Jesus: “the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.” But this certain woman, having no other recourse in the Old Covenant, calls to the man of God.

It is interesting to note that, whereas, in the previous chapter, the prophet Elisha had been dealing with the affairs of government, but here, in chapter 4 of 2 Kings, the prophet leaves the affairs of the governments of this world and focuses entirely on this one, widow woman. Which should encourage us. “Our Father who is in heaven is touched with the feelings of our infirmities.”

“Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, your servant, my husband, is dead, and you know that your servant did fear the Lord; and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be slaves. And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for you? Tell me, what

you have in the house? And she said, Your handmaid has not anything in the house, except a pot of oil. Then he said, Go, borrow vessels from all your neighbors, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. And when you are come in, you shall shut the door upon you and upon your sons, and shall pour out into all those vessels, and you shall set aside that which is full. So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out. And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stopped flowing. Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go sell the oil, and pay your debt, and live you and your sons on the rest” (2 Kings 4:1-7).

Spiritual Adultery

Before the Lord Jesus redeemed us by His blood, and we came by faith to Him, our Bridegroom, we had another husband. Yes we did. We had a husband which was very different from the one we have now. “Know you not, brethren (for I speak to them that know the law), how that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?” Paul is addressing the old husband here. The Law. He then moves to the analogy: “For the woman who has an husband is bound by the law as long as he lives; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So, then if, while her husband lives, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband be dead, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man” (Romans 7:1-3). To incorporate the law (our old, dead husband) into our walk - now that we have been espoused to the Person of the Lord Jesus - is equally adultery: spiritual adultery.

We usually think of spiritual adultery as unfaithfulness to the Lord in the sense of moving into some kind of sin - “touch not, taste not, handle not.” But spiritual adultery is an incorporation of a foreign relationship into the new relationship which the Lord Jesus has purchased us into. “So, then if, while her husband lives, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband be dead, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, you also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that you may be married to another even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God” (Romans 7:3,4). The husband we had before Jesus Christ wonderfully redeemed us, was the Law. And he is dead. We now have been espoused to Christ - Paul said, “that I have espoused you to one husband that I might present you a chaste virgin to Christ.”

You may be asking the question, “Well, if we are going to be presented to the Lord as a chaste virgin to Christ, how then is it possible that we had a previous husband? How could we be virgin again?” It is explained in that “the law,” Paul said, “made nothing perfect.” There was no access to God allowed under the economy of the Law - our old husband.

If you will remember, the structure of the Tabernacle of Moses and the glory of God, which was in the Holiest of all, over the mercy seat, where God sat to dispense mercy, there was a great veil between the two - between the husband and the wife: the people of God (*Israel*) and the Lord. There was, if you please, a garment between the husband and the wife: the veil of separation. So the relationship - the coming together as one - was never established. We could not enter through the veil in the Old Covenant. We two were never made one. We could never be joined to our old husband. We remained virgin, though we were once married to another - like Lot’s two daughters.

May I again, “stir up your pure minds by way of reminder?” Lot had two daughters. And, if you will remember, Lot’s daughters were married, yet they remained virgins (Genesis 19:5-14).

“And they called unto Lot, and said to him, ‘Where are the men who came in to you this night? Bring them out unto us, that we might know them.’ And Lot went out at the door to them, and shut the door after him, and said, ‘I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. Behold now I have two daughters who have not known man; let me I pray you, bring them out to you, and do you to them as is good in your eyes’ . . . Lot went out, and spoke unto his sons-in-law, who married his daughters, and said, ‘Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city.’ But he seemed as one that mocked to his sons-in-law.” This is why, in previous times, we called homosexuals, sodomites - because they are.

Sadly there are those today who would seek to bring about some kind of spiritual meaningful relationship with the Lord Jesus by establishing their own set of rules. Whether they withdraw back into the economy of Moses and deal with the ten commandments or whether they set up new rules - what one church calls, “sin issues and non-sin issues” (there are denominations which would embrace such an idea). I would not suggest for one moment that they do not love the Lord, but Paul tells us that that is spiritual adultery. It is desiring a different partner. It is going to another husband, another man - our old husband. It is spiritual adultery. (Deuteronomy 24:1-4).

Since the Law made nothing perfect; since the Law only dealt death; we begin to see a snapshot of the husband we once had. He was mean. Real mean. He was always criticizing us. We could never do anything right under that husband. Every time we turned around, we were doing something wrong - we fell short. “Thou shalt! Thou

shalt not!" Wives, how would you like to live with a guy like that? Your home life would be something like this: "I don't like the way you mop the floor. Do it again. You're not getting those dishes clean fast enough. You didn't make the bed this morning. I want you to fix me Eggs Benedict every morning. Don't fail. You slept too late today. If you're going to work outside of the home you'd better keep this place clean and have dinner on the table by the time I get home!" That was the type of husband we experienced. Nothing we did satisfied him. The Law dealt death. Paul calls it a curse - "cursed is everyone that lives therein." Isn't it remarkable that some churches would want to embrace such an economy, desiring the people of God to live under that?

Most people who force a legalistic walk with the Lord, do so, not because they're worried about themselves, they're worried about you. They're sure they're going to make it. But they're not so sure about you. So they establish a set of rules to keep you straight - so the church will look good. They don't want the Church to look like a bunch of sinners. But that's what we are, redeemed sinners. The reason you're reading this text, I would hope, is that you have realized you have a Father who loves sinners and you, as a loved redeemed sinner, are seeking to know more about Him. We as believers have no reason to embrace Him, save the fact that we are all redeemed sinners.

The Law made the whole world guilty before God. That's why God gave the Law. The Law could not bring in righteousness, as Paul tells us, so what was the Law's purpose? To manifest me. To manifest you. To manifest our real character. The Law said, "You're all sinners!" And we had to agree. That's why the Lord said, "I've come to seek and save sinners." (Paraphrased.) With that, we also agreed and therefore, He saved us. Now that we are saved, do we still sin? Yes, but we don't want too. A marked difference.

It was very important that we knew our first husband as disagreeable, tough and unsympathetic, so the Lord could prepare us for the kind, loving husband which was to come. So we could appreciate fully, the kindness which we would enjoy in our new kinship. Our old husband is dead! And "we are free from the law," Paul said, "by the body of the Lord Jesus." And "when He died," Paul says, "we died with Him." Since we died with Him and according to the apostle Paul, God took the curse out of the way, "nailing it to His cross," there is no law over us. I know I will raise the hair on the back of some readers necks when I say this, but you cannot violate a law that's not there. He has taken that law out of the way, "nailing it to His cross." And Paul tells us in Romans 5 (which is the great context on our release from condemnation), "therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul said in that context "where there is no law there is no transgression." Isn't that interesting?

Safe and Reasonable

A few years ago Diana and I lived in Scotland helping to birth a church there. While there, we were given a car by a dear believing couple - God bless Bobby and Elizabeth - to use as we pleased. During a three day sabbatical we decided to take a road trip into the upper parts of the land. There is no speed limit, as such, on many European roads. The law says, "safe and reasonable," which leaves the speed limit up to every driver's own prerogative. To arrive at our destination by car, we had to decide what was a "safe and reasonable" speed. Since there wasn't a written rule suggesting a certain "safe and reasonable" speed, we decided our "safe and reasonable" speed was somewhere in the area of 80 to 90 miles per hour. I don't know how we came to that calculation, but that was our resolve. Rebellion runs deep.

As we raced along the winding Scottish Highlands, laughing and commenting on the freedom of having no speed limits, we crested a small hill, and you guessed it, ten feet in front of us, at the bottom of the hill was a group of cars who had decided a "safe and reasonable" speed was 45 miles per hour . . . Diana looked at me and then back at the on coming cars and said, "Well, Lord, here we come." But somehow, by the grace of God, we fishtailed through those cars and came out on the other side unharmed. By God's grace, to this day I don't know how. "Safe and reasonable." We were hardly reasonable and we certainly weren't safe. But in spite of the fact that there was no law for us to break, we still came short. In spite of the fact that we came short, there was no condemnation.

This is the first time Bobby and Elizabeth have heard this story. Diana and I regretted our decision - from then on we opted on a slower speed - but this scary situation did give me a great illustration.

Do you know why God warns us concerning our walk in the New Covenant scripture? It's not because He's afraid we're going to offend Him - He just doesn't want us to kill ourselves. He doesn't want us to run through a bunch of slow moving cars and kill ourselves. The reason we have big yellow signs on mountain highways which read, "dangerous curves," is not because the state is afraid we're going to offend the road, they just do not want us to kill ourselves. That's what the Law is for today. God doesn't want us to kill ourselves.

So the law becomes our schoolmaster until Christ comes. But Christ is come. And "where there is no Law there is no transgression." Our old husband is dead. We were never joined to him. There was always a veil between us and Him. So, there could never be a true joining of the two. We are still virgin. Now we are joined as Paul says, "as a chaste virgin to Christ." The veil has been removed, "the two are one. "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

Freed In Christ!

“The creditor is coming,” as we are back to 2 Kings, “to take my two sons to be slaves.” The law makes us slaves. Romans chapter 6 tells that at one time “we were slaves to the Law.” Now we have been freed in Christ.

“For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not; that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me” (Romans 7:19,20). Romans chapter 7 is a grand chapter. I am very certain the legalist would love nothing more than to rip Romans 6 and 7 completely out of the Book. For it is in chapter 7 where Paul says, “It is no more I that sin, but sin that dwells in me.” That is one verse the legalist really chokes on. “What a cop-out they say.” Yes it is. Isn’t it a wonderful cop-out. Glory to God. Isn’t it wonderful that God does not charge us with sin? Either you believe Jesus took all sin for all time on the cross or you don’t.

The word *forgive* is not in the gospel of John. Do you know why? Because the Gospel of John was written for the church. Forgiveness, in John’s Gospel is a settled issue. We are forgiven. In Matthew, Mark and Luke, the theme is, “I have come to seek and to save that which was lost.” But the theme of John is, “I am come that you might have life and that you might have it more abundantly.” The most difficult certainty for us to grasp, as believers, is that we are forgiven. And it is our failure to recognize that we are forgiven which makes us live in such bondage.

“It is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells in me.” Paul, by the cross, makes a distinction between what we are now in the flesh and what we are now in Jesus Christ - God has refused to impute sin to those who are in Jesus Christ - “not imputing their trespasses (*sin*) unto them” (2 Corinthians 5:19). “I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me” - the one who wills to do good. Paul said, “I want to do good. But there is an evil that is working in me.” Thus, “the strength of sin is the Law.”

“Don’t spit on the flowers.”

A family came to visit a pastor friend of mine. Both families have two small children each. After an hour or so, the children wanted go outside to play. The pastor said, to the visiting father, “I want to show you something about the nature of children and man in general.” As the children made their way outside the pastor said, “Now children, whatever you do, don’t spit on the flowers.” (A curious suggestion indeed.)

“Now,” he said, “let’s watch.”

As the two fathers watched from an open window the children began walking around, coming closer and closer to the flowers in the pastor’s yard. Suddenly the children turned to see if anyone was looking and then one after the other, they began to spit on the flowers. Do you think they would have ever thought of spiting on the

flowers if someone hadn't said, "Don't spit on the flowers"? It would never have entered their minds.

"The strength of sin is the Law." Sin is what makes the Law work, because there is something in man which absolutely refuses to do what he is told. "The strength of sin is the Law."

There's a handwritten sign over the water fountain in the men's locker room where Diana and I used to workout which reads, "Don't spit in the water fountain." The first time I saw it I thought, "How odd." Then, after a couple of sips, I had this unnatural urge to spit in the water fountain. I didn't do it of course, but it made me realize that, "the strength of sin is the Law."

We live in an age of rebellion. "You're not telling me what to do! I've got my rights!"

Really?

In the words of the old Plymouth Brethren, "If you had your rights, you'd be in hell right now." The only right we have is to burn in a devil's hell. It is only by the mercy and the grace of the living God that we have been delivered from that devil's hell.

"I find a law then that evil is present with me" - "the creditor is come" - he wants the debt paid - he says I owe him. Don't we still come short of the Law? Has the fact that *the Law has been taken away*, changed us in anyway? Don't we still sin? "For I delight in the Law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members warring against the law in my mind, which wants to serve God, and bring me into captivity to the Law of sin and death, which is in my members, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ." (read Romans 5-7).

"The creditor is come." We're in this vacuum. We've been released from the condemnation of the Law, but we still see what we are: sinners. I still sin. Don't you? So what is going to change that?

Elisha said, "What have you got in the house?" She said, "All I've got is a jar of oil." Oil is a picture, in the scripture, of the Person of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of Christ. "Except a man have the Spirit of Christ he is none of His." As a child of God, the Spirit of God in the Old Covenant economy, was *with* us. But now in the New Covenant economy the Spirit is *in* us. You are that vessel, that jar filled with oil. So Elisha said, "Go borrow a bunch of jars. Bring them into the house. And you and you're sons close the door behind you." That shuts out all of the antagonisms from the outside. "And just start pouring that oil out into the other jars." "The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the Law of sin and death."

Again, it isn't what we do. We still do not measure up. We still sin. But, God in Christ, has made up the difference by the indwelling Spirit of Christ - He is satisfied with His Son. "These things I write to you little children, that you sin not." Certainly the exhortation in the New Testament is, "Quit sinning!" It's killing you. It certainly isn't hurting God. In the words of Job, "If I do right, have I added to God?" Rhetorical question. "If I do wrong, have I taken anything from God?" Most surly not. "My little children I write these things unto that you sin not. But if you do sin, you have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the satisfaction for our sins and not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world." (1 John). God is satisfied! The Law is done away. There is no condemnation. No transgression imputed. But I'm still a big failure. So are you. We all come short. Nothing is so deadly to the child of God than to have the Law remind us of what big failures we are.

"The creditor is come to take away my sons." *To take away our blessing, our life.*

"That's all okay. What do you have?"

"A jar of oil."

"Oil?"

"Yes."

"Then the Spirit of Christ is here. Fill all the vessels. And then go pay the creditor."

"For what the Law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk, no longer under the economy of the flesh but now under the economy of the Spirit."
(Romans 8:3-4).

God has filled up with abounding grace, all our lack.

"And they poured the oil into all the vessels and filled every one of them." And "where sin abounded grace did super abound." Grace did much more abound! Charles Stanley said on one of his TV broadcasts, "You can't sin enough to lose the blessing of God." Meditate on that. It's grand!

If you try to walk through a brick wall you're going to get a bloody nose. That's the way life works. Common sense tells us that there is a manner in which we ought to behave, which is expedient. But God does not condemn us if, because of our behavior we bloody our nose. The Law says, "Well, you got a bloody nose because you hit that wall. I told you not to hit that wall. You wouldn't have a bloody nose if you would do

what I said." But grace says, "O, let me help you. Let's put a cold towel on that bloody nose."

Which would you rather have as your husband? The day the Law was given, three thousand people died in judgment. The day the Holy Spirit was poured out, three thousand people got saved.

Which would you rather live under? The husband of Law or the husband of Grace?

"Fill the jars with oil." And "He super-abounded." The oil didn't run out. The vessels ran out. And "Jesus Christ was ascended on high in order that He might fill all things" - according to Paul in Ephesians, that's what Jesus is doing. He's filling every area of the believer's life. Of your life. Of my life. Every area that we see as shortcomings. Every area that we think displeases God. The Spirit of God is filling that area of our life. He's making us pleasing to God. "Abraham believed God and his faith was imputed to him for righteousness." In every area where Abraham came short - and he came short on many occasions - "his faith was imputed to him for righteousness." And Jesus Christ, in our lives is filling all things. "Take this," Elisha said, "and pay the debt." "For that Spirit has made me free." How wonderful.

"What the law (our old husband) could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son" - "let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready." (Revelation 19:7).

Our old husband is dead. We are joined to another.

Unfaithfulness & Adultery

Every spiritual truth of God is illustrated in His physical creation. Thus terms which relate to the physical are employed in order to illustrate the spiritual. God takes us by the known into the unknown. In line with this standard, God displays very clearly in the scriptures spiritual unfaithfulness and idolatry in total concert with carnal fornication and adultery.

God entered into covenant with Israel through Abraham by a blood covenant - "Take Me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle dove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not" (Genesis 15:9,10) - and God, by that covenant took to Himself Israel for a wife - "For thy Maker is thy husband; the Lord of hosts is His name" (Isaiah 54:5AV).

God's wife, Israel, the wife of His choosing, turned away from Him and began to love this world - choosing to be joined to this world - becoming analogous with other

nations. "Behold, you are old, and your sons walk not in your ways; now make us a king to judge us like all the nations" (1 Samuel 8:5).

Israel's unfaithfulness was viewed, by her Husband, God, as adultery. "Contend with your mother, contend; for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband. Let her, therefore, put away her harlotry out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breast . . . Then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now. . . I will judge her for the days of Baalim, unto which she burned incense, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot Me, said the Lord" (Hosea 2:2,7,13).

The Lord put His wife away in judgment with a view to restoration. "Hearken to Me, you that follow after righteousness, you that seek the Lord; look unto the rock from which you are hewn" (Isaiah 50:1). "And it shall be at that day, said the Lord, that you shall call Me *Ishi*, and shall call Me no more *Baali* (my Lord). And I will betroth you unto Me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto Me in righteousness, and in justice, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies" (Hosea 2:16,19).

The Hebrew word, *Ishi* - "myself" - or in Hosea, "my husband" - is the name Adam gave himself. When Adam was given Eve as his wife, he called her *Ishsha*, which means, "she's not me but she's just like me." Because he said, "This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman (*Ishsha*) because she was taken out of me (*Ishi*)" (Genesis 2:22). This is a wonderful illustration of the believer's relationship with the Lord Jesus. He is the *Ishi*: Himself - our Husband (or *Bridegroom*). We - taken from His side - are His *Ishsha*: we are not Him but we shall be just like Him. Or, as John writes, "when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). Glory!

To further illustrate this great spiritual truth - the marriage, blood covenant - in the natural: When a man and a woman are merged in wedlock (Ephesians 5:22-32), the couple takes an oath of marriage - "This is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." The couple then, on the wedding night, makes a blood covenant, by the wedding act - the marriage bed. "I will judge thee, as women that . . . sheds blood" (Ezekiel 16:38,59). In that act, the husband breaks, or rends, the membrane or "maiden head" in the woman which causes bleeding and a blood covenant is made between the couple. The two have become one flesh by a blood covenant. The *Ishi* and the *Ishsha* have become one. Myself and the one, who is just like me, have become one. God did not refer to Adam and Eve as Adam and Eve, but rather, "male and female created He them; and blessed them, and called *their* name Adam, in the day they were created" (Genesis 5:2). The husband and wife are one - Adam: Mr. and Mrs. Adam, if you please. This is also why, even now, the wife takes her husband's name in marriage. They are one.

The blood covenant God made with Abraham was offered by dividing the sacrifice in half. This was foreshadowing the rending of the veil of the Temple at Jesus' death. "The veil of the Temple was torn - or rent - in two from the top to the bottom" (Matthew 27:51) - divided in half. This was, in a figure, Jesus' flesh. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He has consecrated" - or dedicated - "for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh" (Hebrews 10:19,20). Through that entrance - the Lord's flesh - we have come into the most Holy Place to commune with the Father through the Son by means of the Holy Spirit drawing us into that communion. Ultimately it is the Father drawing us by the Holy Spirit through the Son unto Him - "except the Father, who has sent Me, draw him." In like manner the husband has - by the wedding act - come into the most holy place of his wife and is made one with his wife by that blood covenant, so to commune with her. "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

Paul said, "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:16,17). We are His virgin bride, "I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:1,2) and any communion with this world is then viewed as adultery; "You adulterers and adulteresses, know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God" (James 4:4)?

The Tabernacle of Moses

We see this illustrated further in the Tabernacle of Moses⁸. That Tabernacle is a template of a human body . By the use of differing Hebrew words - with variant meanings - God patterned the man - the last Adam - Christ Jesus; who "tabernacled among us" (John 1:14); this pattern gives illustration now to His body - "your body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit"(1 Corinthians 6:19) - as the church is His bride.

The outer hangings of the Tabernacle of Moses illustrate the white wedding garment of the bride - the expression of her virgin character - "Arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Revelation 19:8). The "high priest" (Hebrews 8:1) first entered into the Tabernacle (the bride) through the outer garment (paradigm for *outer court*) - the fine linen; then, as the wedding act of marriage, the high priest went into the body itself (the Holy Place of the Tabernacle) the second veil (literally the term for *separation*) - and the curtain which divided the sanctuary was "rent in two" like the membrane of the bride (Matthew 27:51; Hebrews 10:20) - "For He is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, to make in Himself of two one new man, so making peace" (Ephesians 2:14,15) - and a blood covenant was made; as is made between husband and wife - "the Lord is witness between you and the wife of your

youth" (Malachi 2:14,15) as in Christ and the Church; "this is the blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many" (Mark 14:24).

Natural birth comes through this act and how wonderfully this creation law manifests spiritual truth. As we are born in the natural from a fleshly or corruptible seed, Peter tells us we are born again not by a corruptible seed, but of an incorruptible one, by the Word of God - the seed of God.

As the word of God, "His seed" (*sperm*) (1 John 3:9) was in the Holiest in the Tabernacle, so also is His word (*seed*) now in us individually as His bride by His entering through the veil (Hebrews 10:19,20) and we, His bride, share His life. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

Our original theme, should be obvious. If man and woman, when joined together by the oath of marriage and the wedding act, are one flesh, then the same is true of the bride and Christ - which have become one spirit. Anything foreign to His nature which I subject my spirit to is adultery and/or fornication, spiritually. It is bringing an abomination into the temple of God - "the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body" (1 Corinthians 6:13-18). Paul articulates, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy which temple you are" (1 Corinthians 3:16,17).

This abomination, this adultery - of the temple of God - your body, i.e. the temple of the Holy Spirit of God - cannot be corrected or stopped by running away from or avoiding the world or the stuff of the world. Or as some would say, "Taste not, handle not, touch not" (Colossians 2:21) - or by seeking to abstain from the objects of the world, and thereby, not being tainted by the world. That's folly! How can we escape from the world by using what is little more than the world's system itself - worldly methods do not bring about spiritual success. The world itself preaches: "*stop* smoking, *stop* drinking, *stop* running around with your neighbor's wife (or husband)." But that "*stopping*" neither saves, nor cures. I may stop running around with my neighbor's wife (I am using this as a characterization, not as a confession of a personal sin), but I may - after I stop physically being with her - continue daydreaming about our rendezvous: "To look on a woman to lust after her." "This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind" (Ephesians 4:17). Defilement or abomination is of the heart - the mind. Abstinence - physically removing oneself from something - does not stop defilement. Defilement of the Temple of God is brought about by spiritual encumbrance and does not comprise physical proximity. The Lord Himself prayed, "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name . . . I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from evil" (John 17:12,15).

The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they said of Him, "Behold, a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!"

The manner of life John the Baptist offers is not a recipe of escape from the world. For he "neither ate nor drank," and that was not, and is not, Christianity. John the baptizer was a Law follower as a priest under the Old Covenant, preaching repentance - "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." But grace came, bringing salvation - "The law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound (*super abound*, is the actual phrase here)."

John the Baptist was a priest. An Israelite man became a priest under the Law through his family line - the tribe of Levi, from Aaron to be more precise - from father to son. John's father, Zacharias, was a priest; so John the baptizer was a priest under the Old Covenant. Christ came both eating and drinking, and this is what everyone calls "Christianity".

Our escape from defilement does not come through, "taste not, handle not, touch not." Our deliverance from the world - our seeking to not defile the temple of God - begins not with our giving up this or that, or by us not putting this or that into our mouths. But our deliverance begins with our seeing, as with God's eyes - as God sees - this is a world under a sentence of death. Therefore, we do not pursue the scent of death - this decomposing world. But rather we follow, or walk after, the sweet savor of Life - the eternal Spirit of God.

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:2-4).

A sentence of death is always passed, not on the dead, but on the living. In one sense this world is a living force, relentlessly pursuing and seeking out its subjects. But death is certain. The defilement of the temple of God then comes when we fuse our walk with the mechanism from a *modus vivend* with this world and its systems, its *modus operandi*, and become entangled within its disciplines, which are not of God, or His church - we commit spiritual adultery. "Therefore put to death your members which are on earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry . . . But you must also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" (Colossians 3:5-10).

“Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty with which Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5:1).

We, His bride, find our security within God, not within the world systems - i.e. money, a better job, a comprise in our belief to secure a higher standing in the community or the church, . . . to find security; etc. Our security comes not through this world, its systems and philosophy, but through our Bridegroom, Christ Jesus, through His order and ethics.

Abominations in the House

Israel went away from her husband and played the harlot; bringing foreign gods into the Temple of God.

“Manasseh . . . built up again the high places” (asherah, the place of an enshrined idol) “and he reared up an altar for Baal . . . and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served them. Also he built altars in the house of the Lord . . . he caused his children to pass through the fire . . . he observed times, and used enchantments, and practiced sorcery, and with wizards . . . he sat up a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon, his son, ‘In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put My name forever’. He caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to be unfaithful, and led Judah astray . . . to play the harlot. For the children of Judah have done evil in My sight, said the Lord; they have set their abominations in the house which is called by My name, to pollute it” (2 King 21:1-4; 2 Chronicles 21:11,13; 33:4-7; Jeremiah 7:30).

By playing the harlot - polluting the secret Holy Place of God - the wife of God, Israel brought another seed into the inner sanctuary - seed which was not her Husband’s seed (foreign words, exotic customs, temporal worship, old wives tails, astrology, superstition; they stopped believing God as their source of security and went with the customs of other nations.) “But like a wife that commits adultery, who takes strangers instead of her husband” (Ezekiel 16:32) the wife of God became a harlot - unclean - by the worship of foreign gods. By bringing another husband - another seed - into the Holy Place. We, as the church, can bring another bridegroom into our hearts - the dwelling place of God - by embracing the world’s directives, customs and principles - seeking to please men and not God - by accepting duplicitous words, an alternative spirit. The concessions seen in many churches (women priests, women preachers, homosexual clergy, etc.) is evidence of another seed having come into the church - the seed of compromise. “That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the

sight of God" (Luke 16:15). We are witnessing a few high profile men and women who are trying to bring another husband into the church today.

The Apostle Paul addressed himself to false apostles and prophets, who come into the body of Christ and preach, what Paul refers to as "another Jesus" (*alas*; meaning: another of the same kind). By receiving this "other Jesus," you are hearing another *gospel* of a different kind. By accepting this other message, you thereby receive another *spirit* of a different kind. As a believer you are bringing another man's (another god's) seed into the dwelling place of God. You are therefore, committing adultery.

When Israel repented and cleansed the temple - "And they gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and came, according to the commandment of the king, by the words of the Lord, to cleanse the house of the Lord. Moreover, all the vessels which king Ahaz in his reign did cast away in his transgression, have we prepared and sanctified, and behold, they are before the altar of the Lord" (2 Chronicles 29:15,19) - God forgave them: "He sent His word, (seed) and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions" (Psalms 107:20). We - His bride - are made clean through His Word. "Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3).

When Israel would no longer repent, but multiplied her whoredoms (Old KJV) - "until there was no remedy" - God gave her over to her lovers. "And I will judge you, as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will give you blood in fury and jealousy" (Ezekiel 16:38AV). "If any man that defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy which temple you are" (1 Corinthians 3:17). Paul is not speaking about a believer going to hell, but rather of a believer becoming of little or no use in the church of the living God. My grandmother was convinced this was why Elvis died at such a young age. My grandmother was a dyed-in-the-wool Calvinist.

The Valley of Achor

"If a man sows to the flesh he shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Galatians 6:8). A believer who chooses to be entangled within the world's infrastructure (this is more than an occupation; it is a trust in the temporal, rather than the eternal) or seeks to worship another Jesus (a Jesus who saves us, pays us or slays us, depending on our performance) and thereby leaves his first love - or the believer who defiles himself sexually outside of his marriage, thereby leaving the wife of his youth may, as Israel, have to be destroyed (by God physically) in order that he might be restored: "To deliver such as one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh" - (Greek. *olethros*; destruction). There is no thought in this word, *olethros*, of eternal annihilation - as evidenced from 2 Corinthians 2:6,7 - but rather the destruction, the ruination, of the believer's temporal being, which has been ruined and thus, unsuitable to fulfill its

original earthly purpose - "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 5:1-5). The believer is not thrown into hell. His works (wood, hay, etc.) are burned with the fire of God, "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet as through fire" (1 Corinthians 3:15). The unrepentant believer will be with the Lord in glory, but he will suffer loss and will be lacking in rewards and crowns. (For an in depth study on rewards and crowns of the believers, see the chapter, *The Judgment Seat of Christ*.)

God always judges His people with a view of restoration, not damnation. This is evident from Paul's words in 2 Corinthians concerning the sinning brother in 1 Corinthians: "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted by the many. So that on the contrary you ought rather to forgive him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." The sinning man in 1 Corinthians had repented, so the apostle Paul told the brothers in 2 Corinthians to forgive him. God always judges His people with a view of restoration. God judges sin. We, as believers, who sin, and repent, will come through some sort of destruction to holiness. The Lord judges us with a view of restoration.

As we walk in repentance and belief, the Lord says, "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly unto her. And I will give her vineyards there, and the Valley of Achor (*trouble*) for a door of hope" - the ways of God are not the ways of men - "and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be at that day, said the Lord, that thou shall call Me Ishi, and shall call Me no more Baali" (Hosea 2:14,15). The Lord forgives us and gives us vineyards in the Valley of Trouble for a door of hope. The Lord always judges sin in His people with a view of restoration.

Our sins will judge us - "For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep (*dead*). For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:29-32) - except we repent.

Why does God take the view He does towards adultery and fornication? It is the breaking of a blood covenant. "She is your companion, and the wife of your youth" (Malachi 2:14). "This is My blood of the New Covenant" (Matthew 26:28). "Having therefore boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus . . . through the veil, that is to say, His flesh" (Hebrews 10:19,20). We cannot bring a foreign seed into the Holiest. A foreign seed may be the seed of our old husband (the Law) or the seed of a foreign god, Buddha or Mohammed or our favorite preacher who teaches a compromised version of the truth of God . . . if we choose to bring in a foreign seed, God may destroy such an unfaithful vessel in order that the spirit be saved in the day of Christ. Every other sin, says Paul, is outside the body, but this sin - adultery,

fornication - is against the physical body, this sin brings destruction. "Fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4).

Public Oath - Private Covenant

God seals the two - the husband and the wife - as one - in the oath and the covenant. He acknowledges the marriage in the heavens; and He chooses to bless that relationship. There is a public oath manifested between the husband and the wife. There is a private covenant consummated between the husband and the wife. And God seals both and blesses both.

Husband, love your wife as Christ loves the church. Wife, respond to your husband's love as we respond to the love of the Lord Jesus, our Bridegroom.

Husbands love on your wife. When you see her, hug her. You don't need a reason. Just hug her. You don't need to be in heat to love your wife. There is a battery of couples who are in custody and not marriage, because they were in heat and not in love when they took their oath. Love is something which is permanent and faces all obstacles. Love your wife. Buy her something - not because she needs it, but because you want to. It does marvelous things for her. It tells her your thoughts were thoughts of her while you were away. That might really crack up a lot of wives. Court your wife - no matter how long you've been married. Love your wife. Another consequence of loving your wife is that you will produce within your children what you are with your wife.

Wives respond to your husband's love. Acknowledge it. I remember a lady who said to me, "I can't get my husband to do a thing around the house. Oh, he'll go to the neighbor's house and fix all her stuff, but he won't fix a thing around my house."

I asked her, "That's strange, wonder why he does that?"

"I don't know," she continued, "but I know that he fixes things over there, because that old woman keeps coming over here and telling me, 'Your husband is just so talented, so sweet. So handy. He works so hard. I know you must appreciate your husband so much.'"

I began to see the picture - I thought to myself: From the wife, it's "You never fix a thing." From the neighbor, it's "You're so talented." Which one would you gravitate to?

Wives, appreciate your husband. Reverence your husband. Don't leave him feeling that all his love is for nothing. What a sorry state it would be if, given the fact that Jesus Christ, having so loved the church that He gave Himself for us, that we never responded in praise for His love. Diana complements me all the time. She really does. To my face. I like that. Even when I fail, she'll complement my attempt. I love her.

“Husbands love your wives,” because you are sharing in a great mystery. The mystery of Christ and the church.

¹ Job 32:21-22

² see Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5 (and vs. 6); Mk. 10:8; 1Cor. 6:16; and Eph. 5:31

³ A. W. Pink, *Practical Christianity*, Baker Books; 7th Print edition (April 1991)

⁴ see Deuteronomy 25:11.

⁵ Wives are not to live in terror (1 Peter 3:6)!

⁶ The descriptive nouns - bride, bride chamber, and bridegroom give evidence of our place in our relationship to the Son:

Bride. Greek, *numphe* - English, *nymph* - Latin, *to veil*. The bride is first adorned with embroidery and jewels - “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garment of salvation” (Isaiah 61:10) - “They shall be mine, said the Lord of host, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spares his own son that serves him” (Malachi 3:17). The bride is then led veiled from her home to the bridegroom. “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout” - “at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom comes; go you out to meet Him” - “with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17,18; Matthew 25:6).

Bride-chamber. Greek, *numphon* - the room or dining hall in which the marriage ceremonies were held - “So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding was furnished with guests.” I so greatly rejoice in the words, “both bad and good.” The passage goes on to say, “he saw a man without a wedding garment” - of salvation - and He said, “bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness” (Matthew 22:10,11,12). It isn’t our badness or our goodness which will allow us to remain in the wedding feast. It isn’t what we do. It is what He did for us. It is His goodness (righteousness) we now possess - His righteousness in us which will be accepted in that day. We still do not measure up. We still sin. But God in Christ has made up the difference by the indwelling Spirit of Christ - He is satisfied with His Son. And His Son has cast on us the “garment of salvation.” And He is satisfied with our “garment of salvation.” Because He has cast the “garment of salvation” upon us Himself - “for He hath clothed me with the garment of salvation.” The garment we wear is the garment He gave. We are “found in Him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

Numohon is also used to describe the chamber containing the **bridal bed** - “Come and I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife. . . and I saw no temple in it; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it” (Revelation 21).

Bridegroom. Greek, *numphios* - the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus. “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints” (Revelation 19:7,8) - “He who hath the bride is the Bridegroom” (John 3:29).

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church.”

⁷ *Oriental* being the customs of the countries of Europe and the Western Hemisphere; such as Israel. As opposed to the *occidental* customs of the western lands or regions; such as the Americas.

⁸ see *The Tabernacle of Moses* Illustration at end of chapter 3: "What Shall The Righteous Do?" pg. 60

chapter five
Women & Wives

*“And Adam said, this is now bone of my bone
And flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Ishsha.”*

Genesis 2:23

The whole idea of marriage is based upon the Lord’s words, “one flesh.” The husband and wife are to be regarded as a single organism. We, as Christians, believe when the Lord said “one flesh,” He was not expressing a useful sentiment, but rather, He was stating a fact. The husband and wife are “one” - just like violin and bow are one instrument - the husband and the wife are one organism. The two are perfectly combined, as “one being” - not only by a sexual physical union, but by a spiritual union, and a soulish union, as well.

As I have said, my expertise leans more to the husband’s roll in loving his wife, rather than the woman’s roll in honoring her husband. But my development as a husband and a man involves my living with a woman (my lovely wife, Diana) and daily loving her, husbanding her, being the savior of her body and the buttress for her protection. So my expertise, with respect to women, comes from my experience as a man and a husband, and Diana’s continual testimony - she’s a beautiful, secure woman; a compassionate, loving wife. I am a blessed man. So I will attempt here to reflect on my blessed surroundings.

Sexual intercourse, outside of marriage is an effort to isolate the perfect union or the “one flesh” of marriage from the unions of spirit and soul within the marriage - which, in combination make up the whole or the “one flesh.” The husband and wife are joined as “one flesh” by the union of all of their individual natures - sex or physical contact is but one, of those natures.

Sexual intercourse between a husband and his wife is a very pleasurable event - there is nothing wrong with sexual pleasure within marriage, in fact I highly recommend it - “Marriage is honorable in all and the bed is undefiled” (Hebrews 13:4) - but we should never isolate the sexual, physical pleasure from the pleasures of the spirit and the soul - attempting to bring about a perfect union by sex alone. Sometimes Diana and I experience our “oneness” by simply sitting together on our yellow sofa in the morning, drinking coffee and talking, which, to us, this is a very soulish, oftentimes spiritual experience. We are one in our spirit, soul and body. Yet, individual.

Divine Order

“Now I praise you brethren that you remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know that the head of

every man is Christ; and the head of every woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.”¹ This is the divine chain of command. “Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. But every woman that prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is even all one as if she were shaved. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn; but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered. For man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have” - if your King James reads “power” the Greek word is not *dunamis*, but rather *exousia*: authority. “For this cause ought the woman to have authority on her head” - or “over her head” if you please - “because of the angels.”²

Nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman” - we couldn’t get along without you ladies - “neither is the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also of the woman; but all things of God. Judge for yourselves: is it seemly that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Does not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?”³

A Common Misinterpretation

Let’s not miss Paul’s point here. He’s not suggesting that a man can’t grow his hair long. In past decades we have observed men who can grow their hair long and indeed, routinely do. The emphasis of the passage is not the length of the man’s hair. The emphasis is the nature of men.

The nature of men causes us to shear or cut our hair short (most, but not always). Whereas, the nature of women causes them not to cut their hair short (most, but not always). Short hair for men, long hair for women. Not as an ultimatum, but rather to reflect the peculiar natures of the two individuals in most cases - characteristic propensities, which are simply, individual natural human qualities. Men and women. Long and short hair. Good or bad - according to your own rule of thumb. Paul here is not really concerned with the length of our hair, but rather with our order in appearance - under authority - in the service of God.

In Numbers 6, the Lord gives direction to a man or a woman who would separate themselves unto the Lord. This direction of separation, called a *Nazirite* (sometimes written, *Nazarite*) vow - Nazirite (meaning, *one separated*) - concerned the outward conduct and appearance of the man or the woman who separated themselves unto the Lord. The Nazirite was to abstain from wine - the symbol of natural joy (Psalms 104:15) - gaining all their joy from the Lord (cp. Psalms 97:12; Habakkuk 3:18; Philippians 3:1; 4:4,10). The separated man would let his hair grow long - “no razor” would come upon his head - long hair was and is a natural reproach to man (1

Corinthians 11:14) and this gave a visible sign of the Nazirite's separation and willingness to bear reproach for the Lord.

This vow found its perfect fulfillment in Jesus, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26). The Lord was utterly separated unto the Father (John 1:18; 6:38), and allowed no mere natural claim to hinder Him (Matthew 12:41-44). Does this mean that Jesus had long hair? I don't know, but He may have. My point here is to give evidence to Paul's concern with order and appearance in the Body of Christ. Men naturally have short hair whereas women, naturally do not - even in Old Testament times. Long hair on a Nazirite man gave visible witness of his willingness to be dishonored for the Lord. Long hair on a man, who is not given to the service of the Lord, as Paul puts it, "seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither in the Churches of God" (see: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 - verse 1 belongs to chapter 10).

If you want to quibble about the length of hair, according to Paul, "we have no such custom" in the New Covenant. There is not a Biblical hair length etiquette. In general, the length of our hair has no establishment of doctrine in the Church of Jesus Christ. Although, some assemblies see this differently. But, in the New Covenant, women, if you want to have short hair, bless God, have short hair. Men, you want to have long hair? Bless God, have long hair. Paul is stating a principle here, not a law. The principle addresses itself to the subconscious comprehension in men and women to divine order.

God judges our heart, not our hair.

Headship

What then is the divine order? "The head of every man is Christ; and the head of every woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." Headship addresses authority. The Church of Jesus Christ has seen and identified - throughout the scriptures and down through the ages - that Christ Jesus is set as the "head" over what is His body - the Church, which should, without question, define the meaning and the usage of the term "head." Christ is the authority (*head*) over man, man is the authority (*head*) over woman and God is the authority (*head*) over Christ. Simple order of authority.

Jesus, the scriptures tells us (Genesis 3:15), "bruised the head (*authority*) of the serpent" - at the cross. He destroyed the Devil's authority. Satan isn't dead. He isn't in "the lake of fire." Yet. He's still around. As one brother said, "And he's not even sick." But Jesus destroyed his authority: his headship. Jesus destroyed any and all headship and authority the devil possessed. The devil is not in a subordinate position. He's not in any position at all - as far as we, the body of believers are concerned - other than the

position of “the accuser of the brethren.” The Devil’s headship, his authority has been taken away, so we will not be dealing with him in this context.

Headship addresses the beginning of the responsible chain of command. But, as I have stated before, subordination does not suggest inferiority.

Let’s say, for example, you are a building contractor. As a building contractor you must employ a number of men to work under you. And, you - being a cognizant building contractor - would be the first to admit that some of the men in your hire know more about certain aspects of the building trade than you do. Yet, they are subordinate to you, not inferior.

Now suppose one of your hired men came to you with a suggestion, “I think we should build this building this way, instead of the way we’ve been building it. I know you’re the boss, but I think you’re wrong in the way you’re having the men put the roof on.” I dare say you might have a different view if his proposal did not follow the original design. This is not to suggest the inadequacy of the individual, but rather his relationship to you - his authority.

There is a chain of command. You have the authority to build the building the way you want it built. Simple. You’re the authority. The man who offered an alternative plan could very well be the best brick mason in the country, yet he may be totally unaware of the correct way to put up a roof. So by going with his suggestion, the completed building may (and often times will) leak.

This is the reason Paul begins with the responsible chain of command: God, Christ, the man, the woman. The order. The divine order of God. We all must know where and how our particular position, in the body of Christ works within the building of the house of God. When we know our position, and live within our position, we live in peace with one another - within the Church, with our spouse and with God.

Jesus Christ is under the Father. The Church is under the Son. The man is under the Son. And - as related to the Church - the woman is under the man. Not in terms of inferiority, but rather in provision of the divine order. If you have a problem with this line of thinking . . . take your concerns up with Him. I did not write the Book.

Very often the writers of the scriptures address themselves to the economy in which the people of God occupied in that day. “To the Jews I become as a Jew,” Paul said. So when addressing the Corinthian Church, as concerning the order of God regarding headship, Paul reflects the Corinthian society of that day.

Corinth *Sin City of its day*

The original Corinth (the chief city of ancient Greece, not only in wealth, grandeur and authority, but also in luxury and licentiousness - the temple of Venus was situated there) was destroyed by the Roman consul Mammius in 120 B.C. According to one ancient writer, "Its inhabitants were dispersed and the conqueror carried with him to Rome the richest spoils that ever graced the triumphs of a Roman general." For a century after that Corinth lay in ruins. Julius Caesar, sometime around 15-10 B.C. realized the military and commercial import of Corinth's location and began to rebuild it. Gentile, as well as Jewish merchants, lured by the potential commerce of the area, flocked to Corinth. Soon the arts, literature, and the once lost luxury revived. The Isthmian Games, which were held both the year before and the year after the Olympic Games were restored to their old prominence.

The newly rebuild Corinth was named the capital of Achaia and by A.D. 50 had recaptured its former opulence and was vouched as the glory of Greece. By the time Paul arrived, Corinth had become the center of luxury and sensual pleasure. Yet, where sin abounded the grace of God supper abounded! God had foreordained that among this gross wickedness, Corinth would witness some of the grandest triumphs of the Cross of Christ.

This well-thought-out plan of God was a perfect location for the gospel to be spread. Corinth was the political center of Greece, the seat of commercial and intellectual life, a city of concourse of citizens, as well as other ethnic and political nationalities, but it was also a city from which influences of many kinds spread in all directions.

Corinth, at the time of Paul's writing, also had an endowment like no other Greek city. If someone wanted to insult you in that day, they called you a "Corinthian." Corinth was to the Greeks as Nazareth was to the Jews. Remember Nathan's words? "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" If Nathan had been a Greek he would have said, "Can any good thing come out of Corinth?" Corinth typified every debauched element of society. Corinth was the "sin city" of it's day.

Within the city of Corinth lay a sizable enterprise of prostitution, both male and female. Part of their trade related to the worship of the gods, and part related purely to economic gain - similar to today. In this particular Greek society it was customary for Corinthian women prostitutes to shave their heads, or at lease be shorn - have very short hair. The citizens of Corinth could then distinguish their function of employment. In Corinth, if a woman shaved her head or had very short hair, she revealed her vocation as that of a prostitute - a place of insubordination, as far as Corinth society was concerned.

So Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth, “Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. But every woman that prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is even all one as if she were shaved” (1 Corinthians 11: 4-5). To paraphrase Paul: “If you women are going to take the place of insubordination, then shave your heads! Show us, without a doubt, your true attitude.” The conduct of insubordination by these women within the Corinthian Church assembly, was mimicking, Paul said, an equivalent place of insubordination that the women prostitutes held in the city of Corinth - those women, who had cast off all divine order and sanctity as evidenced by no hair or at the least, by very short hair. So the insubordinate women in the church assembly should shave their heads and give physical evidence of their inner defiance.

Remember Paul had earlier assumed the fact of responsibility of the women ministering in the assembly - “Every woman that prays or prophesies.” Paul does not assume, nor does he demand, that women should have no responsibility of ministry within the assembly. Nor, as poor Paul has been so misquoted, does he require that “a woman should shut up in the church for the simple reason that she is a woman.” Paul didn’t say that. He rather maintained that women in the assembly have great responsibility, yet under divine order.

Women shared with the men in preparation of Pentecost (Acts 1:14). A woman’s home became the earliest known house-Church in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). At Philippi, (where Paul ministered), women founded a new congregation under the leadership of Lydia (Acts 16:13-15). Both Jewish and Greek women of high standing were among the first to be converted (Acts 17:4, 12, 34). In some cases, the wife is mentioned before the husband, as with Priscilla and Aquila, Paul’s traveling, ministering and tent-making companions (Acts 18:26; Romans 16:3).

Women in the early Church emerged in both functional and formal roles. Priscilla was a “fellow worker” with Paul (Romans 16:3). Phoebe was a “deaconess” (a minister of service; a helper) in the Church at Cenchreae (Romans 16:1). As the Church developed, a special order of mature women, “presbyters” emerged to deal with the problems of widows in the Church (1 Timothy 5:3-16; Titus 2:3-5). In whatever position the women held, it was held in the order of God and not in the order of the society of that day.

I will briefly mention here that while women in the early Church did emerge in both functional and formal roles, their *position* in the Church - i.e. that of influence, role, capacity, service, etc. - did not, nor does not, identify them as one holding an office. A marked difference.

Silence

In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul expounds on the benefits of prophesy and its implications within the Church. In this same chapter, he addresses women keeping silent in Church.

“Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak, but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also says the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church” (1 Corinthians 14:34, 35 AV).

Now you may be wondering, “If women are to keep silent in the Church, how is it that the women are assumed to be praying or prophesying - in order - within the assembly in the verses prior to 34 and 35?”

Prophesy is for the edification of the saints. Therefore, we must assume that those Corinthian Church women were not praying and prophesying in their home closet. If the women were not praying and prophesying in the midst of the saints, their words would have served little or no value. Their prayers and prophecies were spoken out in the assembly. Paul is addressing the ministry of the women in the local assembly - their speaking out in the local assembly. So what does Paul mean by “women keeping silence in the Church?”

In the city of Corinth the whole divine order had been frustrated - not just in the Church, but in the entire society. So Paul said - in my modern translation - “Women, if you can’t do it right, then you can’t do it at all. If you can’t operate under the authority of the divine order then just keep quiet.” The word “silence” means “not a word.” Don’t speak. Don’t say a thing. Shut up! Women sit quietly in the meeting - in order. In silence, let the Lord minister His love, His order to you Corinthian church ladies within the Corinth Church assembly. This was a cure for *this particular problem* within the Church at Corinth - not a gag order for all Churches in all ages. Paul doesn’t tell the women of Berea to sit quietly while the men do the work of the Church. Does he? No. This command concerned the problem in the Church at Corinth, **not** the Church collectively.

A Genuine Problem

The Church has, in many cases, applied Paul’s cure where there is no disease. In many Churches - I might say, most Churches - women are silenced when there is no problem with them speaking out of order. If the time comes when the Church of Jesus Christ - in general - found itself full of insubordinate women (after watching the women on Christian television, that may be today), then this cure would be necessary. But until the condition arises, we shouldn’t apply the cure to a problem that’s not there. Paul is

speaking to a difficulty in the Corinthian Church. The women were operating in insubordination. The women in the Church in Corinth had embraced the philosophy of the city of Corinth. They allowed themselves to be effected by the fashionable standards of their day. The problems within the society of Corinth had crept into the Church.

There is an effort today on the part of our world society to press the whole NOW/ERA philosophy upon the Church of Jesus Christ. Thus, it is in so many large denominations today that women are being ordained into the office of ministry - pastors, elders, etc. May I suggest, according to Paul's words (1 Timothy 3) unless these women, who are ordained to these offices, are "the husband of one wife," then they can not hold the office of an elder or a deacon or a pastor. A woman can not be the pastor of a Church. Unless we, as the Church of Jesus Christ, embrace the lesbian philosophy of the day - women can't hold the office of a pastor or a deacon or an elder. Again, I did not write the Book.

There is a divine order. And if you are wondering, no!, a homosexual can not serve in any leadership capacity within the Church of Jesus Christ. They can become Christians and stop lusting after other men (or other women) and then they can serve within the Church - after a time of witness - but not until they have changed their abnormality.

Homosexuals are an abomination to God. They are not fit to oversee or give influence to anyone or anything within the Church of Jesus Christ - no matter what you've been told. Read Leviticus. Read Romans. Both Old and New Testaments address this issue. Homosexuals can not serve in the Church of the Lord Jesus, if for no other reason, they're fornicators! "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication; that every one of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the lust of the flesh even as the Gentiles who know not God" (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5).

"Wherefore, God gave them up to uncleanness through the lust of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections; for even their women did exchange the natural use for that which is against nature; and likewise also men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one for another, men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was fitting" (Romans 1:24-27).

Did God send AIDS as a plague to the homosexuals? According to this passage in Romans they "received *in themselves* recompense of their error . . ." Homosexuals brought AIDS upon themselves. All fornicators and adulterers bring judgment upon themselves. (Hebrews 13:4).

Saved by Grace!

I am privileged to know an American married couple who were, before their conversion, both homosexuals. She was a practicing homosexual, as was he. They are now a wonderful loving Christian couple with delightful children. They both serve in a local assembly, both in leadership positions. Don't shoot the wounded. We are all sinners saved by grace!

21st century human condition.

Paul states in 1 Timothy, "that in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons." This is what we are witnessing in many lives today. Satanic deception caused the fall of man (Genesis 3:13; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:14) and is beginning to characterize our 21st century human condition.

The Satanic scheme of, "In the day you eat thereof, your eyes will be opened, and you shall be as God" (Genesis 3:1-5), was perpetrated upon womankind in the later part of the 20th century with the introduction of the birth control pill. Women no longer had to be concerned with unwanted babies, or babies at all. They could become gods of their own bellies. If they wanted children, they could have them. If not, they could take the pill and live like men, or so they were told. Women could finally go about having sex with whomever they wanted, whenever they wanted and never worry about getting pregnant again. Women and men were now on equal footing - and this was called women's liberation! And they were defiantly liberated! Marriage was delayed through fornication. Children were delayed through abortion. Liberation completely divorced women from the bondage of their roll as woman in society. And we, as a society, ceased to consider Paul's warning that, "evil men and seducers shall become worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13).

"He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches." (Revelation 3)

Deaconesses

The Bible addresses the function of women as deaconesses in one reference: Phoebe. Phoebe is the one woman in the whole of the Bible, who Paul points to in his letter to the Roman Church as a deaconess. But is Phoebe in the office of a deacon or is she simply serving as a deaconess, a helper within the Church (1 Timothy 3:12,13)?

The word *diakonos* (deacon) primarily denotes a servant, whether they are doing servile work, or as an attendant rendering free service - without particular reference to its character. It is given reference in the New Testament as domestic servants, the civil ruler, the followers of Christ in relation to one another, the servants of Christ in the work of preaching and teaching as in Romans 16. Here, Phoebe is called a deaconess or

servant in the Church, in serving, maybe in teaching or preaching. But teaching or preaching to whom? Certainly not men (1 Timothy 2:12).

Paul sent Phoebe to Rome to assist the Church in certain issues the believers had need of. Many good, God-fearing people have taken this passage to mean that Phoebe held the office of a deacon. No, she did not. She is not “the husband of one wife.” But rather, Phoebe was sent, along with a few other believers, to the Church at Rome because she had a ministry of service. Phoebe was sent to Rome, as one who had the ministry of service, to help meet the needs, to give service to the saints at Rome.

There is no suggestion anywhere in the scripture which says, “women do not carry on valuable ministries within the Church.” All ministry is service within the Church. But all ministry has a divine order. And the divine order does not contradict itself from one verse to another.

There are a great many deaconesses in the Church today. Diana is a deaconess, but she is not in the office of a deacon. She is not “the husband of one wife,” but she does minister (*minister* and *servant* are the same word) in the assembly. There is not one suggestion anywhere in the scripture which states that a woman should not perform service - be it praying, prophesying, taking up the offering, singing, reading and teaching the Word, etc. - in the assembly of the saints. But rather, there is a divine order in which women pursue that service with a specific divine end. Women you can be deaconesses, but you can not hold the office of a deacon. A marked difference.

So the “woman should pray or prophesy with her head covered.” Again, the reference is not whether she has long hair or a hat on, but rather to what authority she embraces. Women would - during Paul’s time, as well as today - very often wear a covering on their head to testify to the fact that they were under authority. Tragically there are women today who wear head coverings who *aren’t* under authority. And there are women, gratefully so, who do not wear head coverings, who *are* under authority. There are women with long hair who aren’t under authority, and there are women with short hair who are under authority. “Therefore their uncircumcision is made circumcision to them,” because they have a heart for God, they are under authority. But that’s another lesson.

The Divine Covering

In Old Testament times, if a woman was thought to be committing adultery, she was brought by her husband to the priest. “The priest shall set her before the Lord, and uncover her head” (Numbers 5:18). This removed her authority (the authority of her husband, her outward testimony of authority) and brought her open to the judgment of the Lord. “Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his

head. But every woman that prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is even all one as if she were shaved."

When I was a young man in the faith, attending a large denominational Church in Texas, it was once a great enigma to me to observe the odd procedures which took place within that assembly.

After a year or so of attending this assembly, I began to notice a tremendous influence being placed upon personal holiness, to the point of legalism with regard to women's appearance. A suggestion was made that "Their dress sleeves should always go past the elbows." The length of their dresses were also calculated to be such and such. You get my drift. A very strong emphasis was also placed upon the length of the women's hair. Then something puzzling instituted itself. As the women grew their hair long, they began binding their hair up in small buns on top of their head.

Texas can get really hot in the summer and I may have put my hair up too, but I thought this was a strange thing these women were doing. Isn't their hair a covering? So what is it covering? They looked like women with short hair to me. I could see their entire head. Ears and all. It seemed to me the women on the one hand, fulfilled what they viewed was Paul's injunction, but on the other, they negated it. Maybe a little seed of hidden rebellion, I thought to myself.

Then with all of their hair in place these women would come to Church in dresses - the correct length of sleeve and hem - into which they appeared to have been poured. I thought that was a strange enigma. It seems to be the determination of the people of God to strain at gnats and swallow camels.

This is another bunny trail, but, if Diana and I were serving in Saudi Arabia - while, concerning some conditions missionaries in that part of the world live, I would be watching our backs for stray bullets, and, hygienic facilities being what they are in those countries - I doubt very seriously if Diana would grow her hair down to her waist. Diana has beautiful long hair, but practical existence would suggest that she cut her hair as short as possible. And she would still be under my covering.

Prophesying

Prophesying is a broad term. We tend to confine prophesying to "Thus says the Lord."

I actually heard someone stand up in an assembly one Sunday night and say, "Thus says the Lord: I'm a buss. I'm a yellow buss." He went on with other propositions concerning the Lord mobilizing the Sunday school children, but the beginning of his dialogue caused me to discount the remainder of his commentary. We are likely to think of prophesying only in terms of a guy like that one - who has (or says

he has) the gift of prophesy - who stands up in the meeting and proclaims, "Thus says the Lord."

Philip had four daughters who prophesied. The Bible says nothing of the four girls standing up anywhere and proclaiming, "Thus says the Lord." But they prophesied. Prophesying is not limited to "Thus says the Lord." Prophesying is uttering the truth of God in edification, exhortation and comfort. I have been privileged to sit under the ministry of some very Godly women who prophesied; women who spoke words of edification, exhortation and comfort; women who were covered. Anyone who had heard them speak in the assembly knew that they were covered and under authority, because of the manner in which they spoke.

Diana and I were asked to share in a small home meeting in Memphis, Tennessee some time ago. After a short singing session, one of the women stood up to speak. I don't know why we think it is more spiritual to stand when we speak, but we do.

Anyway, she began with the words, "My husband didn't want me to come here tonight. But my responsibility is to serve God. And I'm here." Then she began to chatter on about Abigail.⁴ I almost came out of my seat. She did nothing more than corrupt Abigail. If there is a holier woman in all of holy writ it is Abigail. And that woman corrupted Abigail. How? She was out of order. Divine order. She should have stayed home with her husband. She uncovered her head. She spoke out in the assembly with her head uncovered. Is her responsibility to serve God? Yes. But, she is to serve God through her husband, not in lieu of. There is a chain of command. Because I am such a kind soul, I taugth on Biblical authority that night.

Prophesying is given to address the assembly - speaking in edification, exhortation and comfort, within the divine order, which is the privilege of both women and men in the Church - those anointed by the Lord to so do. Prophesying has a much broader design than we, the Church, have given it. Prophesying and teaching are only different ministries of preaching. There is not a gift of preaching. There is preaching, to be sure, but there is not a *gift* of preaching. Preaching incorporates teaching, exhorting, prophesying, etc. - to build up the body of Christ.

A number of years ago, when I lived in Texas, a missionary spoke to the assembly I was attending. This missionary was a lovely older woman, soft spoken, who had served in Peru for a number of years - a tranquil, proficient woman, who had buried her husband in Peru a year earlier. She was back in the U. S. lecturing on missions. While speaking to our assembly, she wanted to describe the difficulties she and her husband had experienced on the mission field in Peru. She wanted to tell the men, "If you can't pray don't go to the mission field." But she didn't actually use those words. The arrogant, meek-less, loud philosophies of the women's movement would have said, "Men, learn to pray before you go to the mission field." But this reverent

servant didn't say that. Why? Because she had a "meek and a quite spirit which is in the sight of the Lord of great price." Instead she said, "Women, don't go to the mission fields with a man who can't pray." Guess what? Everyone heard - men included. "A meek and a quite spirit in the sight of the Lord is of great price."

A Virtuous Woman

Proverbs 31:10-31

"Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband does safely trust her, so that he shall have no need of spoil." (vs. 10-11)

I hope you don't mind if I speak crudely here. But some men have found it necessary to handle their wives as though they were legal prostitutes. It is necessary for those men to constantly bring something home to their wives in order to maintain harmony in the home. So the wife is nothing more than a legal prostitute. A sad state of affairs indeed.

"The heart of her husband does safely trust her, so that he shall have no need of spoil." If her husband comes home and tells her, "Honey, I just lost my job and we've lost everything we owned." She says, "Honey we've got each other and the Lord." I heard my grandmother say that to my grandfather once. I have never forgotten it. My grandfather "had no need of spoil" because of my grandmother's virtue.

"She will do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life. She seeks wool, and flax, and works willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she brings her food from a far. She rises also while it is yet night, and gives food to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considers a field, and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard." (vs. 12-16)

This woman works inside and outside of her home.

"She girds her loins with strength, and strengthens her arms. She perceives that her merchandise is good; her lamp goes not out at night." (vs. 17-18)

This lamp addresses her communion with the Lord.

"She lays her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff." (vs. 19)

A distaff is a staff which holds on its cleft end the un-spun flax, wool, or tow from which thread is drawn in spinning by hand.

"She stretches out her hand to the poor; yea, she reaches forth her hand to the needy." (vs.20)

This is a very busy woman.

"She is not afraid of the snow for her household; for all her household are clothed with scarlet." (vs.21)

The blood.

"She makes herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates." (vs.22)

I quoted all of that so I could say this. "The woman is the glory of the man." "Her husband is known in the gate." My wife makes me proud. Diana is the keeper at home, but her feet are not in the house, then out of the house, like the woman in Proverbs 6. She's not noisy. She's not boisterous. She has a sense of humor. She isn't religious. Boy what a relief is that. Diana "is the glory of" Jay.

A few years ago, Diana and I and a few other good brothers and sisters gathered together for fellowship, food and the like. One of the men, after dinner said, "I want you women to tell us men what the Lord is saying to the body of Christ today."

First of all it not my wife's responsibility to tell any man what the Lord is doing in the Church today. That's my responsibility. I didn't voice my reaction, which was good because one of the men picked up on the comment and before anyone realized what was happening we were all in Greenland. The subject changed that fast and that far. I thought, God is going to blow on this. But the man wouldn't let go of his statement.

"I don't know if you guys are just trying to cover for your wives, but I still want to know what they think."

Which almost made me quip, "Brother, my wife will not reply to that." But I didn't, because I wanted to see where this interchange would go. The man then addressed Diana directly. So Diana reluctantly said something about what she had prayed for and how God had moved in such and such a way in our life and the like - her presentation was good and very orderly and in order and she really never answered his question.

Then it came around to the second lady and she said, "I've found that I am most serving the Lord when I am serving my husband." I wish I had a tape recorder at that point. She said, "When he brings people home who are working with him; when I am able to take care of their needs; then I am serving the Lord by serving my husband's needs. And by so doing I am giving glory to God." I thought, glory to God. This is marvelous.

Then we came to the wife of the man who first posed the question. She gave a very religious discourse on how she wanted to live a holy life so people could see Jesus in her. I was sick after this. I thought, what a contrast between these two women. One is giving to another and rejoices in another's ministry, the other is saying, "I want to live such a holy life that people will be able to see Jesus in me." Please! I almost blurted out, "Then be the redeemed sinner you are and Jesus might be seen in you." But Diana caught my eye before I spoke - one of her many vocations.

"Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land. She makes fine linen and sells it, and delivers girdles unto the merchants. Strength and honor are her clothing, and she shall rejoice in time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and her tongue is the law of kindness. She looks well to the ways of her household, and eats not the bread of idleness." (vs. 23-27)

She's within her house: Spiritually. An earmark of the harlot addressed in Proverbs 6 is a woman who is without. She's here, she's there, she's never at home. She's eating "the bread of idleness" - another contrast.

"Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but you excel them all. Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates." (vs.28-31).

Have you ever wondered why there are so many divorces among the physically beautiful people in the world? "Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised."

"The woman is the glory of the man . . ." (1 Corinthians 11:9). If the woman is not serving her husband and seeking his good, she is not moving in the order of God and therefore nothing will be blessed. If she is obtaining glory to herself, apart from glory to her husband, it will not be blessed.

The Godly Woman

1 Timothy 5

"Rebuke not an elder, but extort him as a father; and the younger men, as brethren . . ."

I'll use a Biblical law of interpretation called *parallelism* (meaning likeness, correspondence, something similar in aspect of course or tendency) here to explain this passage. The latter, "younger men," gives reference to their chronological age. The

former, “elders,” addresses chronological age as well. That’s parallelism. The “elder” here is not someone in the office of Bishop. He is an older man. Don’t rebuke an older man. But rather, “exhort him as a father.” And the younger men “as brethren.” “The elder women as mothers; the younger, as sisters, with all purity.” The older woman - not an elder in the office of a Bishopress or Elderess, but rather, as an older (chronological) woman. In both verses Paul is drawing a contrast chronologically between older men and younger men, and older women and younger women. The older women are to be treated as “mothers.” The younger women as “sisters” - “with all purity.”

“Honor widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents; for that is good and acceptable before God. Now she that is a widow indeed and desolate” - a widow who doesn’t have family member to support her - “trusting in God, and continues in supplication and prayers night and day.”

I am so grateful for women who pray. Don’t ever stop.

“But she that lives in pleasure is dead while she yet lives. And these things command that they may be blameless. But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”

Men provide. Men support. Men don’t live by faith while sitting at home waiting for someone to mail them a check. That’s abominable. Men who endorse that type of faith should get off their southern most anatomy and go out get a job! “Labor with your hands that which is good.” Do something to put food on the table. Men have a responsibility within the family and within the Church to provide, support, defend and lead. But, as you know, there are men out there who are not (or will not) take on their responsibility - both in the home and in the body of Christ. So what are the women to do? Move into what is the man’s responsibility? Certainly not! Even if we, men, are not assuming our responsibilities, this is no reason for you, women, to move into it. Ladies, if you don’t move into our position, maybe we’ll get hungry enough and go and work. The absence of the man’s duty does not give license for women to move into an office which is not in the divine order.

“Let not a widow be taken into the number under sixty years old, having been the wife of one man” - on the list of the faithful. This concerns support for widows in the Church. The number Paul is concerned with here is the group of widows in this local assembly which are to be supported by the saints in this local assembly - those older widows didn’t have family to look after their needs. It is the responsibility of the

Church of Jesus Christ to see to the needs of those who legitimately have needs. It was a sad commentary on the state of the Church of Jesus Christ when we began looking to Social Security for support of older faithful widows and not the assembly of the saints. Very sad. There are cults who put us to shame when it comes to caring for the needy.

“Let not a widow be taken into the number under sixty years old, having been the wife of one man. Well reported of for good works, if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers” - this verse describes the Godly woman; these are the activities she’s been exercising all her life - “if she has washed the saints’ feet” - cleaned someone else’s toilet; swept someone else’s floor - “if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work.” Couple this with “trusting in God, and continuing in supplication and prayers night and day” - again, this is a busy woman. A Godly woman. This woman has no time to organize a women’s movement.

The influence and philosophy of the world has been so incorporated into womanhood today that many women feel a necessity on their part to make a name for themselves - women are made to feel uncomfortable for not “fulfilling their own destiny” in life.

“But the younger widows refuse; for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they will marry, having condemnation, because they have cast off their first faith. And besides, they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle but tattlers also, and busy bodies, speaking things which they ought not. I will therefore, that the younger women marry, bear children, rule the house.”

Men do not rule the house, the wife does. Whatever my wife wants to cook for dinner, I eat it with all joy. Whatever she wants to do with the family at home, I do it with all joy. I happen to write the checks in our family - I pay the bills. But some women pay all the bills - as far as writing the checks are concerned. If you are a woman in that office, I hope it is because your husband has asked you to be in that office. He has delegated to you that responsibility - you are “ruling the house.” Ruling under authority. That is not disorder. Remember, “she considers a field and buys it.” I may come home some day and Diana says, “Honey, I bought the lot next door to give us a larger yard.” I might say, “With what?” But it is her prerogative to guide our house.

I am afraid the area of divine order has been so corrupted into a domain totally illegitimate before God, to the extent that some women become serfs in their own house. These women are afraid to move, to write a check, to spend a nickel without asking their husband. That’s appalling. My wife is not some feeble-minded, oblivious, deficient, thing I married. If she was, I might question why I married her in the first place. There is a responsibility which belongs to womanhood. There is a responsibility

which belongs to the woman in the assembly of God's people. There is a responsibility which belongs to the woman in the home. And the woman's responsibility fulfills the divine injunction under authority.

"I will therefore, that the younger women marry, bear children, rule the house, give no occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some are already turned aside to Satan" (1 Timothy 5:14,15).

The list continues.

"I will, therefore, that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting" (1 Timothy 2:8).

Men do you do that? If you don't, then don't expect the women - in the next verses - to fall in line. I do not understand why we men expect our women to be what we deem idealistic, when we will not take our own responsibility before God. What kind of an example are we giving?

"In like manner, also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with godly fear and sobriety, not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array, (but which becomes women professing godliness) with good works. Let the women learn in silence with all subjection" (1 Timothy 2:9,8).

The words, *"be silent in the Church,"* in 1 Corinthians 14, and the word *"silence"* here, in 1 Timothy 2, are not the same words. Paul was extorting the Corinthian women, *"if they couldn't do it right, they couldn't do it at all."* He shut them down completely, and, in the same book, addressed the manner in which a woman should minister publicly in the assembly. But here, in 1 Timothy, Paul is using the word which means *quietness*. The same word we have in 1 Peter 3 *"a meek and quite spirit."* Same word. Quietness does not suggest *"no utterance."* Rather, it suggests an *attitude* in the utterance. *"Let the women learn in silence with all subjection."* To have a quite spirit. To have a quite attitude. *"But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over a man, but to be in silence"* - quietness.

"For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived, was in transgression." Paul knew that when the snake came into the garden *"he beguiled the woman."* Why did the serpent *"beguile the woman?"* So he could move her away from the truth of God and give her what seemed to be a logical progression of events. And Eve embraced it. Adam understood everything he was doing. When Eve offered him the fruit, he ate it. Adam knew for certain what he was doing and the results of his conduct. But he ate the fruit anyway. Adam was not

deceived. The woman was deceived. Adam was the one who sinned. Pure and simple. "The sin of Adam." Not the sin of Eve.

There is a nature in women which is deceivable. Some men are deceivable as well, but because of the nature of women, they are more deceivable than men. Like it or not, "the woman, being deceived, was in transgression." Adam's sin, Eve's deception.

What then is the meaning of deceived? To be misled; taken in; beguiled; bluffed; fooled by something or someone with a misleading appearance. All of us know women who have been taken in, fooled, and misled by some good-looking fellow, who is not married, yet raising unwanted, offspring alone. Diana has ministered to a number of women, who have been duped by oily mouth preachers; who have been beguiled by captivating, bewitching orations - left penniless from supporting ministries, which are no more than a paycheck for some guy, who said he was speaking for God.

Again, there is a nature in women which is deceivable. Paul exhorts the necessity of women relating to an authority so that what she teaches, or what she says can be judged. We shouldn't leave Eve alone without a covering, alone with the snake in the garden. It is not valid to put into a woman's hands the responsibility of formulating doctrine, to set that doctrine forth in the Church of Jesus Christ. Because, there is a nature in women which is deceivable.

The major heresies we deal with today were either prophesied by or introduced by women. The Fox sisters, Madame White, Mary Baker Potterson Glover Eddy (let's give her credit for all her husbands), the worship of Mary, all were started by a group of women who said they saw her in a vision and then related this vision to the men in the Church, the National Organization of Women . . . the list goes on and on. Most of the irreverence we see on Christian television today can be traced back to some woman who was completely out of order. We could go on and on.

It is vitally important to the order of the truth of God that a woman, who has a responsible place in teaching - all Churches have many women in that place (and thank God for them) - to relate what they are teaching to their husband or, to a male authority within the Church, if they are unmarried.

Diana has been asked on many occasions to share her wisdom - in teaching to women. On many of these occasions, she has been asked questions concerning doctrinal issues and subjects she felt was not her responsibility. On those occasions she came home and told me about her concerns. First, she told me the questions and secondly, she asked, "what should I do?" Diana's stock goes up a hundred fold each time she responds in that manner; with that attitude. It is not the prerogative of women to establish doctrine. That place belongs to men. Diana is a Godly woman.

Paul said, "I permit not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over a man." In the local assembly of men and women, it is never appropriate for a woman to change the course of the meeting or to direct the course of a meeting, because of the order of the authority from God. That is usurping the authority which belongs to the man. The prerogative for changing the course of a meeting belongs to the man. Why? Because sentimentality can move quickly into the atmosphere of the worship of God, then all of a sudden sentimentality causes the worship of God to go in the wrong direction. Women are naturally more sentimental than men. And that's not a bad thing.

A few years ago, I was in a worship service where the Spirit of the Lord was moving so beautifully, so collectedly, that a flood of excitement fell over the entire body. While the worship leader adjusted his guitar strap, a lady in the back of the congregation began to sing the annoyingly sedate old hymn, "Let's Tell Mother I'll Be There" - not a bad song. But we had just finished, "The Song of Moses." If you don't know "The Song of Moses," let me say here, that the Lord, through that song, had us up on our feet, singing loudly and clapping our hands with joy. The woman caused the meeting to go in the wrong direction because of sentimentality. It took three extra songs to bring the people back from sentiment into the worship of God. The woman was out of order. Sentimentality is motivated by feelings - not by the Spirit of God.

It is so important for all of us to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit - I know more women who are sensitive to the Holy Spirit, than I know men who are - but let us men be wrong. If I blow it in our family, Diana can let me be wrong. She might say, "Honey, I think this is the way we should do such and such a thing." And I might say, "No, I don't think so." But, I could be wrong. And I am wrong on occasions. But not one time has Diana ever said, "I told you so." I am free to fail in our home. So is Diana. So the direction of the home and the Church becomes the prerogative of the men. If we men blow it, let us be wrong. God will deal with us - to be sure.

There are occasions during liturgies when God will give evidence as to what He wants to do next. To God's maleness, we're all female; so He is the ultimate Director. For example - I hesitate saying this for fear of someone trying to direct a meeting to this end:

When the people of God are in the midst of worship before the Lord, hands high, faces aglow in the Spirit of the living God, all at once, God shuts everything off. He'll just stop. Everything and everyone. Do you know what He's saying during those shifts? "You've been ministering to Me, now I am going to be ministering to you." The assembly grows quiet before the Lord. During the stillness the Lord may give an utterance. He may give a tongue, an interpretation, a prophesy, an exhortation, a reading from His word. The Lord is transporting His people into another station in Him. Wonderful. Now, because of us guys, the whole of the assembly may miss His direction. But let us miss it. It becomes the responsibility of the men in the assembly to

pick up on what the Lord wants. Men, wake up to your responsibility! Don't leave the ladies sitting around wondering what's going to happen next; wondering who's going to do what they already know the whole of the assembly should be doing. And they're right!

"In like manner," is how Peter begins his discourse on Godly living in the home. But first, in order for us to understand what "in like manner" Peter is addressing, we'll need to go to chapter 2 of 1 Peter verse 21.

"For even hereunto you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not but committed Himself to Him that judges righteously; who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed. For you were as sheep gone astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." (1 Peter 2:21-25).

Now, "In like manner, you wives, be in subjection to your own husbands that, if any obey not the word" - ladies, if you're married to a chump who will not listen to God, here's how to *fix* him - "if any obey not the word, they also may be won without the word" - that's without preaching - "they may be won by the behavior of the wives." (1 Peter 3:1). You don't need to preach to your husband. You can lay that burden down. You can stop all that preaching. It makes him mad and that's not what God wants you to do anyhow. God wants you to stop preaching at him and serve him. So that, by godly behavior, he'll start thinking, "You know, I think there is something to all this God stuff. This Christianity has done some marvelous things in her. She doesn't nag me anymore. What a relief!"

A lady in Nashville, Tennessee came up to me one day and said, "Brother, I've got this husband who does this and that and so forth." She went on with a whole list of things this guy did, and I have to admit, he did seem to be a wimp of a husband. (I hear this kind of story frequently, so this is not a repeat.) She said, "What should I do?"

I told her (as I usually do on these occasions), "You serve him. You pray for him and serve him."

To which she replied, "Well I've been telling him about the Lord and reading the scripture to him. But he gets mad when I do that."

I said, "Well stop it! Just quit!"

She said, "Oh, but he's got to hear the Gospel."

I said, "Let God give him the Gospel. You just shut up and serve your husband."
(I can be a gentle soul at times.)

A couple of weeks later, she came up to me and said, "I've been doing everything you said to do with my husband, but he still hasn't changed."

I said, "Sister, did you do all that just to get him to change?"

"Why, yes," she whispered, "Isn't that what you meant?"

I said, "No! That's not what I meant at all. You serve your husband because it's right. You do it because, thereby you honor God. Because thereby, the glory of God rests upon you. You do it because that's the way you'll be known before the Lord. You don't do it because you want to change your husband."

She wasn't serving because it was right. She was serving to get her way.

Some time passed and I was back in Nashville. While walking through Greenhill's Mall late one afternoon, this woman ran up to me yelling, "Brother Jay! Brother Jay!" I didn't recognize her at first. But when she said, "Brother Jay!" one more time, right in my face, it all came back. She has a voice no one could ever forget. High pitched, almost surreal. After the last time I spoke with her, I pictured a men's prayer meeting devoted entirely to healing her poor husband's ears.

Anyway, she told me that, "she had done what I suggested and God had changed her husband." They were apparently doing just fine. Bless God.

I was glad she was willing to do the right thing even in the possible event that God was not going to change him. Why? Because it was the right thing to do. Because it was the order of God and therein lies the blessing. But, I also was delighted for his change.

"While they behold your chaste conduct coupled with fear; whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of braiding the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel."

I trust we all know what Peter is saying: "Ladies, don't dress to make yourself seen." Otherwise, this verse could be interpreted as don't wear any clothes at all - "of putting on of apparel" - which is not the case.

"But let it be the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quite spirit, which is in the sight of God a great price. For after this manner in the old times the holy women also who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their husbands, even as Sarah

obeyed Abraham, calling him lord; whose daughters you are, as long as you do well, and are not afraid with any terror.” (1 Peter 3:3-6).

Ladies, you do not have to live in terror. Violence is not to be tolerated by anyone - man or woman. But the scripture does say, “Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord” - which in this context, is a title of honor as when we refer to a well-respected teacher as *sir* or *mister* or *doctor* or the like. This verse really rattles the cages of N.O.W. and the E.R.A. - but therein lies the woman’s blessing.

Priority & Responsibility

“In like manner, you husbands, dwell with them according knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel.” Men, your wife is a weaker vessel - don’t make her live in terror! Men, honor your wife. Esteem her. Meet her needs, which is what honoring her means: Meeting her needs. If your wife needs a hundred dollars for food, don’t go out and spend it on hubcaps for your car. Celebrate your wife. Send her out to get the food she needs. You release her to move out in her area of responsibility with freedom. You speak well of her as a blessed wife. “And as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered” (1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:1-7).

Husbands, are you wondering why you can’t get through to God? Are the heavens like brass to you? Maybe you’re not taking care of your wife.

It scalds me and galls me to hear about men who will not - because of their own inconvenience - do something for their wife - something that she so surly desires - just because it puts them out. It takes up their time. A man like that will leave his wife at home, go out and play his games and never give her an extra thought. He’ll go off on a two week hunting trip, but he will not take his wife on a three day weekend. He’ll say, “We can’t afford it.” How did he afford the hunting trip? How did he afford the gun? If you can’t afford to bless your wife, you can’t afford to do anything but work. If you can’t afford to bless your wife, then you need to be working all hours of the day just to meet the needs of your family. If you can’t afford to bless your wife, then don’t bless yourself. Your wife is the single most important thing in your household. And if you are not serving your wife, then you are not serving God. Men, are you wondering why you can’t get through to God? Are you wondering why the Lord isn’t listening to you? Your prayers are being hindered because you are not giving honor unto your wife.

“But speak you the things which become sound doctrine; that the aged men be sober minded, grave, temperate, sound in the faith, in love, in patience; the aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becomes holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things.” Did you catch that? The women are to be “teachers of good things.” What are they to teach? “That they may teach the

younger women to be sober minded, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed (Titus 2:1-5)." This is to whom and what Phoebe (the deaconess) preached.

I hear women say, "But, my ministry calls me away." But your floors need scrubbing. And your husband is left to honor God in a dirty house. A dirty house is an indication, not only of a woman who is out of order, but one who has a very serious spiritual deficiency. A dirty car, sloppy clothes, an unkempt family, unruly children ("the glory of the father is seen through the sons") indicates the spiritual condition of a man. My father always told me to look at a man's shoes. He said that you could tell how a man behaves by the condition of his shoes. "Even if they're old shoes," he said, "if they're clean and shiny, the man's conduct will be honorable." Some men haven't picked up a wet towel after a bath since they were five years old. You guys just drop the wet towel on the floor and expect your wife to come along behind you and pick it up - which makes her frustrated. She starts to think, "If he doesn't care about the house, why should I care about it?" Men, mow the grass. Put a load of dirty clothes in the washer. At least look busy. Take the kids out for an afternoon. Give your wife some time for herself. Do something to encourage her. Do the dishes. Sweep the floor. I do. It hasn't killed me yet.

"That they may teach the younger women to be sober minded, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." That's a serious charge. Sister, if you're not doing some of these things, or at least trying to do some of these things listed here and you feel like the Lord wants you to go out and preach, forget it! The glory of God will not rest upon your words.

There is such a thing as priority in responsibility. The priority in responsibility for the woman is to be a keeper at home; to teach the young women to love (respect) their husbands. The priority in responsibility for the man is to love his wife and provide for his own household. If the husband is not at least trying to provide for his own household, he has denied the faith and is behaving worse than an infidel; he may as well live like some lost reprobate on the street and get it over with.

There are men within the Church who proclaim, "I'm living by faith." And with the next breath, those same men, will ask you for a little money. Work. "Labor with the hands that which is good." I meet men who tell me, "I just can't make enough money to pay my bills." But those same men will not accept a job they consider minimal. That staggers me. Look in the want-ads. You'll find pages and pages of listings for jobs; companies looking for people to work - to labor. And they pay real money - maybe not the money you want, but something is better than nothing. "But I can't do that kind of job. I'm overqualified." Are you overqualified to starve? Somehow that seems to be

the quandary which embraces us all. "But that job is beneath me." Well, God went beneath you to save you. That attitude in men is incredible. It is nothing more than arrogance. Pride. And God hates it!

About ten years ago, Diana and I returned home from a multi-month mission trip completely broke - having just enough money to rent a two room apartment and a couple of days food rations. I remember sitting on the floor of our unfurnished harbor wondering what we were going to do next. We had read about Muller's faith; how, through his prayers and faith God supplied abundantly for his orphanage - so we thought we'd give that a try.

So we prayed. And we waited. And we prayed again. And waited a while longer - a week as I recall. Well, by now our food had run out, and our rent was coming due in a couple of weeks, so I said, "Maybe we should ask the Lord what He wants us to do." My intelligence overwhelms me sometimes. Diana agreed and we began to pray, "Lord, what would you have us do?" The Lord was very quick and very clear in His answer, "Jay, go get a job!" So I did. The only job I could find was one that paid \$5.50 per hour. So I took it. And you know within six months we saved five hundred dollars - I still don't know how (Diana can stretch a dollar). We had saved enough for me to quit that job and start looking for one that paid more - one more in my field of expertise. Guess what, within two weeks I was the senior copywriter at a large ad agency and we never looked back. We moved into a bigger apartment and got fat. But if I had originally said, "NO! That's not faith." - to the \$5.50 an hour job - I really believe we'd be on the street today - still wondering when the Lord was going to deliver us. Some of us are Muller's. Some of us are Allen's. Some of us are . . . well, you know who you are.

I want every woman to know that we men thank God for all of you. You who have "a meek and quiet spirit." Personally, I thank the Lord for Diana everyday. I thank the Lord for Daisy Laybourn. This woman could out preach most men - although, never to men. I thank the Lord for my mother. I thank the Lord for my granny Ruby. There are many women in my life who have "a meek and quite spirit," and I thank God for them all. It's marvelous to have women like these around. Mothers in the faith. Mothers in Israel. They're not trying to make a name for themselves. Diana has made a name for her family, and by so doing she has made a name for herself. One of the things I like about Diana is that I have to force her buy what she needs. I'm not suggesting that that's right. As a matter of fact, sometimes that characteristic in her angers me. She'll wear out all of her shoes and I'll scream, "Go buy some new shoes!" She has that marvelous characteristic. I have a friend who can't stop his wife from buying. She has more new clothes than anyone could wear in a year's time. So in contrast, I really appreciate Diana's characteristic. She had a credit/debit card in her purse for over a year before she used it once. Thank you dear.

As men and husbands, women and wives, give to one another, everything we desire from one another begins to flow in abundance. When we are operating within the divine order of God, we bless our mate, our Church and give glory to God.

Men, love your wives. Women, honor your husbands. In the Lord.

¹ see (1 Corinthians 11:1-11)

² see (Genesis 6:1-4)

³ see (1 Corinthians 11:11-14)

⁴ Abigail: see 1 Samuel 25.

chapter six
If you can't lick-um . . . join-um

*"He that hath an ear
Let him hear what the Spirit says
To the churches . . ."*
Revelation 3.

I want to begin here to elaborate on the truth of the grace of God found in the reconciliation which Christ Jesus rendered on behalf of His redeemed and the salvation we have received because of that grace. Hopefully we will begin to recognize why we, the church - publicly and privately - perform and function the way we do and why everything is overcome by religion - what a man worships, that's what he serves.

All religions are not alike.

Christianity, as it happens, is the only religion built around, and because of God's love. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Because of God's love, Jesus came to earth to save sinners - a category into which all men fit. He loves us. He forgives us. He accepts us. Now all this may seem natural, routine, inevitable - maybe even boring to intelligent Church folk - but it's not universal.

Hinduism is a religion that established a caste system distinguished by relative degrees of ritual purity or pollution and of social status. Hinduism revolves around *Samsara*, the cycle of death and rebirth - being reincarnated from one physical life to the next. There is no escape from man's transgressions in Hinduism - the sum of a person's actions in this and previous states of existence, decide their fate in this and future existences (*karma*). A Hindu crippled is in his state, says Hinduism, because of one of his previous immoral lives. Hinduism teaches that, because of personal transgressions, a Hindu must be born from one earthly life into another, after another, . . . until the devote removes all tendency to go astray - at which time the Hindu will float off into a transcendent, ethereal nirvana. (This is never really explained in Hinduism because no one has ever reached that level of being and come back to tell the tale).

Buddhism (founded by Siddhartha Gautama in northeastern India in the 5th century B.C.) is a reform of Hinduism that rejected the caste system, but still seeks escape from the suffering of "being" by attaining "non-being". Buddhism has no creator god and gives a central role to the doctrine of karma. The "four noble truths" of Buddhism state that all existence is suffering, that the cause of suffering is desire, that freedom from suffering is nirvana, and that this is attained through the "eightfold path" of ethical conduct, wisdom, and mental discipline (including meditation). There are

two major traditions in Buddhism, *Theravada* (the more conservative) and *Mahayana*. The Mahayana tradition emerged around the 1st century A.D. and is typically concerned with altruistically oriented spiritual practice as embodied in the ideal of the bodhisattva (a person who is able to reach nirvana but delays doing so out of compassion in order to save suffering beings) - Mahayana is practiced in a variety of forms especially in China, Tibet, Japan, and Korea.

Islam is a religion built on forced conversion and conquest. It is a religion of the saber. Founded in the Arabian peninsula in the 7th century A.D., it is now the professed faith of nearly a billion people worldwide, particularly in North Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Asia. The ritual observances and moral code of Islam were said to have been given to Muhammad as a series of revelations, which were codified in the Koran (*Qu'ran*, their holy book). Islam is regarded by its adherents as the last of the revealed religions, and Muhammad is seen as the last of the prophets, building on and perfecting the examples and teachings of a number of Old and New Testament prophets. There are two major branches in Islam: the *Sunni* who are commonly described as orthodox and the *Shi'ia* who rejected the first three Sunni caliphs (the chief Muslim civil and religious rulers) and regard Ali, the fourth caliph, as Muhammad's first true successor. Islam does not put a value on love or forgiveness. The Shi'ia have still not forgiven the Sunni for the death of Hussein at the Battle of Karbala in 680 A.D. They are constantly at war with one another - and - anyone who opposes them.

In Western culture, Jesus has become the universal symbol of love, acceptance and forgiveness. Invoking His life gives everyone the chance to start afresh. That is why the Christian religion has such a personal appeal to all. Christianity transforms people's lives - everyone from Presidents, Kings and on down to you and I.

I remember visiting Ebenezer Baptist church in Austin, Texas one Sunday morning a few years ago. This Church is an amazing place - the sanctuary seats around 2,000 people, with a 50-member choir, who perform gospel anthems with the polish of a Broadway chorus. At the end of the service, the Pastor (I can't recall the good brother's name) asked if anyone wanted to come down to the altar and "accept Jesus." Many did. I remember one dolled-up woman in her late 20's sobbing uncontrollably as she approached the front rail. After a few moments she stood up, almost beaming, shouting, "I'm free!" "I'm free!" Whatever her life had been before, it was changed. And all because of a Man, who walked the earth some 2000 years ago.

We in the West are incredibly lucky to have inherited our Christian tradition. There is no forgiving others in Islam - only the beheading of enemies (the Prophet practiced it himself). Finding your spiritual destiny in Islam means becoming a jihad warrior. Even in Buddhism confession is not like the Christian confession, where there is a knowing of forgiveness and atonement in Christ. Instead, Buddhism involves confessing to your fellow monks that you have not yet succeeded in obliterating the

desires of self and cutting all ties with the world (i.e., “confessing your sins one to another” and then keeping them!)

This truth of universal love, acceptance and forgiveness saturates our Western culture, creating a grand equality among all people - believer and non-believer alike. Long before Thomas Jefferson wrote that “All Men are Created Equal” or the French philosopher declared the “Universal Rights of Man,” the apostle Paul declared, “In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, you are all one in Christ Jesus.” With that deceleration we love our brothers as ourselves. But, contrary to other religions, we also love our enemies. We love our enemies because we realize that our enemies are also a part of God’s created humanity. This ideal of the fraternity of humanity is what has enabled us in the West to establish free democracies, abolish slavery, and create peaceful societies - so that even today we continue to try to wipe out every trace of inequality among sexes, races, and classes. We’ve failed in our trying many times, but because of our Western religion - Christianity - we still put forth a good effort.

What A Man Worships, That's What He Serves

Religions shape the personalities of whole cultures. Religion is a template for a society. What a religion says makes an enormous difference in how a society and individuals within a society act in life and in history. In fact, religion is history itself. Or as my dear bride likes to put it, “History is His-story.” I like that. We in the West live in a civilization that has been created by Christianity. Because Christianity is in the very air we breathe, the water we drink and the ground we walk, it’s easy for us to forget its role - or even to assume that we don’t need it at all. That’s why supposedly “far-sighted” intellectuals can point to the rings of Saturn or the Universe itself and assert that it contains far more beauty than all the soiled religious superstitions of humanity.

This was actually declared at a salvo called, “Beyond Belief,” a seminar held at the Salk Institute in November 2006. As part of the festivities, British biologist, Richard Dawkins touted his best-selling book, *The God Delusion*; Neil deGrasse Tyson, director of the Hayden Planetarium, showed pictures of deformed babies to prove God doesn’t exist; Nobel-prize-winning physicist, Steven Weinberg, declared, “the world needs to wake up from its long nightmare of religious belief.” And Carolyn Porco, of the Space Science Institute in Boulder, showed pictures of Saturn’s rings and said they were “more beautiful than anything in the Bible.” Yet they all forget - in their non-religion Religion - that once they arrive on Saturn, they’ll need enough God-given oxygen to enjoy its beauty.

Why would the people at this salvo subscribe to such nonsense? Because few churches today seem to be preaching the biblical Gospel. The Gospel is not “God loves

you and has a wonderful plan for your life," nor is it "God gives you meaning for life." The Gospel is good news for bad people. It is objective, not subjective. The Gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, being born under the law, as a human, living a perfect life by the aid of the Holy Spirit, and giving His life as a substitutionary sacrifice for others. But it doesn't stop there. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ Jesus was raised from the dead, ascended into heaven, and promises to return to consummate His kingdom.

It is by faith alone - *sola fide* - that we are justified. His righteousness is imputed to us and appropriated to us by faith alone. However this biblical Gospel is not being faithfully preached in many churches. Christianity for many is just a subjective affair between the individual and his own construct of God. Christians today are shifting from a historic faith towards a more amorphous spirituality - epitomized by the trivializing of God, our human condition, and the salvation wrought by God in Christ for us. We need to sort out the true gospel from the gimmickry or many will continue to be led away by the promise of "peace, peace" where there is none.

The Word Alias

In 1 Corinthians 11, the Apostle Paul addressed himself to the false apostles and prophets who come into the body of Christ and preach, what Paul refers to as "another Jesus" - the word *another*, is the Greek word, *alios*; meaning: another of the same kind (Our English word *alias* is also drawn from the same Greek word) - "another Jesus" who looks and acts like the Jesus we've heard about, but he's not the same Jesus at all. He doesn't have the same reliable qualities as the Jesus we know from our Bible - he's another Jesus of the same kind - an alias savior. He's a Jesus who *seems* compassionate, loving, and redemptive, - everything the people of God know the real Jesus to be - but when we are exposed to this other Jesus, we experience another gospel of a different kind: a *false gospel* - a gospel of regulations and requirements jumbled up with grace. By accepting this message, we thereby receive another spirit of a different kind, which carries the Church away from God-loving to people-loving. Jesus did not preach, "Embrace love and thereby redeem the world." Jesus preached, "Embrace Me and forsake the world!"

Embracing love to redeem the world is nothing more than humanism. Humanism makes man the measure of all things. What man says is no longer from God's word, but rather from the human spirit, which has nothing in common with the Word of the Eternal God. Humanism is a gospel of sorts - a gospel of a different kind. It comes across like good news, but it isn't good news at all. Humanism is a false gospel. Humanism teaches that man is the measure of all things. But, if man is the measure of all things, then all is lost.

There is also another alias gospel floating around a few Christian denominations which teaches that, "God will do something for you if you will first do something for Him." Again, this is no better than Humanism. And, like humanism, this alias gospel places man at the center of his own destiny - man's obedience is rewarded with righteousness and favors and his disobedience is met with swift disapproval - which is nothing more than the Law. The Law said, "If you'll do this, then I'll do this." Grace says, "It's finished!"

The law was never a means of justification (Acts 15:10,11; Galatians 2:16,21; 3:39,14,17,21,24,25) - a means for redemption. Nor did the law change the provision or vacate the promise of God in His Covenant with Abraham. "Abraham believed God and God counted him as righteous." Abraham believed God before his circumcision, before any of his works (Romans) and God counted him righteous before the Law. The law was given as a rule for living, to a people already in the covenant of the faith of Abraham: a circumcised (in the flesh) people; covered by a blood sacrifice (the Passover lamb). The obedience of the people of God Israel, to the Law of God wasn't for justification (redemption) - "a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:28) - nor was the Law given as a way - by obedience - to get a bunch of neat stuff from God. The Law was given as a means to separate the people of God, Israel from every other nation. Obedience always brings separation and blessings, but not necessarily a bunch of neat stuff.

Israel misinterpreted the purpose of the Law (1 Timothy 1:8-10) and sought righteousness by good deeds and ceremonial ordinances, and rejected their own Messiah (John 1:10,11). Repetition is the price of knowledge, so I'll restate my point here, the law was given not as a means of salvation nor was it given as a way - by someone's obedience to the Law - to earn brownie points or pick up special obedience prizes from God. The Law was given as a means by which a people already redeemed, already separated as a nation, might through obedience fulfill their proper destiny as a people for God's possession, a holy nation, a kingdom of priest. The Law didn't redeem Israel then, and it certainly won't redeem us now. And our obedience to a bunch of rules - Biblical or not - won't oblige God to bless us with prosperity. I myself would much prefer to be gathered together with Lazarus, rather than with the rich man in Luke 16.

In Exodus 19 we read, "Now, therefore, if you will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine." If we compare 1 Peter 2, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood an holy nation, a people of His own." And Revelation 1:6 and 5:10: "And has made us a kingdom of priest unto God and His Father" . . . "and has made us unto our God a kingdom of priest," we begin to see what was then under the conditional Law is now under grace, freely given to the believer. The preposition is the

object of the Law. "If" is the essence of the law - as a method of divine dealing, which is why "the law made nothing perfect" (Hebrews 7:18,19). In the New Covenant the promise precedes the requirement; at Sinai the requirement preceded the promise. We, as the church, are saved by grace and we walk as responsible sons in obedience. We are not first obedient and then because of our obedience made righteous - saved. We are saved because of, and in our disobedience, because of the obedience of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us!

"If " is not good news. "It is finished!" is Good News.

"It is finished" is the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ! That's what the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ should believe and preach! But that is not what we hear coming from a lot of the Christian pulpits and Christian schools and seminaries in our so-called Christian arenas. But why? What's happened? I believe the answer to these questions lies in the method in which we are instructed, the schools we attend, and the manner in which we are forced to interpret the Holy Bible itself.

Institutions

Our universities and schooling systems had their beginnings in pagan institutions. The establishment of the university system in the Middle Ages occurred in connection with the renewed interest in the writings of Aristotle and other pagan philosophers. The original *universitas magistrorum et scholarium*, the university of professors and students, studied along with pagan philosophers the *corpus juris civiles*, the body of civil law, which dates back from pre-Christian, pagan times.¹

"The reason for the far-reaching autonomy of this new form of institution lay in a spontaneous scientific interest, an intense desire to know and understand for the sake of truth, which was willing to risk conflict to achieve its aims. It was decided without official authorization or sanction to study the legal code of the Roman emperor Justinian, which had been virtually disregarded for 500 years and which was nowhere in force. The attention was focused on the natural-philosophical and metaphysical writings, just then available for the first time in Latin translation, of Aristotle, who stood under suspicion of heresy."²

Schools and universities resolved "to bring the new rational knowledge into agreement with the articles of faith."³ Scholasticism decided that man must gain the worldly knowledge of the pagans along with the wisdom of the Word of God in order to make man a real intellectual. The Bible was relegated to the teaching of redemption and the Christian life. "Aristotle, in contrast, became the source of all valid knowledge of the world, that is, for the realm of natural science, social analysis, and so on. From then on, in other words, God's word was no longer regarded as reliable for these areas of knowledge. Later, Aristotelian philosophy would be replaced by newly developed

science that hastily blamed the cosmological errors of Aristotle on God's word."⁴ Eta Linnemann, *Ibid.*

Thoughts on Aristotle

Aristotle was an essentialist. He believed in essence. He believed everything possesses its own essence. For example, he believed that rocks have their own essence. And because of their essence, a rock tossed in the air falls back to the ground because it is seeking its own essence, seeking what is its own. The rock must return back to its essence. This, essence theory was taught in schools and universities as truth for almost 2000 years (Aristotle lived 384-322 B.C.), until Newton came up with a little thing called gravity. Aristotle also believed the same essence existed in air, water, etc. He, and those who followed him taught this belief as science. They believed water flows into itself because it must seek its own essence. So does light, etc.

Do you see a pattern here? All of these theories have been disproved, but our schools and universities still hold to the disciplines of Aristotle and continue to tutor our students to that means. But why?

Aristotle also said that spiders have six legs. Teachers believed and taught school children about six-legged spiders for some time - esteeming Aristotle - until someone decided to count the spider's legs. Again, if Aristotle was wrong on these subjects, and I have only listed a few here, why are we still teaching this man's work and writings as if he is the representation of all learning, higher reasoning and religion? It makes no sense. Does it?

For those of you dear readers who have not had the opportunity to read Aristotle, here's a few tidbits.

The Ethics of Aristotle

Now there are some kinds of expenditure that we describe as honorable, e.g. service paid to the gods - votive offerings, buildings and sacrifices - and similarly with anything of a religious nature; and all objects of public-spirited ambition, e.g. in any case where it is thought to be a duty to make a fine show by the provision of a chorus, . . . Aristotle, Ethics, Book Four: Other Moral Virtues (ii.) [1122b1-21]

The word *votive*, means something given or dedicated in fulfillment of a pledge or vow or something expressing or symbolizing a wish, desire or vow. Sound similar to what a great deal of public ministers tell us we should do?

"Plant a seed!" - *ecclesiastical hierarchy* speak for: "Send us your money." "Pay your vow to God." "Tell God your desire." "Give in sacrifice: to our new building,

service, work, etc. It's your duty to God. For we're (I'm) doing the work of the Lord and because of your pledge to God you're my partner in this work. If you do this for God, then He will give you your desires." Etc., etc. . . . funny where all of this "*service paid to the gods - votive offerings, buildings and sacrifices - and similarly with anything of a religious nature*" began, isn't it?

I'm not suggesting we stop giving; the Bible counsels us to give. Neither am I suggesting that we stop supporting the church or the men in the church who are doing the work of the Lord. Yet, the New Testament does not command a sacrifice or a tithe; giving a tenth of your earnings to the church. Tithing was never elaborated upon by the New Testament writers - Jesus included - but *giving* was. The church house is not the New Covenant equivalent of the storage house of the Old Covenant. The tithe went the way of the ceremonial Law, of which it was a part. If that were not so then we'd better change a few lines of our beloved hymns. Such as: "All to Jesus I surrender" could be changed to, "*A tenth to Jesus I surrender, I surrender a tenth.*" In the New Covenant, we surrender everything to God. That means our money, time, talent - everything. We give, with a cheerful heart; "For God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). Give to those who ask. Give to the poor. Give to those who are in need. Give to the work of the ministry. Give, Period! Money, time and talent. But that's not tithing. New Covenant giving is greater than 10%. It is 100%. So I'm suggesting that we be "sober-minded, and watch unto prayer." And keep in mind, "there shall be false teachers among you, who secretly shall bring in destructive heresies. . . and through covetousness shall they, with feigned words, make merchandise of you" (2 Peter 2:1-3). Watch.

Aristotle Continues . . .

Greatness of soul, as the very name suggests, is concerned with things that are great, and we must first grasp of what sort these are. It makes no difference whether we consider the disposition of the person who corresponds to it.

Aristotle, Book Four: Other Moral Virtues (iii.) [1123a31-b13]

Think of the many times you have heard men say something like, "Don't look at me, look at what God is doing *through* me." In other words, "don't look at my disposition. Don't look at the way I run my life, work or ministry, look at the great things that are being done through me and my anointed work. Love the sinner, but hate the sin." Where's that in the Bible?

Well, a person is considered to be magnanimous (courageously noble in mind and heart) if he thinks that he is worthy of great things, provided that he is worthy of them: because anyone who esteems his own worth unduly is foolish,

and nobody who acts virtuously is foolish or stupid . . . On the other hand the man who has too low an opinion is pusillanimous (lacking courage; cowardly): and it makes no difference whether his worth is great or moderate or little, if his opinion of it is too low. . . the great man (who thinks himself great) estimated himself at his true worth. The other shows excess and deficiency. (Ibid.)

If we follow Aristotle's train of thought, when the apostle Paul called himself "the chief among sinners," he was right! Paul's not worthy of any other title than "sinner." And certainly not worthy of the title: apostle, because he is a man with low self-esteem and obviously is pusillanimous.

In others words, Aristotle asserts, "whatever you think yourself to be, that is what you are," which is not from God. "The powers that be are ordained by God," said the apostle Paul to the Roman church. Pilate said, "I have the power to crucify you." Jesus corrected him, "You could have no power at all against Me, except it were given you from above" (John 19:10,11). Pilate thought himself to be in power, when in truth, he was in power because God had ordained him to be in power. Pilate could think what he wanted - his thoughts did not give him his power, his thoughts only gave him pride.

From Aristotle's book on ethics, and his other writings we have formed the idea that, "we must love ourselves before we can love others." Although the Bible states just the opposite. Our love for others comes before any love we may have for ourselves. "God loved us first," so we love others first - we follow His example, not Aristotle's. God loved us first and gave Himself for us, and to us, and because of that love given us we are told to love the brethren - so we love the brethren. The love given us enables us to love others - even our enemies. God's love to us comes first. The love that God births in us, births the love we have to and for Him, and to and for others.

Aristotle also gave us the idea of holding our preachers and people in high offices in the church, in greater esteem than we do our layman, our regular church members. No one in the early church was referred to as a layman, in terms of how we define the word today.

Happiness.

Aristotle's goal of highest human good.

Aristotle's whole goal was to show men how to become good and why happiness can, and should, be our goal. "Our task is to become good men," Aristotle said, "or achieve the highest human good. That good is happiness."

Aristotle was the first humanitarian torchbearer to introduce psychology into the study of human behavior. I don't know who introduced psychology into the church,

but “one achievement with which Freudianism ought to be credited is the leading part it has played in the present collapse of responsibility in modern American society” (Jay E. Adams, *Competent To Counsel*)⁵. That collapse has bled into the church, so that we are no longer told that we are wrong; that we are sinners. It's not us. It must be something in our past which makes us drunkards, thieves, adulterers, and etc.; it can't be the fact that we're all sinners in need of the Savior. It can't be our responsibility. It must be something, or someone else. The idea of sin makes us unhappy. Uncomfortable. We don't want to be unhappy because happiness is our goal. Isn't it?

The Father's Goal

There are sins which everyone acknowledges as indefensible, but there are others which a few within the Church seek to justify. It is surprising to see what ingenuity people will exercise when seeking to find excuses where self is concerned. When confronted with a sin, ignorance, never being tutored or a lack of understanding are all employed as excuses for our irresponsible, sinful behavior. None of which deal with our sin, only with the reason for our sin. We ask forgiveness for our rationale, not for our sin. To ask forgiveness for the reason we sin is not the same as asking forgiveness for our sin.

The cunning of the old serpent, which appeared in the excuses of our first parents, seems here to supply the place of our wisdom. When we commit a sin it is common for us to give it another name covetousness becomes *thrift* - malignant contentions become *fidelity for the truth*, fanaticism becomes *zeal for God*, arrogance becomes *humility* - and thereby we become reconciled to our sin and are ready to enter on a vindication, instead of penitently confessing and forsaking it. Sin makes us unhappy so we don't deal with it - in us or in others.

God's goal is not for believers to be happy and thereby redeem the world by our happy example. God's goal is not happiness at all. God's goal is redemption. “In this world you will have trouble.” God's goal is love. God's goal is to show us how much He loves us, John 3:16; 1 John 3:1, and how much we should love others, 1 John 3:14,18. “We love Him because He first loved us.” That is the Father's goal; love and redemption. In *The Problem of Pain*⁶, C. S. Lewis said, “I do not feel that God is so much interested in our happiness as He is in us knowing how to love and to be loved.”

We are learning how to love and to be loved, by the love given to us by our Father in heaven, by Jesus Christ our Lord, through the power of the Holy Spirit. For “we glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation works patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:3-6 AV). That's us.

“Now the end of the commandment is love” (1 Timothy 1:5) - not happiness, as Aristotle teaches.

*Enemies of the Cross of Christ:
A Few Names from History*

Our dear Martin Luther said in his *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*⁷: “Virtually the entire *Ethic*⁸ of Aristotle is the worst enemy of grace. It is an error to maintain that Aristotle’s statement concerning happiness does not contradict Catholic doctrine.” (This was written before the Reformation. The only church in existence at this time was Catholic. We must differentiate between what is now the Roman Catholic Church and the Church Martin Luther is referring to here, which is the Catholic, or the Church Universal - *universal* which is the true meaning of the word catholic). “It is an error to say that no man can become a theologian without Aristotle. Indeed, no one can become a theologian unless he becomes one without Aristotle. Briefly, the whole Aristotle” (Aristotle’s writings) “is to theology as darkness is to light. We are not masters of our actions, from beginning to end, but servants. We do not become righteous by doing righteous deeds, but, having been made righteous, we do righteous deeds.” This could have been written today. Maybe it should be!

Martin Luther and the other Reformers had the same fight on their hands as we do today. The Devil has no new tricks. He is very boring and very predictable in his work. God is creative. The enemy can only do his same tricks over and over again. He can only deceive and introduce to the Church his good-looking deceivers - sadly, we are, at times gullible enough to fall for his same old tricks over and over again.

The Reformers and others like them dealt with false teachers and enemies of the Cross the same as we do today. Enemies such as, Pelagius (360-420 A.D.), a native of Britain who denied original sin. He held that justifying grace is given according to merit and given regardless of sinless perfection possible after baptism. (Augustine, who lived at the same time as Pelagius, vigorously attacked his teachings.) Also John Duns Scotus (1306 A.D.), a leader of the Scottish school which taught freedom of the will and the superiority of the will over the intellect. He denied the real distinction between the soul and its faculties. William of Ockham (1280-1349 A.D.) was a Franciscan school man, a nominalist, who stated that reason could not be applied to theology. He published commentaries on Aristotle and Porohry. Porohry (233-303 A.D.) was a Neoplatonic follower of Plotinus and a bitter opponent of Christianity. And of course, Erasmus of Rotterdam (1469-1536 A.D.), who was the greatest of the Renaissance humanists. In his *Praise of Folly*, Erasmus starts by criticizing everything the church’s Creator holds dear; celebrating youth, pleasure, drunkenness and the dizzying sexual desires which he said, “created us all.” Erasmus examined human pretension, foibles and frailties, mocked theologians and monks, and praised the “folly” of simple Christian piety. While Luther was trying in his day and age to revive the

Pauline/Augustine doctrines of grace with his *The Bondage of the Will*, Erasmus and other humanists and Aristotle theologians were publishing books and teachings on the freedom of the will. It hasn't changed.

I must give Erasmus a note of tribute here, for he, as a linguist did give us wonderful translations of the ancient texts. Although he used the translations to sway the Church into error, they are, themselves very good translations.

Listed above are a few names from the pages of history who were enemies of the Cross of Christ. I did this to help you, my dear redeemed reader, to understand that the enemies that are against the teaching of the Word of God today are the same enemies who were on the scene in history past - only the names have changed.

The essence which is lurking behind Aristotle, Erasmus, and other humanists, is the same spirit lurking behind the false prophets and false teachers of today. That essence or spirit, being their concern for freedom, merit, and good works in human pride - a desire to have something to offer God that will blunt the enormity of our need for grace. I fear that the wrong kind of concern for human responsibility, which they teach, will soon connect with the self-centeredness that is the result of original sin. Such pride of self is the enemy of the gospel, which calls us to receive what God offers in Christ Jesus humbly, and without conditions. Both human wickedness and human achievements stand judged by the Cross, to the extent that either represents an attempt to live without God and by human strength alone. If anyone believes that he can obtain grace by invoking the good that is in him, then he is adding sin to sin - he is now doubly guilty. "Christ has become of no effect unto you . . . you are fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4). Sin does not makes us fall from grace. Trying to obtain that grace by our own efforts does. The gospel is sharply set against human wisdom and human achievements - even, and especially, the best that we humans have to offer.

Although I disagree with much of Aristotle's teaching on science and theology, I will give him credit for his word usage. Aristotle has taught me much about writing. His work on character and thought - chicken and egg - is wonderful. He asked, "Which came first?" His solution was simple: "Plot is character. Forget psychology. Forget the inside of men's heads. Judge them by their actions."

For example: You're in a room conversing with a few friends. One of your friends, sitting in a chair across from you, falls asleep. From that action, you take it that your friend has no interest in what you have to say. The puzzle is, that being the case, why is your friend here at all? So we construct a plot from his actions. You stir a bit in your chair - waking your friend from his sleep. Your friend apologies, looks at his watch and leaves the room. Aristotle would say, "the next question is not why . . . but what is he going to do next?" So the plot thickens. Plot is character.

. . . show me any one of the whole race of mortals, even if he is the holiest and most righteous of them all, to whom it has ever occurred that the way to righteousness and salvation is the way of faith in One who is both God and man, who for the sins of men both died and rose again and is seated at the right hand of the Father; or show me any who has ever dreamed that of this wrath of God which Paul here says is revealed from heaven (Romans 1). Look at the greatest philosophers; what have been their thoughts about God, and what have they left in their writings of the wrath to come? Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*.⁹

If we are characterized by poverty of soul, broken-heartedness, joylessness, discontentedness, unhappiness, it is ourselves and not the Lord's doing; the fault is entirely ours. He has set before us a rich feast: "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined" (Isaiah 25:6 AV). If we choose to feed on the dross and drivel of the world's ideologue theorists, Aristotle, Erasmus, and the like, we will become poverty-stricken in soul and body, as poor as church mice. Our Lord is no close-fisted, penny-pinching Host, nor does He want us to partake of His bounties sparingly: "Eat O friend; drink yea, drink abundantly, O beloved" (Song of Solomon 5:1 AV) is the song of His largeness to us. "Open your mouth wide" is His call; "and I will fill it" is His promise (Psalm 81:10). We should be deeply ashamed before Him if we are crying, "My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me" (Isaiah 24:16) because we have compromised our beliefs, following the philosophy and the philosophers of this world to achieve happiness. Such leanness brings no honor to the Lord. Such leanness was the characterization of the children of Israel in the land of Pharaoh.

Get out of Egypt!

We are seeing a lot of compromises mandated within the Church today. Allowances which possess flavors tantamount to those urged by Pharaoh upon the people of God, Israel.

"And Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only you shall not go very far away" (Exodus 8:28). Worship if you want, but don't venture far from Egypt - the end of which is conformity with the world.

"Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion has light with darkness? . . . What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God . . . Wherefore, come out from among them, and be you

separate, said the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you"
(2 Corinthians 6:14-17).

The principle in the Word of God is simple: it is impossible for the Lord to fully bless us as long as we are in compromise or complicity with the world. We are to live - in the world - separate from the world's system and the evil therein - separate in desire, motive and action. Pharaoh's suggestion simply implies, "Don't be so unworldly. You can keep your head in the clouds, but keep your feet on the ground." Pharaoh finally suggests that Israel could offer sacrifice to the Lord but they should let their children stay in Egypt for their protection. "For evil is before you," in the wilderness. Egypt offers your children safety (Exodus 10:27). There are many Godly men and women who (in ignorance, I believe) desire prosperity and position in the world for their children. Be separate. Get out of Egypt! The song of the elect in this day should be, "I don't want to go back to Egypt, I want to live in the Promise Land." But is it?

Silencing The Elect

"I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is; and thou holdest fast My name, and hast not denied My faith, even in those days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate" (Revelation 2:13-15 KJV).

What was the doctrine of Balaam? "If you can't lick-um . . . join-um" (paraphrased from Numbers). The way of Balaam is to sell your gift for hire. Balaam's doctrine said to Balak, "Hey, you'll never wipe out these Israelites - go and mingle in with them." So the false teachers moved in with all their doctrines of immorality, and mixed in with the people of God.

If you can take from the people of God, the privilege of knowing the Lord, and ministering to the Lord individually, you can then take from the people of God the privilege of knowing what He is saying in His book. If you can take the privilege of interpreting the scripture away from the people of God, and place that privilege into the hands of a select group of church officials, then the people of God become slaves of the group who know and hold the Book. That's the Nicolaitans!

Nicolaitans, some believe, were the followers of the emperor Nicholas. Probably not.

Somewhere around 800 A.D., Nicholas introduced a fatal word into the Nicene Creed, *Filioque*, meaning "and the son." Still the norm in many churches today, the Apostles Creed, Nicene Creed, and so forth read: "That proceeds from the Father *and the Son*." This may seem a small thing, but error is error. This was the cause and effect of a platform being built for many other vile erroneous ideas and inaccurate dogmas to enter in and remain within the church - even in this day. In the early church, the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, was held to proceed directly from the Father - "And I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you;" "But the Comforter, who is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name" (John 14:16,26), etc. Nicholas added to the word of God (Revelation 22:18).

Nicholas did lead the church into all manners of sin and debauchery, but for the Nicolaitans to be classified as followers of Nicholas, we would need to go to other sources of reference other than the Bible (which is not necessarily bad, but other source material is not imperative here) - the Bible interprets itself.

The word Nicolaitans means, (in Greek) *people ruler*, or *converters of the people*. The word comes from *nikao* which means, **to conquer**, and *laos* which means, **people**. We derive our word, *laity* from the Greek word *laos*. As soon as the church began referring to the people of God as the laity, this was the beginning of the separation of the clergy from the people of God. The church became: a Priest class here, and a Laity class there. And God said "I hate it!" This separation brought about spectator-sport Christianity. The teacher up front with the congregation down below in the pews listening to the "The Man of God," and cheering him on. And God hates it!

This was the beginning of the destruction of the priestly ministry of the people of God, before the Lord. What did the Apostle Paul say about the order of the church service? "Whenever you come together whoever has a psalm, song, teaching . . ." everyone is to operate as a priest before the Lord, in order. So what happened? Why do we operate the way we do today?

The substitutes of Christ

Beginning around A.D. 325, in church history we witness a steady rise in the power of the clergy. In the earlier years, all the leaders of the church came to power through a process of earnest prayer and faithful voting using black and white stones. Voters ranged from faithful politicians in the Roman Senate to steadfast country folk. The voting process was much the same as the lots which were cast for Joseph (called Barsabbas) and Matthias in Acts 1. "And they prayed, and said, You Lord, who knows the hearts of all men, show which of these two men You have chosen . . . and the lot fell to Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles" (Acts 1:15-26). In the latter years of the Pergamum church, however, the Nicolaitans made their bid for a complete

overthrow of the laity. Dr. Malachi Martin tells the story in his book entitled *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Church*.¹⁰

At the Roman Senate of 499 A.D. were 25 of the clergy signed in as cardinal-priests. Pope Symmachus endeavored to get rid of the political influences by excluding the Senate and ordinary lay folk. Symmachus laid down the law that only the clergy of Rome may elect the new pope. In time, popes would claim absolute, complete and supreme imperial power over all men. In time, a council of stern bishops would declare the pope to be above and beyond the reach of any mere council of bishops.

All of this is a result of, and the ultimate end of, what happened in the church in Pergamum (Revelation 2:12-17).

Pergamum, the state church, was first established by the emperor Constantine - thus, the first church of Rome and the first Pope, or Pontifex Maximus. As time went on, all the bishops of Rome were given imperial (and pagan) titles. Now, you may ask, Where did all these special titles originate?

One example comes from the title of the high priest of the pagan cult of Magi that Attilus III brought from Babylon to Pergamum. The Magi high priest held the title of Chief Bridge-Builder meaning "the one who spans the gap between the mortals and the gods." In Latin this title is written Pontifex Maximus or Pontiff for short - this title was taken by Constantine in 325 A.D. The emperor and Pope also became known as the Vicar of Christ (Latin *vicarious* or "substitute" of Christ) and the Bishop of Bishops. After Constantine's death and continuing to this day, these three titles are retained by the popes of the Roman Catholic Church. Giving a church leader the title, Pontiff, or Vicar of Christ, is contrary to scripture, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

Of the seven cities mentioned in Revelation, Pergamum was indeed the most wicked, for Satan's seat, or throne, was established there (Revelation 2:13). As its name implies, Pergamum (*twice married* or *mixed marriage*) was a city of mixed religions and temples. In fact, a title held by the inhabitants of Pergamum was "chief temple-keepers of Asia." Behind the city was a cone-shaped mountain rising 1,000 feet above sea level, which in John's day, was covered with heathen temples. Towering above all the temples and visible for miles around was a giant altar to Zeus, the Grecian father of the gods. The city was also headquarters of the serpent god, Asklepios and like Smyrna, Pergamum had erected a temple to the Roman emperor. The most prominent religious system of the city and most likely the one that plagued the local church for what Christ had condemned it, was the worship of Bacchus, the Greek god of revelry and licentious

orgies. The annual drunken feast held in the spring in honor of Bacchus called the Bacchanalia, included eating meat sacrificed to idols and climaxed in a sexual frenzy. To give a modern flare of the gala festivities and the drunken orgies that were performed in this city-wide carnival, *Mardi Gras* has its roots in the Bacchanalia.

Are there Pergamum churches today? Yes.

One signpost of a Pergamum church is Nicolaitanism, or the overthrow of the laity. Some Protestant churches are run by a hierarchy who dictate all policy, forbidding members to vote on certain issues. The selection and placement of pastors in other denominations are handled by bishops, deacons or superintendents. The vote of church members, if indeed there is one, is simply an endorsement of a prior selection. Included in Nicolaitanism is its doctrine which is identical to that of the doctrine of Balaam: "If you can't lick 'um, join 'um" (Revelation 2:14). There are today, whole denominations who are controlled by organizational demons, who have come into the church as "angels of light." They are Balaam's acolytes and they are not interested in the Lord Jesus Christ, though they pretend to be.

Another requirement for being a Pergamum church is that there must be either the Babylonian System of unity of church and state, or a mixture of pagan doctrine with church doctrine. The only nation in the Western world where there is a system of church and state unity is Great Britain: the church of England is a state church and the monarch, its head. In America we have the second part of the "mixed or twice married" - a mixture of pagan doctrine with church doctrine. Today it's called the New Age Movement, which has found a platform in many Protestant churches. Many observations could be detailed on this subject, but for brevity, I will look at only one area: the making of God both male and female.

In October, 1983 the National Council of Churches decided (for the first time publicly) to take sexual gender references out of scripture. Deciding that the Bible should be sexless - the names and titles of God, the Father, Jesus, the Son, the Holy Spirit, et cetera, should be neither male nor female. So they set about rewriting certain passages of scripture in both Old and New Testaments so as to eliminate references to gender or as an alternative measure, to spread the gender around. Thus, Jesus would no longer be identified as the Son of God, but rather as the child of God and in this equalitarian version, it is not God the Father, but rather God the Father and mother.

Member churches were not long in following the National Council of Churches' recommendations. One such member is the United Methodist Church which is the largest financial contributor to the National Council of Churches. The Associated Press reported in December, 1983 that the governing board of the United Methodist Church in Nashville, Tennessee had approved guidelines on Biblical and theological language that suggest that fewer male nouns and pronouns be used in referring to Jesus.

By 1986 the blasphemy had become greater when in Denver, Colorado the Rocky Mountain Region of the United Methodist Church adopted a new policy prohibiting ministry candidates from referring to God as exclusively male in church paperwork and interviews. The policy allows that the historical Jesus be called "he" but prohibits any exclusive male reference to a divine or Messianic Jesus. The policy also calls for phrases such as "divine light," to be used in place of Father, King or Lord. Candidates are allowed to refer to God as mother and father or as he or she, or whatever their little pagan hearts decide. But they better not call Him Father!

Now lest anyone think I'm picking on Methodists, I'm not. Replace Methodist with Baptist, Lutheran, Church of God, or whatever denomination you choose, and you'll find a similar "mixed marriage" of church and state, divine and pagan in them all. And when this "mixed marriage" has a foothold in any denomination, evangelism ceases and heresy enters the church. In the United Methodist Church as a whole, evangelism is a thing of the past and, indeed, heresy has taken root. As for the Southern Baptist's, some pastors believe evangelism is dead but heresy has not entered their denomination, not yet. If your church has mixed patriotism with Christianity, or pagan, or New Age doctrine with church doctrine, your church has passed the final test of being a Pergamum church.

Twenty three years (from this writing) in 1987, 10,000 Protestant clergymen were mailed a four question poll by the Jeffrey Haydn (ph) survey, which according to pollsters has an error factor of less than 2%. 7,441 clergymen replied.

Only three of the four questions are pertinent to our subject:

To the first question:

"Do you believe that the scriptures are the inspired and inerrant word of God in faith, history and secular matters?"

24% of Missouri Lutheran pastors answered: No.

67% of American Baptist Pastors answered: No.

77% of American Lutheran pastors answered: No.

82% of United Presbyterian pastors answered: No.

87% of Methodist pastors answered: No.

95% of Episcopalian priests answered: No.

that they did **not** believe the scriptures are the inspired and inerrant word of God.

To the second question:

"Do you believe in the virgin birth of Jesus?"

5% of the Missouri Lutheran pastors answered: No.

19% of American Lutheran pastors answered: No.

34% of American Baptist pastors answered: No.

44% of Episcopalian priests answered: No.

49% of United Presbyterian pastors answered: No.

60% of Methodist pastors answered: No, that they did **not** believe in the virgin birth of Jesus.

To the third question:

“Do you accept Jesus’ physical resurrection as fact?”

7% of Missouri Lutheran pastors answered: No.

13% of American Lutheran pastors answered: No.

30% of Episcopalian priests answered: No.

33% of American Baptist pastors answered: No.

35% of United Presbyterian pastors answered: No.

51% of Methodist pastors answered: No, that they did **not** accept Jesus’ physical resurrection as a fact.

Imagine what the pollsters would find in today’s church.

The Emperor Constantine opened for the first time in church history the mix of church and state: Christian and pagan doctrines within the church. In fact, the first Peragamum church (320 or so A.D.) was stuffed full of a variety of morose pagans, who didn’t want to become church members, but were made to become church members or face death at the hands of Constantine’s army.

Constantine I, Emperor of Rome was the leader of whom the title “the Great” is fully merited. Within a short period of time, 15 years, he made two great rulings, either of which would have changed the face of civilization. One was the decision to make Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire and the second, to transfer the capital of the empire from Rome to the new city he would rebuild, Byzantium. This was later to be named after this great leader himself, Constantinople. These two decisions have made Constantine one of the most influential men in all of human history, excepting only Jesus Christ and possibly the Buddha and the prophet Mohammed.

Constantine’s rule of authority began in 293 A.D. when the Emperor Diocletian decided to split the powers of the Roman empire into quarters - leaving the East for

himself. He divided the remainder of the Empire between Maximian; Galerius, a professional soldier and brutal man; and Constantius Chlorus. In 306 Constantius died at York, in Britain, and as the legend goes, "the imperial purple toga was placed around the shoulders of his son, Constantine."

Constantine remained in Britain for the next 6 years running the provinces on the whole with wisdom and virtue. In 311 A.D. the senior Emperor, Galerius died and his death left the remaining monarchs to do the unavoidable; go to war. During one of the battles, Saxa Rubra, the 'red rock' on the Via Flaminia, about 8 miles from Rome, Constantine experienced his famous vision.

"A marvelous sign appeared to him from heaven." As Eusebius, Constantine's historian, writes in his book, *Life of Constantine*: "He said that at about midday, when the sun was beginning to decline, he saw with his own eyes the trophy of a cross of light in the heavens, above the sun, and bearing the inscription 'Conquer by This' (*Hov Vince*). He himself was struck with amazement, and his whole army also." With this vision, Constantine set out to conquer.

Rome and the remaining Emperor and his men were destroyed, not by an army or by the hand of Constantine, but by a rushing river during their retreat. They might have escaped, but the engineers opened the water gates too soon and the army drowned. The body of the remaining Emperor was later found downstream washed upon the bank of the river. This was the battle of the Milvian Bridge. This victory made Constantine the master of all Europe, and what was then the known world. It is also the point of which, say some, was his conversion to Christianity. Really, I feel it was the time of Constantine setting himself up as protector and patron of his Christian subjects. But, "Known unto God are those that are His," so my feelings don't really count for much in the scheme of things. But this vision of the Cross was the turning point in Constantine's life and the watershed of all our modern day human history.

According to Lactantius, tutor to Constantine's son Crispus, "Constantine was directed in a dream to cause the heavenly sign to be delineated on the shields of his soldiers, and so to proceed to battle. He did as he had been commanded, and he marked on the shields the letter X, with a perpendicular line drawn through it and turned round the top, thus XP, being the cypher of Christ." He says no more on this. There is no talk of a vision only a dream. No suggestion of the Savior or the Cross. The heavenly sign was really a monogram of *chi* (X) and *rho* (P), the first Greek letters in the name of Christ, which had been used for a long time already in Christian inscriptions. In the years Constantine lived, miracles and heavenly visions were accepted by most everyone, so if Constantine wanted to say he had a vision, then a vision he must have had.

Unity

The substantial dilemma our dear Constantine had to remedy, in order to unify his new kingdom, was blending the pagans and the Christians into a happy mix of work, worship, and church order. He had to satisfy all of the pagans and not offend any of the Christians. But how? How was Constantine, and his state church going to satisfy all those pagans who had come into the church and at the same time, not run-off the Christians who had helped establish the church? Simple. Bring the pagans' religion into the church and blend the pagan religions in with the Christian faith. Then everyone will be happy. "If you can't lick-um . . . join-um."

Constantine's first order of business was to grant full legal recognition to all peoples throughout Europe. As he stated in his Edict of Milan, "I, Constantine Augustus . . . grant to Christians and to all others the right freely to follow whatever form of worship they please, that what so ever Divinity dwells in heaven may be favored to us and to all those under our authority." Diversity, diversity, diversity . . .

History tells us, "there was strife in the land." One group began teaching that Jesus, although a perfect man, was not co-eternal and of one substance with God the Father, but had been created by the Father as His Instrument for the salvation of the world. This heretical teaching is historically called Arianism (named after its founder Arius), which like all the other heresies before them, denied the deity of Christ. Arianism is similar to the heresy that Cerinthus tried to impose on the Ephesus church - the ideology that Christ did not exist before Mary. Other unswerving groups strongly disagreed with this heretical Arianism doctrine and a battle began in Constantine's little world of church and state.

Sometime around 324 A.D. Constantine decided to put to an end to all this fighting and an edict was given for a universal Council of the Church. Everyone agreed - maybe they had no choice. The first council was held at Nicaea (modern Turkey) in 325 A.D.

In Revelation 2:16 Christ apprised the Pergamum church just how He would deal with both the believers and the Arianism heretics: "Repent; or else I will come unto you quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." "I" will come unto "you," the church, and "I" will fight against "them," the heretics. His coming unto the church was, and is a judicial coming - to cleanse the church of heresies by fighting the heretics with the two-edged sword of His mouth - the word of God. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

The debate for and against Arianism was held in the summer of 325 A.D. Present were about 1,500 delegates. The laymen outnumbered the bishops five to one.

It was a stormy council of intrigue and political bargains. One example is recounted by Dr. Harry Ironside in his book entitled *Lectures on the Book of Revelation*¹¹:

At one point in the debate when the heretic Arius seemed to have stopped the opposition, a black hermit from the deserts of Africa sprang to his feet and ripped off his tiger skin cloak. Bearing his upper torso to the assembly, he marched up and down the aisles revealing his dreadfully disfigured body from having been thrown to the wild beasts in an amphitheatre during the last persecutions. He cried out again and again, "These are the brand-marks of the Lord Jesus Christ. I cannot bare this blasphemy!"

The hermit proceeded to give so stirring an address, setting forth clearly by scripture the truth as to Christ's eternal deity, that the majority of the council realized in a moment that it was indeed the voice of the Holy Spirit. All it took was the obedient voice of one man wielding the two-edged sword of Holy scripture to turn the tide. The sword from his mouth, the powerful word of God was wielded against Arius and the heretic with his heresy was vanquished. The council then labored on writing the standard of faith for Christendom, known ever since as the Nicene Creed.

The process began with a disagreement and then pressed on to more disagreements. The doctrine of the Creed was of little interest to Constantine - he was a military man and cared little for theology. But he wanted the debate to end and so introduced the importance of *unity* to the group. The Bible does not say, My people shall learn unity, but rather, "My people shall learn doctrine" - a marked difference. Unity will unite all sorts of people and beliefs. Doctrine divides truth from lies. Unity brings compromise, but it will not bring forth truth.

Constantine urged unity to the church council with the virtues of compromise. He proposed the insertion of a word into the draft of the Nicene Creed, the word was *homoousios* - "of one substance." This he felt would stop the conflict and paint a clear picture of the relation of the Father to the Son. They agreed; and "of one substance" is still the norm to this day. The problem with this phrase is that it can be interpreted to mean precisely what anyone chooses it to mean. Obviously, there was a vital issue at stake, but the example this church council set, sadly, many generations of their successors have been all too ready to follow. There is difference in, "I and the Father are one," and "of one substance with the Father."

Does Jesus, have the quality of being important, valid, significant with the Father as "of one substance?" Or, is He the real matter of which both the Father and the Son are One - with the Holy Spirit - as tangible, solid "One?" As in "In the beginning God . . ." (*Elohim* - a plural noun in form, but singular in meaning).

The goal was unity. Unity within the empire and the church - both were seen as one. But what about the pagans? The pagans, unlike the Christians who worshiped one God, worshiped a plethora of objects symbolizing all sorts of gods. So Constantine, through unity and diversity training brought in the worship of Christian saints and images: crosses, marble statues, etc. The pagans burned candles to the dead. So he brought in burning candles to and for dead saints. Everything the pagans worshiped, plus more, was incorporated into the church and proclaimed Christian. Unity.

All the pagan societies had female deities. So what did the church do with that problem? Simple again. "We'll all worship, and pray to the mother of Jesus, Mary." This must have seemed very holy to them at the time. What could be wrong with praying to the mother of God? Mother of God? Where did that come from? The Bible says nothing of the Mother of God.

The Mother of God?

It was not until the 5th century that this debate really took hold, and later became the norm; really, the law. Was it right to say "Mary, the Mother of God?" This was actually a debate on how we should view Jesus, not the title of his earthly mother. The argument was settled by popular vote. The people wanted to call Mary, "the mother of God," so in 431 A.D. at the council of Ephesus, the bishops approved the title, "Mary, mother of God." "If you can't lick-um . . . join-um."

This was the beginning of shrines and prayers to Mary. By the 7th century, there was a feast to Mary, a celebration of her birth, which like Jesus' birthday, no one really knew the date.

Natural man wants closure. The church had the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, but where was the alternative woman or mother. God is Father. Jesus is Son. The Holy Spirit is, He Him, etc. - male pronouns. Everyone in the church was male. The apostles were male. Jesus came to earth as a man. But the pagan's mother goddess had no counterpart. They needed a counterpart. Without a counterpart in the church how would they win those pagans to Christ? I hear this same argument when someone questions the validity of contemporary Christian music. "How will we win those pagan kids if we don't use some of their pagan music?" So the church was given a woman to worship, the mother of God, Mary. "If you can't lick-um . . ."

The Queen of Heaven

Every nation which held Israel in captivity, and there were seven in all, had female deities. This pagan female worship began with the worship of the queen of heaven, Semiramis and her son Tammuz, in ancient Babylon.

If you will remember when the children of Israel were carried away into Babylonian captivity, they offered up cakes to the queen of heaven and bowed down to Tammuz (Jeremiah 7).

Semiramis, referred to as the queen of heaven, was a slender, flaxen-haired whore who seduced and married the warrior king of Babylon, Nimrod (Genesis). Nimrod was a warrior of warriors. He, along with his massive army, conquered all of his known world. During one of Nimrod's many warring missions Semiramis, his seductive whore-queen became pregnant with one of her many lovers. Much to her amazement during that same mission, Nimrod, her brave, yet slow-witted trusting husband, was killed.

"What to do?" Semiramis thought, "If the people of Babylon find out I'm pregnant with a child that's not Nimrod's, they'll kick me out of the city and most likely kill me!"

So Semiramis forged a plan. She quickly admitted to the people of Babylon that she was pregnant. "But," she said, "this is not just any baby I'm carrying in my womb. No! It's Nimrod himself! That's right, Nimrod. Not just a simple child. I'm carrying the incarnate Nimrod. Your king who died in battle, lives on! Inside of your queen's tummy!"

That's really what she told the people of Babylon. And they believed her!

After a few months the child was born - gestation at breakneck speed - and Semiramis named the male child Tammuz. The word *Tammuz*, in ancient Babylonian, means, "seed of the woman." This, as you can see was a well planned effort by the old snake to counterfeit the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus.

If you will remember in Genesis 3:15, God said he was going to put enmity between the "seed of the woman" and the serpent. That sounds simple, right? Because we've heard it so many times. But the strange thing about that statement is, women do not have seed, men do! Satan understood that statement much more quickly than I did, and began planning from that time in the garden to stop God's plan of the virgin birth. But how? By counterfeiting God's plan.

No one in their right mind counterfeits three dollar bills or three pound notes. That would be stupid. You counterfeit something that looks like the real article. Which is what the Devil did with the queen of heaven, Semiramis and her new born male child, Tammuz. Semiramis gave birth to a child without the means of human sexual relationship, or so she said. "This child was the reborn king himself," according to Semiramis. The child was a counterfeit god-with-us: emmanuel with a small "e." Sound familiar? Isn't that a counterfeit of what God spoke through the prophet? "Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; behold the virgin shall conceive, and

bear a son, and shall call His name Emmanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). Yes indeed! A birth without the means of human sexual contact. That's why the Devil did it!

The people of Babylon were overjoyed with the rebirth, or what they thought was the rebirth, of their dead king Nimrod. Semiramis was made queen and sovereign immediately. Worship of her and the child Tammuz began in earnest. Temples were established. A new religion was inaugurated. Everyone bowed down and worshiped the Madonna (*donna* feminine of *dominus*, lord, master) and child. And all of Babylon was happy.

Then the old snake promoted his counterfeit from Babylon to Egypt, with the worship of Isis; then to Assyria, with Ashtaroth¹² worship; on to new Babylon, during Daniel's time, again, with the worship of Isis. All of these goddesses, or Madonna's, were the same goddess with different names. The Greeks worshiped Aphrodite, the adulterous goddess of sexual love, who gave birth to the phallic deity Priapus - a god of fertility. Persia worshiped Ashtoreth, who represents the mother, as well as all aspects of motherhood, from the perspective of both the child and the mother. She is worshiped today as the Asteroid Goddesses, or Ceres, the Mother, thus Mother-Earth worship (Astrology), according to the National Council for Geocosmic Research, USA. In pagan Rome, the people worshiped Venus and her son Aenæs. And then to Holy Rome, and Constantine's state church, who worshiped the Madonna, or Mary, the Mother of God and Child.

Is the Madonna and child the truth of God? Yes it is. The virgin and the child is the truth of God. That's why the snake did it!

This new doctrine allowed, what seemed to be new converts, the avenue needed to come into the church from old pagan cults, who saw the woman or the goddess as supreme. In 553 A.D. the church ruled that, "Mary was ever virgin" - *theotokos*. What is meant by, "ever virgin?" To quote one early unknown author, "The Virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus only." In other words, Mary had only one Child - Jesus. I don't know how they reconciled James, Jude and other the half-siblings of Jesus with their ruling, but truth didn't seem to matter so much to them at the time. In the earliest patristic writings Mary was mentioned only rarely, and usually in connection with Eve. Justin Martyr contrasted her obedience with the disobedience of Eve. Her perpetual virginity was first introduced in the apocryphal Book of James (this is not the same James we have in our Bible); Ambrose held her to be a type of the church, in that in giving birth to Christ she also brought forth Christians who were formed in her womb with Him. What the people wanted, the people got. Unity.

The church fathers also agreed that the virgin Mary was born from a virgin as well. How they discerned this is still a mystery. But they believed and taught that Mary was also born from a virgin - her mother - and because of virgin Mary's virgin

birth, she was sinless. This is very mystifying and difficult to explain, but I will make an effort.

The problem, they concluded, was the universal transmission of original sin in sexual conception (this is a Roman, not a Christian doctrine). One of their good friars, Eadmer solved the problem by inculcating, what he referred to as "passive" conception (this is also a Roman doctrine). "Passive" suggesting that only Mary herself, without reference to the parental act - her parents never consummated the marriage bed - was without the stain of the original sin from the moment of her conception; Eadmer augured that, "because God could do it and because it was fitting, He did it." I suppose this might be called metaphysical artificial insemination of Mary's mother . . . I really don't know. Anyway, the rest of the Roman Church bought it! No questions asked.

In the last century, efforts were made to secure a Papal definition of Mary as "Mediatrice of All Graces" or *Mediator* (feminine form) of *All Graces* and "Co-Redemptrix" or *Co-Redeemer* (feminine form). To the credit of the Roman Church, when the Second Vatican Council added a chapter on Mary to the Constitution on the Church - against the wishes of those who wanted a separate book on her - their restraint was remarkable; its insistence on Scripture and the Father, and its stress on Mary's complete dependence on the Son at the least should be commended.

Goddess worship, or rather goddess acknowledgment, came into the 20th century church through a radical feminist doctrine by referring to God, the Father, as "mother" or simply, "she." Jesus always referred to God, as "Father," as did all the writers of the Bible - Old and New Testament alike. This, radical feminist doctrine is also the reason many people refer to the earth or nature as "She" or "Mother Earth."

By the 1100's A.D. the *Ave Maria* (Hail Mary) as a prayer appeared. Jesus was left to be the sufferer and to exemplify fellowship and Mary to offer the compassion; the *Pieta*.

Constantine, along with his legacy - Julian the Apostate, Justinian, and other such emperors along with most of the so called "Vicars of Christ" - incorporated all of what was, and is pagan worship into the church: female worship, spirits, demons, pendants, marble statues, whatever. All of it was brought into the church. Saint worship was the beginning of the icon, or holy image worship. "The icon cult grew to the point where holy images were openly worshiped in their own right and occasionally served as godparents at baptisms."¹³ A friend of mine, who grew up in the Roman Catholic church told me, as a child he once questioned a priest, "How come we pray to these statues when the Bible says we're not to have any carved images?" The priest told him that, "those carved images had been sanctioned and blessed by the church, so it's okay to pray to them."

The earliest depiction of the crucifix was around 430 A.D. The stone carving portrays, on one side the Savior on the cross and Judas hanging from a tree on the other. Before the 5th century no one had little crosses or saint pendants hanging around their neck. There were no saint or Mary statues, no baby Jesus paintings, no icons, no fish on the rear of their chariots. But Constantine and his later devotees brought in what the pagans wanted along with what the Church wanted and everybody was happy. Why? Because it made for a bigger church! The bigger the better! Right?

I would be amiss in not relating the occasion of Constantine coming fully into the faith. For years he had been a self-styled bishop of the church - thus giving himself full authority in both church and state. Yet, his baptism was delayed until he was assiduously on his death bed. Why did he wait so long? The answer is most likely as Edward Gibbon writes in his, *The History of the Decline and the Fall of the Roman Empire*¹⁴:

The sacrament of baptism was supposed to contain a full and absolute expiation of sin; and the soul was instantly restored to its original purity, and entitled to the promise of external salvation. Among the proselytes of Christianity, there were many who judged it imprudent to precipitate a salutary rite, which could not be repeated; to throw away an inestimable privilege, which could never be recovered.

It was said that after Bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia performed Constantine's baptism in 337 A.D., that he "arrayed himself in imperial vestments white and radiant as light, and lay himself down on a couch of the purest white, refusing ever to clothe himself in the purple again."¹⁵: Purple being the royal color of the Emperor. Constantine removed, in fashion, the title as emperor replacing it with the shroud of a saint. You may draw your own conclusion here.

When we come into the church today Madonna and child worship has taken preeminence, maybe not in the protestant church as such, but it is there nevertheless. Goddess worship is happening today - within the church.

Sophia

Some of you may remember - "I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance" - the Sophia Beast image which was erected some years ago (mid 1990's) at the World Council of Churches - by the women's segment of that council. The women of the church council fabricated the image of Sophia and began worshiping the image - *sophia* is a takeoff of the Greek word for *wisdom* - offering incense and prayers to this beast image during a church service, which was supposed to be in the name of the Lord Jesus. These women were not some crazy group of radical feminists out to deceive the church. But rather, they were a group of Church women comprised from several mainline denominations - Presbyterian women, Episcopalian women, Methodist

women, etc. - the Methodist women were at the forefront of this "women seeking wisdom service" - all worshipping a goddess made in their own image - all to gain wisdom. "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (1 Corinthians 3:19).

"Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God made. And he said to the woman, 'Yea, has God said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?' And the woman said unto the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it lest you die.' And the serpent said to the woman, 'You shall not surely die. For God does know that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as God, knowing good and evil.' And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Genesis 3:1-6).

These Sophia worshipers had become wise in their own eyes. They had become unfaithful in small things. Unfaithfulness to the word of God in small areas opened the door for these women to become unfaithful in grander domains: which is why I fear liberalism. Liberalism opens the door for all types of error, which will later grow into heresy. These women would have never erected an idol and the World Council of Churches would never have tolerated them worshipping a goddess, (although some have now excused it), if the World Council of Churches had heeded fast to the simple teachings of the Word of God; not deviating from the word of God in any area. "Be faithful in small things."

We have become like the Athenians. We enjoy sitting around, having someone tell us about some new fad: some new trend. We don't care if it is the truth or not, as long as it's new. "That was great!" We bolster . . . "When I heard that new teaching, I felt a tingle go down my back, straight up my neck!" But it wasn't God. It was our own retched carnal emotions. It wasn't God. God starts with the spirit and moves through to the soul which effects the body. The Betrayer starts with the body in order that he might capture the soul. Just because something makes us feel good, we better not lay down our responsibility to pick up the Word of God and see if the "new thing" is in the Book. I don't care who says it, or how good it sounds, or how good it makes us feel, if it is not in the Book, we better reject it. It is more trustworthy to confess, "I was wrong. You were right. It was God." Than to have embraced a false teaching or movement and realize it was not from God and realizing you're now stuck with trying figure out

how to get rid of your false dogma and how to repent to all the people you sucked into it by your embracing it.

It is required of a man to be found faithful. Hold fast to what God says. "Cease my son," Solomon said, "to hear the words that cause you to err from the way of truth."¹⁶ You may never see a Baptist, Lutheran, non-denominational church, bow down and pray to Mary, but ask some of our fine gospel preachers to preach about feminism or the roll of the woman in the church and you'll be surprised by what you see and hear. We are afraid to preach what the Bible teaches. We have become a Church full of "itching ears and ear ticklers."

It is the purpose of Satan to sow a seed now that becomes a great tree later. "So that the fowls of the air can come and lodge themselves in it."¹⁷ As a friend of mine says, "What one generation tolerates, the next generation embraces." I agree. The Devil will flood a valley with truth, so he can float one boat of lies.

I realize that each and everyone of our Christian Churches and schools are not following these teachings. There are always "7000 who have not bowed their knee to Baal."¹⁸ I am speaking of the Church and the educational system within her as a whole, not individual Churches or Church members. So please lay down your stones!

The Democratic Church

"He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: These things said the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God" (Revelation 3:13,14).

The Laodiceans are cousins to the Nicolaitans, but they are opposite of one another. The Nicolaitans are converters of people; *people rulers*. The Laodiceans are people converting, *people ruling people*, democratically speaking. In other words, the whole church membership (saved or not) has a say in how the Church is to be run. The Laodicean church is a democratic church. In the Nicolaitan church you have the dictator. In the Laodicean church you have the democracy.

Jesus Christ's Church is not a democracy. It's a theocracy. It is run by delegated authority. Authority alone can determine authority. Some have so hated the church at Rome, they have thrown out the baby with the bath water. There are many wonderful Bible based liturgies to be found in the Roman Church. The confession. The praying for one another. "He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." (John 3:2 AV). There is authority in the (real) Roman Church. They have Bishops, Overseers, Elders. But that authority has begun to be corrupted.

The Church of the Lord Jesus is made up of elders as was Israel. The Philistines had lords. The Edomites had dukes. But Israel had elders. Do you know the difference?

You can find some guy who has the talents to rule the program. That's a lord. A duke is a ruler of a thousand; a big name, a high profile guy. With that big guy you get a big church. You want a big church? You get a big guy. Then you'll have a big church. If your big church loses its big guy, you simply get another big guy. Then you can keep your big church. That's how it works with a duke.

But Israel had elders.¹⁹ And how do you become an elder? By relationship. The man grows up, and establishes himself as an elder - by relationship. In relationship you have authority. You can't rebuke another man's child. You must have relationship to do that. In the church of Jesus Christ we are a people who have relationship. From that comes men who are elders. We have relationship with them. You hear them. You can't hire that.

But what have we done to men today? We have created hirelings. Perform right and you can stay! If you don't perform right, you're out! We'll vote and that will be that. It's very simple. That's Laodicean.

The Laodicean Church is a people-ruled church. If the people don't like the mention of the Blood in their songs, how does the church handle it? . . . they vote it out! That's the Laodicean system. Some years ago, a large denomination actually voted to remove any mention of the blood in their hymnals. How does God address Himself to that type of Church? "These things say the Amen!" That's the last word! God has the majority vote of One!

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou were cold or hot. So, then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:15,16 AV).

In every Church, there is a remnant. You see this evident in the Church at Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13) - A remnant: People who have all the characteristics of the whole of the church at Philadelphia. In the church today there are those who are His and, sad to say, there are those running the church, who are not His. That effect is seen in the leaders within the church today, as well as the congregation as a whole. There are many Pastors, Youth Leaders, Deacons, Elders and the like, leading the church today, who are nowhere near to being a child of God. They may be Nicolaitans; *people rulers*, or Laodicean; *people converting*, but they give no evidence of being saints of the living God. But, "Known unto the Lord are those who are His."

Everything is overcome by religion.

What a man worships, that's what he serves.

Everything is overcome by religion. What a man worships, that's what he serves. The false teachers of today realize this. It doesn't matter if the teacher is speaking from the pulpit or in front of a group of wide-eyed students in a grade school or a university, the message is the same. Conform or get out! In the dark ages, it didn't matter how wretched you were, just as long as you confessed the church at Rome. You became part of their kingdom simply by saying you were part of their kingdom and obeying their particular denominational rules, whether you understood their policies or not. This was politically subduing the kingdom through religion. Just like today. In the dark ages illiteracy was widespread. Just like today. If you take the privilege of reading, of understanding away from the people of God, placing that privilege into the hands of a select group of officials, then the people become the slaves of the group who know and hold the books. The enemy has sought to silence the people of God with illiteracy for years - and he has almost succeeded.

Just as the history of Germany's strong men of ethics was rewritten by the seemingly subtle reeducation of its populace, the people of today have been placed in a state of subjective education, instead of objective scholarship, to bring about that same form of reeducation. Men are ever increasingly doing what is right in their own eyes. They have shoved aside the truth: 'There is none good but God' and embraced the lie: 'You can be like God.' This lie is wrecking havoc, not only in this country's society, but especially in the Church. The saints are being muddied with lies, instead of being washed in the Word! Diana Leigh Allen, 1997.

Der Führer: The People's Hero

Hitler was a lapsed Catholic - it is said that he had a Jewish mother - who was made chancellor in 1933 because of his moral speeches. These high-minded, quasi-religious speeches gave him favor with most of the German people.

"The streets of our country are in turmoil; the universities are filled with students rebelling and rioting; Communists are seeking to destroy our country, and the republic is in danger - yes, danger from within and from without. We need law and order! Without law and order our nation cannot survive!" Adolf Hitler, 1932.

Ten years before these speeches Germany had gone through a very difficult time of inflation, unemployment and poverty. Hitler called for morals. He, as luck would have it, came into power right when the economy was recovering. He and the Nazi party took the credit for the economical upswing and the people bought it hook, line and sinker! He appealed to the German people to work together. Unity. He called for them to be moral; ostensibly Christian. By the end of 1933 and into 1934 the Nazis' decreed that no Jew could be in a Christian Church because they should not be allowed to sit with German Christians. They promoted the lie, "The Jews killed Jesus." Although Jesus Himself said, "No one takes My life. I lay it down Myself." He gave His life for us, no one took it from Him. But to keep the German recovery going strong, the German people - Christians, too - followed the religious, moral teachings of a devil. "If you can't lick-um . . . join-um"

And so it went, little by little, until the people agreed that everyone who disagreed with Hitler's teachings, Jew or Christian, should be killed. Why, you may ask, did the people allow Hitler to continue? The fear of missing a meal, of not having shelter or health care, of not . . . you get the point. The economy had been booming and it wasn't until after Hitler had reached into the German people's pockets that the people of Germany realized the depths of their problems.

Many Christians like Dietrich Bonhoeffer resisted the Nazis and were killed. But the Church as a whole, embraced the title: "German Christian movement." This increased the German Churches' unity in the society as a whole. This unity was what brought them into one big wonderful Hitler-following group. The Church in Germany used dogma, jazz (the popular music of that day) and national songs, as well as, hymns to enthuse the crowd. We see much the same in political advertisements and rallies on television today. There is a difference between social/political dogma and Christian dogmatics.

All of this chapter could be summed up in three narratives:

1. People today are "chasing after the wind" (Ecclesiastes. 1:14).
2. "There is nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes. 1:9).
3. "Where sin abounded, grace did super-abound" (Romans 5:20)!

If I, or anyone in the body of Christ, has fallen for any of the false doctrines which are coming at us from every angle, the Lord has the answer. First, we must judge our own sinful failures. Secondly, we must confess our failures to God, forsaking our sin and turning to Him for forgiveness. "It is one of the devices of Satan that, after he has succeeded in drawing a soul away from God and entangled him in the net of his corruption, to persuade him that the prayer of faith, in his circumstances, would be highly presumptuous, and that it is much more modest for him to stand aloof from God

and His people." A.W. Pink, *Spiritual Growth*²⁰. Sorrow for sin is never out of fashion with God or with His people. Confession to God and forgiveness from God and His people is the only way for us to find rest for our souls. There is a bounty of forgiveness and redemption to be found in Him. Abraham, David, Jonah, Peter and others of the household of faith were restored, which gives me much comfort in the God of all grace - as it should you as well.

"Today if you hear His voice harden not your hearts" (Psalms 95:7-8).

¹ See Eta Linnemann's *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology? Reflections of a Bultmannian turned evangelical*, translated from the German edition *Wissenschaft oder Meinung? Anfragen und Alternativen* by Robert W. Yarbrough, (Baker Book House 1990).

² W. P. Fuchs, "Universitat" in *Neues Pädagogisches Lexikon*, edited by Hans-Hermann Grohoff and Martin Stallmann: 1198f.

³ W. P. Fuchs, (Ibid.)

⁴ *Historical Criticism of the Bible*, Eta Linnemann (Baker Book House 1990) pp. 24

⁵ Jay E. Adams, *Competent To Counsel*, (Zondervan, July 2, 1986)

⁶ Clive Staples Lewis, *The Problem of Pain: How Human Suffering Raises Almost Intolerable Intellectual Problems*, (Macmillan Publishing, Inc., 1962)

⁷ Martin Luther, *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* 41. - 50. (1517 A.D.)

⁸ Aristotle, (384 - 323 B.C.), *The Ethic of Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics*

⁹ See *Discourse On Free Will*, translated and edited by Ernst F. Winter, (A Frederick Ungar Book, 1961, 1989, 1994). Erasmus: On Free Will and Luther's well written address to Erasmus' thesis. Also. see the Weimar edition: *Weimarer Ausgabe*, of Luther's works

¹⁰ Dr. Malachi Martin, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Church*, (Putman Pub Group, 1981). Dr. Martin was an expert on the Dead Sea Scrolls and From 1958 until 1964, Malachi Martin served in Rome as a Jesuit priest, where he was a close associate of, and carried out many sensitive missions for, the renowned Jesuit Cardinal Augustin Bea and Popes John XXIII and Paul VI.

¹¹ Harry A. Ironside, *Lectures on the Book of Revelation*, Delivered in the Gospel Auditorium, Oakland, California, [Loizeaux Brothers (January 1, 1942)]

¹² Ashtaroth is the plural of *Ashtoreth*, which were figures of Ashtoreth, the equivalent of the Phoenician goddess of fertility, Astarte (see Deuteronomy 16:21), which were worshiped as idols during times of spiritual declension in Israel (Judges 10:6; 1 Samuel 7:3-4; 12:10; 31:10; 1 Kings 11:5,33; 2 Kings 23:13).

The Hebrew word *asherah*, rendered "grove" in the King James Version, means also the idol enshrined there (see also Deuteronomy 16:21). In apostate Israel, such groves were associated with every form of idolatry (2 Kings 17:16-17) - "high places" (Deuteronomy 12:2; 1 Kings 3:2; 12:31; 13:2; 14:23; Jeremiah 3:6; etc.), and Ashtaroth worship. "And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth" (Judges 2:13). "For Solomon went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites" (1 Kings 11: 5).

¹³ John Julius Norwich, *A Short History of Byzantium*, (Alfred A. Knoff, Inc, 1997).

¹⁴ Edward Gibbon (A.D. 1737-1794) *The History of the Decline and the Fall of the Roman Empire* [Everyman's Library; Volumes I - III (1993)].

¹⁵ Norwich, *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Proverbs

¹⁷ Mark 4:32; Luke 13:19

¹⁸ I Kings 19:18; Romans 11:4.

¹⁹ If you have a question or two about the function of women within the Church (deaconesses, pastors, elders and the like), please chapter 5, *Women & Wives*.

²⁰ Arthur Walkington Pink (1886-1952) evangelist and Biblical scholar. A. W. Pink, *Spiritual Growth* [Baker Pub Group; 3 edition (February 1996)]

chapter seven
The Counsel Of His Own Will

*“O the depth of the riches and of the wisdom
and the knowledge of God;
How unsearchable are His judgments
and untraceable are His ways!”*

Romans 11:33

God is sovereign and He does what He pleases. An aphorism, which is one of my favorites. A blunt maxim which articulates clearly what and who God is: independent, autonomous, self-governing, self-determining; nonaligned, free to do as He pleases - He is Other! Other than anything and everything else. There is nothing and no other like Him. God is Sovereign. He rules by the counsel of His own will and no other.

God has foreordained everything that has come to pass; God has decreed what is and what is to come; God is governing the world and everything and everyone in it according to His rule and authority; God has established the world and the heavens according to His divine purpose and not according to some aimless whim; God is never changing; God's purpose in all things are according to how He will have them. “According to the plan of the One, working all things according to the counsel of His own will” (Ephesians 1:11).

“You know my sitting down and my rising up. You understand my thoughts afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether . . . Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your right hand shall lead me. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness shall fall on me,’ even the night shall be light about me. Indeed the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You . . . My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them” (Psalms 139).

God is sovereign and He does what He pleases - most assuredly in the lives of men.

God, in His sovereignty, has given us a Book which is complete and divine in its order. God loves order. "God so loved order" (John 3:16). That's the Greek word here, *kosmos*, order, arrangement, and so, with the Greeks beauty. Order and arrangement, in the sense of a system, are at the bottom of the Greek conception of *beauty*. God loved order so He sent His Son to bring order. Everything was in disorder so He sent His Son to bring order.

I find it interesting that the sequence of dates in which the New Testament writers actually penned each of their letters has little or no connection with the order in which our Heavenly Father has seen fit to place them in His Book. The letters of the Apostle Paul, for example, are not given to us in the sequence of dates in which he wrote them. They are given to us in a wonderful, divine, Godly order, but not in the order, the dated order, Paul wrote them. The Bible is not in the order man would have chosen - although some men have tried. The Bible is in the order our Heavenly Father willed it to be. Men have tried throughout the ages to change, add to, remove from, many words, letters and phrases we find in our Bible; but the Book remains the same as when God originally ordered and canonized it. This says to me, even more perfectly, how the Lord intervened and watched over the recording of the New Testament, as well as, the Old Testament scriptures. Why? Because God is very orderly. He's very neat. He is sovereign and He does what He pleases, even in His Book.

The first epistles which the Apostle Paul wrote, according to the dates given us from history, were 1 & 2 Thessalonians, but they are not the first, second or even the third epistles which fall foremost in the cannon of the New Testament epistles. The first message the Apostle Paul wrote was one concerning the second coming of Jesus Christ our Lord. How wonderful! But when God chose to insert the letters of the Apostle Paul into the cannon of His New Testament scripture, to establish the order of those scriptures as it is relative to our growth and understanding in the Lord, the order in which the Apostle Paul wrote the letters wasn't the order God chose to insert them in His Book. He chose first of all doctrine. The book of Romans, the book of doctrine, not 1 Thessalonians, not the second coming, but doctrine was placed first in the epistles. God's first choice for His people is doctrine. That's what the prophet Isaiah said, "My people shall learn doctrine" (Isaiah 29:22-24). So God put that first.

Somehow in this day and age, we have had the tendency to lay down doctrine and pick up experience. So that we are now interpreting the word of God with the consistency of our experience, rather than interpreting our experience to make it consistent with the word of God. If you're feeling it and God doesn't talk about it, then you better question it! Hello. I heard an older saint say, "I don't care how high you

jump or how loud you shout just as long as you walk straight when you come down.”
“My people shall learn doctrine!”

The book of Romans falls first in the cannon of the New Testament epistles because it is the foundation of doctrine. It is justification and its cause. It is salvation and its effect. Those two terms, when we will lay hold of them, as Paul tells Timothy, we will lay hold of eternal life, which is not just living forever in Heaven. It's much more than that. Eternal life is the character and the nature of Jesus Christ Himself. When we lay hold of that foundational truth we lay hold on eternal life. That's the good news.

We all once believed a lie. We didn't believe God could or would save. If there was any belief at all, it no more than pocket-sized belief. God, we thought was too baronial, too unreal, too unlike us to ever be experienced. So we looked to ourselves, and to others like us, to find a savior we so desperately needed. And came up wanting.

So God sent His Son in the likeness of our sinful flesh who, was “touched with the feelings of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” to save us. God is good. He saw the prerequisite and filled it. God became one of us to save us. He became sin for us; sacrificed Himself for us; was raised from the dead for us; and now sits at the right hand of the Father making intercession for us - God in His sovereign grace gave us a Savior we could believe - “By grace we are saved.” “Let us, therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16 AV).

When we, the people of God, come to an understanding of the doctrines of grace, we will be amazed at the manifestation of the power and majesty of our Father. We will be amazed at what the Holy Spirit can accomplish in our very being. We will be amazed at the realization of the presence of the Lord Jesus in our every breath. When we, through the doctrines of grace focus our attention on Him, who is able - and away from our or others' human persona - we will begin to see what are the heights and the depths and the length of our God. We will see our Holy God as He really is and natural man as he most assuredly remains.

My goal in this text is to help us, the people of God, move our attention away from man and the works of man, be they good works or bad works, and focus our attention entirely on the work of our loving God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit - to see the marvelous workings of God in His plan of salvation: in bringing the sinner into a saving relationship as well as bringing the saints into a family relationship. To proclaim with that great old saint Norman Grubb, “God is the great I AM. We are the little He-is-ers.” Not very good English, but wonderful inspiration.

Responsibility & Grace

A saint is free to fail, but a saint is not free to be irresponsible.

In this narrative I will not be describing in great detail the responsibility of the saint in salvation. Many a book has been penned by authors with greater scholarship than I regarding our responsibility to God. My task here is to describe, in a language, which I hope will be easily understood, the sovereign grace of our great God and Savior in the salvation He has furnished the saints. But, before we venture into the subject of God's sovereign grace, I will *Spartan*-ly purport a few words concerning the unalterable responsibility of the child of God - adding my two cents to the pot.

A saint is free to fail, but a saint is not free to be irresponsible. Even though "He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities" (Psalm 103:10), there are responsibilities in behavior, in conduct, in engagement we believers are obligated to occupy, to demonstrate, to endure, to inhabit, in whatever society or circumstance we may find ourselves in - we are to manifest, in our living, what our Father is like. We're free to fail, but we're not free to be irresponsible. As children of God - saved by the sovereign grace of God - we are obligated to occupy the place of responsibility within the church of the living God and within the world, our Father has placed us. In other words: Let's *not* "sin so grace can abound."

Divine grace works "through righteousness," never at the expense of it. God does not make light of sin. God does not condone our transgressions. The Lord is "the Lord that heals you" (*Jehovah-rophi*), but He is also "the Lord, our righteousness" (*Jehovah-tsidkneu*). One does not work without the other. God is "the God of all grace" and the God of, "be ye holy, for I am holy;" we are saved by grace and we walk by faith. One is the saving work of God, the other is the governmental action God requires of His people. Jesus is Lord and with His Lordship comes guiding principles of conduct.

The believer's position in the heavenlies is not at stake here. Every sinning believer will be with the Lord of Glory in that day. If that were not true, then we'll all go to hell because we all still sin (1 John). But rather, this concerns the responsible or irresponsible conduct of the believer in *this* day - and - the believer's place the heavenlies in *that* day - i.e. what place, or position will the believer occupy in that day: "But in a great house there are vessels of gold and of silver, but of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor" (1 Timothy 2:20). Every believing vessel of the Lord's will make it to heaven. But our behavior "done in the body" today, will determine the place our vessel will occupy in that day. The attitude of our Father will be very different with respect to a vessel whose earthly life's "work shall be burned" in that day (1 Corinthians 3:14), and one who's work in this day is unto "honor, sanctified and applicable for the master's use, prepared unto every good work" (2 Timothy 2:21). Both believing vessels will make it to heaven, but only one will be a vessel to honor.

“If my people who are called by My name shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:24).

Sin is the reason God brings temporal judgment on His people. Our obedience brings honor, our sin brings judgment. But with that judgment, He gives us the prescription for recovery and promises forgiveness and healing after His guidelines are met.

If we, as believers, commit sin - which we most assuredly will (1 John 1:10) - our Father commands us to “humble ourselves” (accept His judgment), “and pray, and seek His face,” which goes much farther than just “prayer” - it’s not just lip-service, but coming to Him with a contrite spirit and a broken heart (Psalms 34:18) - “and turn from their wicked ways” - turn from the sin which brought the judgment - “then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and heal their land.” The last portion - “I will hear, forgive and heal” - is a great and wonderful promise, but mark well the opening conditional clause “if,” and the subsequent adverb “then.” It is only after we have humbled ourselves, prayed, seeking His face in our praying, and turned from our sins that He will “then . . . heal our land.” We have no authorization to look for His promise without first seeking and receiving His forgiveness.

“It is greatly to be feared that not a few will, by grace, enter the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ *that they* shall, through their own follies, fail to have ‘an abundant entrance’ (2 Peter 1:11) there into.” A.W. Pink.

I have personally made much use of, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). I do not want to be “ashamed before Him at His coming.” I would, that we all would seek to be “vessels unto honor, sanctified and applicable for the master’s use, prepared unto every good work” - all, functioning as responsible sons. For God is sovereign and He does what He pleases - in judgment, as well as, in grace.

The Doctrines of Grace

Those who hold to the doctrines of the grace of God, referred to by the acronym T. U. L. I. P. - Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace and Perseverance of the saints - are generally referred to as Calvinists. The other camp, or those who do not hold to the doctrines of the grace of God, are called Arminians. The Arminians also have their own acronym flower, D. A. I. S. Y. - “He loves me. He loves me not. He loves me. He loves me not.” That’s the chant of the Arminians. This is no joke. There are large portion of today’s believing people who live with the fear of sinning that one sin which they forget to repent of, which will be

remembered by the Lord on judgment day, and which will send the poor sinning believer to hell's fire for eternity.

A Note on Calvinism

John Calvin, the patriarch of the Calvinists dictum, was born at Noyon, Picardy, on 10 July 1509. Sometime between April 1532 and November 1533, he adopted the Protestant faith. Then in 1536, he wrote his epoch-making treatise, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, which is a must read.

Calvin always accepted the scriptures as the ultimate authority; religious, personal, social and political. After reading a couple of biographies about Calvin, I've come to the conclusion that his major focus seemed to be the making of Geneva into the "City of God." He made this, "*la parole de Dieu*," his life's work; effective in political and ecclesiastical, as well as personal life; he left no stone unturned in his efforts to make Geneva a city for Christ until the end of his life.

J. W. Allen wrote (in his, *Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*) "Calvin's political theory closely approximates that of Hildebrand, with the authority of the Bible replacing the power of the papacy." (I love that book, but I also wanted to quote someone with such a lovely name.)

Calvin worked along two lines, which were to dominate his whole life: the establishment of purity of doctrine and purity of living. It was Calvin who first began what we know now as the T. U. L. I. P.. Calvin also introduced Capitalism to the West and . . . this catechization:

What is the chief end of man?

Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.

What rule hath God given to direct us

How we may glorify and enjoy Him?

The Word of God, which is contained in the scriptures of the

Old and New Testament, is the only rule to direct us how

We may glorify and enjoy Him.

This stanza is the beginning of the Westminster Shorter Catechism. The statement was formulated long after Calvin's death, it is the manifesto of Scottish and English Puritanism. I added it here because the document reflects the spirit of John Calvin so well.

Jacobus (James) Arminius¹

The philosophy of James Arminius and the tradition of the Arminian's premise argues that a believer, a Christian, can forfeit his place in the Heaven prepared for him by His Father and therefore go to hell. Yes, Arminians believe that a Christian can go to hell. Arminians have so little confidence in the grace of God, the blood of the Lord Jesus, the ability of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life, as to contend that a believer can go to hell because of a sin or some disbelief after the believer has believed on the Lord Jesus and is saved. It's illogical I know, but that's what they believe. What the phrase "eternal life" means to them, only they know. Possibly they see it as more of a hopeful suggestion, rather than a trustworthy statement. Arminian ideology of faith deals more with how the believer looks and presents himself to other Arminians, rather than the position the Father has placed the believer into, by faith in His Son.

The Lord Jesus died, taking all sin onto Himself - taking the penalty of death brought upon the entire human race by the transgression of our fleshly father Adam - taking our sin, our penalty, our condemnation, our wrongs, our unbelief, our **sin** onto Himself. Jesus literally became sin for us. He took sin out of the way, hanging it on the tree.

There is absolutely no wisdom in the Arminian creed of "*perform right* (according to the mandated rule of the preacher you're sitting under) *or lose your place in Heaven.*" Sin, as far as Arminians are concerned, has not been propitiated - paid for. God is not satisfied with the death of His Son. The believer is not eternally justified before God. God requires more - according to the Arminian position.

Martin Luther called justification "the article of a standing or falling church" and Paul would fully have endorsed that description. Some Arminians believe a man must be baptized in water to be saved. Others believe a man must be baptized in water in the name of "*Jesus only*" to be saved. Arminians believe that there's a lot of work to be done - on the part of a man - to be saved. The truth is, Arminians do not believe that the penalty for sin has been done away with by the blood sacrifice the Lord Jesus shed on the cross. Fact: what sends a man to hell is his denial of, his unbelief in the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's all! So the question remains, what then will the Arminian do with Jesus who is called Christ?

A few years ago my mother moved her church membership from one denomination to another. While visiting her one summer, I accompanied her to her new assembly. After the service, I was introduced to her new preacher, who was a thin man, somewhat standoffish, yet amicable. As my mother and I walked to her car, escorted by a large number of her new brethren, each of us hoping to get to *Luby's*TM cafeteria before the line was too long, an elder from her new denomination grabbed my arm and point-blank asked me if I had, "Made Jesus my savior?" I said "No" which

startled the good elder. I continued, "My good fellow, God made Jesus my savior and it's now my responsibility to stop being a rebellious servant and enjoy His Lordship." From the look on his face I could tell he was a bit put out. Apparently all he could see was a young man dressed in what he considered very inappropriate garb, with hair cut like someone from *MTV*TM, too thin to be healthy, smiling like a Cheshire cat, walking with his benevolent mother, racing as fast as he could to get away from church. He glared directly in my eyes for what seemed like hours and then questioned with a grunt, "Well have you been baptized?" "Which one?" I asked, "In the Spirit or water?" But just as he was about to counter my witticism, my mother put her hands on my shoulders, thanked the good elder for his concern and hurried me away.

Why did I answer the good elder the way I did? One, because I have a quick wit and use it often, and two, because I realized his only concern was my church affiliation, not my soul. That particular Arminian denomination believes that unless a man is water-baptized in one of their churches, by one of their preachers, and thus has his name listed on one of their indisputable denomination's church rosters, he'll go to hell no matter what or in Whom he believes. In this denomination, baptism and man-made ordinances have taken precedence over belief. In their zeal for jurisdiction through pretentious dictates they dismiss passages such as Paul's declaration concerning baptism - "I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Caius, lest anyone should say that I baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect" (1 Corinthians 1:14-17). And his affirmation concerning belief, "For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation. For the scripture says, 'Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame'" (Romans 10:10,11).

They also dismiss the thief on the cross who had neither the way, nor the means, nor the time to be baptized. But he made it to paradise anyway. Quick thinker!

The good elder looked on me as a sinner - whether I was or not - because I was not on his church's list of saints. And if he could get me under the water and in his denominational catalogue I'd be safe. That is, unless I committed some sin on the way to *Luby's*TM - then I'd better watch out.

No true Arminian believes in our security as believers in Christ Jesus. Arminians believe a Christian can be snatched out of the Lord's hand and out of the Father's hand at any given moment and burn in Hell for eternity - so you better be on guard at all times and hopefully, as you go through this life you don't sin. Because, if you commit a sin as a believer, and forget to repent of that sin, you're on your way to hell - according to them anyway.

Arminians do not hold to the fact that we're all sinners. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us . . . If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:8-10). My good brothers, John wrote that for us believers, us Christians. We are - in the body of Christ - redeemed sinners. We're redeemed, yet we still live and operate in these sinful acting bodies. Read Romans 7 for the truth of that statement.

Kerygma

The good elder had a knowledge of God, yet, his knowledge was based on what he had been told by his denomination, rather than what he had gleaned from the Lord himself. He and his denomination has forgotten what the early church called, *kerygma* (alternate spelling: *kerugma*) - a Greek word in origin, meaning the preaching (or proclamation) of the significance of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In other words, Christ died for our sins; He was raised from the dead on the third day; He now sits at the right hand of the Father, who is on the throne of Heaven; believe on Him and be saved. That's what the early church believed and taught: *kerygma*. Peter taught this in Acts 2. Paul taught this in 1 Corinthians 15.

Kerygma is the basic unity of the Gospels. No matter to what extent the Gospel writers differ in their linguistic emphases, they all proclaim *kerygma*. Mark's portrayal of Jesus as the suffering Messiah differs from Matthew's picture of the Lord as the fulfillment of Jewish hopes. Luke's depiction of Jesus as champion of the poor, outcast, and sinners, varies slightly from the first two, and John's account gives us a image altogether different from either of the first three, in that he speaks to our salvation as having already been obtained. Yet - *kerygmatically* - all of the Gospels are the same: we believers have been redeemed through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ! That simple fact is lost in Arminian denominations.

Belief

Unbelieving Believers & Believing Believers

Denominations were sired by men. The Church was birthed by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost; kept by the promises of God through His Spirit until the day of redemption - our resurrection - as the bride of Christ. Do we, as the bride of Christ, sin? Yes, indeed we do. Does the Lord reject us because of our sin? No, He does not. Does He like it when we sin? No, He does not. But we do sin. "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God - through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin" (Romans 7:24,25). I so love the words of Jonathan Edwards, "You are called Christians, and this is your profession. Endeavor, therefore, to acquire knowledge in things which pertain to your profession." So our knowledge of sin and of salvation comes through our knowledge of His word. And through His word we understand

that with our minds we serve the Lord, but with our bodies we serve sin. But thanks be to God we have been delivered from our bodies of sin through Christ Jesus (Romans 8) who loved us and gave Himself for us! No matter what church roll you're on - or off.

One phrase I will repeat throughout this text is: we're all sinners. Some are redeemed sinners. Some are unredeemed sinners. What Arminians seem to not understand is: sin is not what sends anyone to hell. Unbelief does. Not unbelief, per-se. But unbelief in the work, the labor of love the Lord Jesus did when He took all sin for all generations - past, present and future - onto Himself on the cross, becoming a curse for us, dying the death for us, taking the punishment for us, becoming the substitute for us, on behalf of us, sprinkling His own blood in the heavenlies before the Father for us, and by that blood became the satisfaction for sin before the Father for us - He died, was buried and rose from the dead, becoming "the first born among many brethren" - is now in the presence of the Father making intercession for us, on behalf of us, His bride - and He will come again to judge the living and the dead and His kingdom will have no end, for us! If you don't believe that . . . then you're on your way to the Lake of Fire.

Rejection of the work accomplished, rather, **completed** by the Lord Jesus is the one milestone in anyone's life that will send them to eternal damnation. Once you comply to the work of the Lord Jesus - "believe on Him who He sent" - the requirement mandated by the Father is concluded. "Believe on the Lord Jesus and be saved." Sounds simple, because it is simple! But many believers wrestle with that truth. We believers have a hard time accepting the extent to which we have been forgiven.

We are, as believers, sons of God. We are not sons of wrath (Ephesians 2:1-10). Yet we, every natural born man, are all born (in the flesh) into the state of being totally depraved - without God. We are born into sin because of our natural father, Adam.

"Therefore, I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; If we suffer," (the word *suffer* is the same word *endure* in verse 10) "we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him He will deny us: **If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself.**" (2 Timothy 2: 10-14 AV).

Arminians always bring up the question, "What if a believer quits believing?" I always tell them it doesn't matter if he quits or not, the Lord remains faithful - "If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself." A short interval of silence usually follows and then a thunder of challenge. Let me explain.

If you will read Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, in chapter 14, he writes a wonderful passage concerning an unbelieving believer coming into the church. He does not say that that unbelieving believer is not saved, only that he is unbelieving or

unlearned on a certain point of church order, speaking in tongues (in that particular gathering) to be exact. (There are, as we know, many legitimate unbelievers - the unredeemed - who enter the congregation of the redeemed, I am not commenting on that particular point of Paul's letter here; only the unlearned or unbelieving believer who enters the congregation.) The believing man is not a believer on one point of church operation - only. He may be, as Paul says, "unlearned" and doesn't believe in speaking in tongues, although he is a believer - a Christian. Paul is writing to the Corinthian believers and begins this portion of his discourse with, "Yet in the church," - "in the church" suggests who? Christians. Paul is writing to the Christians. Let's not forget why Paul wrote this section to the Corinthian church. The gift of tongues had taken the superior place in the church and the preaching of the Word had been set aside - not altogether, but in importance.

Now, some of you well-read brethren may be thinking, there seems to be a contradiction in 1 Corinthians 14. In verse 22 we read, "tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not." Then in verse 23 Paul continues, "If, therefore, the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak in tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that you are mad?" If tongues are for the unbelievers in 22, why not in 23 as well? If tongues are for the unbeliever, why will he think you are mad? What good would tongues be to an unbeliever if he sees you as a frenzied bunch of kooks and runs out of the church screaming? What good would tongues do? Has Paul changed his mind somewhere between these verses? I think not.

In verse 23, we are faced, I believe, with an unbelieving believer. I say this because Paul begins with the words, "when the whole church comes together." If the whole church is together, then they all are believers. Yet not all are learned or believing. Some are unlearned and some are unbelieving. They're all believers, but some are unbelieving believers. So he urges them, in verse 24, to speak a language everyone in the church will be able to understand; so that he, the unbelieving believer, will be "convicted . . . so falling down on his face he will worship God." So there are believing believers and there are unbelieving believers in the church.

"I would that you all spoke with tongues," says Paul, "but rather that you prophesied; for greater is he that prophesies than he that speaks with tongues, except he interprets, that **the church** may receive edifying" (1 Corinthians 14:5).

Speaking in tongues had taken the place of teaching the Word of God; which is the reason Paul tells them, "I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual, but as to carnal, even as to babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and with solid food; for to this time you were not able to bear it, neither yet are you able. For you are carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are you not carnal, and walk as men?" Teaching the Word of God will edify the believer, speaking in tongues

will not - unless there is interpretation. And apparently there was no interpretation, just a bunch of tongues.

Evidently these believing Corinthians were all speaking in tongues - all together and all at once - and not teaching the Word. It also appears that some Church members enjoyed the service the way it was going, while others disapproved. So the Church was divided to the point that "one said, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos." And a divided Church will not last long - which is one reason we have so many denominations.

As believers we need to hear the word to believe the word. If we hear the word and don't understand the word, we may not know what to believe - we may become unbelieving believers.

Mysteries

For a long time I had difficulty believing the "rapture" - as taught by some. I was reading the Bible with all the vigor my little heart could muster, but the "rapture" was a "mystery" to me. And I am not alone. The Bible speaks of many "mysteries" - concealed truth over which the Lord has cast a veil. Precepts over which the Lord has not revealed His intent - as yet. Most of us have felt the sting of a "mystery" or two from the Word of the Lord. Of that I am sure.

Many "mysteries" have been unveiled to us through His revealed truth of the New Testament, but many have not. The reason being, many "mysteries" concern actions or situations which transcends the powers of man to conceive, and is therefore beyond our ability to imagine or establish. We are told of the mystery "of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 13:11), the "mysteries of God" (1 Corinthians 4:1). The restoration and salvation of Israel is spoken of as a "Mystery" (Romans 11:25). The resurrection and bodily transformation of the saints of God (the "rapture") is spoken of as a "mystery" - "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep" (1 Corinthians 15:51; cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:17). These all are "mysteries" which have been, or shall be, revealed to us as the Lord sees fit. Before the Holy Spirit made such a disclosure, "We shall not all sleep," who of us could have imagined a whole generation of God's people entering heaven without passing through the portal of death - as we are cognizant of the "mystery" of death today.

So, for a long time the Lord had not seen fit to unveil the "mystery" of the "rapture" to me until . . . I heard a devout scholarly man teach on the second coming of the Lord - in a language I could understand - and suddenly I believed in the "rapture." Glory! I became a believing believer. It was funny at the time, but my first thought was, "How could I have been so stupid?" But I wasn't so much stupid, as I was unbelieving - this "mystery" was veiled to me. During my time as an unbelieving (or veiled) believer, was I at any time in danger of spending all of eternity in Hell because

of my unbelief? Certainly not! I would venture to say that most of you who are reading this text are unbelieving believers on certain points of real Bible truth. Individual portions of the Bible are a “mystery” to you. They are to me. That’s why Paul declared, “We know in part.” Because in truth, all of us, only “know in part.” Yet, we believe. Oh, the “mystery” of our faith.

Even though I believe in the “rapture” of the Church, I do not hold to a pre-millennial “rapture.” That teaching is nothing more than dispensational ideology. We will be “caught up” to be sure, but when, where, and how that will take place is a “mystery” and is the Lord’s prerogative, not mine.

Again, “If we believe not, yet He abides faithful; He cannot deny Himself.” Paul here states that if you stop believing, He keeps believing - He cannot deny Himself. Wonderful! “Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers” (2 Timothy 2: 10-14). If we transgress a doctrine, fall short, or go astray as believers, in any portion of the Word of God, we have sinned. But have we sinned sins unto death? Eternal death? No. To lie is a sin. To steal is a sin. To covet is a sin. Any infraction of the Word of God - sin that it may be - committed by a believer will not send a believer to hell. There are sins - “all have sinned and fall short” - and there is **SIN**. The sin of Adam. We’re all (of the family of Adam) born into, as human beings, total depravity; into the **SIN** of Adam. We’re all at enmity with God from birth. Natural birth. Totally depraved. Which is why we needed a Savior.

The Total Depravity of Man

The apprehension of this doctrine is imperative to our understanding any part of the grace of God. All other doctrines - salvation, election, etc. - can only be properly understood in the light of this doctrine. The total depravity of man declares that the entire race of Adam - everyone born of woman, save the Lord Jesus Himself - is corrupt and fallen; in our natural state we are dead in our trespasses and sins; every part of our being is defiled, twisted and deformed by sin; we are justly deserving of the wrath and punishment of a righteous and holy God.

It is not my place to say who is the Lord’s and who isn’t - “Known unto the Lord are those that are His.” But in this day of inclusiveness, my desire is to know truth. The total depravity of man is one of the most basic Bible truths, and one which is very misunderstood. Before I set out to explain what the total depravity of man is, let me first explain what it is not.

The total depravity of man is not *absolute* depravity. The adjective, *total*, tends to presume that man is as corrupt and as evil as he can possibly be. But that’s not the purpose of the adjective. The adjective doesn’t establish the intensity of our depravity,

but rather it specifies its extent. Neither does it imply that we couldn't sin to any greater degree than we already do; which isn't the point at all - all of us can sin bigger and better than we do right now. If you could plumb the depths of the evil of the human heart you would find it a bottomless pit. There is no end to the evil man can and will do. When we read newspaper articles or watch the TV news reports depicting bombings, killings, maiming, rapes, and beatings that are so horrible, bloody, and unbelievably inhuman, remember, human nature being what it is, those stories and those pictures could be much worse.

A Sampling of History

In 811 A.D., the Bulgar king, Krum, along with his immense host, marched on Pliska; slaying, raping, burning all they encountered. It was said that he and his army spared neither woman nor child in their conquest - babies were thrown into threshing machines. During the bloodbath the Emperor Nicephorus was killed and beheaded. His head was then impaled on a stake and paraded around the defeated realm. Later, Krum took the head, stripped it of its flesh, mounted it in silver, and for the remainder of his life, used the skull as a drinking cup. See, the TV news could be much worse.

Total depravity is not absolute depravity; our nature is sinful and corrupt at its very core. The term, total depravity, says, that because of our nature, we can do nothing good - nothing righteous. Nothing. Our state, without the Lord of Glory, is totally depraved. Totally without good. Our good is as filthy rags, worthless in the sight of the Living God. Valueless. Trivial dross. Man, as he stands alone before God, without the saving blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, is without any good at all. He is in a condition, not of *absolute* depravity, but *total* depravity. Everything that fallen man does or thinks is tainted and corrupted by original sin.

Relative Goodness

The state of total depravity, however, is not the absolute absence of relative good. Even in man's fallen condition there are those works, which we (as men) call good. For example, a someone may receive a hero's decoration for bravery and sacrifice during wartime. There are individuals the world acknowledges as paladins; unselfishly doing humankind a great service; extensive human good - discovering cures for catastrophic diseases, devoting their life to feed the world's hungry. These admirable works can, and are called good works, in a relative sense. But, not necessarily in a God sense.

So does God consider relatively good works, good works or bad works? The scriptures are clear that all of our good works, relative or not - without the interjection into man's very core of the Spirit of God - are like filth, useless and unacceptable at their core to God. "You are they who justify yourselves before man, but God knows your

hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15). We need to understand the whole picture.

Imagine, if you would, a run-of-the-mill suburban neighborhood. One day a well dressed, retiring older gentleman moves into this quiet, family-oriented locale, sets up housekeeping and begins to blend in with his new surroundings. After a couple of months the neighborhood embraces the old guy. He seems virtuous and respectable. He smiles and waves at passerby's. He's extremely helpful to all his new neighbors. He always assists the kids in crossing the street in front of his house on their way to school. He keeps a clean, well mowed lawn. He's a really sweet, likable guy. So, everyone in the neighborhood speaks well of the old fellow. He is well liked.

Late one summer evening, fifty commando type guys bust down the older gentleman's front door. Guns cocked, arms up, ready to fire - blue lights flash on every corner of the neighborhood - screeching bull-horns blast out commands. An army of reporters converge on this run-of-the-mill neighborhood. Then the neighbors see the older gentleman coming out of his house, head down, handcuffed, escorted by a group of well-armed Federal authorities. The old man is gingerly seated in a unmarked car and they drive away.

The neighbors, all of whom are standing in the street by this time, are mystified. They all agree that no one had ever seen him do anything wrong. "That old man wouldn't hurt a fly." Something was wrong here.

After an hour or so the neighborhood was quite again.

Later on that week the neighborhood folk see the old man's face, full-framed, on the national news. They hear the newscaster describing the old man's arrest and how, as an SS guard in one of Hitler's death camps, he was responsible for the deaths of thousands of Jewish and Christian men, women and children. The entire neighborhood is stunned.

The old man was relatively good in the neighborhood. But the relative good the old man did in the neighborhood will not carry a lot of weight in the Israeli justice system. The Jewish courts won't take into consideration the old man's nice clean yard and how sweet he was to the children in the neighborhood. When the old man is judged, he will be judged against the backdrop of his crimes committed against humanity during World War II, not the relative good he did in his nice suburban neighborhood.

The same is true in God's justice system. The relative good we do in this life, when put against the back-drop of our sin and rebellion against a holy and righteous God, won't carry a lot of weight in the justice system of the court of Heaven. There is nothing good in us that can satisfy God's justice. There is nothing we can do, which

will remove the stain of sin we were born into this world with. Our relative goodness may bring a moment of praise from our neighbors, but it will not satisfy a holy and righteous God. That's why we needed a savior.

What is Total depravity?

Total depravity is only and always being in enmity with God. We, in our natural state, as born of woman in this world, are in the state of being actively opposed and hostile to God, and to all that He is. We are mortal beings, in rebellion, in sin, lost, fallen, unable to be reformed, lifeless - the walking, breathing, laughing, eating, sleeping dead. Total depravity declares that the entire race of Adam is fallen, and in our natural state we are dead in our trespasses and sins. Every part of our nature is corrupted, twisted and deformed because of sin - this is the *total* aspect of this doctrine. We, as sinful mankind, of the race of Adam, are justly deserving of the wrath, punishment and judgment of the righteous, holy God. If not for Christ Jesus, we'd all be condemned to eternal fire! But Christ has come!

More on this later.

These next sections usually cause a great disturbance within some people - much more than is really necessary.

Unconditional Election

The doctrine of unconditional election states that God, in His most holy grace, and entirely without any merit on our part, chose and elected, out of the mass of fallen humanity, some from every tongue, tribe, people and nation to be called the sons of God. He chose to save them, not with the view of anything good or worthy that He foresaw within the creature. For there was nothing good, nor worthy to be seen in these creatures. By His grace, for His own glory, for His own pleasure, and for His own purpose, which He determined within Himself, did He choose to save whom He would save. It is God's unconditional choice.

We have seen by the total depravity of man, that there is no condition that we, being dead in our sins, could meet, or conditions that we would meet, if we could meet, that would bring us to God, because we (as fallen man) stand in rebellion and enmity towards God. Thus, our election is unconditional and is not respective of any faith, of any repentance, of any holiness or of any good work or of any perseverance on our part. All of these, faith, repentance, good works, holiness etc. are the fruit and effects of God's electing grace; not the condition or the cause of that grace.

The doctrine of Unconditional Election, basically states that: we did not choose to accept or reject God (which sounds ridiculous), God chose us; we had nothing to do with the Spirit drawing us to the Father; we had nothing to do with our names being

written down before the foundations of the world; we had nothing to do with any of the process of God saving us (no matter what the preachers or the numerous evangelical tracts say) and we have nothing to do with keeping or letting go of our salvation. It's "election!" God has a majority vote of One.

Election is not a half-hearted attempt on the part of God. Election does not mean that God is anxiously awaiting the final ballot boxes to see who gets in and who doesn't. Election does not mean that God has no idea how many houses to build in heaven. Election means that God has foreordained that the elect will be saved. The elect are not those who God hopes will be saved. The elect are those who God will save. And He will save them to the uttermost!

Isaiah states, "Mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth" (42:1 AV). "Mine elect I have called by my name" (45:4). The Gospel of Mark continues, "He will gather together his elect" (13:27). Then 1 Peter, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God" (1:2). One of the best texts on election is found in Paul's letter to the Roman church. I won't quote it here, but I suggest you read all of chapter 9 and allow the Holy Spirit to bring you to your own conclusion. Paul also states in that same letter, "Has God cast away His people? God forbid. . . God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. . . Even so, then, at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace" (11:1-5). This is in reference to the people of God, Israel, who are elect through the Lord Jesus - just as all the elect are. Paul ends the discourse with, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace" (11: 6).

If you are still under the impression that you must choose God, as if God is not the One making the decision, then I would suggest you look in your Bible and find one place where any man in the whole of the Bible made the choice himself - find one who chose to choose God. They are not there. The Lord chose the apostles; they did not choose Him. God chose Abraham; Abraham did not choose God. And so on, and so on. Romans 9 states, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Some may ask, "How could God hate Esau?" My answer, "How could God love Jacob?" Thanks be to God for His unconditional grace in election.

Limited Atonement

The doctrine of Limited Atonement is a bone of contention within the church. It has served to divide even those who hold the tenet of Calvinism. Those who maintain the doctrines of grace, including Limited Atonement, are known as 5 point Calvinists and for the most part, are a small, select faithful band. There are also 4/5 Calvinists, who are known as 4 pointers, because they do not like or believe the "L" in T. U. L. I. P. These "4 pointers", as they are called, remove the very heart of the doctrines of the grace of God, and in the process negate Unconditional Election, Irresistible Grace and the Perseverance of the Saints. Without the "L," (Limited Atonement), they are not

distinguishing or properly comprehending what was accomplished by Christ Jesus on the cross. Our focus must be on what the Father was doing in Christ Jesus on the cross to fully understand all of the doctrines of the grace of God. What the Father was doing in the cross - what the purpose of the Father in the work of the cross was, is the heart of Limited Atonement.

As I expound upon this doctrine of Limited Atonement, or more exactly, *particular redemption*, which I feel better states the posture of this doctrine, many of you may react harshly. The number one complaint is: "It's just not fair." This doctrine causes a lot of grief among the children of God. Some of us don't like the idea of the word "limited" in relation to God's atonement. But, "when you look at this doctrine in the light of the Word of God, you see God's sovereignty manifested, instead of man-made conditions exerted upon the fact of God redeeming whom He will." Diana Leigh Allen, *from a letter dated 3 March 1996*. (You may have a bunch of love letters from your wife, I have an assortment of letters from mine, which read much like this one.) I do love her.

All of the people of God are from different backgrounds. God has been ever so faithful to bring us out of a multitude of experiences and environments to place us into His church body. But, if we, the mass of us, were to encapsulate the essence of the last half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, as we have dealt with conservative evangelical Christianity, the substance of what we, the church, have been teaching by and large for the past 50 or 60 years, is this:

- (1.) God loves everyone.
- (2.) There is a problem. That problem is sin. Everyone of us are sinners.
- (3.) This problem was solved by God, when He sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross for all men.
- (4.) God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.
- (5.) All you have to do is admit that you're a sinner and accept Jesus as your Savior.

This is the bulk of the Gospel message preached in the church today and I am very offended with this type of declaration. You may be offended because of my response. Let me explain.

The crux of the problem I have with this type of message is that the work of Christ on the cross - what was accomplished by His suffering and blood shedding - has been diluted and glossed over. I know some of you are saying, "I can't believe that you would say that! I mean, that's the Gospel I've heard all my life! I'm highly offended

that you would even think of questioning that message.” Hear me out. As Stephen was allowed to speak his peace, allow me as well. Then you can stone me if you like.

I will go even farther and offer a sense of rebuke to the church as a whole, myself included, because the church has not been like the Bereans. They, if you will remember, were more noble because they searched the scriptures diligently to “see whether these things were so.” The Apostle Paul was not embarrassed or ashamed because the Bereans checked up on his teaching; he was unlike many teachers today who are offended if you question any opinion they assert. In fact, Paul was thrilled because the Bereans questioned his teaching. The Bereans didn’t take what the Apostle Paul said was fact, as fact. They searched the scriptures to make sure what he taught as truth was in fact truth. I would that all who read what I write or hear what I teach, would do the same. I am no infallible interpreter of what God has said. So check me out, “see whether these things be so.”

The church in this day and age has not, for the greater part, had the attitudes of the Bereans. We hear this gospel preached: “God loves everyone. Christ died for everyone,” and we believe every word without question. If you search the scriptures you will find that the “God loves everyone, just accept Jesus” gospel is not the testimony of the word of God.

The work of Christ on the cross is the focal point of God’s work of redemption. It is the great hinge of history. The cross is the most important event in the history of the world; the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross.

When the truth of the word of God, concerning the teaching of the cross of Christ is illustrated, most Arminians and a lot of evangelicals, seek to depict God as “fair” by their standards. But the Bible teaches that God is objective by His own standards, not subjectively fair by the standards of man. God is objective, not subjective. A marked difference.

There are three major areas I hope to cover in this section.

First: A Biblical prospective .

Second: An analysis of the doctrine.

Third: An examination of, John 3:16, which contains what is called, “the universal testimony” ; words and phrases such as “the world” ; “all” ; “every,” and the like, which seem to support the Arminian position of universal atonement.

The first question we must ask and the main one which must be answered is: For whom did Christ die? There are two very different answers given in response.

The Arminian answer is: "Christ died for all men and for every man." The verses quoted are: John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." And, "He Himself is the propitiation (which is a big theological word meaning *satisfaction*) for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:2). Another translation of the same verse, "God's wrath towards sin was satisfied and Jesus Himself is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." Then, 2 Peter 3:9 is quoted, which says, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering towards us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

And so the basic Arminian position is: God loved the world. Christ died for the sins of the world; to redeem the world. God is not willing for any to perish. But there are people for whom Christ died to redeem, but His blood was never applied. Never applied to those people who chose not to be saved. So the blood of Christ was shed, not only for those who will finally go to heaven, but for those who won't get there, as well. In essence, the blood was spilled, but it wasn't employed . . . it was wasted on those whom He could not redeem by His blood - because they would not accept Him.

The Bible's position is: "And you shall have a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Christ died to redeem the elect - His people. That's what raises the hair on the back of the masses.

The very name, Jesus, implies a limited area. He is going to come to save "His people from their sins." Not all people, but His people. Also John 10:14-15, "I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father, and I lay down My life for the sheep." Not for the goats, the pigs or the dogs, but for the sheep. "Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father" (Galatians 1:3-4). "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her" (Ephesians 5:25) - for His people.

So there two different answers. Both with scriptural support backing them up - at least on the surface. We have a problem. Right? Is this is a unanswerable paradox? A conundrum of sorts? Something we shouldn't delve into or seek to unravel? I don't believe that to be the case. This is not where we should stop. We should be Bereans and search out both answers, "to see whether this be so."

Let's do a brief study on the two conclusions, in the light of our previous studies: Election and Calling. Both positions, the Arminian and the Calvinist, agree: the Father elects, the Son redeems and the Holy Spirit calls. But, even though they use very

similar terminology, the Arminian and the Calvinist communicate two entirely different principles.

Adjectives & Nouns

In the doctrines of Grace, Arminians put emphasis on the adjectives: *Limited, Irresistible, Unconditional* and *etc.* But their emphasis is illegitimate. It may sound correct, but it's not. The emphasis should be placed on the nouns - *Atonement, Grace, Election* - not the adjectives.

Both sides agree that God elects. Yet the Arminian election is not unconditional. However, an election that's conditional on something we do, we believe, or on something we perform, is not election at all. It is simply God seconding a motion we have before put into existence. The term *conditional election* is, at best, a paradox: it is not an election at all, because it occurs *after* the fact.

In the same way, if we say, "Irresistible grace," then the Arminian says, "No, the grace of God is resistible." Their position is, "You can stiff-arm God on the playing field of life, and go your own way. God implores you because He doesn't want anyone to perish, and He'll be really upset if you wind up going to hell. But it's up to you. You have to exercise your own free will if you want to stay in His grace and go to heaven."

Any Grace which can be resisted to the point of eternal damnation is not grace at all. Grace is not earned - it is received. "According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love having predestinated us unto the adoption (Greek: *huiiothesia*, placing as sons) of sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, through which He has made us accepted in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:4-6).

The sovereign choice of God in election, predestination, foreknowledge or foreordination logically originates in God. Logically, not chronologically. We do not choose God and then therefore, He is obligated to accept us. Election is wholly by the foreknowledge, foreordination and grace of God, apart from any human merit or decision. "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16). But, we would rather *earn* grace than *receive* it. We feel the need to earn the right to God's goodness, even though He gives His goodness to us freely. We have an appetite for what speaks to our own ability. We want to feel as if we have obtained salvation, by something of our own merit.

The same is true of Limited Atonement. If you have an unlimited atonement, i.e. Christ died for everyone, for all men, then you can't believe in an eternal hell. You can't believe that there will be those who will wind up in the eternal lake of fire and believe

in an unlimited atonement. If you once admit that there will be those who will wind up in hell, and still hold to unlimited atonement or freedom of the will of man to choose God or reject Him, then there is something lacking in the atonement in which you believe. How could Christ have fully atoned for all sin in hopes of redeeming men to God, and yet, have failed in that atonement to the point that some of those men will wind up in hell. What kind of an atonement is that? It's certainly not unlimited.

If the Arminian says that the atonement is unlimited, and yet people still go to hell, then there is something inefficient in that atonement. That atonement does not work completely. If all men do not go to heaven, and some do go to hell, as the scripture teaches, then there must be, in some way, a limit in the atonement. I don't care what you call it: The atonement is limited either in scope or in power. I personally do not want to opt for the latter. I do not want to imply that God's power is limited. I would rather say, No, the purpose, the intent, the scope of God's atonement, of God's redemption, was limited to the elect. For the elect, it is unlimited atonement. For the elect it is complete, utter forgiveness. We are made partakers of the divine nature. We are brought into fellowship with God and we will be glorified in that day. That's complete and utter atonement. So, I believe the atonement is limited in its scope, not it's power. Christ Jesus died for the sake of the elect of God!

If you take the other option and say, "The atonement is not limited, and was given for all men, all people, every man, woman, and child in the world," you also have to agree that the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ was limited in its power. Because the power of the freewill of man can overcome the power and choice, of the eternal God in the atonement.

The Arminian places the individual saving work of the triune Godhead in ever shrinking succession. The Arminian theory goes something like this: (The Arminian answers are in *italic*.)

The son died for who? "*The whole world.*"

So we have this huge circle that has everyone in all of history within it. That's who Christ died to redeem. Right? "*Yes, the whole world.*"

Next the Spirit of God calls all that Christ died for "to be reconciled to God." Right? "*Right!*"

Christ died to reconcile the world to God; therefore the Spirit of God is calling all those who have been reconciled to be reconciled. But the Spirit calls with resistible grace. So a man, of his own freewill can and very often refuses the call of God, that the Spirit of God gives out. Some will exercise their freewill and accept the call of the Spirit and some will not. That's the theory. Right? "*Right.*"

So, where Christ died to redeem everyone, where He was successful in making atonement for all, the Holy Spirit is only successful in a smaller circle of those who exercise their free will to choose Christ. Right? *“Right.”*

Do you follow any logic here? Unless you're a Universalist, you must admit that the Holy Spirit of God is just not as successful in calling as Christ was in redeeming. Once you acknowledge that one of the called ones goes to hell because he chooses not to accept the call of the Spirit of God, then you must concede that the Spirit of God is not always as successful, in the saving process, as the Son of God was in His ministry of salvation - because Christ redeemed all, but the Spirit only called those who by their freewill chose to accept the call. The others outside the circle of the influence of the Holy Spirit, those who Christ died for, perish eternally in hell because they chose to be out of the circle of influence of the Holy Spirit. So Christ died for their sins, but the Spirit was unsuccessful in calling them into His Kingdom; because of their freewill. It doesn't stop there.

Lastly of all, those that did, of their own freewill obey and did not resist the call of the Spirit of God and were born again into a living hope, (those inside the Spirit's circle) only those who continue to exercise their freewill and remain in the faith, only those that endure to the end, only these are the ones the Father finally elects to be with Him in Heaven. Right? *“Right.”*

As you can see the circle is very small at this point in the Arminian theory.

The ones Christ died for, who have obeyed the call of the Holy Spirit and yet, did not remain faithful until the end, these are cast into “the lake of fire” with the devil and his angels. Wow, is that good news or what? Doesn't that make you feel secure in your Father's love? It's not enough that the Son died to redeem you. It's not enough that the Spirit called you by His grace. You better keep it up 'till the end or you'll be in hell! Now go out and preach *that* good news! Encourage one another! Beloved, this is **not** the Gospel of the Grace of the living God. This is nothing more than man trying to save himself by his own effort and will. Free or not.

A Mountainous Illustration

Let me give you another illustration: Imagine the entire earth as one huge ocean. No land, just water. This ocean represents the entire fallen race of Adam, every man, woman, and child who has ever lived. Christ comes to redeem all that ocean. He comes to reconcile the whole world, ocean and all to God. All those that Christ died to redeem, the Spirit calls out, all “whosoever will,” let them come. So up out of the water comes a huge mountain. These are the ones that heard the call of the Spirit of God. Now remember Christ died to redeem all of them, He died to put all of them in the position where they could be redeemed, if they so choose. Of all those in the position to

choose, those who hear the Spirit of God and by their own self will, free will, believed and came to Christ; that's what we see as the mountain. That's the work of the Spirit.

Next, picture a horrible earthquake that shatters the mountain. California size chunks of land, by their own freewill, rip themselves lose from the mountain and fling themselves back into the gaping waters. After all the dust clears and everything has settled down, the small mountain the Father sees, the paltry mound that's left, is what He elects to take up with Him to glory. Does that make sense to any of you dear readers? The fact that the mountain could break itself off and go back into the ocean saying in essence, "I refuse to be a part of this mountain," is ridiculous.

This is an ever shrinking circle within the Godhead according to the Arminian. The Son was totally successful - He died to redeem the whole world. It was the blood of Christ that was given to redeem all mankind. But when the Spirit comes along and tries to call everyone with resistible grace, He is thwarted and only some of those for whom Christ died come. The Spirit isn't entirely successful because of all those He calls out, and of all those that are born again, there are still some of those who reject the faith at the last and die and go to hell. So when the Father finally gets around to it, the elect are a very small group, compared to the massive throngs Christ had set out to assemble.

If we consider what the Arminian teaches, of everyone who gets to Heaven, as well as all who wind up in hell, all were redeemed by Christ on the cross. Every person in heaven or in hell heard the resistible call of the Holy Spirit. All that wind up in heaven and some that will spend eternity in hell, some of them obeyed, at one time, the resistible call of the Spirit. All those in hell Christ died to redeem, but they chose not to be redeemed. There will be some in hell that the Spirit of God called and yet, at last, they of their own freewill, reject the faith, or fell into some sin and became lost again and will spend their eternity in hell. Beloved that's not Gospel. That's not good news.

Good News

The word of God sees things very differently. The word of God sees the Trinity of the Godhead involved in unified and complementary work. Those whom the Father unconditionally elected before the foundation of the world, those very ones that were elected, God the Son died on the cross to redeem. He was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. The very ones that Christ died to redeem, those the Spirit of God irresistibly draws to Himself. And those that are irresistibly drawn to God will be, by the grace of God, glorified in God in that day. And as Jesus said, "Father I have lost not a one." Not a one!

Let's repeat our illustration from a more Biblical viewpoint.

Again the whole world is covered in water. It's all ocean, no visible land. All of the water represents the entire fallen race of Adam. All of us are in sin. All are in a

state of total depravity. We're hopeless. Without Christ. Without God. Without hope. (One of the saddest verses in all of scriptures is, Ephesians 2:12: ". . . having no hope, and without Christ in the world." But it is followed by one of the most joyful (vs.12), "But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off are made near by the blood of Christ.")

So out of that fallen mass of damnable humanity, God in the marvel of His grace and love, for reasons He did not reveal in His Word, He fore-loved some of those - those that were foreknown or fore-loved, those the Father elected. So up from that water rises a huge mountain. These are the ones the Father elected. That same mountain, every part of it, are the ones that God the Son died on the cross to redeem, to reconcile to God. The very ones the Father elected and the Son died to redeem, the Spirit of God irresistibly draws to Himself. These are the ones who are brought to faith in Christ. All of the whole of the mountain will be glorified in that day.

If you don't believe me, read the first 9 chapters of Romans and try to come to another conclusion.

It's not a section of the mountain that was called. It's the whole thing. All who were called are redeemed, are elected, will be glorified. All. He forfeits none of the mountain. Thus, there is complete effect in the redemption brought about by the Triune God. Those for whom redemption is accomplished are those for whom redemption is applied. Those who were fore-loved are the very ones the Father elected. The very ones the Son redeemed are the ones the Spirit irresistibly draws. The very ones the Spirit draws are the ones who will be glorified. Bless God!

Those for whom Christ died are made alive. Those for whom He was made sin become the righteousness of God. Those for whose transgressions He was delivered up are the ones justified by His resurrection. Those for whom He took the stripes are the ones healed; no matter what the TV preachers say - Christ died to redeem all those whom the Father gave Him. That's limited atonement - in *scope*, not in power!

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified. What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:28-31).

Are the battle lines being drawn? Are you ready for iron to sharpen iron? Let me encourage you in the strongest words I can. Read through your scripture with the

proper reading wear. Peter says there are some things Paul writes which are “hard to understand. And people who are unstable and untaught, distort and pervert.” So scripture can be distorted and perverted, but let me encourage you, if you are grounded and established in the doctrines of Grace and the sovereignty of God, if you read the scripture with the proper glasses (faith), the Spirit of God can bring to life what’s in His Word. Now to the definition of the term.

Limited atonement affirms that Jesus Christ, in dying, bore the sins of His people: Taking all the punishment that was due to them by becoming for them the curse the Law demanded. It pleased the Father to send Him forth and to bruise Him for this purpose. For in so doing He gained by His meritorious death, by His blood shed on the cross, forgiveness, righteousness, satisfaction, and eternal glory for a different and vastly diverse number of people, out of every tongue, tribe, and people and nation - **all** of whom He knew and was joined with before the foundation of the world.

Limited atonement is a startling doctrine. It flies in the face of everything our flesh cries out for.

Forgiveness

Again, the message we hear in this day and time is: “You must admit that you’re a sinner. Ask God to forgive you for your sins. Accept Jesus as your Savior. Then you are born again and your sins are forgiven.” My question is: What did Jesus do on the cross, if not to forgive us our sins already? New birth is not forgiveness of sin. If we must be forgiven for our sin before we can be born again, what happened almost 2000 years ago on Calvary’s tree? What do we have faith in, if it is not in the completed work which Jesus accomplished on the cross on our behalf? Paul says in no uncertain terms, “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (2 Corinthians 5:19). God is not counting anyone guilty because of sin. God is not concerned with sin - as far as redeeming us. “For He hath made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). So what do we have faith in, if not in the work of Christ Jesus on the cross? Jesus bore all sin on Himself on His cross - all sin! - sin has already been absolved. We must now accept that already forgiven sin payment He made on our behalf and be saved. We must believe that our sins have already been forgiven, paid for, done away with, to be saved. “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us . . . through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Galatians 3:13,14). Faith in what? Faith in Christ Jesus who bore all sin, that we might experience forgiveness and therefore be born again.

He has “begotten us again to a living hope” (1 Peter 1:3). Here Peter emphasizes the aspect of faith as something which has already been worked in us - for the experience of the new birth. Thus he uses the phrase, “born again.” This phrase, “born

again" or "new birth" appears only here, in Peter's first epistle. The phrase used in John 3 - "Except a man be *born again* he cannot enter the kingdom of God." - is the expression "born from above," not "born again." "Except a man be born from above he cannot enter - cannot not see, cannot not comprehend, cannot understand - the kingdom of God." "Born from above." But here, Peter uses the expression which focuses on the regenerating work of the person of the Holy Spirit when, by faith we trust in Jesus Christ; faith in His completed work on the cross and thereby we experience "new birth."

Faith is the noun. Believe is the verb. But they are both the same word in the Greek language. If we have believed, we have faith. That is why we believed; because we had faith. If we have faith, we are standing through that faith in the finished work of Christ Jesus. As a result of our standing through that faith, the gift of the Holy Spirit has been given to us and we have experienced, what Paul refers to as "regeneration," or as Peter attributes it, the "new birth." We have been "born again."

What then is the reason for the "new birth?" Why must man be "born again?" Simply because we are born from a fleshly conception into corruption - born in "death" from our first father, Adam. "For as in Adam all die." "For since by man came death." Every human is born into this world through the genealogy of the first man Adam, and, as he died because of his transgression, we inherit that transgression and also that death sentence from him.

Some do not believe in original sin - the sin of Adam. The thought of our sinful nature having its beginning in the transgression of someone who lived thousands of years ago seems implausible. But we inherited Adam's physical death. We'll all die sometime. We got that inheritance from Adam. So, if we got that inheritance from Adam, who's to say that we didn't get our sin nature from Adam's original sin, as well?

Similarly, if your family is short and stocky you'll be short and stocky - because of inheritance. If you are born from blonde-haired stock, you'll inherit blonde hair - Diana's hair dresser notwithstanding. So then, because of our earthly inheritance we must be "reborn" into life, a new inheritance, thereby dying to all our first father Adam was, and be raised again in "newness of life," in all that Christ Jesus, the last Adam, is.

"By man also came the resurrection of the dead." We are brought from death into life by the last Adam, Christ Jesus, by "new birth" in Him. "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption" - from our fleshly, earthly birth - "it is raised in incorruption" - from our new birth in and from the Spirit of God by Christ Jesus. So new birth brings us from a life in death, to life in Life.

We have the connotation in our psyche that "new birth" is forgiveness of sin. But it is not! New birth is not forgiveness of sin! We are born again because *we have been forgiven*, not *in order* to be forgiven. God, through the blood of Jesus Christ His Son,

has washed us from our sins and as a result of that washing, that forgiveness, He could give to us the gift of the person of the Holy Spirit - whereby we are "regenerated," or as Peter says; whereby we are "born again." "Not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible by the word of God." "Not through the vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers." Here Peter is focusing on their background and the legalistic rituals the Jews needed to go through in order to stand acceptable before the Law. Sadly, there are a large number of misguided believers today who are still making an effort in the same legalistic rituals - "causing the fall of many" - in order to stand righteous before a Holy God. A "vain activity," Peter says, because it is by faith in Jesus Christ - in His completed work on the cross, whereby we have already experienced forgiveness of sin - and as a result of our faith, we experience the "new birth."

We have been forgiven - by, and because He shed His blood on the tree - and because of our faith in that forgiveness, we (the redeemed) receive the "new birth." We have all been forgiven. Yet, not all have been "born again." We will expanded this in another treatise. I find it interesting, in the Gospel of John the word *forgiveness* is never used.

The "All" Scriptures

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes on Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16 AV).

This conceivably is the most famous "all" in scripture - it is the verse we customarily cite when unfolding the gospel. From this verse God is said to love every single person in the world, sending His Son to save everyone in the world - if they choose to be saved.

If that's a legitimate interpretation, the next verse says, "For God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him" (John 3:17 AV). If "world" in verse 16 means every single person, then in verse 17 it must mean "world" too - every single person in the world. Once you admit there's a hell, John 3:16 won't add up to every person in the world - unless you're an Universalist and believe that no one goes to hell, because hell simply doesn't exist.

"I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep. I am the good Shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep." Therefore there was a division again among the Jews because of these sayings." Not surprising.

"Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, 'How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.' Jesus answered them, 'I told you, and you

do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe."

Why didn't they believe? "Because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me is greater than all," (Jesus apparently believed in the sovereignty of God) "and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and the Father are one" (John 10:11,14,15,19-30).

Where are His sheep? In the hand of the Father and in the hand of the Son. That's a safe place. And those who are not His sheep do not believe. He didn't say they choose not to believe, He said "you do not believe." You're not My sheep. I lay down My life for My sheep. That, beloved, is limited - in scope - in atonement.

Irresistible Grace

The scriptures portray a divine unity within the Godhead regarding the covenant of redemption. Those, for whom the Father chose by setting upon them His electing love are those, for whom the Son died to redeem and are those, for whom the Holy Spirit draws with irresistible grace. There is complete unity within the Godhead.

When God places His love and His grace upon a fallen and corrupted sinner, God will not be disappointed. God will effectively give life to that sinner and draw that sinner to Himself. That is irresistible grace. That's what I refer to as an effectual calling.

I do not know all the testimonies of each and every one who has come into this grace of God; how the Lord brought you to Himself. But each believer is a testimony of the grace of God and not of the work of man. The fact is, when each of us were first convicted by the Spirit of God, we were all lost, undone and unholy sinners. Totally removed from God.

I remember when I was born again; saved. I was eleven years old. It happened on a hot August night. My parents and I had attended a revival meeting of some sort earlier in the evening and by ten or so we were all in our beds waiting for sleep to fall. But I couldn't sleep. How could I sleep! The only thing that kept going through my mind was, "I'm going to hell!" I really didn't want to go to hell. But I knew that, I was going to hell! I knew the only way out was the Lord Jesus (my mom, dad and grandparents gave me sound teaching from birth). So I knelt down in my room and cried to Him who lives, "Save me Lord." And He did. I believed. I was accepted. I was born again. I was saved. Glory!

I rushed to my father's bedside and told him what had just happened, which woke my mother up - they were both overjoyed in a startled, half asleep kind of way.

As I remember, all I wanted to do was go outside and look at the stars and glory in the majesty of God's creation. I did and it was a wonderful sight. I could almost hear the angels in heaven rejoicing. So I rejoiced with them. I haven't been the same since. And yes, with all the commotion in our front yard, my parents got up and rejoiced with us too. It was a grand August night.

At the right time the Holy Spirit reveals Jesus Christ to us as savior and Lord, at that point we all chose Jesus Christ. Right? Now you may be asking, how does that hold with unconditional election? Allow me to explain using a personal pronoun.

One of my first initial announcements as a Christian was, "I found the Lord!" The feeling which came before this grand revelation, was, as I said, "I don't wanna go to hell!" So I believed on the Lord Jesus and I was saved! Glory! At that point I chose Jesus Christ. I chose Life. That's why I went around proclaiming, "I found the Lord! I found the Lord!"

As I began to grow and mature as a believer, I realized that I was the lost one, not the Lord. It wasn't me who found the Lord, but rather, I was lost and the Lord found me. The Lord searched for me and found me and saved me. I was one of His lost sheep, and the Lord found me.

Prodigal

I was lost, but I was not a prodigal. (The definition of prodigal is, spending money or resources freely and recklessly; wastefully and extravagant.) I was not prodigal, because I didn't have any resources from my Father to waste - I was lost without a Father or His resources. I had never known, in my lost state, God as Father.

The prodigal son's father did not search for his lost son as the Lord searched for me. The prodigal son was lost, lost in relationship with his father, not in relationship to his soul. The prodigal son came back to his father because he remembered his father to be a father of all grace and love.

The prodigal son is not an example of the sinner coming to the Father. The prodigal was already a son to the father, and remained a son even while he was eating with the pigs. But he was lost: which is why his father said that his son was "dead" - not dead on his way to hell, but rather, dead in relationship to his father.

The prodigal son cried out while he was in the congregation of pigs, "I will go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." (Similar to David's prayer to the Father in Psalms 51.) The prodigal remained a son to the father even while he was living a sinful life. He was lost - because of his sinning walk - but he knew the father's love as a son. Only a son could remember the love of a father.

A man without God does not remember the love and forgiveness of the Father because he has never known it. He knows God's wrath and God's judgment, but not God's grace, love and forgiveness.

If you will remember, King David sinned with Uriah's wife and when confronted with the sin, David said, "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned . . . restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation" (Psalm 51 AV). David, even in his sin, was still the King in Israel, he remained a son of the Father - and remembered, when faced with his sin, the Father's love and grace.

David's sin had separated him from a relationship with the Father, but it did not damn his soul or even take his crown. David understood, just as the prodigal son understood, that the Father loves His sons - He loves us no matter what we've done. He may not be very happy with our behavior, but because of "the great love with which He loves us" we can go to Him, just like David did, just like the prodigal did, we can crawl up in His lap and let Him love us back to health.

But, before I knew the love of the Father, I was lost and the Lord found me.

As I grew in the Lord, I began to sense in my heart - even though there was a genuine love for God from within me - I began to realize the only reason I loved God was that God first loved me. God's love for me begot love for God in me. My love for God was birthed from the love God has for me, not the reverse. When I was lost, no matter how much I was loved, I didn't have the ability to love back.

Before my salvation, I was akin to an inanimate cadaver, excluding one consequence: I was (to quote a popular movie title) a "dead man walking." I was a dead living being; an lifeless individual responsible for my actions, my desires, my manner of life, my sin. "In which times past you walked (expression of movement) according to the course of this world . . . we all had our manner of life (existence) in times past in the lust of our flesh" (Ephesians 2:2,3). I was dead, lifeless without the Lord, but functioning. I stunk. Even at eleven. And I couldn't, with my own effort, do a thing to stop the stink. No matter how hard I tried. Because I was dead.

What I needed was life, not philosophical deodorant.

When the Lord brought Life to me, loved me, then could I call on Him as Father. I was no longer responsible for my stink - I no longer bore my sins - He bore them for me - He became responsible for me, for my sin. I was dead and He made me alive. I became a truly living being. Then and not before. And my stench is gone forever.

We must possess life before we can respond to Life. And, as new living beings, we are responsible to the Lord, in that, we are responsible (now) to enjoy His Lordship, our Bridegroom.

The same holds true for all who have believed on that name, Jesus. Once you were dead, now you are alive. Glory. "In the twinkling of an eye" - which is why the grace of God that saves us is called irresistible grace. No one that He calls can resist it. "God commended His love towards us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Blessed be our God and irresistible Father.

Perseverance of The Saints

The T. U. L. I. P., which we are dealing with is only one small piece of the theological pie. Yet, it is an extremely important slice and one which most accurately reflects the teaching of the scriptures concerning theology - the study of the nature of God - of God being sovereign in salvation. That's what the T. U. L. I. P. is all about. So what is perseverance of the saints?

It is designated by many terms and phrases. All of them point to the same purpose, once you're saved, you're saved. One phrase used by a large denominational church is "eternal security of the believer." "Once saved, always saved," was a favorite of my dear Grandmother Ruby. It's a phrase which I have turned into "once justified, always justified." These are but a few designations to which this doctrine is referred. All, as you can see, repeat the same meaning: once you're saved, you're saved. Forever. "You can't take that away from me" as the song says.

In its simplest terms this doctrine states that the salvation, which is a gift from God, can never be lost. This doctrine states that those in whom the Father has placed His electing love, those, for whom the Lord Jesus Christ died upon the cross to redeem, those who the Holy Spirit draws with irresistible grace will finally, unconditionally, and without a doubt, most assuredly wind up in heaven. Those of whom the Father calls "His sons" are without out the slightest chance at all of ever, ever, ever, ever going to hell. Is that clear? Once you've got it, you can't loose it! That is perseverance of the saints.

Each time I have addressed this subject someone always asks, "You don't believe in that 'once saved always saved,' do you?" Let me state here and now, once and for all, that I most certainly do believe in once saved, always saved! I can't believe anything different. Not to believe in the always, ever-more, complete, everlasting, eternal salvation of the sons of God would be heresy. It's a gift given to me, purchased by the work of God, the Lord Jesus Christ upon the tree. It is not a bounty I have won, procured, assumed, or earned because of my repenting, choosing, or accepting that work of the Lord Jesus. And I will not keep that gift of eternal salvation because of my darling precious sinless life which I live here on this earth. It's all in and from God. He gave the gift to me and He said I could keep the gift, because He keeps me; "in the palm of His hand." Remember? And God does not lie.

This doctrine is often maligned. Many a theological battle has been fought over this doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. Yet, I would maintain that if you embrace the first four of the doctrines of grace, the T. U. L. I., then the persevering of the saints, the "P", is a foregone conclusion. It's more of an afterthought, a footnote; it's not the main point of emphasis. If you adhere to the doctrines of grace, there's no other explanation. All of the T. U. L. I. P. hang together or they fall together. You cannot have one without the other. The doctrine stands as one.

The Theological Basis

The cause of the Father placing His love upon the elect must be found in God alone. We were altogether unlovely and ungodly. God knew from the very beginning there was, and is, absolutely nothing in us which would make us worthy in the slightest degree of being or becoming deserving of His electing love and saving grace. Yet, He saved us anyway - while we were still sinners, "Christ died" for us. So there can be nothing in us, such as sin or unbelief that would cause Him to turn His love away from us and remove His saving grace from us; His sons. For the cause of His love for us is to be found in Him and not in us. Therefore the Biblical doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints is founded upon and grows out of the eternal electing love of God, not in the accepting or the not-accepting of that love from the poor repentant sinner. If it were possible, as some will say, for a person, whom God has elected, to slip away from the faith after they have believed, to somehow lose or fall away from that faith, then it is not election.

If you deny the perseverance of the saints you reduce the electing love of God to an impotent position; if God's love cannot keep the ones that He loves out of hell, without the help of the creature itself, what kind of impuissant God would you be believing in? Do you see that? Those who deny this doctrine allege that God loves everyone, but, unfortunately, He can't save them all. Some of those whom God loves with an eternal love, will slip into the fires of hell and burn for all eternity. He loved them, but He couldn't do anything to keep them out of hell.

Beloved, what a horrible picture of God. To indicate that God is eternally sorrowful and remorseful because He could not save those He loved, is to degrade God to the level down below that which He has created (Romans 1) - which is putting the creature's will beyond and above the reach of the will of God. Ridiculous. What a way for God to spend eternity - lamenting over those He couldn't help.

If the work of Christ upon the cross does not guarantee the perseverance of the saints, that begs the questions: What did Christ accomplish upon the cross? Did Christ actually take away the guilt and sin of His people or not? Or did He just do so provisionally? He took away their guilt and sin, provided they hold fast to the end, provided they kept their faith.

Was Jesus actually made sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God, through Christ Jesus? That's what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 5. If that actually took place, then you have believers, who become the righteousness of God, and yet, wind up in hell, which makes no sense. What does that say of the righteousness of God?

Another question: Did Jesus actually take upon Himself the wrath of God that was due to us? If He did, as the scriptures report, how then could we fall away and again receive the wrath of God? Did Jesus actually die a vicarious death, being made a substitute for all the sins of His people, past, present and future, or not? If a believer can ultimately fall and wind up in hell, then Jesus Christ did not pay for all sin.

Arminians believe that a Christian is sent to hell because of his "*sin of unbelief*" - i.e. because they have quit believing in the grace that saved them. Therefore, this unbelief in the Christian, as purported by the Arminians, is a result of deception or false teaching. Believing or being taught that their righteousness comes through the law, is false doctrine, as opposed to the truth: righteousness has been given freely to the believer by the grace of God. Paul dealt with this very problem in Galatians: "I do not make void the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." (Galatians 2:21). "O, foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been openly set forth crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received you the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Galatians 3:1-2). This happened in the Galatian Church, and it can certainly happen to us. False teaching is false teaching - people who "pervert the gospel of Christ."

The Arminians (Paul would refer to them as *Judaizers*) believe Christians are sent to hell because they refuse to believe, even after they have already come to the Lord and believed that grace-filled, "good news" - for salvation, or more properly, for *justification*. Yet the scripture says, "If we believe not, yet He abides faithful; He cannot deny Himself" (2 Timothy 2:13). In other words, if we quit believing He doesn't. But, according to the Arminian, Jesus did not die for all sin - past, present and future - but only for a select group of sins. And certainly not for the sin of unbelief in the believer. Arminians believe the Lord is able to forgive sin, but not all sins. They believe a believer can sin *that* one sin that will remove the dear sinning believer from their secure place in God's heaven. My beloved, this is not so! That is heretical doctrine: teaching people to trust in the law and in their own ability to carry out that law for salvation. That is not grace. God does not require double payment.

The Council of Trent

The Roman Catholic's perception on the subject of justification is similar in tone to the Arminian's belief, but with just a little different timbre. According to the Roman

Church, justification is God putting a Christian back in right standing with Him after a Christian sins. (In the Roman Church a person becomes a Christian when, as an infant he or she is baptized by a certified Roman Catholic Priest.)

In 1547, the Roman perception of justification became an edict at the *Council of Trent*.

The Council of Trent, held in the Italian city of the same name, came about largely because of a kindly, ex-Roman Priest - our dear Martin Luther. Brother Martin had displayed ninety-six ways in which the Roman Church had become corrupt and how Christians in the Roman Church were being taught tenets and edicts, which had no support in scripture - and Brother Martin could prove it.

One such dogma, which really annoyed him, was one which maintained that any Roman Catholic could buy *indulgences*. "Indulgences" was a grant of remission, by the Pope, of the temporal punishment in purgatory, still due the individual for sins after absolution. In other words, by compensating a Roman Priest, or the Church itself, (with the right amount of coinage), anyone could, in turn, get the soul of a loved one out of purgatory. The Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory states that there is a place or state of suffering inhabited by the souls of sinners, who are expiating their sins before going to heaven. Unsurprisingly, purgatory was yet another erratum of the Roman Church, which peeved brother Martin. The unrestricted sale of indulgences by pardoners was a widespread abuse during the later Middle Ages. Against this, Luther argued that justification is by faith alone. The result was whole nations began abandoning the Roman Church.

The Pope knew Luther's position needed to be answered, but he couldn't assemble enough bishops to hold a council. Twenty years passed. When the Council finally met at Trent, it was because Emperor Charles V, who ruled most of Europe, had demanded it - not the Pope. Charles thought the best chance of winning the Protestants back to Catholicism was for the Church to clean up it's act. The Pope didn't agree. The Pope saw Protestant ideas as heresy and, in turn, wanted to define all Roman Catholic doctrines as universal Church edicts - thus denouncing the Protestants as heretics. The Council finally did a bit of both, switching back and forth between theology and reform.

Justification was the toughest theological question the Council tackled. A few bishops wanted to condemn Luther's views without any explanation, but most held the view that if one was going to condemn someone else's theology, then one should at least explain why. This was going to be difficult, because Roman Catholics, themselves, did not fully agree on justification. *Thomists* emphasized God's action, *Scotists* human feeling, and *Augustinians* faith.

Personalities clashed. Ecclesiastical friction came from here, there, and everywhere. Agreement was impossible. History recounts, at one point Bishop

Sanfelice overheard Bishop Grechetto mutter, "Sanfelice is either a knave or a fool." Sanfelice stood up and asked Grechetto to repeat what he said. So Grechetto repeated it as loud as he could, "**Sanfelice is either a knave or a fool!**" At that, Sanfelice reached across the table, grabbed Grechetto by his beard and shook him so hard that he actually jerked out part of Grechetto's beard.

Six questions were put to the Council:

- (1.) What is meant by justification?
- (2.) What brings it about - what is God's part and what is man's?
- (3.) What does it mean to say a man is saved by faith?
- (4.) Do works play a role before and after justification, and what is the role of the sacraments?
- (5.) Describe the process of justification: What precedes, accompanies, and follows it?
- (6.) What proofs support Catholic doctrine?

Another important question came up during the Council of Trent:

- (7) Is it possible to know with certainty that one is saved?

The Council took sixteen *congregations* (meetings where each bishop stated his opinion and cast his vote) to reach a decree on Justification. By contrast, the doctrine of Original Sin took only three congregations.

The doctrine of Justification was issued as sixteen chapters, followed by thirty-three binding statements, or *canons*, aimed against Protestant ideas. All the same, Luther's thoughts and writings influenced the work - it is obvious, the Council read his books. Luther had been an Augustinian and, times being what they were, an Augustinian drafted the Council's final position.

The Council of Trent's decision was that grace is necessary at each step of justification; however, man's free-will must cooperate. They concluded Justification to be more than forgiveness of sins: that justification is God's ongoing process of making a person new and good. And, that faith is not the only condition of salvation, it is its beginning, foundation, and root. The Council continued, that in order for the grace of justification to grow, we must obey God's commands. They also included that justification can be lost by certain sins and that no man can be sure that he is saved . . . which, to me, harmonizes quite well with Arminianism.

Efficacious

There is a big theological word, *efficacious*, which means: the divine work of Jesus Christ on the cross was thoroughly and abundantly powerful enough to completely achieve the desired results and the divinely planned purposes of that work. Therefore, the perseverance of the saints is not only logical, it is a foregone conclusion given the efficacious work of Christ on the cross. If some of those for whom Christ died to redeem, do indeed fall away and perish, what a horrible vilification of the work of Christ Jesus. You then have the possibility of at least one for whom Christ died to redeem, winding up damned. What kind of a savior is that? That is not the Savior the scriptures reveal; a meager re-creation of the image of the creature it serves. Who needs a savior who does less than save?

Rather, Jesus is the Redeemer who truly redeems. Those for whom He died to redeem will in no uncertain terms and, without any doubt, be redeemed! And, if they will most assuredly be redeemed, then the perseverance of the saints must take place. Jesus is the Savior who saves. Eternally.

Those who disagree with the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints present a gospel which cannot save without the help of the creature. They present a redeemer who cannot fully redeem without the help of the creature. They present a father, whose love cannot save his children. They present a holy spirit, who can sanctify, but can not secure. They present the blood of Christ as weak and unable to indemnify all sins. They present the believer as one who is able to sin and overpower, throwing-off the blood of Christ and thus, go to hell. They present a reconciliation with God that can be *un-reconciled*. They present a forgiveness that can become *un-forgiveness*. They present an eternal life that can only be temporary. They present the will of the fallen creature as a will that can bulwark the will of the One, Almighty God. They present a god, who loves, but who cannot *keep* whom he loves.

My dear readers avoid those who teach this philosophy. Stay away from anyone who teaches this horrible creed. I beg of you for your soul's sake, run from the teachers of this type of ungodly conviction.

Eternal & Everlasting

One of the most powerful Biblical arguments for perseverance, or eternal security of the saints, are found in the words, "eternal life" or "everlasting life." "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but *have everlasting life*" (John 3:16).

"He who believes in the Son *has everlasting life*; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36 AV).

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me, *has everlasting life*, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life” (John 5:24 AV).

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that *you have eternal life*, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God” (1 John 5:13 AV).

If you will, notice the tense of all the verbs above. They indicate present, current possession of eternal life. Not that they, the ones who believe, might receive it in the future, but have it, now, in the present. It is current possession. We, the believing ones, have eternal life now!

Paid In Full

“Now to the one working, the rewards are not accounted according to grace, but according to debt. But to the one not working, but believing on the One justifying the ungodly, it is accounted, by the faith of him, for righteousness; even as also David speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God accounts righteous (righteousness) apart from works. They are blessed of whom their lawless deeds were forgiven and of whom their sins were covered over. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord would never account (impute, in the AV) sin” (Romans 4:4-8).

The word *account* or *impute*, denotes something charged to one’s account. Our account has been “paid in full” - another translation of “*It is finished.*”

Abraham believed God and “it was imputed to him for righteousness, Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus, our Lord, from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:22-25).

The word “*for*” is better rendered, “*on account of.*”

It was on account of offenses that Christ died (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24). He was raised and exalted at the right hand of God because of the fact that we are justified by His blood (Romans 5:9). His resurrection is proof our sins are forever gone (John 20:21). Forgiven.

The righteousness of God is all that God demands and approves. That *ALL* - the righteousness of God - is ultimately found in Christ Jesus Himself, who fully met every requirement of the law in our stead. Christ Jesus is “made unto us . . . righteousness.”

*“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling
and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy.”*

(Jude 24)

Be glory forever, Amen.

¹ **Arminian** (adj.): relating to the doctrines of Jacobus Arminius (Latinized name of Jakob Hermandszoon, 1560–1609), a Dutch Protestant theologian, who rejected the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. His teachings had a considerable influence on Methodism. (n.) an adherent of these doctrines. *Derivatives:* Arminians; Arminianism

The adjective, Arminian, is not to be confused with **Armenian** (adj.): of or relating to Armenia, its language, or the Christian Church established there. (n.) 1. a native of Armenia or a person of Armenian descent; 2. the Indo-European language of Armenia, spoken by around 4 million people and written in a distinctive alphabet of thirty-eight letters.

Or with the **Armenian Church** (also *Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church*), which is an independent Christian Church established in Armenia since c. 300 and influenced by Roman and Byzantine as well as Syrian traditions.

Note: A small **Armenian Catholic Church** also exists (see *Uniate* below).

Uniate (also *Uniat*) (adj.): denoting or relating to any community of Christians in eastern Europe or the Near East that acknowledges papal supremacy but retains its own liturgy: the Uniate churches. (n.) a member of such a community. It originated in the mid 19th century from Russian *uniat*, from *uniya*, and from the Latin *unio* (union).

chapter eight
A Living Hope
Salvation

I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord."

Genesis 49:18

A few years ago a preacher paid a visit to one of my father's buddies - a tall, ex-Texas rancher who was known for his wit. The story goes - as told by my father - that as the preacher approached the rancher's barn he noticed high above the roof a sizable weathervane. On top of the weathervane was a sign which read, "God is love." The preacher pointed to the sign and in a tone of rebuke said, "Friend, do you think God's love is as variable as the weather?" "No," said the rancher, "I put that sign up there to remind me that no matter what the direction of the wind, God is love."

We are saved, we are being saved and we will be saved.

The Present Truth

"Beloved, I now write unto you . . . which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandments of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior . . . Wherefore, I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them, and are established in the present truth." (2 Peter 3:1-2; 1:12).

There is a philosophy in this day and age, which has been cultivated in various church circles which defines Peter's statement, "the present truth" to be unique to the late 20th and this early 21st century. Let me say, with all emphasis, "the present truth" began on the day of Pentecost, when we entered into the kingdom of God and has prevailed successfully until this present hour - and will triumph absolutely until He comes. That is "the present truth."

"Yea I think it fitting, as long as I am in this tabernacle (i.e. Peter's body), to stir you up by putting you in remembrance, knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shown me." (2 Peter 1:13-14).

Salvation

Our salvation is in three stages: *Soteria*: deliverance and preservation; *Soterios*: bringing salvation; *Soterion*: the hope of salvation.

We are saved. We are being saved. We will be saved.

The apostle Peter's emphasis on salvation is in two of salvation's three tenses: *We are being saved. We will be saved.* He speaks to the first - *We are saved* - but his emphasis is on the last two. The dominant thread we see in both of Peter's letters is that of the suffering of the believer and the steadfastness of the Lord through that suffering, "by the power of God through faith unto salvation." "God is love;" no matter the direction of the wind or the size of the storm - "that your faith and hope might rest in God."

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again" - or borne us again - "unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, for a little while if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than that of gold that perishes, though it be tested by fire¹, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom, having not seen, you love; in whom, though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls . . . Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope full upon the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ . . . He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who through him you do believe in God, who raised Him up from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope might rest in God." (1 Peter 1:3-9,13,20-21).

Isn't that an interesting expression? ". . . your faith and hope might rest in God." Because God has raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His own right hand, glorified in His presence, therefore our faith and our hope is in God. "If indeed Jesus be not raised from the dead, we are yet in our sin, and are of all men most miserable."² Aren't you glad that you know, that you know, that you know, that Jesus Christ is seated alive, at the right hand of the Father and that "our faith and hope rests in Him." The man who does not know that rest, is without hope.

"Seeing that you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned" - in sincere - "love of the brethren, see that you love one another

with a pure heart fervently, having been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever” (1 Peter 1:22,23).

Peter emphasizes three infallible truths, which are to be found in Paul’s letters as well - of which, Paul makes great emphasis: “He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who through him do believe in God, who raised Him up from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope might rest in God.” And, “in sincere love of the brethren, see that you love one another with a pure heart.” Three bona fide, unchanging truths, “faith, hope and love. These three abide forever.” The remainder of the elements which we enjoy, in so far as the function of the person of the Holy Spirit, being found in Him, in this present hour are temporary. “Whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.” But these three abide forever. “Faith, hope and love.”

So Peter emphasizes the aspect of faith. Faith, as something which has already worked in us, by belief - for the experience of our new birth. “He has begotten us again to a living hope.” Which is the phrase “born again.” Again, *faith* is the noun, *believe* is the verb. Both are the same Greek word. *Pistis, pisteuo, pistos*: noun, verb, adjective - belief and faith are the same word. If you have believed, you have faith. If you have faith, you confirm yourself standing - believing - through that faith, in the finished work of Jesus Christ. And, as a result of that belief, the gift of the Holy Spirit has been given to you and you have experienced what Paul refers to as, “regeneration,” or as Peter here renders, “new birth.” You are born again. “For by grace you are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.”

God, by His grace, through the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, has washed you from your sins, and as a result of that cleansing, purifying work, He has now given you the gift of the person of the Holy Spirit, whereby you are “regenerated,” whereby you are “born again”! “Not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God.” “Not through the vain conversation received from your fathers.” Not through worldly methods or good works. Not through a discourse or hypothesis. Not through a membership card. Not through water baptism. But rather, by faith in Jesus Christ we experience forgiveness of sin and as a result of that faith the “new birth” - which brings us to something very interesting. Salvation is already obtained.

“And the apostles and the elders came together to consider of this matter.” The matter referred to here in Acts, had to do with the legalistic systems, which certain men of the Jewish Christians wanted to be placed upon the Gentile believers. “And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, you know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by

my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, who knows the hearts, bore them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as He did us; and put no difference between us and them" - Jew and Gentile believers - "purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:6-9). What a relief. Our hearts have been purified by God, as a child of God - the work is accomplished. Salvation is already obtained.

You may be asking, "If salvation is already obtained, why do I still see all this wretched stuff operating in me? Why is sin still working in my body?" Because you're looking at your carnal nature and not your heart.

If we could probe our carnal nature, we would find it is like looking through a microscope at what appears to be a clear drop of water, when in fact, there's a bunch of disgusting microbes swimming around in there. But, salvation is already obtained.

Purified Hearts

We are saved.

The heart is a New Testament term for that organ of the body which God employs to testify to the spirit of man. Your heart is what the apostle Peter refers to as the "hidden man of the heart" - "That secret man of the heart." The spirit of man - that meek and quiet spirit - which, as believers, in the sight of the Lord is, "of great price." The inward man is the soul. The outward man is the body. And Peter tells us that He has "purified our hearts." Our "hidden man." Our "heart." Our "hidden man" who God contemplates. Our "hidden man" who God inspects. Our "hidden man" who God has purified. Our "hidden man" who God sees as righteous before Him. How? "By faith." When we believed the record, which God has given concerning His Son, we therefore, as a result of that faith, stand in the righteousness of God through Christ Jesus. The scriptures testify that through Christ Jesus, we, the believers, are as righteous as God is! Do you believe that? Difficult isn't it? Do you know why it is so hard to believe? Because we all have the propensity to picture ourselves according to our behavior, rather than looking at ourselves in terms of what God has already done for us. We will become most like what we most look at. If we continue to look at ourselves and groan over all that is wrong with us, then groaning is what we will produce.

Balak hired Balaam to curse Israel (Numbers 22-25), but he couldn't do it. Balaam could not curse Israel, because he said, "He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob." The Lord saw no iniquity in the people of God, Israel. Although Israel had complained, tested the Lord, disobeyed, and by all outward witness was an unrefined sinful people. Yet, the Lord saw no iniquity in Jacob. Why? Because Israel had believed God. And God judges the "hidden man." "But to him that works not but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also described the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputes righteousness apart

from works, saying, 'Blessed are they whose iniquities are covered, blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin'" (Romans 4:5-8). Israel believed and was justified by faith in the eyes of the Lord. We are a redeemed people, because of our faith. Although God judges our sinful behavior the same way He disciplined Israel's, our standing is eternally secure and perfect before Him - though our state may require the Father's discipline (1 Corinthians 11:30-32; Hebrews 12:4-10); concurrently, God is eternally "for us" (Romans 8:31).

The finished work of Jesus Christ is brought about in us by simple faith. And by simple faith in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus, we obtain an imputed righteousness - a bookkeeping term - God has accounted to us, given to us, looks upon us in the righteousness of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are as righteous as God is, as a result of our simple faith - we do not have to understand it to believe it; we do not need to understand the hypostasis union of the theosophic man to go to heaven - all we need to recognize is: Jesus Christ. His Son died for our sins. And by that realization, that belief, we are made as righteous as God is. We do not have to understand it to believe it. Our faith does not require us to understand - only to believe.

When the children of Israel meandered in the wilderness they rebelled against God and He sent fiery serpents into the camp to bite them. The children of Israel began to die. So they cried out to Moses, "We have sinned; for we have spoken against the Lord, and against you; pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed to the Lord for the people. And God said to Moses, "Make you a serpent and set it upon a poll; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looks upon it, shall live." So "Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." (The serpent of brass, "He who knew no sin became sin for us.") Literally, "whoever looks thereon will be healed" (Numbers 21). Faith.

Suppose, if you would, that there were a few weak-eyed Israelites in the camp - Israelites who were a bit nearsighted or blind. Suppose those Israelites could not push through the masses of people standing near the poll. Suppose those Israelites could not get close enough to the serpent of brass on the poll to see the serpent of brass clearly or at all. What about them? Remember, we do not have to understand it to believe it. When they "looked thereon," they were healed. "Whoever looks thereon will be healed." They may not have been able to describe in great detail, or in any detail at all what the serpent of brass looked like, but they were healed. Why? Because they looked. Maybe some of them couldn't see the serpent on the poll, they could look upon; seeing, if you will, by faith, whether they could actually physical see it or not. They believed by faith the word of the Lord. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet believed." In the words of the prophet Isaiah, "Look unto Me all ye ends of the earth, be ye saved." By embracing what God has done - we do not need to understand to

believe that Jesus Christ, His Son died for our sins - by our simple faith, we are "born again."

But Peter doesn't leave us there. Peter goes on to emphasize our hope in the salvation which is set before us. We are being saved. We "who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Peter is anticipating the day when we will be taken out of our defunct bodies and receive bodies "like unto the body of His glory" and experience the salvation God has prepared for all those who love Him. "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." Which is what we're really anticipating: we will be saved. Which is our blessed hope, indeed.

People who do not have this blessed hope, have not believed to the saving of their soul. People who are not confident that ultimately Jesus Christ, most surely is going to take them out of this earthly sphere and into His presence and give to them a "body like unto the body of His glory" are without hope. This is the type of person who, when their finances collapse, blow their brains out. This is the type of person who, when their health fails, calls Dr. Death. They do not have a blessed, divine hope. A hope made sure by the testimony of the Lord. A hope which anticipates the end of this and the "glory that will be revealed in the sons of God." "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet believed." We are saved, we are being saved and we will be saved. It is not "seeing is believing." But rather, "believing is believing."

This hope is not something we're not sure will happen. This hope is a settled conviction. A recognizing that God has given a promise, and "the promises of God in Christ Jesus are yea and amen," to the glory of God - it cannot fail. This hope is a hope whereby we stand in a sure anticipation of the coming of the great God and our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ. This hope is the hope the Apostle Peter addresses - the anticipation of Jesus Christ coming. And therefore as a result of this hope, in the words of the Apostle John, "He that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure." We will be saved.

We Are Being Saved

Purifying Our Soul

With all of the grace of God, which I seek to make known, with all of the emphases made on the sovereignty of God, some may say, as some have already said to my face, "You're giving license to sin." Well, I am in good company. In his epistle to the Romans some were slanderously saying that Paul was preaching, "Let us therefore do evil that good may come." In the words of Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones - the successor of G. Camble Morgan at West Minister Chapel in London England - "Brethren, when you have preached the grace of God to such an extent that they begin to accuse you of giving license to sin, rejoice! You've come nigh to the truth." The grace of God that is

in Christ Jesus *super abounds* any sin that you might find yourself having fallen into. Don't take my word for it. Take Paul's word for it: "Where sin did abound, grace did super abound!" And with that, "he that has this hope in himself purifies himself."

There is within this hope an attitude to please God. This hope, which is generated in the heart of the child of God, is why Paul bears witnesses in his epistle to the Romans, "The things I would do, I do not." We want to serve God. "I delight in the law of God after the inward man," the "hidden man . . . But I see another law in my members bring me into captivity to the law of sin and death." We may not always do what we want to do but, our yearning, our heart's desire is to please God. This desire is all the Lord requires of us, "a want to".

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear; slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God." (The militancy, which is arising in the church of the Lord Jesus in so many quarters today, is so contradictory to the nature of Christ and the nature of the body of Christ and to the emphases of the New Testament record.) "Wherefore put away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:19-21). We read in Acts 15, He has "purified our hearts by faith." The heart is the spirit of man. Here, in James, it is the *soul* the Lord is going to save. If, in fact, He has already saved our spirit, we may ask, how then is He going to save our soul? The spirit was saved by faith. The soul is being saved by the word of God. (More is said about this in *One Baptism*.) The word of God does the work of God within our *soul* - the place of appetite in the believer. It then becomes our responsibility to hide His word in our heart that we "might not sin against Him." We are being saved. 1 Peter uses this same expression in chapter one.

"Seeing that you have purified your souls by obeying the truth." And what is the truth? "Thy word is truth." So we embrace the divine record, (we are saved). We hide His word in our heart, which is purifying our soul (we are being saved). We are obtaining a new value system. We are learning a new frame of reference. We are, getting our "mind renewed" (Romans 12).

A New Appetite

When I recall hurdles I faced in the beginning of my walk with the Lord, problems which seemed so difficult, so unworkable, hindrances which caused so much distress in my soul - challenges which are not equally as difficult in this hour - I am awed. What happened? God changed my appetite. I do not hunger after the food I once did. I hunger after different food. My taste buds have changed. The terrestrial spice, which was once indispensable, has lost its flavor. God has given me a new value system. A new mind - "the mind of Christ." A new appetite.

A Baptist pastor friend of mine from Austin, Texas told me a story about a sailor who, a few years back, he witnessed being saved, and then saved. This is how he explained that curious statement.

The good pastor had been asked to drive down to Corpus Christi, Texas to evangelize a particular Baptist congregation one hot Texas summer. From a hot July Sunday morning through the next Wednesday night he preached - in hopes of enlarging the church roll with new converts. "By Wednesday," he told me, "nothing much had happened. The usual stuff, you know, church members repenting of one sin or another and the like . . . which was great, but this was not why they asked me to preach." Apparently, from his discourse, the last night of the revival wasn't going any better than the first. The church members were not stirred and the lost weren't coming forward for salvation. "So," he continued, "I decided to close the service early. I motioned to the organist to start the customary invitation song, "I Surrender All," and as I was stepping away from the pulpit, on my way to the front of the stage, this enormous, burly guy stood up in the back of the church, began running at break neck speed down the entire length of the auditorium, coming straight up to me screaming, 'I need to be saved!' So, I stepped off the stage and knelt down and prayed with the man. And bang! The man stood up and shouted, to a not-so-excited audience, 'Hot, damn, the Lord saved me!' Which did, in fact, wake up the previously drowsy congregation."

At this point in the story, the good Baptist pastor's language was as gruff to me as the newly saved man's was to that Corpus Christi Baptist congregation and probably to you as well. It woke me up too.

"Now just wait a minute brother, let me finish the story." He was grinning from ear to ear as he finished the story. "Jay, that man was a sailor for an oil company in the gulf. That's just the way he spoke. That's the way everybody he knew spoke. He didn't know any better. As shocked as I was, I hugged the man, turned him around and introduced him to his new Corpus Christi brothers and sisters. After a week or so, the church did embrace their new brother and he was baptized not long after." Now here's where the story takes a turn. He told me that he kept in touch with the man for some time and "You know, Jay," he said, "it took the Lord almost a year to save that man's mouth." Glory. We are saved, we are being saved and we will be saved!

If you are young in the Lord, the problems you are facing, the sins which seem so unchangeable, the hindrances which so plague your soul - rejoice! - God is changing your appetite. He is convicting you of sin. Which works in you a "repentance not to be repented of." He is painstakingly, meticulously, thoroughly giving you an appetite for Him and His word. "Flee youthful lust, which war against the soul." (A man can get saved in his sixties and still have youthful lust.) Flee every lust which rises up within your body, those passions, those appetites which are antagonistic against all the Lord wants to work in you; they "war against your soul." They are in conflict with your

whole new thought process. And how do we deal with those old appetites? We hide ourselves in the word of God. We eat His word. Find comfort in the words of Job, "I have seen Thy word more necessary than my necessary food." The word of God will passively, by our subjection to that word, change our mind, our appetite; by the word of God we are "getting our mind renewed." We are being saved.

Conviction of sin.

The longer we walk, the older we are in the Lord, the more our appetite for what is in the world decreases - or it should be decreasing. If your desires have not changed, then you have a dilemma. The trouble with some of us is that we don't want our appetite, our desire, our mind, changed. We rather enjoy this temporal stuff. "Enduring the pleasures of sin," delightfully. How contradictory this is to the work of the Spirit of God in the heart of a man. The first attribute of a redeemed man is that a redeemed man will hate sin. One of the difficulties we have in this day (of which I am deeply concerned) - one of the hindrances with some Christians - people who have been born of the Spirit - is that we have never been convicted of sin.

Have we ever been ashamed? Really, genuinely ashamed? Caught in the act, exposed in the presence of everyone? All our wrongs exposed? The humiliation is overwhelming. The embarrassment is devastating. Coming into the presence of a Holy God, the one Holy God, can be very embarrassing, because the light of His glory suddenly replaces the flicker of our candles. We instantaneously see ourselves for what we really are - in the words of Job, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see Thee and I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Have we really grasped the import of that? Have we ever really been ashamed? Have we really been convicted of sin?

Every great revival which has ever struck this world - whether it is the Welsh revival, the Shantung revival (in eastern China), the Herrnhut (the Moravian Church) revival, the Great Awakening or whatever revival which has ever moved across this world notably in England and the United States - has always been in combination with the humiliation of the flesh, the conviction of sin in the children of God, as they stand in the presence of a Holy God. I am deeply concerned that the chief problem with the saints of God in this day is that we have never been convicted of sin. We have been convicted just enough to realize that we do not want to go to hell - we want revival, but we do not want to stop enjoying all our stuff.

The one sure sign that God is moving in real revival among His people is conviction of sin. We have the term "revival" misrepresented - misconstrued in our thinking. We think of revival as a time, which is marked by people jumping up and down, having a good time, nice warm feelings going up and down their spines, all manner of gifts of the Spirit being manifested and people dropping like flies, moved by

the Spirit of God. Beloved brother, revival is always preceded by conviction of sin. Not by singing in the Spirit. Not by a preacher working the people into a frenzy. Not by anything the flesh would glory in. But rather, the one sure sign that God is moving in real revival among His people is conviction of sin in His people. Understanding as Hosea understood, "judgment begins at the house of God" (1 Peter 4:17), revival is always preceded by the people of God down on their faces weeping before God. Because - for many of them, this is the first time in their lives - they see the degradation and the wretchedness of their own sin and their own flesh and they are humiliated in the presence of a Holy God. The best time for revival is here and not there; standing before His throne "giving account of our deeds done in the body." "Therefore abide in Him," John said, "that you be not ashamed before Him at His coming."

We Will be Saved

You "who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time . . . That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto the praise and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ." What God has worked in us will be to His glory in that day. We are going to receive a new body, "like unto the body of His glory." We are going to find ourselves, in that day, as Jesus Christ is now. What He is now, is what we, as a part of the church of Jesus Christ, are going to be in that day. We will be saved.

Paul, in Romans 8, encourages the believers to understand that it is the hope of His coming and the realization of that hope, which will be the end of the conflict and misery which we, the believers, are experiencing in these, our natural bodies. This will be our salvation. Our deliverance. Our glorification. The sufferings which we are going through, the temptations which we are enduring - those which are the result of the fleshly bodies we are now in - will be wrapped up, done away with, at His coming.

Temptations do not arise out of the work of Christ in your heart, "for God is not tempted with sin, neither tempts He any man." Temptation arises out of these shells we walk in. "The lust of the flesh, of the eyes and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16) arises out of these cadavers we are inhabiting. It is what Paul refers to as, "sin that works in my members." Again, not the members of the church, but rather the members of your body: your hands, your feet, your lips, eyes, mind, etc.

Brother Lester Roloff (a brother who was so maligned in the course of his ministry, but was a Godly man), in one of his messages "*Dr. Law and Dr. Grace*,"³ said, "When the fellow began to see that he had difficulty living, he went to see Dr. Law. And Dr. Law told him that he needed an operation. He needed a new heart. The fellow told Dr. Law, 'It's not my heart that's the problem. It's my hands! They keep taking stuff that don't belong to them. And its my feet. They keep dancing with other men's

wives. It's my eyes, they keep looking at things they shouldn't look at . . .' And Dr. Law said, 'It's your heart'."

We try to refine the flesh, educate the flesh, culture the flesh. The philosophy of present day is, "If we could put the flesh in the right environment, everything would be all right."

I lived in Dallas, Texas for a time in a rather wealthy part of the city. I myself was not rich (things haven't changed that much), but my friend, in whose guesthouse I lived, was - God's grace to a poor student. Anyway, the problem the Dallas city fathers faced was juvenile delinquency. And for the most part, it was in the upper class kids. The wealthy class. The rich kids were committing most of the crimes in Dallas. Environment didn't help those children at all. What was the problem? Their heart. Not their background, culture, education or their surroundings. Their heart.

Arising out of our flesh, we feed a system - in us - which has a propensity to disobey God. "A law," Paul said, "that works in my members." Paul addresses this subject in Romans 6 and 7, until he comes to the deliverance, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Paul concludes, "I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord." So, "as long as I am in the flesh I do mind the things of the flesh." The flesh would drive us against God.

Then Paul brings us to Romans 8 and God's final solution. There will no longer be a vehicle for sin. God is going to fix our problem. He isn't going to culture our flesh or refine it, He's going to do away with it. "There is therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk under the economy of the flesh, but under the economy of the Spirit."

Paul is not addressing in Romans 8 the manner in which we behave, as in "walking after the flesh," the term used in his letter to the Galatians. There, Paul was addressing behavior. Here, in Romans, Paul is addressing where we live or what *sphere* we have been brought into. That is: whether you are born once in the first man Adam and are still in the sphere of the flesh; or whether you have been born again in the last Adam (the Lord Jesus) and you have been placed into the sphere of the Spirit. It isn't our behavior Paul is addressing here. This is evident in verse 9, "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Paul cuts a fine line. Either you're redeemed through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and you stand in His righteousness, which is absolute and eternal, which cannot be changed; or you're hopelessly undone and lost "without hope and without God in the world."

Most of us live as if we are never going to die. So it doesn't make a lot of difference to us how we live, until . . . we are confronted with the convicting work of the Spirit of Christ. Then all of a sudden, "God have mercy on me a sinner."

"Want-to's"

Paul goes on in Romans 8, beginning in verse 10, as he is anticipating the deliverance, "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Which is why Paul said, "If I therefore sin, it is no longer I who sins but sin that dwells in me." God has made a distinction between what you are in your physical body and what you have been made in Christ Jesus - in your spirit. And God refuses now, through Christ, to impute sin to the believer. There I go giving license to sin again. But I would that each and everyone would go and do exactly what they really want to do. Not what they *feel* like doing. But what they really *want* to do.

Most all of us make an effort to constrain our church members to live like Christians. Why? So the church looks good. We want the world to see the church without spot or wrinkle. But the church is full of redeemed sinners, and sinners have spots - in the flesh, not in the spirit. I would hope that each one of us have realized that we have a Father who loves sinners - church-ed or not. So just go out and do what you please. If you want to do righteously, it is because you have been born of the Spirit. You may fail in your doing because there are feelings - fleshly fears, which arise - which come up - so that you do what you feel like doing, rather than what you want to do, and you fail. Feelings arise out of our flesh, *want-to's* arise out of the heart. That is why God refuses to impute failure to us - because that's not what we *wanted* to do. We don't want to fail. We *felt* like a failure and so we failed. But we didn't want to. Feelings arise out of the flesh. *Want-to's* arise out of the heart. God addresses our heart. God is addressing our *want-to's*. Not our feelings. Not our failure. David went with his feelings a lot. But God said of him, "There is a man after My own heart." God was addressing David's *want-to's*. Not his failures. David's heart was right before God because David wanted to do right. He failed in his doing many times, but God didn't count David's failures. God counted David's *want-to's*. Just like us. God looks at our *want-to's*.

On the other hand, the unregenerated man wants to sin. There is no motivation by the Spirit of Christ in him to do anything other than sin. So he has a heart to sin. He goes after sin; "He pursues sin", which is what John meant when he said, "He that is born of God *does not commit sin.*" This is in the continuous tense in the Greek. "He that is born of God *does not pursue sin.*" Believers do not go after sin. We don't want to sin. We do sin. But, we do not want to sin. Why? Because we are born of God and "His seed remains in us." All of this is a matter of our heart.

The Lord spoke to Moses, "Put your hand into your bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom; and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow. And He said, Put your hand into your bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and behold, it was turned again as his other flesh" (Exodus 4:6,7). The heart (bosom) stands for what we are, the hand for what we

do. What we are is ultimately what we do. What we do must be guided by what we are. Our hand (what we do) must be a cleansed hand responsive to and by a new heart. "A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, brings forth that which is good; and an evil man, out of the evil treasures of his heart, brings forth, that which is evil; for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45). All of this is a matter of our heart.

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly but by reason of him who has subjected the same in hope. Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Romans 8:18-21).

The whole of creation is under bondage of corruption, from the fall of Adam to this present hour - showing decay and death on every hand - it isn't getting better, it's getting worse. The environmentalists can make every effort to preserve the earth if they wish, but they're like a physician treating terminal cancer. It's a hopeless cause. The patient will die. Only the manifestation of the sons of God will make the difference. "For we know the whole creation groans and labors with birth pains together until now."⁴ The earth, yes, all of creation must die - and be resurrected again in newness of life. "And I saw a new heaven" - everything above the earth - "and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away . . ."⁵ All creation must die and experience resurrection.

Each time we hear of another earthquake, of another volcano; every time there is an upheaval in the physical creation (we witnessed, not long ago comets hitting the planet Jupiter, "signs in the heavens") are all part of the birth pains. Every time there is an earthquake, the earth is saying, "I'm about to be reborn. Resurrected." "Not only that, but we also have the fruit of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body."⁶ Our spirit has been redeemed. Our soul is in the process of redemption, by the renewing of the mind. And our body is going to be redeemed. "For we are saved in *this* hope." There you are!

God is going to do away with all of your agony. He is going to get rid of your old body of sin and death and He is going to give you a new one. Your new body will not have the propensity to sin whatsoever. What a release. We will not have the desire to sin. We will not want to disobey God. Our new body will be created in and with the nature of Jesus Christ. Our new body will manifest His glory the same way a light bulb manifests the glory of electricity. We will be the manifestation of the character of Jesus

Christ - with no propensity to sin. Believers realize the importance of this. If you don't see the importance in any of this, then you're in real trouble.

We are saved: The fallen spirit in us had to be replaced by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. We were "born again."

We are being saved: He is saving us daily by the washing of the word. By the renewing of the mind.

We will be saved: The body of flesh we are now in is only the seed of what shall be. It will be sown in the ground and come up a body "like unto the body of His glory."

"It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."⁷ What an astounding anticipation. What a grand hope. My dear friend Daisy says it like this, "You can fly baby, but that cocoon has got to go."

Amen!

¹ see *Goldsmithing* in chapter 11: "Cast In The Salt" pg. 60

² 1 Corinthians 15, *et. al.*

³ *Dr. Law and Dr. Grace* is perhaps the most famous of all of Evangelist Lester Roloff's sermons. The message is available in many formats.

For more details, see: <http://www.gotothebible.com/HTML/drlawindex.html>

⁴ Romans 8:22

⁵ Revelation 21:1

⁶ Romans 8:23

⁷ 1 John 3:2

chapter nine
One Baptism

*“Teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father,
And of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”*

Matthew 28:16-20

A middle-aged brother who had recently been redeemed, whom the Lord had brought out of a horrendous drug-filled, alcoholic life, who possessed a very elaborate testimony came to my good friend, pastor Drew, early one Sunday morning and said, “Pastor Drew, I’ve decided to put my testimony in the Austin American Statesmen. I think that people need to hear what God did for me.” Pastor Drew said in shock, “Brother, you can’t do that.” With that, the middle-aged brother reached into his coat pocket, pulled out an article from that day’s paper and said, “I already did.”

Isn’t it amazing what believers will do on the basis of what they read in the scripture, if someone doesn’t tell them that they can’t do it. It’s remarkable.

Diana and I have witnessed, in various locales around the globe, many dear believers who have been told there are certain things they shouldn’t believe God for. So, as a result they don’t believe God for those things. These dear believers have confidence in the people who told them not to believe, so they don’t believe. As a rule, the people, who told these dear believers not to believe, are dear believers as well; they are only following the traditions of their fathers - so they carry on the tradition of not believing - for certain things. The Lord is beginning to break down our traditions - traditions, which we have built up contrary to His concern and to His desire towards His people. He is now beginning to make us aware again - anew in some cases - that He said what He meant and He meant what He said.

True Unity

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation to which you are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1-3).

All unity is begotten by the Holy Spirit. There is no unity apart from the Holy Spirit. We humans tend to think in terms of singularity in regards to matters of life. But that distinction is not accurate according to scripture. In God’s economy everything is a unity - a whole made up of varying parts. This is true in everything God created. It is true in the nature of God and in God’s nature - His natural creation. In God nothing stands alone. One man does not work by himself for the Lord - we all are working - as

a unity - together as one. We, as the church, do not need to pray for unity because unity already exists. We may not see it or walk in it, but unity is there nevertheless. The whole of God's physical creation testifies to unity. A simple tree testifies to unity.

Three properties make up a tree: trunk, leaves and sap. We see the trunk and the leaves, but the sap is hidden. The sap is the life-giver, the life-conduit, inside the tree. We can't see the sap, but it's there. The sap is essential to the life of the tree. Without the sap the tree is dead. If the tree loses its leaves - which most do - it may not be dead. If the tree loses a few branches or if some of its trunk is chopped away, it still may not die, but if the tree loses its sap, it's dead. The sap is the one element which gives life to the tree. And the sap is the one element we can not see.

What is the believer's sap? The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit cannot be seen. But He is essential to the life of God's people. He is our life giving source. Moreover, He's the life giving source to all that is seen. Everything in God's creation is threefold. God is a unity: Three as One - Father, Son, Holy Spirit - one God. Everything in God is a unity. As the tree is trunk, leaves and sap; we are spirit, soul and body. As the sap gives unity to the tree; so the Holy Spirit gives unity to the body - singularly and collectively. All unity is begotten by the Holy Spirit. There is no unity apart from the Holy Spirit. Unity isn't something we need to pray for or work towards - unity exists without our help.

The unity of the Spirit is expressed in the whole of everything God created. "There is one body," which is the body of Christ. "There is one spirit." In some of your Bibles (King James) this noun "*spirit*" may be capitalized, although "*spirit*" isn't capitalized in the original manuscript. The noun does not have an article before it, neither is it prefixed by the word *hagios* - holy. Therefore the "one spirit" here is the "one spirit," which unites the believers, i.e., the "one body" - the "body of Christ." The "one spirit" here is not the Holy Spirit. "There is one spirit." And that "one spirit," like that "one body," is made up of many members, which are bound together as one body by the Holy Spirit. The "one spirit," is within the "one body," which is the "body of Christ" - united by the Holy Spirit.

I am one spirit with my good wife, Diana. I am one spirit with every believer in the body of Christ - the church. We are all "one spirit." All believers. The word "*spirit*" here is the "one spirit" within the believers, who are within the "one body." There is "one body" and that "one body" has "one spirit." When our spirit is resurrected by the incoming of the Holy Spirit, which begot us as a new man in Christ, we all become "one spirit," with everyone within the "body of Christ." That's the reason we recognize the brethren.

I met a man the other day at a local coffee shop. While we waited for our caffeine and sugar fix, we struck up a conversation. It wasn't very long until we both

realized our kinship. There was something about that man that witnessed to my spirit, and there was something about me that witnessed to his spirit - "one spirit," "one body." During our exchange, I used a scripture - in a funny timbre - describing our waitress bringing us coffee, "Yea, how beautiful are the feet of them that carry the Gospel of good things." "Amen," he replied. Glory, the man was a believer too. It's always interesting to me to see how we all show up in "one spirit." I never asked the man what denomination he belonged to, and he never asked me. If either of us had asked what church house we frequented, our fellowship may have been broken immediately. We just talked, enjoying the fact that we were both "one spirit" in the Lord. I didn't need to know what specific tag he was wearing and he didn't need to know mine. He may have been a church of decaff and I may be a fellowship of espresso - which could have blown our whole fellowship. We didn't talk doctrine. We just talked.

One Baptism

"There is one body, and one spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and in you all" (Ephesians 4:4-6).

There is "one baptism."

Many of us, I am sure, have had a problem or two with the theme of baptism, because there's more than one baptism found in the scripture. Baptism shows up in different fashions, different locations under differing circumstances throughout the scripture. There's a multitude of baptisms: The baptism of Moses. The Lord's baptism. The Spirit's baptism. Water baptism. The baptism of John. Plus a bunch more. So what is "one baptism?"

First let's see what the word baptism implies? "Know you not that, as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" (Romans 6). The word baptism can mean identification, immersion, washing, dipping and so forth. There are more than a few words in the scripture which we have translated into our English word baptism¹.

baptisma: a noun which indicates immersion, submersion and emergence (from the word *bapto*: to dip). The ordinance of John the Baptizer.

baptize': a noun to denote a Baptist; or the individual who baptizes someone.

baptismos: a noun indicating ceremonial washings.

baptizo: a verb, as in washing oneself. This is used in the New Testament for identification of the believers with the Lord.

So baptism, for the most part - as far as we, the church is concerned - is for identification of the believer to the Lord- *baptizo*.

Throughout the Old Testament we see the people of God experiencing baptisms. Plural. Baptism identified the people of God with the Lord. All of these baptisms were accompanied by experiences. In the course of these experiences, the people of God were identified with or baptized unto the Lord. At the same time they were baptized, they were sanctified by the Lord from what they were - before baptism - and sanctified from the world unto the Lord. They were separated from the world and identified with the Lord through baptism. God, by bringing His people together, in a union - unity - with Himself, brought about their baptism to establish His people under a new authority: His authority. He did this, not just to establish them under His new authority spiritually, but to *position* them under His authority spirit, soul and body. "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Every covenant of God is accompanied by a physical sign. The rainbow, circumcision, and baptism are all physical signs of a spiritual covenant or experience.

When Diana sees me coming in the front door, she sees Jay. She can't see my spirit or my soul. She only sees my body - my physical body. Yet my body is only part of me. When the time comes that I lay aside my body and "go into the presence of the Lord," God is not finished with my body. My body will turn to dust. Yes. But on "that day" God will come down upon my dust and gather my molecules and bring my body together as a seed into the fruit which will be brought forth as a glorious body or body "like unto the body of His glory" (Philippians 3:21) - which I will possess in that day. I am one person, but I am three parts: I am spirit. I am soul. I am body. Yet, I am one. This is true for all believers. God has "sanctified us holy." God is "sanctifying us holy." He is sanctifying us spirit. He is sanctifying us soul. He is sanctifying us body. We have been separated, as one, into His glorious kingdom, because of His sanctifying work.

The issue of baptism is not really a problem for me. It wasn't a problem for the apostle Paul either. He said, "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on into perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment" (Hebrews 6:1-2). Paul lists the first principles of our faith. If you will notice, in his list, the word *baptism* is plural. "Baptisms." The word could also be translated, "washings." Whichever translation you prefer, the word is plural. When I first realized "baptisms" was plural, I said to myself, "In the New Testament economy God said, 'there is one baptism.'" So I began to rationalize. "Then the only baptism which is valid before God for eternity is the

baptism of the Spirit. That's what Paul is addressing in Ephesians 4." This is the way my mind works. And I wasn't wrong. But, I wasn't right either.

Three, yet "one baptism."

Just as there are three identities within each of us (spirit, soul and body) there are also three baptisms for us. And these baptisms accomplish our perfect sanctification before the Lord. Three, yet "one baptism."

Sanctified: Set Apart

We, as believers, are sanctified. But we, as believers, still sin. The word sanctified - strictly translated - means: to be set apart. That's all. The Greek word *hagas* is translated throughout the scripture as *saint*, *sanctify* and *holy*. We are sanctified before the Lord. We, as the church, are set apart for the Lord. We are holy before the Lord, because of the Lord's own Holiness given to us. So how many of us set-apart people still sin? All of us. If you think you don't sin, you really have a problem - a real problem. When God sanctifies His people to Himself that sanctification should not suggest, nor does it suggest that His people have become perfect. God has forgiven us and has sanctified us unto Himself, but we're not perfect individuals. When I finally understood that the only people who will make it to heaven are saved *sinners*, I sighed a big sigh of relief. Righteous (self-righteous) people will not go to Heaven. They can't go. Jesus said He wouldn't even call them to repentance, "I haven't come to call the righteous to repentance, I've come to call sinners." And sinners hear Him "gladly." Remember what the self-righteous, the folks who used the Law to secure their own righteousness, said about Jesus? "This man receives sinners. And He eats with them." How terrible! They couldn't fathom that the only class of people God would redeem were sinful people. The only category of people who need grace are sinful people. "The scripture has concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." The Law neither justifies a sinner, nor sanctifies a believer. Grace bestows righteousness to the believing sinner, the Law demands righteousness of everyone. God has brought His grace and His salvation and His loving kindness to sinful, unrighteous people. The Gospel is good news for bad people, which is the "offense of the cross" Paul spoke about in Galatians 5. When we realize that we are in fact sinful people, then and only then, can we receive the grace of God; the righteousness of God is imputed to us, and we become "new creatures in Christ Jesus." Then the Lord wants to sanctify us spirit, soul and body and preserve us blameless unto the coming of the Lord, because we are a people in need of a Savior.

The Spirit

Our baptism - as a child of God - the first baptism we believers experience is the baptism of the Spirit into the body of Christ by the Father. "He that loves me not keeps not my sayings; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent

Me. These things have I spoken unto you, being present with you. But the Comforter, who is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you" (John 14:24-26). What were the apostles waiting for in the last chapter of Luke's gospel? Jesus told them to remain in Jerusalem and wait for what? The promise of the Father. The promise of the Holy Spirit "whom the Father will send in My name." The Father sent the Holy Spirit as soon as Jesus was seated at the Father's right hand and glorified in the Heavens.

Jesus sat down at the right hand of the Father - having sprinkled His blood (Hebrews 9:19-26) - being seated there in the heavens and glorified there in the heavens, which gave the Father the authority to send forth the Holy Spirit. "He that believes on Me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water. (But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom they that believed on Him should receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.)" (John 7:38,39). The Holy Spirit could not be given - or sent - until Jesus was glorified before the Father in the heavens. When Jesus was glorified, then the Father could and did send the Spirit to dwell within the believers.

By the Father sending the Holy Spirit - this took place in Acts 2 - which was prophesied in Acts 1:5 "You shall be baptized by the Holy Spirit not many days hence" - the Father baptized those first believers and all who would come after by Jesus Christ - they were and we are immediately baptized by the Spirit, upon our belief in the Son (Galatians 3:25,26). The Father baptizes the believer, by the Spirit into the body of Christ - which sanctifies the believer's spirit. This baptism of the Spirit does not necessarily need to be seen or felt. I can't say that this baptism will not be seen or felt. It may be or it may not be. One thing I've learned about God, is that no one tells Him how to do anything. As soon as we tell Him how He should do something He's likely to tell us that He doesn't have to do it that way. Then He'll demonstrate a new way. Then we begin to wonder if that new way was really God. God does what He wants, when He wants, in whatever way He wants.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold, all things are new." We usually stop there. "But all things are of God" (2 Corinthians 5:17, 18). Is everything in your life of God? You may be thinking soul. You may be thinking spirit. You may be thinking body. You may be thinking, "How can everything be dogmatically of God in the believer?" Because God is in the believer. And because God is in the believer, the believer is sanctified throughout. Through and through: holy. And "we know all things." That's what John said, "you have an unction from the Holy One, that teaches you all things, and you have no need that anyone should teach you, for you know all things." Where do "we know all things?" In our spirit. Our soul doesn't know yet, but our spirit knows it all. The whole idea of

growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is getting what's in our spirit into our soul. Our problem is that we have heart knowledge and little head knowledge. God wants to get what's in our heart into our head, because the soul governs the body. The spirit doesn't govern the body. The spirit governs the soul. The soul governs the body. We're souls. That's what we are. "God breathed into the man the breath of life and he became a living soul." I am a soul. I have a spirit. I live in a body. That's me. That's you, too. That's all of us.

The Holy Spirit dwells in us and we then become the holiest of all God's creatures. The Spirit of God dwells in the spirit of the believer and sanctifies that spirit and the believer's spirit becomes the holiest of all before God. But we not only want our spirit sanctified - which is accomplished by this baptism - the Father baptizing us into the body of Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit - but our soul and our body need to be baptized, too.

The Soul

The soul of man is what makes him function. The soul is what makes man think. The soul is what governs the activity of man. The soul requires something more than residence. The soul requires precedence. This requires God coming, by the work of the Spirit, to bring a precedence over the believer so that the believer might reign in righteousness by one man, Jesus Christ.

"But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruits befitting repentance, And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham as our father; for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." (Matthew 3:7-9).²

This definitely speaks to the sovereignty of God. The stones raised up by God would have been authentic children of Abraham. "And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore, every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."³ What is the subject of this discourse? What is John baptizing in water to manifest? What does God want? Fruit. The fruit of righteousness. How do we receive the fruit? "I, indeed baptize you with water unto repentance." Not "unto fruit", but rather "unto repentance." John's water baptism, which is not valid for the church today, was "unto repentance." I have already touched on this subject in another composition so I will not trouble you with a repeat, other than to say, John's father was a Levitical priest, and because of that fact, John was also a Levitical priest (from father to son in the line of Aaron) who baptized Jesus for an explicit purpose at an explicit time for a mandated duty only Jesus could attain. Enough said. You go to the Word and look this up for yourself. We are not baptized with the baptism of John.

“I, indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire” (Matthew 3:7-11). This is not the baptism which the Father brings. This is the baptism which Jesus, the Son brings.

“Jesus,” John said, “is going to baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” What does fire suggest? Power. The Lord Jesus is going to bring power. The Father brought position. When the Holy Spirit comes into the believer to dwell, He brings us into a position before God, by that indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Now the Holy Spirit is going to bring the believer power because Jesus is going to impart to the believer another baptism. This baptism will sanctify the believer’s soul.

The Father baptizes first. Then the Son, Jesus Christ, sends forth the Holy Spirit to baptize the believer into the Spirit - which indeed is power. The effected, in the Father’s baptism, was the spirit of the believer. The effected in the believer, in the Son’s baptism is the soul. There is an interesting distinction between Acts 1:8 and Acts 1:5. Acts 1:5 speaks to us concerning the baptism of the Holy Spirit. “For John truly baptized with water; but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” John baptized with water before the New Covenant, before Jesus lifted the cup and said, “This is the cup of the New Covenant.” Acts 1:8 speaks to us concerning the Holy Spirit coming upon us. “But you shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” With the Son’s baptism, the believer receives “power.”

When the apostle Paul met a group of believers at Ephesus he asked them, “Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?” How does a believer receive the Holy Spirit? We believe. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.” “Except a man have the Spirit of Christ he is none of His.” So when we believe, the Holy Spirit comes in us and dwells - makes His residence - within us - which is the Father’s baptism. But each time Paul laid hands on anyone in the book of Acts (on anyone who had believed) the scripture says that “the Holy Spirit came upon them.” These believers didn’t receive Christ. They received the Holy Spirit. “The Holy Spirit came upon them.” The Holy Spirit only comes upon someone who has already believed. If I want to lead someone to Jesus Christ - knowing the lost sinful condition of the person with whom I am sharing - I don’t tell them, “You need to receive the Holy Spirit.” No. I tell them they need to receive Jesus Christ. “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name, under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). But if a person has already believed - the Holy Spirit is indwelling him - he then needs to be empowered. So I say, “Receive the Holy Spirit!” Receive the Power of the Spirit - which is the Son’s baptism.

So the second baptism is the baptism from the Lord Jesus. The Son. The Son's baptism baptizes the believer into the power of the Spirit - which sanctifies the believer's soul - which causes the believer to think differently. To act differently. To see things differently. All believers who have experienced this baptism begin to think differently, which is why I had a hard time calling this baptism "the baptism of the Holy Spirit." Because there is only one baptism of the Holy Spirit. But as I read I began to realize that there is a little more to this subject than I expected. I realized that we can have more than one baptism and still have "one baptism."

The Body

Now that our spirit and our soul have been baptized, the next step is the baptism for our body. Our body needs sanctifying. We have our spirit sanctified. We have our soul sanctified. Now our body needs to be sanctified - spirit, soul and body baptisms.

This order - spirit, soul and body baptisms - fell upon the house of Cornelius in Acts 10. When the Gentiles - as a body of people - were introduced into the body of Jesus Christ, they believed: they received; they were filled; they were baptized in water. A remarkable order. Don't you think? Their spirit, soul and body were baptized. "In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

"For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison, who at one time were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, in which few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water; the like figure unto which even baptism does also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but answering of a good conscience towards God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him" (1 Peter 3:18-22).

The passage reads, "which even baptism does also now save us." The word "save" here is the word "safes." The word is *diasozo*: to bring safely through. This baptism - in water - which "does also now safes us" is not a baptism which saves us from the wrath of God. The Lord Jesus saved us from that. "For God has not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Wherefore, comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also you do" (1 Thessalonians 5:9-11). But rather this is a baptism for our body - for safety, not for justification. The

apostle Paul did not believe water baptism saves or justifies us and stated it in 1 Corinthians 1:13-17: "I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius . . . I baptized also the household of Stephanas; besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel; not with the wisdom of words lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect." Paul preached a gospel of salvation by faith, not by water. Baptism, in water makes us safe - our flesh saved - in and from the world. That's why we're water baptized. This is also why Peter used Noah as an example. Noah's flesh was made safe through water. Our flesh is made safe by water. We are made safe from the world. "Which even baptism does also now save us."

We have been baptized by the Father: our spirit. We have been baptized by the Son: our soul. We are then baptized by the Spirit: our body. Noah then is a perfect "figure" of this body baptism. Noah - which included eight souls - was made safe from the wrath of God - the flood on the whole world. His body was saved through the water.

Noah "found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Grace saved Noah's spirit. Grace is always what saves. "Grace came bringing salvation." Not water, but grace. "For you have I seen righteous before me in this generation," is what God said to and about Noah. The water didn't produce Noah's righteousness. God produced Noah's righteousness, water didn't. God said Noah was righteous *before* Noah went through the water. *Before* Noah's water baptism. But Noah was not yet made safe from the water - flood - which was to come. Noah's spirit had been saved. Noah was now a righteous man before God. Saved. But Noah had not been water baptized. Noah's righteousness came before he and his family got into the ark: before water baptism. The Bible doesn't tell us if Noah was a preacher, an office manager or a fruit salesman before God "saw him righteous." The only clue we have to the way all men thought or acted before God made him righteous is: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Noah, who God saw as righteous was one of those men on the earth. Noah was a man. "There is none righteous, no not one" (Romans 3:10; vv. 10-12; Psalms 14:1-3; Ecclesiastes 7:20). So the conclusion must be drawn that God - who never changes - saved a sinner. Noah, believed God and, I suppose one could say, as in Abraham, Noah's belief was accounted to him as righteousness - God "saw him righteous."

But what did Noah believe? The only word Noah knew from God was: a redeemer will come from, "The seed of the woman" (Genesis 3:14-15). This was the promise Noah embraced: the pledge, that a Redeemer would appear on the scene in that Day - *One* who would bring redemption to mankind.

Noah didn't ask God to make him righteous for God to save him - Noah didn't say or do anything - God saw him righteous and that's what saved or justified Noah. No words, no water, no nothing - as far as Noah's portion was concerned - God did it all for Noah, just like us - "he who glories let him glory in the Lord."

So we see that Noah's spirit had been saved. Noah's soul had been saved as well. No matter how Noah acted before God "saw" him righteous, he acted and thought differently afterwards. Noah is the guy who began building a boat to save his family and a lot of other creatures from a flood, when the earth had never experienced rain. That's acting and thinking differently, don't you think? Noah is a different man from that point onward. His thinking is different. Because his soul had been saved. "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so he did." Noah's soul had been saved. Now God needs to save Noah's body - or, make Noah's body safe. God made Noah safe when "Noah went in" - into the ark. Noah was made safe from the flood. "Which even baptism does also now save us."

This safety water baptism is also true of the children of Israel - when they came out of Egypt; when they crossed the Red Sea. Their spirit was saved by the blood of the Lamb. "When I see the blood I will pass over." Their souls were saved with, "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. The Lord shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace." Their souls stopped reacting to their bodies' dilemma. They began thinking and acting differently. They stood still in "peace." Something they were not doing just moments before. "The Egyptians marched after them, and they were in great fear." From "fear" to "peace." Something happened inside of them. Something had saved them. Someone had baptized them. Someone had saved their souls.

After God saved the children of Israel's spirit and their soul, God saved their bodies: "And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon dry ground; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left." God baptized the children of Israel through the water of the Red Sea to save their bodies. God saved the children of Israel spirit, soul and body.

As the children of Israel had to be baptized three times, so the church must be baptized three times. Or in three different ways. Yet, it is only "one baptism."

The third baptism for the believer then is water baptism. The baptism for the safety of the believer's body. Water in the scriptures is a figure of the Holy Spirit. Who then, in this case is doing the baptizing? The believer is the one - in his body - who's getting wet, but who is sanctifying the believer's body? The Spirit. This is the Spirit's baptism. Not the baptism of the Spirit, but the Spirit's baptism. The same Spirit Peter says, by which "Jesus preached unto the spirits in prison." (This is expanded on in the chapter, *The Heart of the Earth*.)

This same Spirit - by which Jesus preached - is the authority on any believer, when any believer baptizes another believer in water. It is that same Holy Spirit who is the authority for the sanctifying of that body - the body of the believer who is being baptized. If the Holy Spirit is not present in that act of water baptizing, then you can dunk a guy in and out all you want and the water will not sanctify his flesh. When he comes out dripping wet, his flesh will not be saved (made safe), because the water baptism was not done under the authority of the Holy Spirit. The baptism was not the Spirit's baptism. The baptism was only a man's baptism. This baptism may put the man's or baby's name on a church roll, but it will not baptize him safe - it won't save him. But, if a believing man is baptized in water by another believer in - or under - the authority of the Holy Spirit, then that baptism will sanctify his body - the body of the water baptized believer - as a body unto the Lord. Baptized by another believer - not just an official preacher or priest - unless the preacher or the priest is a believer, too.

Confession

Did you know that water baptism had a lot to do with bringing confession into the church?

The early Christians hoped the convert who was water baptized would not sin again. Much to their surprise they found that this was not the case. So what could they do? They needed something which marked forgiveness, something which could remove the guilt and stain from the believer who sinned after water baptism. Thus the confession.

The penitent would publicly confess his sins and his sorrow and then ask God for pardon. He or she would then wear sackcloth and smear ashes over their body - usually their face - to show sorrow. For grave sins such as murder, thief, adultery or idolatry this confession could be done only once: one forgiveness in baptism, one forgiveness in public confession, and then there was no future chance, only expulsion from the church.

After a time, some of the local pastors believed that this was much too rigid, that this put limits to God's infinite grace. The argument they gave was from the Lord's own words, we are to forgive our brothers, not seven times, but seventy times seven. There was a split in the clergy for some years, but eventually the forgiving pastors finally won over their demanding critics and confession for our numerous transgressions is still the norm.

Sad to say, but this rigid non-biblical, no future chance expulsion from the church rule is still practiced in some overly fleshly zealous denominations today. Their desire is "to make a fair show in the flesh" so they won't "suffer persecution for the cross of Christ . . . that they may glory in your flesh." And, as a result, if you don't follow their rigid, fleshly rules "they would exclude you, that you might seek them"

(Galatians 4, 5, 6). In other words, you need to seek their forgiveness and their fleshly form of righteousness, not the Lord's.

Paul's letter to the Galatians is full of allegories - 4:22-31 is a prime example, one which Paul addresses to justified, but immature believers (cp. 1 Corinthians 3:1-2) who, under the influence of legalistic teachers, "desire to be under the law." They were, observing "days, and months, and times, and years" - "Weak and beggarly elements," which they desired "again to be in bondage." Paul five times in Galatians raises the question: Is the believer under the law (2:19-21; 3:1-3,25-26; 4:4-6,9-31)? Paul's answer: No, we are not. For, as Paul states, if you keep one part of the law, you become "a debtor to keep the whole law." And if you desire to be under the law, "Christ is become of no effect to you, whosoever you are, who are justified by the law; you are fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:1-4). Sinning is not falling from grace. Trying to be justified for your sin apart from belief in Christ Jesus alone, is falling from grace.

Righteousness:

The Great Commission

So we have baptisms. Plural. Which finds its testimony in the last verses of Matthew's gospel. The Great Commission.

The uniqueness of Matthew's gospel, other than the fact that he is writing in particular to Israel, is his concern with showing the children of Israel the righteousness of God. His message is the kingdom of heaven. His theme is the Lord Jesus. His conclusion is the righteousness of God. The end of Matthew - a portion which is not in another gospel - concerns itself with righteousness.

"Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted." I've always thought this was strange. These guys had seen the Lord die on the cross, now He's standing in front of them alive and they "doubted". Strange. But doubt is still the way of man. "And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, All *authority* is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

If your Bible uses the word "power", which is the word, *dunamis*, the translation is not correct. The word here is, *exousia*, authority. There is a vast difference between "power" and "authority." If you have authority, you can demonstrate power. If you do not have authority, you'll never have power.

But you can demonstrate authority without using power. I was given the occasion of experiencing the proof of this just a few days ago, when, in the speed of the moment I was stopped abruptly by a supportive officer of the law. The officer - a hefty gentleman - walked up to the window of my car and said in a very polite tone, "May I see your driver's license?" Now the cordial intonation of his request gave me ample

opportunity to answer him with either respect or animosity. I chose the former. Because I realized that the state of Tennessee stood behind this guy's tan suit and badge. The state of Tennessee gave him his authority. Which meant the state of Tennessee was standing in the window of my car - because of his size, he really looked like the whole state of Tennessee standing in my car's window. Now if I had said, "I think you need to prove your right to ask for my driver's license." He could have exercised his power. But instead I smiled and handed him my driver's license, because I knew he had authority. I also understood that he could use the power of that authority at any time - part of his power was hanging at his side. I submitted to his authority, so he didn't need to use his power. God teaches me in strange ways at times.

I see a lot of people in church today waving around a lot of power trying to prove they have authority. The apostle Paul didn't need to do that. The seven sons of Sceva⁴ tried it, and you see where it got them. The seven sons of Sceva went into the house of a demon possessed man and said, "we adjure you in the name of Jesus, who Paul preaches. Come out of him!" The demon jumped on them, all seven of them, ripped off their clothes and sent them out bleeding, running into the street. Remember what the demon possessed man said? "Jesus I know. Paul I know." But who are you guys? Where's your authority? They didn't have any authority, but they tried to use power. Jesus said, "All authority is given unto Me." So we - the believers - go out under the authority of the Lord Jesus.

"Go you, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the age. Amen" (Matthew 28:16-20).

Matthew lists three baptisms here. The baptism of the Father. The baptism of the Son. The baptism of the Spirit. But in reality we only have "one baptism." Which is the complete sanctifying work of God teaching us "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the age."

If I am a single entity, as spirit, soul and body and yet I am one man, then I am baptized in one baptism. Baptism of the spirit, of the soul and of the body - "of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." And God regards these three baptisms as "one;" as a unity. Without the totality of these three baptisms, the work isn't complete. I can make it to heaven because I believe (Romans 3:22), but I'll find life pretty hard going while I'm here on earth. I'm not complete without the three at work as one. If I am only one out of three, or two out of three, I am not one. I need to be three in one to be one. So do you. Deuteronomy declares, "Behold O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." Is he? Yes, He is. He is Father, Son and Spirit. He is one Lord. Yet, He is three parts in the One. Some ancient Greek manuscripts read, "Behold O

Israel, the Lord our God is a unity.” Everything God does is in harmony - unity. God’s work is never singular. The work of God is a unity. We, as believers, are a single unit in the Lord. Yet, we are many members of that single unit. Everything God does is in unity.

What then is “one baptism?” The baptism of the Father. The baptism of the Son. The baptism of the Spirit.

“There is one body, and one spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and in you all” (Ephesians 4:4-6).

There is “one baptism.”

¹ **Baptist** (proper noun): a member of the Baptist Church.

baptize (verb): to administer baptism to (someone); to christen : *he was baptized Joshua.*

- to admit (someone) into the Church by baptism : *He was baptized into the church on Sunday.*
- to give a name or nickname to : *he baptized the science of narrative “narratology.”*

ORIGIN Middle English : via Old French from ecclesiastical Latin *baptizare*, from Greek *baptizein* ‘immerse, baptize.’

baptism (noun): the act of sprinkling water onto a person's forehead or of immersion in water, symbolizing purification or regeneration and admission to the Church.

- a ceremony or occasion at which this takes place.
- a religious experience likened to this : *baptism in the Holy Spirit.*
- figurative a person's initiation into a particular activity or role, typically one perceived as difficult : *this event constituted his baptism as a politician.*

ORIGIN Middle English : from Old French *baptisme*, via ecclesiastical Latin from ecclesiastical Greek *baptismos* ‘ceremonial washing,’ from *baptizein* ‘immerse, baptize.’

PHRASES: **baptism of fire** a difficult or painful new undertaking or experience. [ORIGIN: from the original sense of *a soldier's first battle.*] DERIVATIVES: **baptismal** adjective

(*Thesaurus*) **baptism** noun: **1.** *the baptism ceremony* christening, naming. **2.** *his baptism as a politician* initiation, debut, introduction, inauguration, launch, rite of passage.

baptist (noun): a person who baptizes someone.

ORIGIN Middle English from Old French *baptiste*, via ecclesiastical Latin from ecclesiastical Greek *baptist_s*, from *baptizein* ‘immerse, baptize.’

² See also Luke 3:7-8

³ Matthew 3:10

⁴ Acts 19:11

chapter ten
Cast In The Salt

*“For every one shall be salted with fire,
And every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good.”*

Mark 9:49-50(a)

Our commission as believers, is to offer vision to the blind and unmarred illumination to the newly sighted. Tutoring, directing, assisting them as they learn to walk with eyes of faith - animated by trust, rather than the terrestrial. Yet, the Church in this day seems to be trapped within a modern Gospel, a secular rite of salvation which gets men justified and then sets them in church pews to deal with their old natures by themselves.

We pull the sinner out of the fire, “hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 23). Then what do we do? We point out faults. We lament failures. We diagnose old flesh sicknesses (our “old nature,” sinful flesh - which we all come into the church with), but we never give the remedy. We preach how “sin abounds,” but rarely are the new converts apprised of the fact - now that they’re in the Body of Christ - that “grace supper abounds.” We have become much better at diagnosing pathology without reaching any common accepted definition of vitality.

Clearly, this secular rite of salvation (not justification) which we practice, is obsolete, and deadly. New believers, as well as, long-lived believers, are forced to live in the urgency of the moment, captive to quarterly profit reports and trends of the day - the flesh. But they are never given what they are desperately needing: an opening beyond the present to that which offers hope and dignity. We are people living in a new fertile land, but there seems to be something very wrong: there’s no real fruit.

A Covenant of Salt

Moses wrote:

“As for the oblation of the first fruits, you shall offer them unto the Lord; but they shall not be burned on the altar for a sweet savor. And every oblation of your meal offering shall you season with salt; neither shall you allow the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from your meal offering: with all your offerings you shall offer salt” (Leviticus 2:12,13).

All sacrifices of the Lord had salt in them.

“And all the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer unto the Lord, have I given you, and your sons and your daughters with you, by a statute forever: it is a covenant of salt forever before the Lord unto you and to your seed with you” (Numbers 18:19).

In the words of the Lord Jesus:

“If your eye offends you pluck it out; it is better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire, where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good; but if the salt have lost its saltness with what will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another” (Mark 9:47-50).

The Salt Miracle

In 2 Kings we see the return of Elisha after the Lord had taken Elijah up into heaven by a whirlwind and the mantle of Elijah had fallen upon Elisha. The mantle of Elijah was the authority of the Lord - as a prophet, the mouth-piece of the Lord. With the mantle of Elijah, a double portion of the spirit of Elijah had fallen upon Elisha.

“And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken away from you. And Elisha said, I pray you, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so unto you; but if not, it shall not be so. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and separated them and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and its horsemen. And he saw him no more; and he took hold of his clothes, and tore them in two pieces. He took up the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of the Jordan. And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? And when he also had smitten the waters, they parted to the one side and to the other; and Elisha went over” (2 Kings 2: 9-14 AV).

The double portion of the spirit of Elijah had been given to Elisha, but this did not necessarily mean a better spirit was in the prophet. The original spirit given Elisha would have been difficult to improve upon. But rather, what God was promising him by this double portion, was a double ministry - as compared to the ministry of Elijah. Elijah worked eight miracles in the course of his earthly sojourn and Elisha worked sixteen. So Elisha was given a double portion of the spirit of Elijah. Twice the miracles.

It is interesting to note that Elisha died after his fifteenth miracle. In order for the Lord to accomplish what He promised (in giving him a double portion), God used his dried dead bones to work his last and sixteenth miracle. You will recall in one of Israel's battles, a dead man was cast into the open sepulcher (grave) of Elisha. The moment the dead man touched the bones of Elisha the man was revived and stood up on his feet alive. A double portion of the spirit of Elijah - sixteen miracles.

That was a remarkable final miracle - if I may pursue this a brief moment. The dead man Elisha had enough life remaining in his dry bones to bring a lifeless man to life. Great. But we don't seem to have enough life in our living bones to render anything near the same. "He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto My Father" (John 14:12). The Lord has given us a double portion. But do we use it?

The first notable miracle - not counting the parting of the Jordan - which Elisha did, as recorded in 2 Kings 2, was a miracle utilizing salt.

"And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray you, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees; but the water is bad and the ground barren. And he said, Bring me a new cruse . . ."

A cruse is a vessel used for holding ointment or perfume; its name is derived from the alabaster stone, of which it was usually made (Matthew 26:7).

". . . and put salt in it. And they brought it to him. And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus said the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from there any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spoke" (2 Kings 2:19-22 KJV).

I have itemized here a few scriptures (certainly not all) in regards to salt; setting a function of or the usefulness of salt in God's economy. Every sacrifice, God said, "should be salted with salt." No sacrifice could be brought into the sanctuary of God unless it was first salted with salt. The Lord Jesus emphasizes - with regard to His own commitment - His own presentation of Himself to the Father; He submitted Himself to

the authority of the Father; He sanctified Himself (He has told us) in order that we might be sanctified through His truth.

According to the Apostle Paul in Hebrews 9, we believers have exactly the same position. The Lord Jesus committed Himself to the Father in the covenant of the sprinkling of the blood in the heavenlies, and by that commitment we are also sanctified - by His blood in the presence of the Father. In turn we are exhorted to actuate precisely the same act: "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1,2). That is precisely the manner in which the Lord Jesus presented Himself to the Father: sanctified and holy.

We, as believers, present the same - we come sanctified and holy before the Father. We rightfully execute this because of the Lord's work accomplished in the heavenlies on our behalf. But the sanctified and holy work committed and kept by the Lord Jesus did not begin at the cross. It was first manifested when He made the decision to come to do the will of the Father - before His virgin birth - the Law was within His heart before He came; Jesus came sanctified with salt, if you please; "every sacrifice shall be salted with salt," He said.

Life or Death

Salt has a very remarkable function. The more I thought about the function of salt, the less I realized I understood. And quite frankly, I still don't fully understand. But salt has a remarkable function in God's economy. Salt has the power to slay and it also has the power to make alive.

When I was a young my father moved our family to a small 150 acre farm. That's small to a Texan. The land was never managed as a professional farm but, "Just living on the land," said my father, "would do us good." Which it did. I learned many lessons from living on that land. Our land produced hay, corn, soy beans and the like, which we used to feed the fifty or so cattle we owned. The yearly harvest of calves were sold each year for a dear profit. The land also gave ample space for my father to take his daily walks. The land was good and it did us good.

One chilly November morning my father decided to position a large yellow block of salt just outside our barn, hoping to coax our cattle closer to their harbor of protection and in the process, provide extra salt for their diet. My father's plan worked and the cattle grew fat during that winter, but in the process the salt killed a pear tree growing a few yards from our barn. Salt has the power to kill. Yet, at the same time it has the power to make alive. Funny stuff, salt.

One summer I worked for a surveyor. My job consisted of jostling through overgrown, bug-infested fields while carrying bags full of surveying utensils and two colored polls, locating a spot in that field, stopping at that point, and holding - as steady as possible - one of those long red and white polls high in the air, while my employer gazed ever so carefully in my direction through his surveying scope. This seemed to take hours. My surveying employer would then pencil something on a special writing pad, look up from his notes and motion for me to gather my preponderance of paraphernalia, walk back through the same swarming field, place the equipment in his pick-up and wait for his call. This procedure was repeated several times a day. That's my recollection concerning my summer surveying stint.

My uncle procured that horrible job for me a few months after my father died to, as he said, "Make a man out of you." My father's brother was never fond of my ability to make a living in the arts - although my father never had a problem with my chosen profession and even encouraged my pursuits. Suffice to say, I was not thrilled with my uncle's procurement. I especially hated the muggy summer heat - sweat poured from every pore of my body that entire summer. Every day. All day long. I was soaked from dawn to dusk. I was also a bit rebellious at the time.

During my first day of torment, as the temperature began to rise, I was given a life giving substance: a hand full of salt tablets, "Eat these," my employer said. He was a man of few words. So I did. I ate the salt tablets. Each morning and on through the heat of the day - I ate salt tablets. And I found that if I didn't eat salt tablets, I would become faint before noon. I was losing a vital part of my life and the salt tablets brought life back to my sweaty body. Salt can bring life or death - it depends completely on how the salt is ministered. In addition to the salt tablets, my employer also kept a large yellow barrel full of icy water which was strapped down ever so carefully to the bed of his Chevy pick-up, icy water which I exploited whenever possible.

I did make it through that onerous summer with few scars - mostly my pride. But you know to this day, each time I see someone laboring in the summer heat, I find myself asking the Lord to send cool air, icy water and salt tablets. I relate. "Everyone shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." Every one. Every sacrifice.

Fire, like salt, has a two-fold effect. Fire can bring life or death. A romantic glow on a frosty night or a blister on the finger kissed by it. Fire, just as salt, brings life or death; it depends on whether you have propagated the nature of the fire.

You will recall the three Hebrew children who were stuffed into the Babylonian fiery furnace: "Now, if you be ready that at that time that you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, to fall down

and worship the image which I have made, well; but if you worship not, you shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is that God, that shall deliver you out of my hands? Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah . . ." (I'm using their Hebrew names here) ". . . answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer you in this matter. If it be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not worship the golden image which you have set up" (Daniel 3: 15-18). So the king had the three Hebrews thrown into the fiery furnace.

The story continues - the king is speaking here, scrutinizing the unblemished men (four men to be true to the text, which is another homily indeed) - "You servants of the Most High God come forth" and . . . they "came forth from the midst of the fire . . . the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counselors, being gathered, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them" (Daniel 3: 26,27).

Why didn't the fire burn the three Hebrews? Because they had previously shared in a greater fire. They had propagated the nature of the fire. They had been salted with the fire of God long before they entered the blaze of the Babylonian furnace. They had earlier tasted of the nature of God. And the nature of God - as it comes to the believer - will either bless or blast - depending on the walk of the believer.

We believers are to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4), after the spirit (8:4), in honesty (13:13), by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7), in good works (Ephesians 2:10), in love (5:2), in wisdom (Colossians 4:5), in truth (2 John v.4), after the commandments of the Lord v. 6) - negatively, not after the flesh (Romans 8:4); not after the manner of natural men (1 Corinthians 3:3); not in craftiness (2 Corinthians 4:2); not by sight (5:7); not in the vanity of the mind (Ephesians 4:17); not disorderly (2 Thessalonians 3:6). But, "Everyone," whose walk is upright before the Lord or not so upright, "shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." God doesn't have to - and I am not saying that He will not - give any special decree as to what is going to happen to the believer during the salting of fire or salt - our behavior will reap its own fruit. Will it not? The way we walk will manifest its own fruit. It all depends on the mode of our conduct.

We come to that same principle in 2 Kings, chapter 2. "Every sacrifice will be salted with salt." Every sacrifice must move in the salt of God - if it is to minister blessings to those who are about. And if "every sacrifice" will not move in the blessings of God, then God will send His own salt - and He calls His salt, fire - and that fire will bring about a change in the sacrifice: purging out the things that are offensive; stopping the corruption - which will establish His righteousness and His sanctification in that "salted with fire" vessel.

Goldsmithing

Peter tells us, “the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, through it be tried by fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7). The words Peter uses here are wonderful. They speak of a goldsmith at work. Before the goldsmith could fashion the rough gold into the shape he desired, he first had to refine the gold. The gold must be unadulterated. Pure. He did this by testing and trying, burning out the corruption, the unacceptable ingredients; removing the dross from the gold, leaving only the uncorrupted metal: the pure gold.

The goldsmith first placed the unrefined gold into a large mortar-like bowl. The mortar was placed over a searing fire to liquefy the metal. The fire segregated the dross from the gold. The goldsmith, during this long process, would periodically take a trial (a long spoon-like instrument) and dip it into the molten liquid. Placing a small drop of the refining gold onto a wooden plank, he would inspect the gold; testing for purity, hue, structure and clarity. This burning out of the corruption from the gold took hours. Drop by drop, testing and trying until the dross, the last bit of corruption was removed and the gold was pure.

Do you know how the goldsmith knew when the corruption had been completely burned out of the gold? When in his last test, the final drop of gold placed on the wooded plank, the only object he could see in the drop of gold, was his own reflection. No dross. No impurities. No corruption. Wonderful.

So the Lord tries us and tests us to bring us forth as pure gold. “Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). When the Lord sees us in that day, the only object He will see in us is His own reflection. Glory! We are made pure by the testing and trying of our faith by fire, by the goldsmithing of the Lord.

When the apostle Peter exhorted us to, “think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you” (1 Peter 4:12), he was referring to experiences which we will meet in this life, and ones which, as his language denotes, is by no means exceptional. Each of us will face “fiery” trials. We may not experience, in this century, the trials of being thrown to the lions or “the spoiling of our goods” or living in caves “destitute and afflicted.” But during the last two centuries, the Lord’s people, and especially His servants, have faced “fiery” trials, which have come in a more subtle manner: The Lord’s people have had to suffer the reproach of credulity and simple-mindedness, of being called “behind the times,” because we refuse to believe agnostic scientists and their theories of “modern scholarship” - our sensitive natures can find such reproaches harder to bear than

physical sufferings of past centuries. In this day, the test, the “fiery” trial, is to resist the seductions of an alluring world, to refuse any and all compromise.

Everyone who confesses the name of Christ will be tested - the true believer, as well as, the false professor in Christ, will be tried and tested and proved. Spurgeon was right when he said, “Whether your religion be true or false, it will be tried; whether it be chaff or wheat, the fan of the great Winnower will surly be brought into operation upon all that lies on the threshing floor. If thou hast dealings with God, thou hast to do with a ‘consuming fire.’ Whether thou be really or nominally a Christian, if thou comest near Christ He will try thee as silver is tried. Judgment must begin at the house of God, judgment will begin with you.” It is the will of God that whosoever takes upon him the profession of His name shall be tried, tested, and proved.

The Lord tested the rich young ruler (Mark 10:17-23). The Lord tests those who build their faith “upon the sand” - whose hope is based on a “faith in Christ,” which produces no obedience to Him. To such professors He says, “Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). They are tried and tested and found wanting. The intellectual professor is tested by being constantly subjected to alterations of the Truth. The Pharisees were of this sort - relying on their intellect, their knowledge, their apprehension of formal truth. Intellectual professors admire Truth, but they will not die for it. When tested, the intellectual will go with what seems more comfortable, more compatible to their own interest. New mythical experiences, so-called new-found biblical facts or translations, inconstant intelligence is the fire which test the intellectual’s faith. Intellectual knowledge of the truth is fluctuating, ephemeral. Truth is entertained as a transitory idea and found wanting.

Pilate was tested as an intellectual. He had a theoretical knowledge that it was contrary to the evidence to condemn Christ to death, but when the issue of his own interest with Cesar was raised, his practical judgment dictated him to save his own prestige. God allowed Adam and Eve to be tempted and tried by Satan. God tried Abraham when He charged him to take his dearly loved son and offer him up for a burnt offering on Mount Moriah. The Lord gave all that Job had, except his life, into the hands of Satan - to test and try his faith. God left Hezekiah to himself to try him and make known what was in his heart when the ambassadors of Babylon came to inquire of him what wonders the Lord had done in the land (2 Chronicles 32:31).

All who profess the name of Christ will be tried and tested and proved - whether they bear “good fruit” or “bad fruit.” That we “might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ”

Bad Water

“And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees; but the water is bad and the ground is barren.”
(see 2 Kings 2:19-22)

When the men of the city said to Elisha, “the water is bad,” they were not saying, “Elisha, there’s no water.” There was water. But something had been introduced into the water that had corrupted the water - the water could not achieve the purpose God desired it to achieve. Water, in the word of God is a picture of the Holy Spirit. The water had been corrupted. There wasn’t anything wrong or corrupt with the Spirit - the water - but corruption was within the water: “And he went forth unto the *spring* (the source) of the waters and cast the salt in there, . . .” The water had become of no healthy use for the people of the city, as far as the water ministering healing to the land in the development of their produce into ripe, mature fruit. The water was flowing through something, which was contaminating the water, thereby their crops were never brought to mature. ripe. good-to-eat fruit. And as a result, “the ground was barren.”

In these United States we have water analyzing facilities. If we desire to know the purity of a certain body of water, we can forward a water sample to one of these analyzing facilities, they will analyze our water sample and remit back to us what’s wrong or what’s right with our water.

Before my father moved our family to our 150 acre farm, he had our drinking water analyzed by one of those facilities. My father wanted our drinking water to come from an old well, which had been on the land for a number of years. But before my father would allow us to drink from that well, he made sure the well water was drinkable. My father, with me in toe, took a small amount of the well water, placed it in a sterilized jar and sent it off to be diagnosed. I remember my father prayed over the well water before he sent the sample in. He told me that he had “thought about throwing a stick into the water but stopped short” - a stick is for bitterness (Exodus 15:25), salt is for bareness.

Our sample came back pure. The water was good for drinking. My father, after he received the test results, went back to the opening of the well and said, “Thank you Lord that you have given us healthy water.” My father was like that. If the water had not been pure for drinking, my father told me, “It would not be the water’s fault. It would be the fault of what was in the water.” We would need to remove - from the water - what was corrupting the water, otherwise when the water - which in itself is good - arrives at its destination - in this case our family’s stomachs - and is consumed, rather than bringing life, the water would have brought sickness. And, as a result, barrenness.

The Land

“The ground was barren.” The water itself was good, but something was corrupting it. They said, “Elisha, look at this place. It’s a great place. Isn’t it?” Elisha said, “Yeah. It’s a great place. It’s very pretty. This is a lovely area.” It wasn’t the land’s appearance that was bad. The situation of the land was perfect. Anyone who came to visit that land could look out on the ground and say, “Yes, this is a beautiful land. It is lovely.” But, in the spring of the year, when the fruit begins to come forth - beginning to manifest life - the water did not have the capability of maintaining life: it was corrupted. So, “the ground was barren;” there was no mature fruit. This can be seen at work in many of our beautiful Christian ministries. The scenery is lovely, but the ground is barren. There is no fruit being brought to maturity. Have we grieved the Holy Spirit?

“The ground was barren.” The Hebrew word translated into our English, barren, is *miscarry*. The words read literally: “The land causes to miscarry.”

Many good folks declare to Diana and I, “You two really do have it good. You have a wonderful relationship with each other and - collectively and personally - a close relationship with God. Both of you are people of the Word. When we visit your home, the Spirit of the Lord is so rich - your company is so lovely.” You may think their words bless me. But they do not. Their words slay me. Because I know when the crops begin to blossom, and the fruit begins to look good, the water may be bad - it may miscarry. Diana and I - collectively and personally - may never have reached the capacity God wants for us. A tragedy indeed. Christians and people of the world tell us, “My, you’re such spiritual people. The Lord must really love you.” Something deep down inside of me knots up. I could go away rather flowering my soul saying, “Well, praise the Lord for their testimony,” but I know what may be on the inside.

We all may go about ministering the joy of the Lord and the peace of God - testifying to the works of the Lord - but neither joy, nor peace is actively residing within us. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, as you know. So if we have no joy, we are lacking that fruit. “The land causes to miscarry.” We come into the Church house - the assembly of God’s people, and rejoice. We go outside the doors of the church, and misery encompasses us.

When the spiritual fruit of joy is no longer in our lives, someone will come up to us and say, “Well, you ought to praise God even when you don’t feel like it; to offer the sacrifice of praise. Even if you can’t praise, praise anyhow! That’ll bring joy back into your life.” But that’s not the level in which God intends for His people to move.

Joy is a spiritual fruit produced from a fertile land, not the outcome of some fleshly, sacrificial emotion. The impressionable idea purporting we must offer sacrifice (which is not what the word *sacrifice* implies), every time we worship and praise the

Lord (implying that worship and praise to God must be a hard discipline and that discipline will bring us joy) is totally foreign to the word of God. It is the garment of joy God has cast over His people. And that garment of joy is produced by the salt of God; not our emotional notions of God. What then stops our joy? Corruption within the life-giving water.

If my father, after learning our well water tested pure, decided to throw a few dead rats into our well, in a very short time that water would be more akin to the corruption of the dead rats and less analogous to the pure H₂O my father had thanked the Lord for. Again, it isn't the water. The water remains H₂O. The water still has all of its suitable properties, all of the elements which engenders water. But, if you throw dead rats (corruption) into pure water, you obstruct the water and its usefulness in producing maturity, or a fruitful land; the water is obscured. So before the water can be effective, or pure again, something must be performed to rid the water of the corruption.

God has the solution. He desires to come and purify with His salt. Salt, when it is applied, slays corruption, which to me, remains a unique function. But salt when applied brings purity, joy and maturity to the believer. When salt is applied, fire is salted, corruption is removed and the Holy Spirit can "flow from our bellies" - bringing forth fruit to maturity "from a pure heart." And that's joy.

One year when I was about eight or nine, my father decided our family was in desperate need of pork. We had plenty of beef, corn, green beans and like vegetables - along with a variety of fruits (frozen and/or caned) - stored up for the coming winter months, but we had no pork. We had never felt the need for pork before, but this year was different; we would have pork. Which, according to my father, required buying, feeding, slaying and then processing a pig.

So, after the first frost - after our Chester White had reached it's required weight, after about a year of growth - my father, my grandfather and myself (the three of us had very little notion of what to do with our soon to be dead pig), along with a large, good-natured older gentleman - a gentleman, who chewed tobacco and spit incessantly and an enlightened pig cognizant fellow, who my father had retained to oversee the slaughtering operation - we began slaughtering. This was the weirdest thing I had ever witnessed. As soon as our pig was pronounced dead (from a single blow by our good-pig-fellow's hammer to the forehead of our well-fed porker), our hired man hung the cadaver upside down, began skinning, and cutting our soon to be gourmet swine flesh into befitting apportionment's. I, for the most part, stood some distance away in amazement.

As our hired, pig-man wrapped up his work, my father and grandfather mixed a compound (the formula which was given to them through intermittent tobacco spitting

by our hired, pig-man) of various elements, the primary one being salt . . . in abundance. After our pig was cut into its assorted parts, my father began to rub the salt mixture over the entire surface of each edible division. My father gave the pork meat a liberal dose of salt. After the salting was concluded, we put our salted fare in a chilled warehouse to cool. The salt, during this cooling process, migrates into the meat. While the pork meat was enduring this salt process, it wasn't doing much of anything - except being prepared. The salt was purifying - removing the corrupting elements - to preserve the meat.

Someone will say, "Now I'm saved. I've been filled with the Holy Spirit. It's time for me to preach the word. It's time for me to do the work of the Lord." No it is not. It's time *now* for the salt to work. It's time to grow: To be purified: To be sanctified by the word of God. And that requires a dark cool place - in the warehouse of the Lord, if you please, where it's dark and cool, where the salt can accomplish its work.

God Works in Darkness

There's an old hymn I love, "When darkness veils His lovely face, I rest in His unchanging grace." I know He's there, in the darkness - salting me, firing me, purifying me, changing me into the image of His son - but I can't see or feel Him. Yet, He's there nevertheless - removing the elements which are rotten. Salt has the capability of stopping the rot - of nullifying the rot's effect. Fire brings the thing being "fired" to purity. "They shall be salted with fire." But darkness is where the work is performed. Let me explain with a few scriptures.

In Psalm 18 we read, "He made *darkness* His secret place; His pavilion round about Him was *dark* waters and thick clouds of the skies." God uses darkness as a covering when He performs His mighty works.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and *darkness* was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Light there be" - literally - "and light was" (Genesis 1:1,2) - a note here: this was not the creation of the sun, this was the light of the Lord. God uses the darkness as a covering when He performs His establishing works.

"And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until morning, For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood . . . the Lord will pass over . . . and it came to pass, that at *midnight* the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 12:22-29). God saved His people in His pavilion of darkness. God uses the darkness as a covering when He performs His saving works.

“And the Lord said unto Moses. Wherefore criest thou unto Me? Speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward; But lift thou thy rod, and stretch forth thine hand over the sea, and divide it; and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea . . . And the angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before, and stood behind them. And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and *darkness* to them, but it gave light by night to these, so that the one came not near the other all the *night*” (Exodus 14:14-20 AV). God uses the darkness as a covering when He performs His liberating works.

“Now from the sixth hour there was *darkness* over all the land . . . Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the spirit” (Matthew 27:45-50). God uses the darkness as a covering when He performs His redemptive works.

“For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the *night*” (1 Thessalonians 5:2). “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the *night*” (2 Peter 3:10). God uses the darkness as a covering when He performs His delivering works.

If we do not allow the Lord the time to do His work of salting, firing, preserving (in darkness) - of removing the rot in us - we will never have the corruption which is in the water removed. Our ground will be barren. It will miscarry. We may have a giant ministry. A huge following. A big TV profile. Many books and CDs in print. But there's corruption in the water and the fruit will not remain. We will look good, but our fruit will not mature. If we do not allow the Lord the time to do His work of salting, firing, preserving, our land will miscarry because of the corruption - the corruption from our natural sinning self that is still in the pure water.

Leaven

Remember the feast of Pentecost, which the children of Israel were commanded to offer unto the Lord - or the Feast of Weeks, if you please? You may also remember that leaven was a no-no in God's Old Testament economy. Wasn't it? The children of Israel never offered anything with leaven before the Lord. Leaven is a picture of sin. When the children of Israel offered the pure, spotless lamb of God in the presence of God for an offering, no leaven could be confounded within the sacrifice. God also added, when the children of Israel offered the offering of the Passover, He said in effect, “I do not want leaven in the offering, and I do not want leaven in your house, because I am going to sanctify you by that offering. And you are therefore going to picture the kind of perfect sanctification that My offering will bring. I don't want any leaven in your house.” No leaven in the sacrifice. No leaven in the house. No leaven period. But then He turns around and says, concerning the Feast of Weeks, “You are to bake the

offering with leaven." Why? Why add sin to the sacrifice? What's happened to God? Has he changed His mind?

When the Holy Spirit fell on the day of Pentecost, did He fall on a church that was absolutely pure and without the blush of sin? No. Well, there seems to be a problem here. Did the sacrifice work; the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross? Yes, the sacrifice worked. But there was a qualifying statement with regard to that offering. "You shall bake it with leaven." The Lord knew what kind of people would be in His church. So when He birthed His church, He birthed it on the day of Pentecost - "You are to bake the offering with leaven." On that Sunday morning the Lord brought forth a people baked with leaven - baked in the fire of God.

Diana bakes our bread. I asked her one day what baking does to the yeast (leaven)? She told me, "It stops it from working. It actually kills it." Once God has baked us with His fire, which stops the leaven from working, He salts us with His salt, which terminates bareness. "Our old man is crucified so that the body of sin might be destroyed that we should henceforth not serve sin." The Lord bakes out our leaven, "so that the body of sin (leaven) might be destroyed that we should henceforth not serve sin." Fire and salt. We are being made into the image of His Son.

Have you ever rubbed salt in an open wound? Stupid as it may be, there is great pain in that action. When the Lord comes to us, with His purifying, sanctifying work, He snips off this part which is bad, and yanks off that part which is corrupt and we are left with open wounds. Exposed flesh. So He salts our open wounds. And it hurts. And we cry, "Lord, what's happening here. Have I sinned? Have you left me to die in the desert? What's going on? I'm in pain. I'm in bad pain here, Lord. Where are You anyway? Can't You see I'm hurting down here?" But the desired effect is accomplished. God gets done exactly what He wanted. He cast our pruned bodies into His fire to "purify unto Himself a people of His own, zealous of good works."

"Look at this beautiful land here Elisha." A man without the eye of the Spirit could look out over the land and say, "What's wrong with this place? Why have you brought me here? It's beautiful." Yes, the land looked pretty, but, when the harvest comes, everything withers. The trees bud, flower, and fruit begins to appear. Then the fruit dries up and we're left with barren trees. Jesus said, "You have not chosen me but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit." And, if I may add here, "that your fruit should not miscarry." Sometimes we look real good, real religious, but there's no fruit for the harvest. We're barren.

"The water is bad. And the ground is barren" So Elisha tells them to bring him a new cruse. Not an old one, but a new one. Jesus speaks to much the same issue. Don't put new wine into old wine skins, He said, "Lest the wineskin break and both be lost." Both be lost. They are both lost. Not just the new wine, but the old wineskin is lost as

well. There is nothing wrong with an old wineskin, as long as it has old wine in it. The old wineskin, which Jesus is referring to, looked to the Old economy of God. The law. The Old Covenant. The old wine within the old wineskin functioned together just fine. The manner in which they moved together worked - as far as the Old economy of God was concerned. As long as the old wine was in the old wineskin, there was a function of God at work. But when the time came for the new wine, there needed to be a new wineskin. A new cruse. Elisha said, "I want a new vessel that's been sanctified for the master's use. I want something new to put this salt in." That is why the apostle Paul asked for a body; "Present your body a living sacrifice. Holy;" H-O-L-Y. That's a new cruse. God slew the old man so that He might establish a new man. A new cruse, in which He could put His salt and cast it into the water.

But what do we do, as the church, to stop bareness? Instead of dealing with the problem, we fertilize the barren land. We try to put good stuff in the land to make it bring forth fruit. We have this beautiful group of believers growing up with what looks like good buds and flowers, but they aren't bringing forth fruit, so we fertilize them. We put more "good things" into them - all those good fertilizers that are needed to grow a fruitful crop - so the people of God will bring forth fruit. But we could fertilize 'till the Lord comes and no fruit will come - especially it won't come to maturity. The land will still miscarry, because there is a bad element in the water, which needs to be dealt with. Again, it's not the water's problem. The Holy Spirit within us is perfect. It's our old nature. Our sinful propensities. Our fleshly leanings that's spoiling our fruit before it can mature.

We try to fertilize by adding gift upon gift, upon blessing upon revelation, hoping the problem will be corrected. But it will not be corrected by this technique. We cannot add more programs, prayer (personal and corporate), extra services, extraneous youth symposiums, sounds-like-the-world "Christian" music concerts, a young flesh-like proffer to tantalize the youth group, a bigger elaborately robed choir, one more well-liked preacher, weekly fasting, sacrificial giving, exemplary stewardship, feeding more poor, visiting myriad's of the sick, adding an all-inclusive prison ministry, etc. - all of this is just fertilizing the ground, fertilizing the land to make our field bring forth fruit to maturity, and it won't work. Fertilizing a barren land won't work! (Depending on the fertilizer used, it might even make our land begin to stink, or at least smell like the fertilizer.) We must deal (collective and personally) with the bad element, before the good fruit can ever proceed.

So Elisha put salt into the new cruse and went to the spring; the source of the problem. He didn't go to the land surrounding the spring; he didn't sprinkle salt on the earth, which would have completely destroyed the land's ability to bring forth any crop whatsoever - he went to the spring - the source of the problem and tossed the salt into the water. Isn't it wonderful when God salts us, He salts us through the Spirit.

Abimelech, the usurper, in the days of the judges (Judges 9:45) went out in one of his battles and destroyed a city - he salted a whole city with salt. Why? So no one could ever live on that land again. Salt can destroy an entire land. But God doesn't employ salt in that manner. We "are God's field" (1 Corinthians 2:9) and He doesn't want His field to be unlivable. He wants His field to bring forth fruit to maturity. That's the problem with taking the word of God and beating the saints of God over the head with it. God doesn't do that. "Let your speech be with grace," said Paul, "seasoned with salt." Season your words with salt - with the word of God. And the word of God is sweet to the saint. I like salt on melons. The salt triggers the melon's sweetness to me. But if I put too much salt on the melon, I can't eat it. It's destroyed - for my use anyway. So God salts the believer through the Spirit. The salt thrown into the water won't destroy us, but rather the salt of God brings sweetness to the fruit. So we're no longer barren.

In the Song of Solomon we read, "Awake, O north wind, and come thou south; blow upon my garden, that its spices may flow out." When I first read that I thought how unusual. Why would I want a north wind to blow on my garden? One day I brought this verse up to a friend of mine who grows fruit trees. I asked what he thought the purpose of the north wind might be. He smiled and said, "Jay, when the north winds blow on my fruit the cold air makes my fruit extra sweet." How wonderful. The Lord sends His cold north wind to sweeten our fruit. How wonderful. His ways are definitely not our ways.

God said to Elisha, "Throw the salt into the spring." So Elisha cast the salt into the spring of the waters. And the spring of the waters was made pure, which in turn, poured out fresh pure water and purified the ground. And the ground brought forth fruit in its season. God is moving through His people through His Spirit. "The Spirit quickens, but the flesh profits nothing." "The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." God is moving through His people through His Spirit. So that we bring forth fruit to maturity.

The Man of God

We, as the church, have come to the point of our grave error and my deep concern. We have recognized the barrenness - miscarrying - or we may not have recognized the miscarrying - have we recognized it? Instead, have we stood around observing, as others have observed, and rejoiced in the times of blessings that come through the workings of the Lord, but have not looked for what God really intended - an abundance of fruit, which ultimately reproduces itself? The land around is barren. The church-house is full; the praise is up lifting; the preaching is great, but no one really does anything - anything that lasts.

One of my European brothers described our painful condition, "Jay, you live in such a pleasant land; in the church of the United States, with all its speech and religious freedom." His statement rips my heart, because I know it miscarries.

What did the men of the city do about the problem? They came to the man of God - the man of God today is Jesus (Hebrews 1:1,2) - and said, "This is a pleasant land. All the ingredients for everything we need is right here. But it isn't working. For some reason there's something in the water that's bad and everything around is miscarrying. What can you do about this, Elisha? Man of God, what can you do?"

So Elisha got a new vessel with salt in it and he cast the salt into the spring of the waters - and the Lord Jesus, if you please, in a figure, came on the scene and applied the fire. "For every one shall be salted with fire, every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." God is looking for us (individually and collectively) to turn again to Him and cry out and be satisfied with nothing else until that single deed is accomplished. We need to cry out, "Man of God, the water is bad. We're not bringing forth any fruit to maturity!" Rather than ignoring it, or shutting our eyes to it, or closing our minds to it, or starting a new program to enlarge it, we rather should cry to the living God so something might be done about it.

Praise is wonderful. The blessing of the people of God to the living God is marvelous. But where is our scene of the Holiness of God? God has opened my eyes to something I have known, but have refused to admit for some time: I see us, a column of saints marching towards the Lord. We're singing and rejoicing and blessing the Lord. Finally we reach the Lord, and then we march right out of His presence, still singing and rejoicing and blessing the Lord. Where did we go? We came right through to the Lord, into His place of dwelling, singing and praising His name, but we never sat down to wait before Him. We seemed happy and we looked beautiful, but we just entered in and then hurried right out.

One of my teachers was asked to fill-in for a vacationing pastor one Sunday morning. Before the morning service began, one of the men in the church suggested that he, "Should be sure to glance at your watch during the service, because," he continued, "if we get out of here too late, the cafeteria will be out of the green *Jell-O*TM before we get there." We need to wait on the Lord.

We, as the church, have been content to go through the motions, while God has wanted to minister and bless His people. But I am afraid, as in the description of the Ephesian church, "We have left" - not lost - "our first love." "Left our first love." And in the same way the Lord Jesus admonished the Ephesian church, "Remember from what a great height you have fallen. And repent. And do the first works." (Revelation 2:5).

What brought me to a certain awareness of our need for the salt and the fire of the Lord, was the thought that someone might suggest that we have a problem. And suddenly God opened my understanding to see that that was exactly what the children of Israel did with the prophets of God. He sent them, "rising early in the morning, He cried to them, but they would not hear them." And I thought what a callus has come over us. What an insensitivity. The lack of the Spirit of God within the church - it is like watching a slow, meticulous deterioration before our eyes. We may not become aware of what has happened until suddenly, some years later, we look back at what might have been. We need to cry out with the prophet Jeremiah, "O Lord God I long for the days of old." It is bittersweet indeed, when, we, as the church, must say, "Remember how it used to be?"

"For every one shall be salted with fire, every sacrifice will be salted with salt." If I come into an assembly on the Lord's day, be that a Sunday or any other day for that matter, as a teacher of the word of God or a musician in His courts to offer the offering of the Lord before the Lord, and the offering and the one who is offering (me) has not been salted with the salt of the Lord, seasoned with the fire of the Lord, then the offering is unacceptable before God and before His people. If the offering is given from within the corruption of my own heart, it is unacceptable. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. How much more when he comes offering it with a wicked heart?" Do we think that that cannot be applied to those who are judiciary righteous in His presence? God is looking for an offering which His hand has touched.

I might end with this: "If the shoe fits . . . will we wear it?" If this applies, will we forsake it? Or rather, will we act on it? Will we let God refresh our hearts - beginning with His Spirit - ministering His life? To be content with absolutely nothing less than what God - the Lord Himself - would want to do in our lives. To be content with nothing less than what the Lord would want to do with us His body - that we would be fruitful and multiply. Good ground. Good seed. Good water. Rich harvest. Ripe mature fruit. Seed which reproduces after its own kind.

Father send in the salt. Send in the fire.

*"For every one shall be salted with fire,
and every sacrifice shall salted with salt."*

(Mark 9:49)

chapter eleven
The Heart of the Earth
Sheol

*“For Thou wilt not leave My soul in Sheol,
Neither wilt Thou permit Thine Holy One to see corruption.”*

Psalm 16:10

“The Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was in danger of being broken. Then the mariners were afraid . . . and cast forth the wares that were in the ship to lighten it Then they said to Jonah, what shall we do for you, that the sea may be calm unto us? . . . And he said unto them, take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm for you . . . Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to bring her to the land . . . the sea raged . . . Therefore, they cried unto the Lord, and said, we beseech You, O Lord, we beseech You, let us not perish for this man’s life, and lay not upon us innocent blood; for You, O Lord, has done as it pleased You. So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging.”

(Jonah 1:4-15).

We have a vision of righteousness, perceived as something we do, and not something we are. In order to obtain the pleasure of the Lord, or in order to be delivered from some difficulty, or in order to recover what we may feel to be lost time because of an expressed sin or affliction, or some other like circumstance, it is the propensity of every man to feel the need to pay God or rather, to repay God. So we engage in dignified righteous acts - activities which we consider pleasing to the Lord. We cast forth our goods - ridding ourselves of all the extraneous stuff in our lives we imagine displeasing to the Lord; we row harder to bring our ship to land. We may begin committing random acts of kindness, - of which compassionate, merciful, altruistic people should do - struggling to force our sinful behavior onto a sure, righteous footing by our honorable parody. But we will not cast Jonah out of the boat; we will not cast all our cares, deceitful ways, shady desires, unprincipled traditions, sins and offenses, on the Lord Jesus - an act which will stop our turbulent sea from its raging. Jonah chapter one. Colossians chapter two.

Our desire is to shape up before the Lord. So we throw wrong doings out of our life. We quit smoking, playing cards, running around on our mate, drinking, telling off-colored jokes, etc. We then have the appearance - or at least the feeling - of being righteous; but we are only unloading our ship. That’s not God’s goal. God is not

looking for a righteousness (active or passive), in which we actuate by our own elbow grease. God is looking for a righteousness, which has its origin in the person of the Lord Jesus - "I therefore count all those things as loss that I might stand in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law."¹ Obviously there was no greater righteousness than that which might be obtained, which was pointed to in the Law of Moses, "but rather," Paul said, "not having my own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness of God by faith,"² which is an imputed righteousness, not an achieved righteousness. Christ Jesus died for our sins - He cast Himself out of the boat to save us - we need only to believe.

We have two aspects here. In one, we have a passive righteousness - one in which we want to personally obtain self-righteousness by cleaning up our own lives. In the other, we have an active righteousness, which points us out to be the spiritual giants we would all like to be seen as (or at least we would all like to be known as), by our own self-consecrated activities. But we remain fruitless in our effort to row ourselves to our necessary haven. "For He has made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). The righteousness God demands from us is the righteousness we obtain from His righteousness, which we receive from Him by faith in Him - not a righteousness we solicit by our own resourcefulness.

The Belly of Sheol

We see in the book of Jonah a breathtaking Old Testament picture of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. "Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights" (Jonah 1:17). The Lord Jesus sights this simple statement in Matthew 12; "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, even so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." What then was Jonah experiencing in the belly of the great fish?

"Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord, his God, out of the fish's belly, and said, I cried by reason of mine afflictions unto the Lord, and He heard me; out of the belly of Sheol cried I, and You heard my voice." (Jonah 2:1,2)

Much of the terminology used in this peculiar prayer of Jonah is terminology that relates uniquely to the cross of Christ. "For You have cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas, and the floods compassed me about; all Your billows and Your waves passed over me" (Jonah 2:3). This is effectively a direct quote from Psalm 42 - which is one of the great Messianic Psalms.

It is my personal opinion - and I do not have verse and chapter for this - that all of the Psalms are Messianic Psalms. When the full truth of the Word is known, fully in

that day, we will then fully understand the depths of the prayer life of the Lord Jesus and how He entered into the cries of the Psalms - each one being prophetic of His own experience. In many of the Psalms this is evident:

“O my God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore will I remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermons, from the hill at Mizar (or little mountain). Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterspouts; all Your waves and Your billows are gone over me” (Psalms 42:6,7).

This is exactly the terminology we hear in Jonah’s cry. The reason Jonah’s cry in chapter 2 and the cry of the Psalmist in Psalm 42 are analogous? Because both are looking forward to the cry of the Lord Jesus - as He was in the pangs or the throws of death - at the time when the sun became black, “as sackcloth of hair” - Jesus cried out, “My God, My God why hast Thou forsakened Me?”

There is an important distinction between the agony of Christ on the cross - as He was “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world” (AV) - and as He was the serpent on the pole (Numbers 21). I don’t want to wade too deep into this torrent, but allow me to clarify a bit.

As the Lamb of God, Jesus was shedding righteous blood before the Father - what Acts 20 refers to as the “blood of God Himself” - He was that righteous substitute for our sin. When He became the serpent on the pole, “He who knew no sin became sin for us.” It goes without saying but, may “I stir up your pure minds by way of remembering,” the blood of the serpent is of no value in the atonement for sin. It must be the blood of the righteous Lamb. Peter said, “it is a Lamb without spot and without blemish,” who became our substitution on the cross. What then is the import of the serpent? The serpent depicts Satan. Jesus Christ came into the place where we were, in order that He might deliver us into the place He is.

“The Heavens Became Black”

“Well might the sun and darkness hide and shut its glories in; when Christ the mighty maker died, for man, the creatures’ sin.” The author of this wonderful old hymn alludes me, but its theme is etched on my soul. “The heavens became black.” Those three hours of darkness - when Jesus was on the cross - when Jesus entered into where we are, in bondage to Satan, in darkness - in order that He might deliver us to where He is now. The cries of Christ during His time on the cross, may very well have encompassed a great deal of the Psalms. Psalm 22 is quoted at least in part: “My God, My God why . . .” C. H. Spurgeon pointed out in his belief that Jesus probably quoted the whole of Psalm 22 as He hung on the cross, since the whole of the Psalm is

indicative, not only of what was happening to Him, but what was going to happen to Him - when God the Father raised Him from the dead.

For the most part, the Psalms are songs of prevailing. Psalm 88, in contrast, is the only Psalm which presents no note of victory, which is rare and unusual for any of the Psalmists to leave no cry of triumph:

“O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night, before You. Let my prayer come before You; incline Your ear unto my cry; for my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near unto Sheol.”

Some translations read, *the grave, death, hell, etc.*, which is very often misleading. The word is *Sheol*, and it simply means, *“the abode of the dead.”*

“I am counted with them that go down into the pit; I am as a man that has no strength . . . Shall Your wonders be known in the dark? And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? But unto You have I cried, O Lord; and in the morning shall my prayer come before You.”

Here is the Psalmist’s cry.

“They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together. Lover and friend have You put far from me, and mine acquaintances into darkness.”

This is in reference to, *“His disciples forsook Him and fled.”* *“Lover and friend have You put far from me.”*

Paul’s words in Hebrews 5 indicate this identical agony - which is the same agony Jonah is experiencing in the belly of the great fish, in a figure, on behalf of Christ. *“As He said also in another place, You art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek; who, in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death and was heard in that he feared.”* *“Strong crying and tears.”*

“I went down to the bottom of the mountains; the earth, with its bars, was about me forever; yet hast You brought up my life from corruption, O Lord, my God,” (This is a very significant verse.) *“You brought up my life from corruption”* (Jonah 2:6). *“You will not suffer Your Holy One to see corruption”* (Psalms 16:10).

What Jonah is declaring, what the Psalmist is anticipating (as Jesus has already pointed to the analogy), is the strong crying which He, the Lord Jesus, cried out as He faced that substitutionary death on our behalf - as He was approaching the grave.

Offerings

The Levitical meal offerings in the Old Testament manifest three different categories - as far as their preparations were concerned:

1. Some were baked in an oven;
2. Some were fried in a pan (grill); and
3. Others were cooked on a griddle.

Each of these meal offerings were in varying degrees of visibility. The offering on the grill could be seen totally; the offering on the griddle could be seen partially; the offering in the oven could not be seen at all. These three differing preparations of the meal offerings, point to the sufferings of Christ as they relate to the Lord Jesus - His body, soul and Spirit.

His suffering in His body could be seen in totality. The physical agony which He endured was evident. All of what He physically endured on the cross was witnessed, physically. When His friends forsook Him, what He was going through soulishly could be seen partially. When He cried out saying, "I thirst;" "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" - could be witnessed to a degree. But we saw none of what He experienced Spiritually - which is what the Psalmist is expressing: "Shall Your wonders be known in the dark?"

The meal offerings, presented in the Old Covenant provide us a point of reference in understanding Christ's sacrifice; there are elements, which we may comprehend regarding the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross, and there are elements which we can not comprehend - we couldn't enter into them, even if we could understand them. If we could somehow enter into them, we would be as He is and do what He did - which we cannot. It is totally out of the question that we should even consider such a ramification.

The Psalmist's prophetic cries given to us are intended to furnish us a view into what the Lord's physical body was going through on our behalf on the cross. What the darkness of this age wants done to Him, it now wants done to us. We are given this prophetically, for our example. But "it was not possible that death could hold Him." We are going to come out with Him on the winning side, no matter what the world, the flesh and the devil wants.

"You brought up my life from corruption." The Jews believed that after an individual had been in the grave three days the spirit left the body. During the first three days, the spirit stayed in the body. I don't know where the Jews got this idea or how they came to such a conclusion, but they believed the spirit stayed in the body for

three days after death and on the fourth day the spirit left and the body began to decay - the classic example of this is Lazarus.

You will recall, in the case of Lazarus, Jesus received the message of his death a day after he died; "He tarried yet two days later." The Lord took another day to come back down to Bethany. Lazarus, by this time had been dead four days. What was his friend's conclusion? "By this time he stinketh" (John 11:39 AV). I like the Old King James there. The spirit had left the body and decay had set in. Jesus was not in the grave, Sheol, four days.

What was the promise God gave in Psalm 16? Peter quotes it in Acts chapter 2: "As He says also in David, You will not suffer Your Holy One to see corruption . . . You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor suffer Your Holy One to see corruption." The Lord's soul did not stay in the abode of the dead (*Sheol*), neither did His body begin to decay. How do we know this? How did Peter know this? Because David, being a prophet, the scripture states, prophesied it. Jesus was in the grave, "Sheol," for three days and three nights. No decay. No corruption.

There are a number of Messianic Psalms, which, if you read them alone, you begin to realize the vision of each individual Psalmist - each Psalm revealing what each Psalmist is seeing and feeling. But, when you back away from the written words, a larger view comes into focus - you begin to understand that Jesus Christ is identified in every experience of the Psalmist.

It becomes very important - I'm not certain I can convey what I want to exemplify here; I will make an assault with an intent. It is tremendously essential that we begin to understand that every experience the Psalmist experienced, Jesus Christ experienced as well. Every experience we, as believers, experience, Jesus Christ is experiencing as well. We are thoroughly, perfectly and absolutely joined to Him. That truth becomes vitally important to us: to our living in and through Him; to our realization that when He died on the cross, when He died to all that is wrong with us - we are separated in and by His death from all of our old man's activities. Separated from all - aggregately - with that which is associated with sin. And with that separation, because of His death on the cross, we are raised together in newness of life with Him - by His resurrection, which has justified us before the Father (Romans 4:25) - so that God no longer assigns to us those things which are inconsistent with His nature. We are separated from sin, our old man, because Jesus Christ accepted our sin - and the sin of the whole world - taking onto Himself the judgment of sin which is death, death on the cross - for us - we bear our sins no more. Our life is hidden in Christ Jesus. What He is experiencing, we are experiencing. What we are experiencing, He is experiencing. We are "one body," with one Head. "One body, yet many." What He feels, we feel. What we feel, He feels. May I encourage you to meditate on that truth.

As you read through the Psalms, consider what the Psalmist is crying out. Consider what he's going through, what he's feeling. Then move David out of the picture, move Asaph out of the picture and bring the Lord Jesus into the picture and understand that He has, in every aspect, become our substitute. So, "He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities" and because of that, "He can be a faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God," therefore, "He is able to deliver them also who are tempted." But, the experiences we find in the Psalms may not be circumstances we are experiencing - or the Lord is experiencing - but experiences, which are being done to us.

In Psalm 109, for example, the Psalmist is relentless in the Lord punching out the enemy. What we see in Psalms 109, one of those great imprecatory Psalms, is the experience which is ensuing the Psalmist. It is another individual - without - who is in pursuit of the writer. Psalms 109 is prophesying of Judas. Peter quotes this Psalm in Acts chapter 1, "his bishopric let another take." Judas died that "he might go to his own place," which is a significant statement in itself. So, Psalm 109 is prophesying of Christ once again, but prophesying of Him as He was betrayed by "His own familiar friend," which each of us can relate to in our own life experiences. Of that, I am sure.

The spirit of Judas.

Psalm 109 is a prophecy against Judas. As the Lord Jesus said, "have not I chosen you twelve and one of you is Devil." Not *a devil*, but *Devil*. There is no indefinite article in the Greek. He is addressing the nature of the individual. Those imprecations which are called for, are legitimate as though they were called for by the Lord Himself and they fall upon the man, Judas.

It is my personal conviction that the spirit which will inhabit the false prophet that "arises out of the sea," Revelation 13, is the spirit of Judas. I find certain indications of that fact in the Scripture. For example, Judas is the only man Jesus ever referred to as Devil. Other passages of scripture use the word, *demon* - in this singular case, addressing Judas, the word *devil* is applied to a man. Not *daimin* or *daimonion* - demon - but *diabolos* - devil.

Secondly, Peter's statement is very significant, "he died that he might go to his own place." What was "his own place?" The place of the devil, according to the title given him by the Lord. Judas is that one referred to as "the son of perdition," the son of destruction: *apoeia*, which metaphorically means: a person persistent in evil. The word *perdition* signifies the proper destiny of the person: destruction, which is the term applied to the man of sin in 2 Thessalonians. So my conviction has a justifiable implication. It prophetically addresses Jesus' attitude towards Judas: the Beast, the final head of the revived Roman Empire (Revelation 17:8,11).

The “man of sin,” the “Beast,” is raised from the dead when he appears on the scene; yet he goes “alive into the lake of fire.” We know that no man goes into “the lake of fire” without first experiencing death and resurrection.

No man goes into “glory” without first experiencing death and resurrection - transformation, being “caught up,” “raptured,” in the instance of some last days saints (1 Thessalonians 4:17); “Translated,” as in Enoch (Genesis 5:22; Hebrews 11:5); “Went up by a whirlwind into Heaven,” as Elijah (2 Kings 2:11,12). A transmutation. A change of some sort. No man, righteous or unrighteous goes into “glory” or into “the lake of fire,” without first experiencing beginning, ending and resurrection. When the antichrist appears on the scene, he is slain and resurrected.

But when the false prophet - a man - appears he just comes out of the sea. Yet, when the time comes for them both to be cast into “the lake of fire,” the scripture says that they are “cast alive into the lake of fire.” Both of them. Without the benefit of death and resurrection? No, both, the “False Prophet” and the “Beast” have experienced death and resurrection. The “man of sin” was alive before he rises up out of the sea. He has died, or committed suicide, in the case of Judas, before he is then resurrected from “out of the sea.” Hence, both of them have already experienced death and resurrection, which is why I believe Judas, or the spirit of Judas, is that “Beast,” “the man of sin,” given in the Revelation. Psalm 109 follows that same theme.

Since I’m here, I know you may be thinking, “of all that Thou hast given me I have lost none.” But the verse goes on to say, “. . . but the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled” (John 17:12). Judas was not given in redemption. The scriptures had already prophesied that Judas was coming on the scene to play a particular role - which he did play. Judas was raised up to play the role he played. He was not raised up to be saved. He was raised up to destroy. Thus he is called “the son of perdition.” He was not given as a believer is given to the Son. Seven times in John chapter 17, the believer is sighted as a gift from God, the Father, to the Son. The only verse in John 17 which makes reference to Judas, states that he was given for a particular purpose, and that purpose was not redemption. He was given as the son of destruction, the betrayer, “the son of perdition.” That’s why Judas was accepted. That is why the statement is made to accept him - “But the son of perdition, *that the scripture might be fulfilled.*” Judas is given reference to in more than a few Psalms. “Thou my own familiar friend we’ve walked to the house of God in communion together. . . you have lifted up your heel against me.”

Did Judas have a choice in the matter? The choice Judas had, he made. And the choice was the choice he wanted to make. Remember, Judas was not repentant. Judas was remorseful. There is a great difference between being sorry because you did something, and being sorry because you were caught doing it. Remember, it was Judas’ idea that Jesus was going to make him the treasurer of His new kingdom. He was

already the treasurer of the twelve, "He had the bag and he kept what was put therein." Judas was looking forward to being in charge of the whole of the new kingdom's money. Avarice ruled Judas. One of the Rothchilds said, "The man who owns the gold, rules the world." Judas knew that. And Judas, being the kind of man he was, was really looking forward to all the ramifications which would come with that position. But as the circumstances materialized, it became evident that Jesus wasn't going to set up His new kingdom the way Judas envisioned. So Judas decided to make the most of what he saw as a bad situation, redeeming out as much from the situation as he could.

It's my personal opinion, but I don't think Judas ever considered that Jesus would allow Himself to be captured. Judas watched Jesus escape many times. One group tried to push the Lord off a cliff, and He disappeared out of their midst. They tried to arrest the Lord and He just disappeared out of their midst - He just walked out of their sight. The Jews tried to make Him king - by force - and He just disappeared out of their midst. Judas had precedence. Judas most likely thought, "I am going to recover from this all that I can." But his plan back-fired. That's is why he cast the money back into the treasurer. Saying, "I have betrayed innocent blood," which hearkens back to the Law of the man-slayer.

The Man-Slayer & The City of Refuge

In the Old Covenant, a man-slayer could be protected in a city of refuge, if he accidentally killed someone. "That slayer who kills any person unintentionally and without premeditation may flee there; and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood" (Joshua 20:3). But if the man-slayer hated the person before he killed him, if he knew what he was doing, there was no deliverance. The man who, being in the city of refuge or not, killed someone because of hatred or premeditation, was delivered up to death - which was exactly what Judas was referring to when he said, "I have betrayed innocent blood." He was seeking refuge. But he found "no place of repentance," because there was no place. No hope. Judas was not repentant. Judas was remorseful, not repentant. Because he, like Esau "would find no place of repentance though he would seek it carefully with tears."

As Paul says in 2 Corinthians, "Godly sorrow works repentance not to be repented of. But the sorrow of the world works death" - the sorrow we see in the children of this world - which does not reflect on what they have done to the Lord or because of the Lord, but rather reflects on how their situation came out - is not Godly sorrow. It is only remorse. They're sorry because they were caught in the act. We are looking at someone, in Judas who is reflecting on how his situation came out - because he got caught - not because he was repentant. And he could see no way out. Judas believed the Law and saw no escape. Remorse overwhelmed him. He had no hope. So he hung himself. This is why people commit suicide - they have no hope. Remorse

overwhelms them. That's what happened in 1929 in the Stock Market crash - hope crashed. So they killed themselves. Avarice, hanging, self destruction.

Dante Alighieri gives a wonderful illustration of this in his *"Inferno"*. Pier Dell Vigna (1190-1249) was a lawyer, poet, and chief minister and secretary to the Emperor Frederick II, king of Sicily. Having fallen from favor, he committed suicide. Because of his avarice and his betrayal of the Emperor's trust, Pier Dell Vigna was disgraced, blinded and imprisoned. Dante's pilgrim finds Pier Dell Vigna on the seventh level of the inferno and like Judas Iscariot, he died by suicide. So Judas and Pier Dell Vigna are linked in Dante by the avarice he saw in them. In fact, avarice and hanging are linked in the medieval mind.

The earliest known depiction of the crucifixion was carved on an ivory box in Gaul about A.D. 400. It includes the death by hanging by Judas, his face upturned to the branch that suspends him. Judas is pictured again on the door of the Benevento Cathedral, this time with his bowels falling out (Acts 1:8). There is a plate from the 15th century edition of the *"Inferno,"* which depicts Pier Dell Vigna's body hanging from a bleeding tree. I will not belabor the obvious parallel with Judas Iscariot - Dante Alighieri needed no drawn illustration. It was his genius to make Pier Dell Vigna - now in hell - speak in strained hisses and coughing sibilants as though he is hanging still. In Dante, Pier Dell Vigna, like Judas was an unquestionable portrayal of one's fate from a life of avarice. Pier Dell Vigna, like Judas saw no escape, "Now come, death, quickly come!" (Canto XIII). Avarice, which led to hanging: self destruction. "I have betrayed innocent blood" (Matthew). "I make, my own house, my gallows place." (Dante)

Avarice, hanging, self destruction - no hope.

"The Lord made all things for Himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." (Proverbs 16:4). So as God prepared individuals for His various purposes (both wicked and righteous), Satan grabs those individuals - the wicked - to accomplish his deeds: i.e., Judas. But as Norman Grubb says, "Satan is like a glove on the right hand of God." Nothing comes to God as news. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, said the Lord, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (Revelation 1:8). The Lord is never surprised.

It all comes down to this: we are not going through anything the Lord is not aware of, and we are not going to be overwhelmed by anything we are going through. Jesus has never been overwhelmed by His circumstances - even His betrayal - and we, being found in Him, cannot be overwhelmed by our circumstances. So we don't lose hope. "The things that have fallen out to us," Paul said, "have fallen out for the furtherance of the Gospel."³ And, "there is no trial which has taken us but such as is common to man. God is faithful who will not suffer us to be tried above what we're able. But with the trial He will make a way of escape" - I would that it ended with

escape (I like the idea of escaping) - but the verse goes on to say, "that we might be able to bear it."⁴

So then, in the midst of our situation - unlike Judas or Pier Dell Vigna - we begin to understand the wonderful work God is doing in each one of us and the hope that is before us. As Peter said, "he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin." That's marvelous! After we have suffered for a while, the Lord shall establish and strengthen and settle us. It is ever the purpose of God to cause us to experience sufficiently of what this world has to offer to make us long for that which is to come. It is Godly sorrow that works repentance in the children of God - a marked difference from the remorse we see in the children of this world.

The Heart of the Earth

Lying Vanities

*"When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord;
and my prayer came in unto You, unto Your Holy Temple.
They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy"
(Jonah 2:7-8).*

I hope you grasp the essence of what Jonah is saying here. "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy." They forsake what is theirs to receive. What was the lying vanity Jonah pursued? That he could run from the Lord. "Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your presence? If I ascend up to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Your hand lead me."⁵ Jonah knew that and in that Jonah also knew he couldn't run from God. As the prophet of the Lord, Jonah knew that he couldn't hide from the Lord. But he tried, as do we. Nevertheless, when we embrace a lying vanity, deception falls upon us; what Paul refers to as "the deceitfulness of sin." One brother said it this way, "Either sin will keep you from the word of God or the word of God will keep you from sin." Which is why we "hide His word in our heart." To keep us from sinning. To keep us from trying to hide from God.

When we are kept from the word of God, deception begins to fall upon us and we fall into greater deception. When Jonah decided that he didn't want to go to Nineveh - disobeying the Lord - deception fell upon him and he found himself asleep on the deck of a ship heading in the opposite direction. So he says - concerning his own deed here - "they that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy." A "vanity" in the Hebrew tongue is a "soap bubble." The word, "vanity" here can be translated, "soap bubble." When you touch it, it pops. So, "they that observe lying vanities

forsake their own mercy.” There is mercy to be found in obedience to the Lord. Although, with most of us, it isn’t doing the will of God which is grievous to us, it’s thinking about doing the will of God. Most of us want to know the will of God so we can *consider* it. Then, after we have considered it, then we will *decide* whether or not we want to do it - a lying vanity. A “soap bubble.”

“This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts” (Ephesians 4:17).

When we are kept from the word of God deception falls upon us - narcissism of mind sets in - we fall into greater deception - our understanding of the ways of God leave - we become alienated from God - we become ignorant of His activity - we become blind - sin overtakes us - we begin to “observe lying vanities” - thus, we forsake our own mercy. Remember, the mercy of the Lord is: God not doing to us what we deserve. Each of us merit death. But God is ever merciful. We all have the same disobedient, self-willed motivation within us that Jonah had. We would do well, not to chastise Jonah.

His mercy endures forever.

At times, we really do need to take heed concerning how we deal with some of the disobedient saints in the Old Testament scriptures. They were friends of God. We see their affliction and work them over because of their failure. We work Abraham over from time to time because he lied about Sarah. But remember, Abraham was and is, “a friend of God.” Even when Abraham sinned, God “counted him as righteous.” We are moving into very serious territory in working Abraham over. God just might say to us, “Why are you talking about My friend?” We need to remember that these men are given to us for our examples. Why? Because we are what they are. God wants us to understand that the manner in which these men reacted, is precisely the manner in which we would react given the same situation. Given the same or comparable episode, we will be found acting exactly the same way. But the ultimate end is this: there is mercy with the Lord. “For His mercy endures forever.” But when we observe lying vanities we forsake that mercy. We go our own way - “the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways.” “The transgressor is held with the cords of his sin.” I know something about being held with the cords of my own sin. I’m sure you know something about your cords as well. We all know. “In Your wrath, O Lord, remember mercy.”

“But I will sacrifice unto You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that which I have vowed.” Which in Jonah’s case addressed his commitment as a prophet of

God. "Salvation is of the Lord"⁶, abounds in the Old Testament scripture and points to the fact - it always points to the fact - that God is doing for us what we could not, yea would not do for ourselves. We did not recognize our need for salvation until salvation was presented to us.

The questions are asked, "How could Jonah pay what he vowed to the Lord if he was in 'the abode of the dead'? How can a dead man pay his vow to the Lord?"

Jonah didn't write his book in the belly of the great fish. "I will sacrifice unto You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that which I have vowed" is what Jonah was crying out - in agony while he was in the belly of the great fish - which he recorded, "on dry land," after he had been "vomited out" of the belly of the great fish. He is reflecting on the experience he went through in the belly of the great fish - in "the abode of the dead." After his death experience, Jonah decided to be obedient to what God had called him to do - as would I, hopefully. The whole experience in "Sheol" was given to Jonah to bring him to the place of repentance, the place of response to the Lord. It is ever the purpose of God to cause us to experience sufficiently of what this world has to offer to make us long for that which is to come.

Jonah's thought process is recorded in chapter 2 - in poetic phrase. The book of Jonah is written as a poem. Not a poem as in, *key, we* and *see* - Jonah is written in Hebrew poetic verse. So Jonah comes out of the belly of the great fish and writes down in poetic verse the whole emotional upheaval he has just gone through - in the course of the great fish's belly, the course of death.

"Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord, his God, out of the fish's belly." The word translated "belly," is the word *intestines*. Jonah, when he was swallowed by the fish, right away, begins to cry out to the Lord. But Jonah is going to experience a depth of agony which he had not considered.

Death has a certain mercy, in that it is a termination of timely, earthly suffering. But not so, in Jonah's case. "I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and He heard me; out of the belly" (abdomen, hollow, bosom) "of Sheol cried, I, and You heard my voice." Between verse 1 and verse 2 of chapter 2, Jonah has gone from the intestines of the great fish into Sheol - "into the heart of the earth," "the abode of the dead." It is based on this verse that many men are convinced, as am I, that Jonah died in the belly of the great fish. He didn't just fall asleep. He died.

People have tried, throughout the ages, to make the miracle of the book of Jonah the size of the great fish. Many men have put out to sea to locate a great fish which could contain a man and hold him alive for three days and three nights. This is absolutely ridiculous, yes indeed, it is totally unnecessary. That's not the miracle of the book. The miracle here, is that Jonah came out of the great fish alive. And the city of Nineveh repented in sackcloth and ashes at the preaching of the prophet. The

importance here is not the size of the great fish, but the life that was brought forth - after three days! A situation which should have masticated Jonah completely, saw him come out in resurrection life. And by that resurrection, Jonah becomes a more perfect type of the person of the Lord Jesus. Jonah, having gone into the place of death physically, having gone into Sheol spiritually and having come out again in that body in resurrection life is a perfect type of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. That's the miracle! Jonah knew he was dead. Everything he wrote indicated that he understood he was in "the abode of the dead," *Sheol*. Jonah is writing by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit - there was no question in his mind as to what he had just gone through. Yet, all that Jonah remembers about his experience is the agony which he had gone through. Nothing more - which is very interesting to me.

Lazarus, after being dead for four days, also, had nothing to say about what it was like in "Sheol." How come? Because his soul did not have the ability to transfer what his spirit experienced there. "Eye has not seen nor ear heard." You can not analyze an experience out of the spirit world, through your soul, into the natural world and expect to give a clear expression of what you have encountered - the two (spirit and natural) are on two different wave links. They are on different frequencies - different spheres. So, neither Jonah nor Lazarus give us any explanation which describes what it's like in "the abode of the dead." We find it difficult to describe what salvation's like - it's very hard for any of us to explain something spiritual to the natural.

There are people who have experienced, what is called, "near-death experiences." I would not say that they are invalid. But there is a limitation to what they describe. They are limited in their explanations - their communications. I read one story concerning a gentleman who, while on tour in Jerusalem, passed out dead in the street. The people on tour with him, being Christian, began to pray for him. The story goes on to say that the man raised up and began to speak to them, "No! Let me alone!" and laid back down and died. Why did he say that? Presuming the story can be believed, maybe wherever he had been, he liked much better than where his praying friends wanted him to be. All near death reports are very narrow sketches. And I have here, ventured way outside my area of expertise and experience. Forgive me.

"Out of the belly of Sheol have I cried." "Out of the hollow of Hades (New Testament word) have I cried and You heard my voice." - which settles the issue of Jonah's deliverance. He was brought from death to life. A perfect picture, don't you think?

The Abode Of The Dead

There are various Old and New Testament words we have translated as the word "hell," which is very unfortunate. "Hades," translated *hell*, is the Greek term for the Old testament Hebrew expression "*Sheol*," which is simply "the abode of the dead."

“Hades” and “Sheol” are the same place. “Sheol” is the Hebrew word, “Hades” is the Greek word, but they refer to the same place. Both would be better translated, simply, “the abode of the dead.” There are five different words, which we have translated, in reference to the “abode of the dead.” The implication in the location is not, whether its residences are redeemed dead or unredeemed dead, they are just dead. The Gospel records elaborate more specifically concerning the nature of “Sheol.” In the Old Testament record we do not have an elaboration, but we do understand, from the Old Testament, that both - those who were the Lord’s and those who were Satan’s - went into “the heart of the earth,” translated “Sheol.”

The classic example of “Sheol” is the occasion of King Saul seeking out the witch of En-dor, to conjure up for him the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 28).

Saul, if you will recall, was no longer hearing from the Lord. “The Lord had withdrawn from him and became his enemy.” The Lord removed Saul’s crown, He did not blot out his name from the book; “Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being King” (1 Samuel 15).

By chapter 28, we find the rejected Saul in a real fix. The Philistines are ready to attack. Saul had no idea what to do. The prophet Samuel had died. And no other prophet in the land was speaking and the Lord wasn’t talking to Saul. So Saul - as was his fashion to go with his own itinerary and not the Lord’s - ordered his men to go out and find him a witch, so he could bring up “the man of God,” Samuel. This was risky, because Saul had formally thrown all the witches and wizards out of the land - if a witch was still in the land it was on the pain of death. But Saul sent his men out anyway, to find a witch - who wasn’t supposed to be there. And, as it so often happens, his men did find a witch, the witch of En-dor.

So Saul, in disguise, goes to the witch of En-dor and inquires of her concerning Samuel. The witch, assured of her fate, eventually asks, “Who do you want me to bring up from the dead?” Saul says, “I want you to bring up for me Samuel.” So the witch goes through her incantations and up pops Samuel. Boom! And she jumps back in horror. Saul said, “What’d you see?” And she says, “I see gods ascending out of the earth, an old man coming up, and he is covered with a mantel.” And Saul says, “It’s Samuel!” That is why she was so terrified. It was customary for her to deal with demons, now all of a sudden she is confronted with something holy. And she doesn’t know how to deal with a holy thing, so she lets Saul do the talking.

There is no indication that this witch brought up Samuel from the dead, only that Samuel appeared. Mediums do not have access to the dead, but rather communicate with spirits posing as persons who have died; which is why they’re called lying spirits (1 Kings 22:22). Moses and Elijah appeared, but it wasn’t because of a medium.

Where did Samuel come from? "From out of the earth," which is "Sheol" - "In the heart of the earth" - "Paradise," in Luke 23. "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish even so must the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." After Jesus died on the cross where did He go? To "the heart of the earth." To "paradise." For what purpose? To "preach deliverance to the captives." He went to the place Samuel was - "Abraham's bosom," "Sheol," "Paradise." Jesus did not go to Hell, *tartaros*.

I have heard preachers assign Saul, after his death (Saul killed himself - he fell on his own sword, 1 Samuel 31) to the camp of the unredeemed. They say, "Saul disobeyed the Lord and committed suicide, so he lost his place in glory. He is in torments, not in paradise." But Samuel, speaking to Saul from the house of the witch of En-dor, said, "tomorrow shall you (Saul) and your sons be with me." Where was Samuel? In "Sheol." In "Paradise, *the bosom of Abraham*." Was Samuel in the camp of the unredeemed? Was Samuel in the place of "torments, in *tartaros*?" No, Samuel, "the man of God," was in "paradise." So according to "the man of God," Saul went to "Sheol," the place of the redeemed - to "paradise" - to be with Samuel. Remember, God removed Saul's crown, not his birthright.

Another Lazarus

"There was a certain rich man . . . and there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus. And it came to pass that the beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom; the rich man also died, and was buried; and in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeing Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom . . . And Abraham said . . . between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they who would pass from here to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from here" (Luke 16:19-31).

There is an "abyss," or "bottomless pit," which is called here "a great gulf," which is fixed between what we know from other passages, to be "paradise," called here "Abraham's bosom," as opposed to "Hades," "in torments," the place of the unredeemed. One is the redeemed side - the justified - and one is the unredeemed side - the condemned. Lazarus, being redeemed, is on one side of the "great gulf" - in "Abraham's bosom" - and the rich man "in torments," is on the other side of the great gulf," the place of the unredeemed: "A great gulf which separates the two."

When Jesus went into "the heart of the earth," He went into "paradise," or the redeemed side of "Sheol." He did not go into "Sheol" so that He might finish His work of redemption, but rather to deliver those - the redeemed dead, those Old Testament saints waiting there, in "the bosom of Abraham," in "paradise" - to take them with Him

into "the third heaven" - "I knew such a man (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell; God knows) - how he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Corinthians 12:3,4). The Lord Jesus did not go to the unredeemed dead in "Sheol" and preach to them the five spiritual laws or the Roman road or whatever method of evangelism was popular in that day, hoping that the unredeemed dead would accept Him and be saved. That's a ridiculous thought. If He had given them a chance don't you think all would have taken it? The Lord Jesus, when He was raised from the dead, took "paradise" - the redeemed side of "Sheol" - into "the third heaven." He did not go to seek and to save that which was eternally lost in hell. This is also why the Lord said to the thief, "today you will be with Me in paradise;" because that's where they both went. The Lord Jesus and the redeemed thief didn't go to *tartaros*, they didn't go to hell; they went to paradise.

"When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." "He gave some apostles; prophets; evangelists; pasturing teachers; for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:8-12). "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same that ascended up far above all heavens" - "the third heaven" - "that He might fill all things."⁷

The "third heaven" is the abode of God, the first heaven being that of the clouds, and the second heaven that of the stars. Again, the Bible should not be criticized for speaking of heaven as being "up," any more than a man of science should be charged with ignorance for describing the sun as "rising" in the east.

"Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive. Thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also . . ." - ". . . gathered both bad and good; and the wedding was furnished" - ". . . that the Lord God might dwell among them."⁸

So where do we, the redeemed, go when we die? "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). When the child of God dies, the child of God is instantaneously in the "presence of the Lord." Instantly. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:52). We are taken up to "the third heaven" - into "the presence of the Lord" - to "ever to be with the Lord."

Although we will be "in the presence of the Lord," we will not go through the "Judgment seat of Christ" (2 Corinthians 5) as soon as we get there. That judgment will take place after all the saints are in glory. Not before. Because this is a judgment seat of rewards; the rewards are given to us for the work we performed on the earth - then and now - during our life and after our death. Some great men of the faith, who are now

with the Lord are still performing work for the Lord; still blessing the saints of God. I, myself, am still being blessed by the work Peter did, by the work Paul did, by the work Luther did, by the work many of the saints who are now in the presence of the Lord did; their works are still bringing blessings to the people of God; their works are still being added to their rewards ledger, in preparation for this judgment seat. We will all be rewarded for all our work "done in the body," not just the work we did before we went to be in the presence of the Lord," all of our work done for the Lord will be rewarded. Wonderful!⁹

The people who die today, outside of Jesus Christ, do not go to hell in the sense that we think of hell. Hell is the ultimate end of the unredeemed dead - "the lake of fire": "*Gehenna*." But the unredeemed enter first into "Sheol," in "the heart of the earth" - some translations read - in the "place of torments." Thus the rich man "lifted up his eyes being in torments." And torments is all that remains of "Sheol" today: "the bottomless pit, the place of torments." The place of the redeemed - "paradise," "Abraham's bosom" - has been translated to the "third heaven." Only the place of "torments," remains in "the heart of the earth" today.

Why was "paradise" translated to "the third heaven" in the New Covenant and not in the Old? Because sin was taken away in the New Covenant and not in the Old. Because of the blood of Jesus Christ, sin is now, not just covered over as it was in the Old Covenant economy, sin now has been removed, by His sacrifice and therefore "paradise" and the people in "paradise" could be taken or translated into "the third heaven." This is also why we no longer need "Abraham's bosom," or a place of sleep (as some say) between earth and heaven. When the redeemed die, we go to the "presence of the Lord." But "Sheol" is where Jonah went, the "abode of the dead" - "he cried out from the belly of Sheol" - "the heart of the earth."

If you will remember the demons at Gerasa¹⁰, when they besought the Lord, they begged Him that He would not send them to the pit. "Art Thou come here to torment us," they said, "to send us into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" - "before the time"? (Matthew 8:29; 25:41 AV). The word is translated *torment*, but it refers to *the pit*. "The abyss" or "the Bottomless pit," is a prison-house for the spirit world and they didn't want to go there before it was time. Have you ever wondered why those demons didn't want to go to "the pit?" Maybe they didn't want to be with their own kind, with other demons and unclean spirits; which, even to them wasn't very pleasant company, so they said, "Let us go into the hogs." So He let them go into the hogs. A friend of mine said that she "now has more respect for some hogs, after hearing this story, than for some people. Because the hogs wouldn't allow the demons to live in them - they ran down and drowned themselves in the lake immediately. The men had lived with those demons in them for years."

Hell

The terms, *Sheol, hell, the heart of the earth, abyss or the bottomless pit, the pit or the deep* are at times translated interchangeably, which can be very misleading. The word *tartaros* (hell) is used only once in the scripture - "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell (*tartaros*), and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (2 Peter 2:4). *Tartaros*, translated here into the word *hell*, creates a vague picture of what hell really is. In all probability - I cannot prove this by chapter and verse - *tartaros* is a special locale in "the bottomless pit," which is reserved, uniquely for those "angels who kept not their first estate" (Jude vs.6-7); those angels who cohabitated "with the daughters of men" (Genesis 6:2). *Tartaros* is in reference to the prison-house created for disobedient angels. *Tartaros* is a unique location, a distinctive estate within that prison house, within hell.

The Valley of Slaughter

The terms, "*Gehenna*" and the "*lake of fire*" are the same place. The word *Geenna*, or *Gehenna*, was Jesus' term for "the lake of fire" - which He refers to as the final judgment. *Geenna* was in fact, the trash heap outside the city of Jerusalem - referred to as "the place of fire." *Geenna* was located at the southwest corner of the city of Jerusalem, in the valley of *Geenna*, or the valley of the son of Hinnom. The valley of Hinnom - "the valley of slaughter" (Jeremiah 7:32). This was the valley, in the Old Testament where human sacrifices were offered to Molech, Topheth, as well as other pagan gods. Josiah defiled the valley - that no man would do those things - their sons and daughters were "passed through the fire to Molech" (2 Kings 23:10).

Because of the extensive use of sacrificial fires during idolatrous rites, and its pollution, the valley of Hinnom became a symbol of preeminent burning in connection with sin. So Jesus makes references to the trash heap, the place where the "worm did not die and the fire was not quenched," the place where the Israelites had by that time positioned into the unclean realm, by casting their trash there. The trash fires burned perpetually, in "the valley of Hinnom," which was why Jesus used the term, *Geenna* to apply to the "lake of fire." He went from the known to the unknown. They didn't understand "the lake of fire," but they certainly understood the "valley of Hinnom." The word *Geenna* is used twelve times in the New Testament as a description for the place of eternal punishment.

The fires of *Geenna*, which began around the sixth century B.C. as human sacrifices to pagan gods, I have been told, burn to this day - with the trash from the city of Jerusalem.

Simple Language

God deals with us using a language of appearance. For example, when we see terms such as “bottomless pit,” we need to see it as a place that has no end - no floor. The deeper you go into it, the worse it becomes. It’s bottomless - as far as blackness and torments are concerned. The Lord utilizes language we can distinguish. In this narrative we are peeking into the spirit world, which cannot be fully synthesized into physical terms. Spirit is a very different estate than that which we experience physically. It’s not over-crowded. It’s not elbow to elbow in heaven or hell. The Reformers realized this and augured over how many angles could fit on the head of a pin. One man in Gerasa had five, maybe seven thousand, demons, and it wasn’t crowded in there. When we look at the spirit world, we’re not looking at a crowded assembly hall. God simply refers to a certain portion of the spirit world as being imprisoned in “the heart of the earth,” to give us understanding with a language of appearance. They’re imprisoned, but not crowded. I’m struggling with a lot of ignorance here, because “eye has not seen,” so I am at somewhat of a disadvantage.

When I was young in the Lord, I tried to imagine hell as being in “the heart of the earth” - I read, “hell hath enlarged itself.” So I tried to visualize what it must be like in the core of the earth where all this was going on - hell must be getting bigger and bigger, I thought. But I was focusing on a totally different plane. I was trying to bring the physical axis into the plane of the spiritual.

A couple of years ago I read about a group of believing academicians who bored into the molten core of the earth, hoping to unearth hell. But when they got to the center they couldn’t see a thing down there except a bunch of hot rocks. What they found was more of the physical and none of the spiritual. After reading this I didn’t feel so simple-minded, or alone in the way I was thinking.

The Lord utilizes words and phrases we can distinguish, which is why He used the term, “the lake of fire,” in many verses throughout the Gospels. The Lord uses descriptive language we can understand. The Jews saw “the lake of fire” as a fiery trash heap; we may see it as a massive sea of flames. But we understand what the Lord means by the depiction. The “lake of fire” is ultimately sighted in Revelation 20 when “the Beast and the False Prophet are cast alive in the lake of fire.” The Beast and the False Prophet have already experienced death and resurrection, so God sends them into that “lake of fire,” “alive” for a thousand year period - the Beast and the False Prophet are the only ones in “the lake of fire” during those thousand years. “The lake of fire” is totally empty now. Once the Lord casts the Beast and the False Prophet into “the lake of fire,” then it will be occupied - not before. At the close of the thousand years, finally, the devil, “death and hell (or Hades) are cast into the lake of fire,” which is “the second death,” the final judgment. “Death” is the prison house of the body. “Hades” is the

prison house of the soul. "The lake of fire" then becomes the ultimate end of the unredeemed dead. Spiritual death.

Closing Thoughts

The scriptures state that in the end time, the world will be "as it was in the days of Noah," when the "angels left their first estate" and "came into the daughters of men." So what can we draw from this?

First: Revelation tells us, "the mouth of the bottomless pit opened up and a great horde of demons came out" - "like locust on the earth."

Second: Fallen angels are not demons.

Third: Yes, all of what we see in the Revelation will happen. Just "as in the days of Noah."

It may have already begun. Dr. William R. Nool of the Moody Bible Institute, from the 1920's, in his book on Revelation said, "I am convinced that in the last day this same thing would be repeated. Fallen angels will be cohabitating with the daughters of men."

A friend of mine told me a story touching on this subject: "A group of women decided to meet for prayer over a six week period." (This was about ten years ago and I am only quoting my friend. So don't shoot me.) "During one of their many nights of prayer the women began praying that Jesus would appear to them physically in their midst. As they prayed, Jesus did appear to them - or what they said was Jesus - and began to have sexual relations with the women of the group." I was not there, thanks be to God, so I don't really know what actually happened. But other people have confirmed the story, and it shows me ever more clearly where we are in this world today. There is a bizarre mindset in this age. The 1966 movie, "Rosemary's Baby" gave evidence to "the sons of God coming into the daughters of men," which expresses to me, "the time is near." "Even so, come Lord Jesus."

"But I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them who are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring to Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not proceed them who are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds,

to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words” (2 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

“To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.” Amen.

¹ Philippians 3:7-9

² Ibid.

³ Philippians 1:12

⁴ 1 Corinthians 10:13

⁵ Psalm 139

⁶ Jonah 2:9

⁷ see: Psalms 68:18; Matthew 22:10; Ephesians 4:8-12; 2 Corinthians 12:2 AV
[see also: Exodus 25:8; 29:43-46; Leviticus 26:11-12]

⁸ *Ibid.* (see above Endnote: number 7).

⁹ This is amplified in chapter 12, *The Judgment Seat of Christ*.

¹⁰ *Gerasa* is also called *Gadara*, “. . . He came . . . into the country of the Gadarenes . . .”

chapter twelve
The Judgment Seat Of Christ

*“Many seek the ruler’s favor,
But every man’s judgment
Comes from the Lord.”
Proverbs 29:26*

We, as the Church, routinely employ within our personal exchange, terms, words and phrases - related metaphors, which are more designates of accommodation, rather than words or phrases taken directly from Holy Scripture. In other words, we, as the church, say things, which do not really find their strict authority in the Bible. Yet, those words and phrases of accommodation do, at times, find their truth in the word of God.

Literary accommodations.

For example, we use the word *trinity* when describing the Father, Son and Holy Spirit - the one triune God. But the scripture says nothing about *trinity*. That is to say, the word *trinity* is not used in the Bible as such. Scripture affirms the Trinity: the three persons of the Godhead, but the word *trinity* is not in the Bible. Yet, we recognize from our study of the Holy Scripture, that there is, in reality, a triune God, a Trinity; One God manifested as a unity, in three persons. “Hear, oh Israel, the Lord thy God is One” (*a unity*, the Hebrew reads), “the Lord thy God is a *unity*, and you shall worship the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind and strength” (Deuteronomy 6:4,5); “In the beginning God - *Elohim* (a plural noun in form but singular in meaning) . . . ” (Genesis 1:1). The Trinity is the truth of God.

We also, do not find the word *rapture*, in the Holy Scripture, - at least not in most of our English translations. We recognize the truth of the rapture; the fact that we, the church, will be “caught up” (the phrase “*caught up*” and the word “*rapture*” are synonymous in the original Greek) to meet the Lord Jesus in the air, “and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). But the word *rapture* is not represented as such in our English Bible. This is another expression of accommodation based on Biblical truth. (Author’s note: Please do not misconstrue my intention here. I am not teaching a pre-millennial rapture of the believers. To do so, I would need to use sophistry as an interpretation protocol. Pre-millennialists use superficial cursory logic to prove their point - which I am not, nor will I use. Some of us will be “caught up” to be sure, but when, where, and how that will take place, is the Lord’s prerogative, not mine.)

So, there are many terminologies, phrases, expressions and words, which we use for our accommodation - words, which are not always specifically found in scripture. We use the broader definitions of the words, the terms, the expressions, and the terminologies to accommodate ourselves to a broader thought. Our broadest use, our most accommodating terminology is found in the word *judgment*.

In His Holy Writ, God has employed different Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic words, which, for our accommodation, we have translated into our English word, *judgment*. Some were translated from the Septuagint, an early Greek translation of the Old Testament; some from the Hebrew Bible; some from the Vulgate, a Latin version of the Scriptures; etc.; but all of these metaphors do not have the same meaning.

When we see or hear the word *judgment*, I know you my dear reader do not do this, but what is the first thought that comes to some of our minds? Hell? Of course. At least some of us think, "Hell," or at least "Eternal Damnation" - most of us, if we are honest, have thought in those terms at one time or another. My thought at one point in my Christian walk was exactly that: "If the Bible speaks of judgment, it must mean sending someone to Hell!" I was a good Arminian once.

The Apostle Paul declares in no uncertain terms:

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

When I first read that, I was certain the Lord was going to send some believers to hell because they just didn't measure up! But is that what Paul is asserting here?

If the word *judgment* is always rendered "Eternal Hell" or "Damnation," we're all in trouble. None of us will be able to measure up, if the Lord Jesus, on that day, will be weighing our good deeds against our bad deeds in order to get us into His Heaven. If we are judged on deeds alone, who of us could enter into His glory? No one! If the Lord makes His decision to let us in, or keep us out of His Holy Zion by that method of judgment . . . we'll all go to Hell! For none of us will be able to out-weigh our bad deeds, done in the body, with our good deeds done in the body. For "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

So the question must be asked, Will anyone be sent to "the lake of fire" at the judgment seat of Christ? The answer is simply, No! That is not the objective of the word *judgment*, as stated in the, *"judgment seat of Christ."*

As the Psalmist writes, "The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment nor the sinners in the congregation of the righteous" (Psalm 1:5); therefore our assessment in eternity is made the more clearer. The *"judgment seat of Christ"* is not for sinners, but

rather for the righteous. Our righteousness is given us from the Lord, it is His righteousness we enjoy, not our own and it is His own righteousness we will stand before Him with at His judgment seat. No sinner can stand before the Lord, only the righteous. We will be judged, to be sure, but not on the basis of our sin, but rather, on the foundation of His righteousness. We can not interpret the word *judgment* as always indicating damnation, condemnation or punishment.

The Bema Seat Judgment

The number of times the word judgment is used in terms of God dealing with His people, so far outweigh the few times, by comparison, when God is bringing someone into eternal damnation or condemnation by His judgment - the scale is immediately tipped. The word, *judgment*, the Apostle Paul penned in 2 Corinthians 5:10, is the Greek word *bema*. The word means *reward*. It is "the reward seat of Christ" the redeemed will face on that day - not a condemnation or damnation seat - not a judgment seat which will send some believers to hell and some believers to heaven. Every believer will be in heaven with the Lord, but we first must be critiqued for our behavior done in the body, and rewarded for such. We'll all get rewards, - some copious, some meager, - but we'll all get something. That's good news!

Many times the Lord uses the natural to help us better understand the spiritual. This *Bema Seat* is a case in point. *The Bema Seat* was a seat of rewards, an assembly of tribute on Pnyx Hill in ancient Athens, where orations and awards were given out to soldiers after battle. So, Paul, in Corinthians, used what was known in the natural, to convey what would be in the spirit. One Greek soldier may have been formidable in battle, one not so much, yet both received an acknowledgment of service - "good or bad" - a reward, a judgment.

The Bible is a message from our loving Holy Father to us, His redeemed children. It also addresses those who are not His children, because they are threatening those who are His children - as we will see later on when we look at some of the other words translated into our English "judgment." But the emphasis of this *judgment* seat, this *Bema Seat* is not on damnation or condemnation, but rather on the "blessings" we, the people of God will enjoy in the heaven that our Father has prepared for us. Rewards.

We are saved by grace and we live by grace - not by a group of rules. Grace is the vitality of the life of the Lord Jesus, which is the substitute to the Law. Under the Law, someone could walk in holiness by obedience; grace requires relationship to promote holiness, fellowship, and love.

God's design in regeneration is to bring His elect back into conformity with His Holy Law. We see this working in the beautiful harmony which exists within the distinctive workings of each of the three Persons of the blessed Trinity. The Father, as the Supreme Governor of the world, framed the Moral Law as a written text of His holy

nature, and as an authoritative expression of His righteous will. The Son, as Mediator, magnified the Law and made it honorable by rendering to it a personal, perfect and perpetual obedience, and then by voluntarily enduring its curse in the stead of His people, who had broken it. The Holy Spirit, as the Executive of the Godhead, convicts the elect of their wicked violation of the Moral Law, slaying their enmity against it, and imparting to them a nature or principle of the very essence of which the elect are to delight in and serve that Law.

"For I delight in the Law of God according to the inward man . . . I thank God - through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin" (Romans 7:22,25).

A lot of us look at the Law as a catalog of rules which, if we don't obey we'll be doomed. But we were not created for the Law, the Law was created for us; the whole of the Word of God was created for us - it is the holy, loving message of our loving Father to us His children. So the judgments found in our Father's Book are for a greater part addressed to His children's place of reward and blessings in the heavenlies, rather than proclamations of damnation to those who do not believe. A believer couldn't go to hell even if he wanted to! That's why we believe on that Name.

This judgment, *The Judgment Seat Of Christ*, of which Paul speaks in 2 Corinthians 5:10, is for the quality of life the believer will occupy in that day.

In contrast, *The White Throne Judgment* - the word here is *krino* (judgment) - found in Revelation 20, gives reference to the positions the unredeemed will occupy in that day, which is "the Lake of Fire" and "Damnation." The one who "knew his master's will and did it not, will be beaten with many strip's. The one who did not know His master's will, will be beaten with few stripes" (Luke 12:47,48). They are both beaten, but it depends upon the light given to each one.

As saints, we are free to fail, but we are not free to be irresponsible. We are "sons" of God. Sons are responsible. We must learn responsibility. We are judged - rewarded - by our responsible actions done in this world, in our physical bodies, for our position in eternity. All judgments are eternal. All give benefit, or results.

The Ten Commandments

"The Two Tablets of Testimony"

"Judgment must begin at the house of the Lord."

(1 Peter 4:17)

There is a large group of people today whose desire is that we would begin to observe and live by the Ten Commandments - which they believe will stop us from sinning. Yet, the Ten Commandments have never stopped us from sinning, but only

made the sins we commit evident. I love the Ten Commandments. They were given by God for the people of God. They are His rules, which remind us that we've broken - and continue to break - those same rules on a daily, yes hourly, basis. The Ten Commandments have not stopped us from sinning, but rather remind us that we do.

Jesus, in the *Sermon on the Mount*, showed that He requires in the character and conduct of His disciples something radically different from and far superior to the religion of the leaders of His day. "Except your righteousness exceed that of the Pharisees. . ."

The Pharisees took it upon themselves to judge others while being blind to their own faults. The Pharisees stressed, "The Sabbath day is to be kept holy, in it you shall do no work." Jesus enlarged that to say, works of piety, of mercy, and of necessity are lawful.

So what are the ten commandments for?

Let's say God finds a good gentleman who is upright and law abiding. He questions him, "Do you observe My Ten Commandments?"

And he tells God, "Yes, I do. From a child."

God says, "So you don't have another God before me, you haven't made or worshiped an idol, you haven't taken My name in vain, you remember the Sabbath day, you honor your father and mother, you don't kill, commit adultery, steal, or bear false witness?"

"That's right," the good gentleman says.

"Okay," says God, "then don't *want* to do any of those first nine and you can say truthfully that you have fulfilled My Ten Commandments. But if you ever consider adultery or think about killing your neighbor or imagine taking what isn't yours or contemplate doing anything against Me, My name or against your neighbor, you have broken My last Commandment, '*you shall not covet.*' If you observe all of the outward Commandments and sin in your heart, you have broken all My Commandments. So as soon as you stop having *thoughts* about doing anything wrong, I will call you a good, law abiding, righteous man."

So unless we stop thinking, we won't stop breaking the Ten Commandments.

So what are the ten commandments for?

One reason is to give us ten constant reminders of our need of the Savior.

Right Judging

“Judge not, that you be not judged.”
(Matthew 7:7)

In His sermon on the Mount the Lord declared, “Judge not, that you be not judged” (Matthew 7:1). This verse is by no means one of the simplest prohibitions to interpret - this is apparent from the volumes of summations it has received at the hands of biblical commentators. As the many evaluators have attempted to define its limitations, a considerable variety of opinions have been expressed, which - given the vastness of their interpretations - should give us warning against coming to any hasty conclusion as to its meaning; against being misled by the mere sound of the words or coming to a hasty conclusion as to its intention. At any rate, for us to more fully clarify our theme, we must discuss it - thus adding my two-cents to the already plentiful collection.

The verb “*judge*” in, “Judge not, that you be not judged” is one that occurs frequently in the scripture, and is used in quite a variety of senses. “I speak to wise men; *judge* you what I say” (1 Corinthians 10:15). Also, “*judge* in yourselves: is it becoming that a woman pray unto God uncovered?” The word “*judge*,” in these instances simply means to carefully weigh a matter and form an opinion or come to a conclusion.

The Lord told a story of a creditor who “had two debtors; the one,” He said, “owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.”

“Tell me,” the Lord asked, “ which of them will love him most?”

Simon Peter answered, “I suppose that *he* to whom he forgave most.”

And the Lord’s responded, “You have rightly judged” (Luke 7:43).

The Lord commended Peter’s conclusion - his “right judgment.” Peter had drawn an accurate verdict - a right judgment.

The logical conclusion is that “judge not, that you be not judged” does not imply, or even suggest, that we should never have an opinion (*which is literally impossible*), to never come to a conclusion concerning anyone or anything, to fully accept whatever anyone says because we are not to “judge” - thus we are to never consider anyone’s words or actions no matter how dictatorial, sinful and fruitless they may be - which would be negation of reason. The capacity of judging, of forming an opinion, is one of the elect’s most valuable faculties - and - the right use of judging, is one of the most important duties we have as believers. If we do not form judgments as to what is true

and false, right and wrong, good and bad, false and true doctrine, true and false teachers, preachers and prophets, how can we embrace the one and avoid the other?

I was told as a child, "You shouldn't judge." "You can't judge another man." "Now Jay, stop judging." Yet, the Bible tells me to judge "right judgment." We have two attitudes here, "judge not that you be not judged," and "you have rightly judged." So what's the difference?

Let's look at a hypothetical situation. The elders in the church confirm that one of their brothers is engaged in some immoral act - such as, adultery. And in spite of the fact that *indiscretion* has become a euphemism for such sins as adultery, to excuse such behavior by attributing it to a momentary lapse of judgment, does not negate the fact that adultery is still a sin in the eyes of God. If the church confronts their brother with his transgression, aren't they judging? And if they don't deem his actions a sin, but rather, attribute his behavior to, say, his lifelong struggle with self-image, aren't they harming their brother, and the church? So what kind of reasoning are we to use? Antipathy? Supposition? Or conviction? If we don't form judgments as to what is right and true, as opposed to, what is false and wrong, how can we embrace the one and avoid the other? It is very necessary for us to have our "senses exercised to discern" - thoroughly judge - "both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14), so we will not be taken in by every oily-mouth philological imposture we encounter.

We should spare no pains in seeking to arrive at a right understanding of this verse - for unless the meaning of "Judge not, that you be not judged" is opened up to us, we will be at a loss to repel those who would bring us into bondage by their corrupt use of it.

There are few verses quoted more often than "Judge not, that you be not judged," and few less understood by those who so readily proclaim it. At one time the most quoted Scripture was "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son . . . (John 3:16)." Now the most quoted is: "Judge not . . ." Interesting.

If a godly fellow denounces a man who is promulgating serious error, there are those who will say to this champion of the faith, "Judge not, that you be not judged." Let a saint faithfully rebuke an offender for some sin and he is likely to have the same, "Judge not, that you be not judged," quoted against him. If a well-meaning, faithful man of God - unquestionably properly versed in the Word of God - speaks out concerning a grave error voiced by a favored, well known teacher or evangelist - giving Bible verse and godly reason for his concern - more than likely he will be shot down with: "Judge not, that you be not judged." In the entirety of these samplings, "Judge not, that you be not judged," is quoted and mandated in error.

The Lord never forbade us to act according to the dictates of common prudence. He did not prohibit us from judging men's character and actions according to their

avowed principles and visible conduct, "Judge you what is right." The actions of men absolutely require us to form a judgment - with respect both to their state and their conduct. This is being responsible "sons." Unless we come to a decision of what is germane, what is good or bad in those we meet and situations we are in, we will be found rejecting the one and condoning the other.

Fruit Inspectors

*"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing,
But inwardly they are ravening wolves.
You shall know them by their fruits
(Matthew 7:15,16)*

"Beware of false prophets" - no idle warning is this - one, which must be taken (judged) very seriously by all who have any concern for the glory of God or their own eternal interest. But my regard here is not so much for the "false prophets," as it is the self-appointed inspectors of fellow believers' fruit.

"You shall know them by their fruits." This declaration of inspection concerns "false prophets," not fellow saints. Read the verse for yourself: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. You will know *them* by their fruits" - be on guard against false teachers' fruits, heretical preachers - not the "fruit" of the guy sitting next to you in the church pew. Be on guard against so-called men of God who have a false commission, having never been called by God to the service they are engaged in; they preach error, which is subversive of "the doctrine which is according to godliness" (1 Timothy 6:3); the fruit they bear is imitation fruit of the Spirit.

The chief identifying mark of the false prophets is always, "Peace, peace," when there is none (Jeremiah 23:17). They heal the wounds of sinners slightly (Jeremiah 8:11), and daub, with "untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies into them, saying, Thus said the Lord God, when the Lord has not spoken" (Ezekiel 13:14; 22:28). They prophesy "smooth things" (Isaiah 23:3,17), inventing easy ways to heaven, pandering to man's corrupt nature. There is nothing in their message which searches the conscience, which makes the natural man uneasy, nothing which humbles and causes the hearers to mourn before God; but rather they preach that which puffs up the hearers, that which makes them pleased with themselves and rest content in a false assurance. They birth imitation fruit and imitation converts.

The general characteristic of "false prophets" is that they re-define vital godliness to be less strict and easier than it actually is, making true godliness more agreeable to fallen human nature, and thus they encourage the unregenerated to be satisfied with something, which falls short of true grace.

We must “judge” the “fruits” of “false prophets.”

Paul stated in Galatians that there are “*works of the flesh*”, plural, and there is “the *fruit of the Spirit*”, singular. False prophets lie against the truth of God in making *fruit* into “fruits,” plural, when it is actually the *works of the flesh* they are trying to equate with *the fruit of the Spirit* - which is why Jesus used the term *fruits* when describing them - they (false prophets/wolves in sheep’s clothing) can only do works of the flesh because they do not have the Holy Spirit within them to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit.

We must “judge” the “fruits” of “false prophets.”

While we must judge the “fruits” of “False prophets,” we do not, nor can we judge another man’s heart - reckoning him a believer or not - reckoning his motives to be from a sinful heart. That again, is the Lord’s job. So in that instance, “we judge not, lest we be judged.” Just as, “whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca (empty, an abusive epithet), shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, you fool, shall be in danger of hell fire” (Matthew 5:22). We do not call, or judge a man a fool - “a fool in his heart” - because we don’t know whether he’s a fool in his heart or not. It should be noted, this fool is not some short-sighted fellow who comes to work wearing one brown shoe and one black or the simple-minded chap who forgets the name of the guy in Grant’s tomb. No, the fool in Matthew is a fool in his heart. He is a fool that says in his heart, “There is no God” (Psalm 14:1; 53:1). Only the Lord can judge the heart of a man. We can’t. We don’t know the heart of any man. So we, “judge not.”

Exceeding the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees

The main point of the Lord’s sermon is summed up with, “unless your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven,”¹ - not: “judge not so you won’t be judged.” What then was the *less-than-expected* righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees - as far as judgment was concerned?

The disciples of Christ Jesus are to conduct themselves in a manner exactly the reverse, from that of the Pharisees or those who would have you keep the law or their opinion of the law; we unsparingly judge ourselves and refuse to invade the office of God where others are concerned.

If we scrutinize the words, “Judge not, that you be not judged,” with the eyes of another or from the teaching or understanding of another - me included - and don’t search the Word itself, probing for ourselves, canvassing the words for the right meaning, we are executing a great sin in the sight of God. “There are ways which seem right to a man but the end is death.”² Don’t believe everything some well-dressed fellow tells you, no matter how many abbreviations he has after his name. Unless we

are careful in our interpretation and understanding we will be guilty, as the Pharisees were, of prohibiting what one passage requires, and censuring that which another verse commends - swallowing a camel and straining on a gnat (Matthew 23:24). We must not pursue scholarship as the Scribes and the Pharisees did; appropriating one verse of scripture, building a doctrine around it, and only it; erecting a church building to hold it; stacking reams of paper and piles of books in it; and amassing special preachers and prophets in an attempt to explain it. All of which will not exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, but rather affirms it.

Two opposing objects must always be kept in mind; in seeking to guard against hasty and harsh Pharisaical judgments, we must also be aware of abusing grace. On the one hand, we should watch against unjust and unmerciful censuring, on the other we must not be guilty of judging laxly and loosely. We must always keep in mind that within the church, as within the world, there are not only the "sheep" of the Lord, but also there are the "dogs" and the "swine" - and they are treated and spoken to as such. We speak to, treat, and judge the believers in one way, and we speak to, treat, and judge the unbelievers in another. Rightly judging. There is a strict line of demarcation drawn between the two.

When an openly carnal person - an obvious worldling, a man the church knows to be an adulterer and a drunk - applies for church membership, it would be wrong to silence the God-fearing objectors with the Pharisaical, "Judge not, lest ye be judged." Grace must not be allowed to override the requirements of holiness so that the unclean are permitted to enjoy the privileges reserved for those who are washed in the blood of the Lamb. "Not everyone who says to Me Lord, Lord . . ." - simply because a person says to you, "I'm a Christian," does not necessarily mean that he is a believer. It is through failure at this very point, through false "charity," by refusing to heed this commandment of Christ, that the grossest of evils has been tolerated in the House of God, until the mystical Babylon - the mystery religion, the false church - is "now a cage of every unclean and hateful bird."

Both the Scribes and Pharisees had a very high regard for themselves - the Pharisees in particular - and held utter contempt for anyone who did not belong to, or agree with, their sect: "He spoke this parable to those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others" (Luke 18:9). The Pharisees took it upon themselves to go about passing unjust and biased judgment on anyone and anything which did not comply with their own perception of the Bible, while they were blind to their own toxin. They trusted in themselves and only listened to those who agreed with their philosophy and only read books which taught in compliance with their beliefs. They did not "rightly divide the word of truth," coming to a godly, Biblical determination, or opinion, concerning a situation, a man or a man's beliefs. No, these guys mandated that you were wrong if you didn't agree with them. They affirmed you

acceptable if you agreed with them no matter how much of a heretic you may be. They made it clear - with their words and ways - they, and they only, had the right to reject, to denounce, to profane or to bless you - it all depended on your compliance with their traditions, not the truth. They called themselves, the anointed ones - set apart by God - and because of their office and flamboyant position they had the right and privilege to tell you what to do and what not to do. This was "the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees."³

We, as followers of the Lord Jesus are to be the antithesis of that manner of behavior. We are to openhandedly judge ourselves, but we are not to invade the office of God where others are concerned - "God judges the heart," not us. We can and should judge the actions and words of others, but not the motive or position of their heart. "Judge not," a man's heart concerning his relationship to God; "that you be not judged." But if you see some guy whack someone over the head with a bat, its okay to judge him by saying "Hey, that guy just whacked someone over the head with a bat." This is also true with respect to seen and known adultery, murder, lying, stealing, misleading teaching, faulty prophecy, phony evangelists, counterfeit apostles, drunks, etc. In evaluating (judging) actions and words we are not sinning but rather, we are confirming righteousness by right behavior - "test all spirits; to see if they are from the Lord or not."

Reconciling the World

God deals in eternity, not in time. His judgments are eternal. Everything He does has a view for the quality of life for His people in the future, the eternal.

Colossians is that marvelous epistle which addresses the headship of the Lord Jesus over all that is and will ever be. (Ephesians is the epistle which deals with His headship over His Body, the Church.) In Colossians we read:

"Who is the image of the invisible God, the first born."

First born here is a cardinal number, not an ordinal number. It addresses His possession in authority. It is not addressing the order of His origin.

"He is the first born of all creation for by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers - all things were created by Him, and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist."

Or cohere. This is the One who holds everything together.

“And He is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the first born from the dead.”

That is to say, He is the first one born again, brought out of the grave, in order that we too might experience new birth and resurrection to life.

“That in all things He might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.”

Or more literally, *“all fullness was pleased to dwell in Him.”*

“And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself . . . by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.”

Reconciling all things unto Himself was the purpose of the Father in the cross.

“And you, that were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now has He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreproved in His sight” (Colossians 1:15-22).

This is a wonderful illustration of who the Lord Jesus is and was and how the Father saw Him in the cross - reconciling the world back to the Father.

The Father judged all sin at the cross. That was the purpose of the Father in the cross: to reconcile the world back to Himself. That was the purpose of the cross, as far as the Father was concerned. There was a penalty for sin. The penalty was death. The Son of God took that penalty on Himself to save His elect - three hours of darkness; three hours of separation from the Father - then the cry of victory was heard, “It is finished!” The penalty was paid in full. So sin, as far as the Father is concerned, has been taken care of forever. “It is finished” - it is paid in full! In that single proclamation the Son of God satisfied the just requirements of the Father. Jesus took all the judgment of sin on His cross (2 Corinthians 5:19) to reconcile all things to Himself. We, the elect believers, are now ambassadors reconciled to God. Our ministry is to reconcile others to God. But God, the Father, is reconciled to us, and not just to us, but to the whole world. “To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the *world* unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” And if you will allow a Dr. Jay phrase here, ‘God was in Christ refusing to count the world guilty because of sin.’

So if, as the Word says, no one is guilty before God because of sin, what’s all this sin problem we hear so much about today? Doesn’t the Bible say “all have sinned and fall short of God?” We hear preachers saying “if you sin you can’t get into heaven.”

But Paul tells us, sin doesn't keep us out of heaven; (reference: "not imputing their trespasses unto them," not counting a man guilty because of sin) then what does keep us out of heaven? What is Paul trying to tell us? Doesn't God care about our sins? Is God just looking the other way? Or, is He waiting for us to ask Him to forget our sins before He will do anything about them, before He will forgive and forget? Or, is He just winking at our sins today? Or just not paying much attention to them? Or is He just not counting them to our charge? What is it?

First off, sins are not what keeps you out of heaven. Never has, never will. It's unbelief in the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross - His blood reconciled us back to the Father. Even in the Old Covenant it was the shedding of blood to cover the sins of Israel and their belief in that covering, not the Law of commandments which justified them before God; this was a temporary state, year to year. God knew the Israelites were sinners, just as He knows we are sinners today - even in the church. Man has not changed. Israel's sins were covered by the blood of goats and bulls upon the Altar each year (this atonement was not permanent as reconciliation is today). So when God went looking for their sins, what He saw was the blood. In the New Covenant we have a better transaction - we are reconciled back to God, and not just us, the whole world is reconciled back to God - because of the Cross of Christ. His blood did that.

There were sins, Paul tells us in times past God "winked" at. Sins, God overlooked, Romans 3. Sins, God did not bother to acknowledge. A great example of this is found in the life of David. I have people ask me, "How could men such as David have so many wives? The Bible says, "Since from the beginning He made the two one?" - this is a true statement and a valid question. How did men like David (and others) get away with it?

We'll go back to Romans 3. These were "sins in time past that God winked at" (KJV). But now "He commands all men everywhere to repent." Yes? So now, at this time, under this time of grace, God is refusing to impute sin unto anyone. He just doesn't wink at the sin as if it is not there. It's really not there. As far as God the Father is concerned, "It is finished."⁴ When the Father looks for our sins, He see the blood of His Son - "The blood of sprinkling, that speaks of better things than that of Abel" (Hebrews 12:24). That was the purpose of the cross as far as the Father was concerned. The Father wanted to see the blood, and He saw the blood; and with that sprinkling of the blood of His Son in the heavenlies, He is reconciled - ". . . being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Romans 5:9,10). "To wit, God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19). God is reconciled! Jesus took all sins forever, and for everyone on His cross - no matter what the *Five Spiritual Laws* tell us. That's a relieving thing. We need to believe that to be saved, but

even if you don't believe it, it doesn't change the truth. Truth is truth . . . whether we like it or not!

But what "believing" are we referring to here? If I believe, or *say* that I believe, is that enough to get me into God's heaven? No! "Not everyone who says to Me Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." The mere acknowledging of the truth concerning His person or a lip-service of profession will not make any of us worthy of God's heaven. Even the demons owned Him as the "Son of God" (Matthew 8:29) - they believed; but what did that benefit them? It certainly didn't save them! We should not fool ourselves with the notion that simply because we believe that the Lord lived, died and rose again, and we've accepted that fact, that we are automatically "sons of God."

"It is finished" is the finished work of Christ Jesus.

But do those blessed words signify that Christ so satisfied the requirements of God's holiness that that holiness no longer has any real and pressing claim upon us? Did Christ magnify the Law and make it honorable that we might be lawless? Did He fulfill all righteousness to purchase for us an immunity from living for God with all our hearts and serving Him with all our faculties? Did Christ die in order to secure a Divine indulgence that we might love to please self?

Christ died not to make our sorrow for the hatred of sin useless. Christ died, not to absolve us from the full discharge of our responsibilities unto God. Christ died, not so that we might go on retaining the friendship and fellowship of the world. The finished work of Christ profits us nothing if our heart has not been broken by an agonizing consciousness of our sinfulness - the sin we are born with, from our father Adam. It avails us nothing if we still love the world (1 John 2:5). It benefits us nothing, unless we become a new creature in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17).

But God, the Father, is still reconciled.

Pre-Salvation Quickening

A man, when he comes to the Lord and cries out for redemption, does so because of a previous act of the Holy Spirit in his heart. He does not cry out independently of a previous act of the Holy Spirit. This is what my grandmother Ruby and others in her generation referred to as "Pre-salvation quickening." I once revolted at that term, but as a matter of fact it's true.

There is an impartation of life by the Spirit of God which gives a man the ability to respond to the message God has given him, and therefore he responds to that message. A man who is dead in his trespasses and sins, is perfectly dead. Dead people don't do anything. They don't ask for anything. They don't think they need anything. They can't talk or sing anything, even in Church. They don't, or can't, respond to

people calling them with the message of the *Five Spiritual Laws* or the *Roman Road*. They are dead - without spiritual life - so it becomes necessary for God to do something in that spiritually dead man to bring life to him. The reason God does this to certain dead men is because some dead men are God's. Therefore, God brings life to them. If the dead man isn't God's, He brings no life to him. Oh, what have I said?

There are men in the world, who are the Lord's and there are men in the world, who are not the Lord's - those whom He has known from before the foundations of the world, and those He knows not at all. "Not every one that said to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that does the will of My Father, who is in heaven." "Believe on Him who He sent." "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name? And in Your name have cast out demons? And in Your name done many wonderful works?' And then 'I,' (Jesus) "will profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, you that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:21-23). The Lord either knows us or he doesn't - then, as well as, now.

So God brings a quickening, by the Holy Spirit to those who are His before He saves them; those whom He has known "before the foundation of the world" and on that basis they respond. Others, who do not experience this quickening, do not respond because they are not the Lord's - and never will be; He never knew them, no matter how much they prayed, or cast out demons, or etc . . . He never knew them. God is reconciled, but He must first create life in us, animate us, through the quickening of the Holy Spirit, before we have the capability to believe and be saved. Chew on that one for a while.

A couple of years ago I was teaching at a mission on this very subject: The grace of God - the Father's complete work in the cross. Now, I don't mean to be critical here, but in the audience sat an assistant pastor who was bathed in tradition - Arminian to be exact. He was there because he had been told I was full of the word of God, and "taught from the Bible as one who had authority," that's really what the guy was told. (A friend of mine has put it this way, "Jay you inflict the word of God on people. But keep on inflicting them brother.")

Anyway, this assistant pastor was sitting on the front row - Bible opened, pad and pen in hand. The further I pushed into the message of the fullness of the grace of God, teaching the total forgiveness the Lord has on the believing sinner, the more nervous this man became. Until, he began to vocalize, "Lord! Oh, Lord Jesus. Oh, Lord Jesus." I could tell from his expressions, the further I went into the full message of the grace of God the more upheaval he was going through. He thought that I was, as Paul was accused of, giving license to sin, which I was not. Neither was Paul. But me, being the kind and gentle creature that I am, I just poured it on more. I don't know if the Lord was really thrilled with what I was doing at the time, but I did it anyway. I

taught so much of the fullness of the grace of God, by the end of the message I thought the man was going to pass out.

What concerned me most was his horrified reaction, not the fact that he might have a heart attack during the teaching. I was staggered and I remain staggered at the inability or the unwillingness of the people of God to understand the degree to which we have been forgiven. There is nothing that you can add to the grace of God or better still, to the righteousness of God, which will make it any better than it is. It's perfect. There is nothing you can take from it to lessen its strength and integrity in you, because it has been imputed to you by Christ Jesus Himself. It has nothing to do with you. It is His righteousness in you. Now start enjoying it! You were given it because you believed. Now start enjoying the freedom you possess in Him. It's a wonderful thing.

I also don't understand why so many people have so much trouble with grace. It seems as if some people spend more time trying to scare believers out of hell, than they do trying to get unbelievers into heaven. God doesn't judge anyone on the basis of sin, but rather on the basis of faith: our faith and belief in His Son. It is not what we're doing or what we've done, but rather on Who we know and believe and Who knows us!

Repetition is the price of knowledge, so I'll run through my credo again. I have maintained, for some time now, as soon as a person becomes a believer, we should tell him to, "go out and do as you please." No rules. No law. Just do as you please. Yes, I said it. And I mean it too. Because one of two things will happen to that person. He will either, on the one hand manifest he is truly a believer, or on the other hand, he will manifest that he is not. It'll be evident. He'll either become like his Father in heaven or he will go back to his old ways and nothing will change. If we would be bold enough to suggest that, then all of our preachers could stop trying to make all of our unsaved church members look and act like Christians. It would be evident.

Now don't misunderstand what I am saying. I am not suggesting we should do away with discipleship. My love for the Word of God is great and I began that love through discipleship. But I am suggesting we do away with actors.

There is nothing you can do, if you are a believer, to keep you out of heaven. The sins you haven't gotten to yet, were nailed to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ some 2000 years ago. You bare them no more. Bless the Lord! So what does forgiveness do? It works a response of obedience in us. "It is the goodness of God that leads to repentance." Not threats. Threats do not lead to repentance. Threats may change a man momentarily until the threat is gone, then he'll go back to doing the same old thing he did before he heard the threat. Look at what happened to America on September 11, 2001. We were threatened. So we changed. But when we realized the threat was gone, we went back to doing the same old exploits we did before the threat -

even more reprehensible in some cases. Why is that? Because the heart must be changed. In the words of the Psalms, "Because they have no change, therefore they fear not God." So the basis of this New Covenant relationship is: I have been born again by the Spirit of God; I am still the same failure I ever was, but my response to the goodness of God and to the love of God changes what I *want* to do. It doesn't change what I *feel* like doing, but it changes what I *want* to do. Again, it may not change what I do, but it does change what I *want to do* (Romans 7). A marked difference.

There is a great difference between what we want to do and what we feel like doing. What we feel like doing arises out of the flesh we live in. "The lust of the flesh . . . eyes . . . the pride of life," John says, which arises out of these biological carcasses we're walking around in, which, as yet, is a dying creature - and which, has not yet experienced it's adoption. All sin arises out of our flesh. That's what we *feel* like doing, sinning: letting the flesh, our carcass, arise and do what it feels like doing. If we could tear our self from our carcasses - I'm not suggesting anyone make any effort in that direction deliberately - we would suddenly discover that we are free to do what we *want* to do. There is no longer that incumbency on us. That's the message of Romans 7. All sin was judged at the cross. I have been loosed from that sin. If I therefore sin "it is no longer I that sin, but sin that dwells in me." It is not me, it's this fleshly object I dwell in. I have been made all of the righteousness that is God. But I have this stinky, rotting thing around me, and boy does my flesh want to sin. If you have a problem with this type of teaching, take it up with Paul.

When Jesus judged sin at the cross, He judged all sin, in every age, in every person, so the basis of judgment (as far as eternal hell or heaven is concerned) in the future, would not be predicated on the first man Adam, who brought us into this mess, but rather it would be predicated on the last Adam, Jesus, who is now in the presence of the Father. Thus, "What will you do with Jesus, who is called Christ?"

When we stand before Him in that day, at the Lord's Judgment (*Bema*) Seat, it will be absolutely because of His shed blood.

"For He has made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The import of that verse is the fact that we have been made all of the righteousness that God is. Or, we are as righteous as God is. Don't let that frighten you. For if we in anywise fall short of the righteousness of God, there is no entrance for us into His kingdom. Sin is coming short. So the righteousness we receive from Him must be an absolute righteousness or no righteousness at all. That's why Isaiah said, "all of our righteousness are as filthy rags." That's why we must have another's righteousness. That is why Paul cried out, "Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Paul is crying the cry of all of the elect of God - our life in Christ, with our "body of this death" in tow. With this phrase, "body of this death," Paul was describing a form of punishment given in his day to convicted murderers. The murdered victim would be strapped to the back of the murderer. The convicted murderer would live with his murdered victim's decomposing body strapped to his back for the remainder of his life. Needless to say, the remainder of the convicted murderer's life was usually a very short period of time, because most of the convicted went crazy or killed themselves soon after the punishment began. So here Paul is describing our life in Christ with our flesh in tow.

"Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Paul goes on to say,

"I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. So then, with the mind . . ."

That is the mind of Christ.

"I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh, the law of sin."

Paul understood he was going to deal with his dying body as long as he lived on the earth. So do we. That is why we need to learn of God so we can walk in God - to walk as His people realizing that:

"There is, therefore, now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh" (or doing whatever our dead carcass feels like doing), "but after the Spirit."

That is - doing what we want to do in the Spirit of God Who indwells us.

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." (Romans 7:24 - 8:2).

Glory!

Martin Luther said, "A man cannot be thoroughly humbled until he comes to know that his salvation is utterly beyond his own powers, counsel, endeavors, will and works. And absolutely depending on the will, counsel, pleasure and work of another. That is of God only." I like that. It takes all the pressure off, and lets us walk in His life as freed men totally on the basis of our faith in Him. Nothing more. No works, free will, self-will or etc., but totally because of Him who loved us first. Then we don't notice the stench of our rotting carcass so much. In contrast, a man without Christ Jesus, without the belief in His reconciling work on the cross, is without "hope," and is

living in this world, not as a freed man, but rather, as a condemned man waiting for his final trial and ultimate everlasting execution.

God Judges to Restore

It is ever the purpose of God to cause His people to experience sufficiently of what this world has to offer to make us long for that which is to come.

When God's people, Israel, committed sin and iniquity the Lord sent them judgment with a view of restoration.

“And they committed harlotries in Egypt; they committed harlotries in their youth; there were their breast pressed, and there they bruised the breasts of their virginity . . . Oholah (Israel), the elder, and Oholibah (Judah) her sister; they were Mine . . . Oholah played the harlot . . . she doted on her lovers, on the Assyrians . . . with all their idols she defiled herself. Wherefore I have delivered her into the hands of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians . . . her sister Oholibah saw this, she was more corrupt in her inordinate love than she, and in her harlotries more than her sister . . . I saw that she was defiled, that they took one way, and that she increased her harlotries. . . as soon as she saw them (Chaldeans, Babylonians) with her eyes, she doted upon them . . . and the Babylonians came into her bed of love, and defiled her with their harlotries, and she was polluted with them, and her mind was alienated from them . . . Behold, I will raise up thy lovers against you, from whom your mind is alienated, and I will bring them against you on every side . . . I will do these things unto you, because you have played the harlot with other nations, and because you are polluted with their idols” - which is spiritual adultery - (Ezekiel 23).

The Lord judged His people, Israel, because of their sins; He raised up their lovers - other nations, other religions - as judgment on His people; to war against them. But why? Why did the Lord raise up the other nations to war against His people, bringing judgment on His people? To restore them. To let His people live - for a time in their sin - with their lovers. The Lord raised up the other nations to war against His people to demonstrate to them the traditions of the other nations, other gods - the practice of slavery - and then, to restore them to the traditions of God - the tradition of peace, safety and security.

“Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from you, and your harlotry brought from the land of Egypt, so that you shall not lift up your eyes unto them, nor remember Egypt any more” (v27).

It is ever the purpose of God to cause us to experience sufficiently of what this world has to offer to make us long for that which is to come.

When Israel repented, the Lord brought restoration.

“For thus said the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out . . . and I will make them and the places round about My hill a blessing, and I will cause the shower to come down in its season; there shall be showers of blessing . . . and they shall be safe in the land, and shall know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the bars of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those who enslaved them” (Ezekiel 34:11,26,27).

God’s judgments on His people are always with a view of restoration. A wonderful New Covenant example of judgment to restoration is found in Paul’s letters to the Corinthians.

“It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife. And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that has done this deed might be taken away from among you . . . to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Corinthians 5:1-5).

The Lord brings judgment on His people - individually and collectively - because of our sins in the body. He raised up our lovers - the lust of our flesh, the pride of our life, the lust of our eyes, the world, the flesh and the Devil - as judgment on His people; to war against us; against our flesh. “For the destruction of the flesh . . . that the spirit might be saved.” The Corinthian man individually, and the Corinthian Church collectively, God judged to bring them back to Himself - to restore them. He judged the fornicating Corinthian Church-man and the prideful Corinthian Church. They were both judged because of their sin.

The Corinthian Church man sinned (sexually) with his father’s wife. The Corinthian Church sinned in their pride - fabricating their walk, hiding their sin, turning a blind eye to the sin within the Church. The sin of the Corinthian man was evident in that he and the woman could be seen. The sin of the Corinthian Church was

not so evident because it was hidden. Paul rebuked the Corinthian Church because of their pride. Because they were acting as “reigning kings,” being “puffed up” and not functioning as ruling servants - as men under authority. “You have reigned as kings without us” (Paul was a sarcastic man at times) “and I would to God you did reign, that we also might reign with you” (1 Corinthians 4:8).

Reigning & Ruling

There is a considerable difference between reigning and ruling. We do not reign now, we rule now, because we have an authority over us and we rule by and because of His reign - His authority. We will, in that day reign with Him because He will give us, in that day something to reign over - “on the earth.” “And hast made us unto God a kingdom of priest, and we shall reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:10). We will reign then, not now. Don’t get the cart before the horse.

Someone who reigns makes the rules. Someone who rules follows the one who is reigning. A reigning king appoints lords, dukes, etc., to rule in his kingdom. But a reigning earthly king will never appoint another king to reign over his kingdom, because the direction of authority will become eschewed. There is one Head and one body. The Bible calls us (at this time) co-workers, not co-reigners. The Lord makes the rules and we, His people follow them. If we, the Church, go about acting like little reigning kings, making our own rules, neglecting the word of God in certain areas, harping on the words in others, we will become “puffed up” in our own deceit. “Those who follow lying vanities, forsake their own mercy” (Jonah 2:8), which is what happened to the Church in Corinth. They had become “vain in their imaginations.” They were “puffed up” with pride - inflated egos - proud. They had become self-appointed judges of what was right and wrong conduct in the body of Christ. “The Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son.” The Lord Jesus is The Judge of conduct within His body. He is the reigning One. We, as individual members of His body, are now ruling under His reign.

The Lord is reigning and we are following His reign in our place of ruling. “For He must reign, till He has put all enemies under His feet” (1 Corinthians 15:25). “. . . till He has . . .” What is the last enemy that will be put under His feet? “And death and hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death” (Revelation 20:14). When death and hades are tossed away, we will then reign with Him - not before.

“The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of your enemies” (Psalm 110:2 AV). We are now ruling in the midst of our enemies. He is now reigning over His enemies. And, in that day, when He puts all of His enemies under His feet - casting them into the lake of fire - He “shall reign forever and ever.” In that day, “the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory” (Matthew 25:31). And in that day we

shall reign with Him. "To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne" (Revelation 3:21).

"Little Kings"

If we, the church, do not follow His reign, but rather begin performing like little kings by our own man-made feigned reigning; acting as if we have been given authority over entities and elements of which only the Lord has the authority, He will judge us - with a view of restoration. For even "Michael, the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you'" (Jude 9). Why didn't Michael rebuke the devil? Because He was under authority (he was ruling), he was not the authority. So he said, "the Lord rebuke you!"

The Corinthians had become "puffed up," "having men's persons in admiration because of advantage." "Walking after their own lust; and their mouths speaking great swelling words" (Jude 16). We are His sheep. He is our Chief Shepherd. And He will rebuke the devil, correct the wrongs - and - when needed, judge us with a view of restoration.

Again, why does the Lord judge His people? To allow His people time to live in their sin - with their lovers - for the destruction of the flesh - to demonstrate to us the traditions of the other nations, other gods, our flesh, as the practice of slavery - to then restore us, His people, to the traditions of God - the tradition of peace.

The particular judgment - "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you" - which Paul addressed in 1 Corinthians 5, was a judgment of destruction to restoration. Paul told the Corinthian Church, "to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh." This, "destruction" is from the Greek, *olethros*, which denotes something that is of no use; something which must be destroyed, taken out of the way. Paul's "*olethros*," is not a destruction which will send the believer to hell, but rather, a judgment which destroys or brings death to the flesh, so that the spirit might be saved in "the day of the Lord Jesus." Paul did not ask the church to pray for this brother, who was copulating with his father's wife, but directed them to kick the guy out of the church, remove him from their fellowship - remove the leaven from the Holy dough.

Sin is leaven and the leaven must be removed, because the church is now, in Christ, "unleavened." "Purge out, therefore the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened. For even Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us."⁵ As soon as the leaven is removed, the Church can "keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" - but not before. First, get the fornicating brother out of the Church!

There is no place for fornicators - sexually active unmarried men with women, men with men, women with women, etc. - within the Church of Jesus Christ. Fornication is a sin. We are told "not to company with fornicators" within the Church - brothers and sisters within the Church, not individuals we know in the world, because "then must you go out of the world." Paul's declaration was not a judgment of annihilation, but rather, a judgment of destruction - the Corinthian Church-man's body was ruined because of continual fornication and was unsuitable or unable to fulfill its original purpose. All judgments are not necessarily God sending someone to hell, but rather, more than likely, they are judgments which deal with the believer's position. "For who the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives" (Hebrews 12:6).

When I am asked to pray for a brother's deliverance from sins such as adultery, fornication, pornography and the like, I refuse. Because those are sins which must be destroyed, terminated, eliminated from the believer's life. No amount of prayer will help until the sinning brother has removed these sins himself - those sins can be, and must be stopped! They must be judged for what they are: sins of the flesh. They are not some physiological misunderstanding, which can be gently soothed away. They must be judged as a judgment of "destruction" - judgment of the flesh. The sin is the "lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes," no amount of prayer for deliverance can stop the sins of the flesh or the sins of the psyche. "And she was polluted with them, and her mind was alienated . . . with her eyes, she doted upon them."⁶ If the sin is stopped, I will gladly pray and fellowship with my brother again. But not until the sin is stopped. We need to judge and not hold back because of sentimentality or fear.

Restoration

The Lord's judgments are always - for the believer - with a view of restoration.

"Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted by the many. So that on the contrary you ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore, I beseech you that you would confirm your love towards him." (2 Corinthians 2:6,7,8).

Paul extorts the Corinthian Church to restore the man who was fornicating with his father's wife because he had repented; to bring the formerly sinning believer back into the place of fellowship. The man had repented and was now "in danger of being swallowed up."

When a believer sins, God will send judgment. When a believer repents, God will send peace and restoration. And we, as fellow believing sinners should "restore

such a one" back to a place of fellowship. God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (1 Peter 3:9). "As sons," the Lord chastens us "for our profit, that we might be partakers of His Holiness" because "afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are exercised by it" (Hebrews 12:7-11).

Wrong Response to His Cross

There are a number of people whose response to the Lord is influenced, not from recognizing a personal need for Him, but because they rather dislike the circumstance they find themselves in and want God to change it. Multitudes of people call on the Lord, not because they are willing to have any loss in this life to gain Christ, but they call on Him because they are loosing in this life. They don't like the condition they find themselves in, so they call on the Lord to change their circumstance. They don't like loosing their wife, house, car, health, freedom, etc., and they want God to change that. They want God to make them healthy, wealthy and wise. If they must accept Jesus in the process, then they'll accept Jesus - over and over. In these cases, very often it requires such a convicting work by the Spirit of God - a complete devastation of their circumstances to bring them to the point of wanting only the Lord - even if they never get anything from this life - only through pure devastation - a complete loss in this life is the only verdict which will bring them to the Savior.

We commit a great error in the way we preach in many cases - in that we preach about the good things that are available to the individual who will come to the Lord. We preach, "He will straighten your family, your job, your credit, etc." All of which may be true in many cases. But, a lot of people only come to the Lord to have their family, work, etc., straightened out - they don't come because they want redemption. Therefore, they come again the next Sunday and the next. They come over and over because they are not getting their problems addressed. Jesus offers redemption. But they are not receiving redemption, because they're not coming for redemption - they are coming for another reason.

The convicting work of the Spirit of God is the first imperative to anyone's response to the Lord. But a lot of people come to the Lord for the wrong reason. They are not coming saying, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15). Theirs is a response to His provision, not to His redemption.

I have wondered how many professed believers would serve the Lord if He removed everything from them and left them nothing but Himself? That's one of the reasons Job is in the Bible - to make us understand that a man who believes God, is a man who recognizes that nothing else is important. He needs nothing else, he only needs the Lord. God did not redeem us to improve our environment, He redeemed us because He loved us even while we were lost undone sinners. The individual who

comes to the Lord because they realize they are undone lost sinners in need of the Savior, will receive redemption. The individual who comes to the Lord because he realizes he is an undone lost sinner in need of the Savior, will receive redemption. If your first need is not redemption, your needs will never be met.

“Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner.’ I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted” (Matthew 18:9-14).

The word used by the tax collector, “merciful,” is the Greek word *hilaskomai*. The word is used in connection with the mercy seat (Exodus 25:17-21; Hebrews 9:5). The tax collector was not thinking of mercy alone, but of the blood sprinkled mercy seat in the temple. There is no forgiveness apart from sacrifice. There is no salvation apart from the blood of Jesus.

Approaching the Father

God’s desire is for everyone to be able to approach Him - everyone on the same basis - not on the basis of physical ability, mental ability, appearance, wealth or the like. But rather, He desires to put everyone on the same level before the Father: on the basis of His Son, Jesus. This was suggested in the Old Testament’s $\frac{1}{2}$ shekel of silver offering.

“The rich shall give no more the poor shall give no less” (Exodus 20:13). Every man was required to bring a $\frac{1}{2}$ shekel of silver before the Lord which is short of a standard - Jesus Christ is the whole, or the standard. As a man, I’m only $\frac{1}{2}$. . . so are you. We fall short. But everyone must come on the same basis before the Father. Yet, when we, the believers, present ourselves before the Father, we present ourselves in Christ Jesus, who is the whole standard of God. So the Father, accepts us in Him, in Jesus, as the whole. We are constituted whole because of Christ Jesus. So the offering we offer is the whole standard: Jesus! That’s the difference in the redeemed and the unredeemed. We’re the whole standard of the Father because of the Lord Jesus. The unredeemed, the unbelieving, are short of the standard. It is not a matter of sin. It is a matter of God’s standard.

When sin was judged at the cross it was judged in its totality. So the basis of judgment has been moved from the sin in Adam, to the righteousness in Christ. God removed the condemnation received by birth from the first Adam and has made the basis of judgment the person of His Son, Jesus. And Jesus Christ has taken all sin unto Himself and He has obtained the right to judge. "The Father judges no man" (John 5:22), "but has committed all judgment unto the hands of the Son".

We are in covenant with God through the Lord Jesus. The issue of covenant is transferable, as in Abraham to Isaac. The book of Galatians states that: I give what I have to Him, and He gives what He has to me. Like the old hymn, "I gave Him my old tattered garment. He gave me a robe of white." It's covenant. "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believes on Him is not condemned; but he that believes not is condemned already." Now here's the clincher - here is why he is condemned: "Because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:17,18 AV).

No man is condemned because of sin! The man who will spend eternity in Hell will be there because he did not believe on that name, Jesus! The question all men must deal with is, What will you do with Jesus who is called Christ? That is the basis of all judgment. When Jesus went to the cross to bear sin; past, present and future, He did so to transfer the guilt of sin from the first man Adam, to His own person. Now, what will we do with Him?

As I have said, all judgments are eternal; with benefit or result. God always deals with all men on the basis of His righteous principle. God is a just judge. He judges in righteousness and in honor to His Word in all things and in all people.

I realize the word, *election* can be a vector of affliction to many, but the truth of God still stands. We are the elect of God. God chose us, we did not choose Him. The truth is: God foreknew that if He had left us to our pleasure, none would ever accept Christ (Romans 9:29), and therefore, He made sovereign and unconditional selection from among all mankind. Had God not eternally chosen me, I certainly would have never chosen Him. Salvation is the gift of the Triune God to His elect: the Father planned it, the Son purchased it, the Spirit communicates it.

All of God's dealings - His judgments and work - are eternal and just. The way in which He deals with His children, the redeemed, is eternally for our good - which is the issue in this judgment, *the Judgment seat of Christ*, the *Bema seat judgment*. It is the believer walking before the Lord in His righteousness and in His justice. It is God dealing with His people on the issue of His standards and decrees - His Moral Law - and rewarding as to the same.

Renewed To Repentance

Again, all judgments are eternal; with benefit or result. The one passage, which gives most of us the biggest problem as it concerns judgment, is found in Hebrews 6:1-6

“Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of the laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do, if God permit. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.”

That sounds pretty scary upon first reading. But we must remember, eternal judgment does not indicate a *place* of judgment, but rather a *character* of judgment. It is the quality of life the believer (and unbeliever, too) will occupy in that day.

There are men who try to use Hebrews 6 to send believing sinners to hell. The question I ask these men is: “Is there anyone in the Bible who sinned a sin so great that the Lord refused to accept his repentance and yet, that guy still got into heaven?” Most of them will answer, “No!” Well, “What about Moses?”

Wasn't Moses the chap who struck the rock twice and the Lord told him he could never go into the promised land? No matter how much he repented, (not that we're told Moses tried to repent), God had made up his mind. Moses could not have repented enough to be forgiven. God would not forgive this sin. The definition of “forgiveness” here is the fact that the sin cannot be repented of enough to change the consequence of the sin. God is righteous and must judge sin. But this judgment does not mean eternal condemnation, but rather, a judgment of the sin. Moses was saved, yet, Moses was judged (Hebrews 12:7). Who among us could say that Moses wasn't, “once enlightened;” that Moses once, “tasted of the heavenly gift;” that he was, “made partaker of the Holy Spirit.” Moses did, “sin” - God told Him to speak to the rock, but Moses, in his anger with Israel, instead struck the rock, and when the water didn't come out instantaneously, he struck it again, thus sinning (disobeying God).

God said to Aaron and Moses “Because you believed me not . . .” (Number 20:7-13). Moses lost his faith in what God had said and went his own way - Moses “*fell away,*” so to speak, into unbelief. So he could not be “renewed to repentance.” Yet, we see him again in the New Testament standing with the Lord and the prophet Elijah at

the transfiguration. So where had the poor sinning, once enlightened, unbelieving, falling away Moses been for the past few years? Paradise of course. In the "bosom of Abraham." Certainly not in hell.

You'll never get a believer into hell with Hebrews 6, no matter how hard you try.

Prayers of the Unredeemed

This subject is a can of worms because the unredeemed, as we know, are at enmity with God. So, does He hear their prayers?

The blind man Jesus healed, if you will recall, came before the Sanhedrin and gave his defense in part saying, "We know therefore God heareth not sinners. And if this man is not from God He could do nothing" (John 9 KJV). There is a sense in which he is very right. And, there is a sense in which he is very wrong. In terms of those who are the Lord's, God hears them. In terms of those who are not the Lord's, God does not hear them. But, God deals on His principle of righteousness, just principles, with both sinner and saint.

The Unredeemed Raised Up For God's Purposes

"The scripture said unto Pharaoh, even for this same purpose have I raised you up (Romans 9:17)." Was Pharaoh raised up so that he might be saved? No. It was for an entirely different purpose that God raised up Pharaoh. For God said, "that I might show my power in you, (Pharaoh), and that My name might be declared throughout all the nations" (Romans 9:17; Exodus 9:16).

We have this same principle at work in the betrayer, Judas. Judas was raised up for one purpose, and one purpose only - he accomplished that purpose.

God has mercy on whom He will have mercy and whom He will, He hardens (Romans 9:18; Exodus 4:21). But God will work justly on behalf of anyone who serves Him - willingly or unwillingly, knowingly or unknowingly.

Shalmaneser, the king of Assyria was a servant whom God used to chasten the northern kingdom of Israel, the ten tribes, although Shalmaneser was never aware that he was serving the God of Israel. The Lord referred to him in Isaiah 10, as "the rod of Mine anger." God raised up the king of Assyria to go against the ten tribes, to carry them away into captivity; severely chastening them. After Shalmaneser had accomplished his work as "the rod" of the Lord's anger, Shalmaneser declared: "by the strength of my hand have I gotten all this great victory." So the Lord said, "because you attribute this great victory to yourself, I'll bring judgment on you," which He did. God heard the words of the unbelieving Shalmaneser, and judged him.

In the case of Babylon we see this same design. God used Babylon to destroy Assyria, fulfilling the above mentioned prophecy against king Shalmaneser. The Lord

brought Babylon, “down to take Israel captive, to destroy” - the city of Tyre (Assyria and king Shalmaneser). When Nebuchadnezzar had completed the mission the Lord had sent him - without the knowledge of being sent by the Lord - the Lord said, “Babylon had no wages for the labor wherewith he labored for Me against Tyre. I will therefore give him Egypt for his hire.” After Nebuchadnezzar had finished destroying Tyre, he couldn’t get the spoils from his victory (because the city was on an island, and it was impossible for him bring out the spoils of the battle), so the Lord said, “because he didn’t get a reward, I’m going to give him Egypt.” And He did.

Both kings, Shalmaneser and Nebuchadnezzar served God. Yet, He rejected the former because of pride. A. W. Tozer said, “We are all used by God, either as a tool or as a son.” Maybe this is a good example of why we have so many rich unbelievers. God is using them, without their knowledge - God is blessing them, prospering them, growing their operation by giving them the spoils of their labor. He is using them to serve His purpose - as servants, not sons. The same may hold true with certain individuals in the Church. Something to ponder.

So we see that God always deals with all men on the basis of His righteous principle. If they serve Him in any way, whether they are pagan or believer, He deals with them on His principle. God is a just judge. He judges in righteousness and in honor to His Word in all things and in all people. But, to call on the Lord for redemption requires an initial work on the part of the Holy Spirit of God, Himself. Without that initial work, God does not hear their prayers - prayers of the unredeemed. He does, however, send them rain for their crops when they serve Him - plus, they are growing food for His people.

God’s dealings in His judgments and work are eternal and just. The way in which He deals with His children, the redeemed, is eternally for our good - as in the judgment seat we will face. The *Judgment Seat* with which the believer will face, will not be a ruling on the believer’s place in hell or heaven, but rather, an edict on the believer’s position in the heavens the Lord has prepared for us.

A Little Word Study

As stated before, the Greek word, *Bema*, translated *Judgment* in the Judgment Seat of Christ, in 2 Corinthians 5:10, is not the same word translated as *judgment* elsewhere in the Word of God. There are many varying words which have been translated, for our English tongue, into the word, *judgment*. Such as:

Krisis: whereby we find our word *crisis*. It is *the point of judgment*. When God brings us to a point in our experience where we face the fruits of our doing. It is God dealing with us in an area; a crisis.

Krima: whereby we have our word for *criminal*. This is *a fact of judgment*. In Romans 11:33, God is addressed as that Great and Righteous Judge in the earth.

Kriterion: whereby we have our word *criterion*. It is *the basis of judgment* of those things which are brought together to bring us to a particular conclusion. It is used as a noun, verb or adjective. "The One who judges, the discerner of the thoughts of our hearts" (Hebrews 4:12).

Krino: a noun, *an act of judgment*. Matthew 7: "Judge not that ye be not judged."

There are many more judgments found in the Holy Word of God, which I have not applied to this list. The one suggestion I would give to you, my beloved reader is read. Read the Word. Look up this stuff. Feed on the Word. Get a hold of a Greek, Hebrew and Latin expository dictionary or two. Maybe an exhaustive concordance and a complete English dictionary. Read. Seek the Lord.

One of my favorite verses in Holy Writ states, "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter and the honor of kings to search it out." Solomon said that⁷. Another favorite is, "Seek ye out the Book of the Lord, and read." Isaiah said that.⁸ You can consider that the "mouth of two witnesses."⁹ Discern, for yourself, the meaning, the intent of the manifest glory of our Father in Heaven, which He has hidden for us within His amazing Book. You will be amazed at how simple even the ancient languages are to learn (or at least understand), when they are perused through the power of the Spirit of Life.

People Without the Law

I want to explore the judgment of sin "when there is no law." How are they judged? The simple answer: "when there is no law," they are judged on the basis of the fact that they were born of the first man Adam. Just like us. But let's expand upon our inquiry.

Before the law, God dealt with the nations in a time sphere on the basis of their behavior - which is why He brought the flood upon all the world of the ungodly. But man's eternal position was never predicated on what he did. That is why Paul said, "For until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression" (Romans 5:13-14).

What was the similitude of Adam's transgression? God said, Adam don't "eat of that tree." So Adam, "ate of that tree." The woman didn't hear God say, Don't "eat of that tree." Eve got the message from Adam, but "ate of the tree" anyway. So they were both thrown out of the garden because of their disobedience.

After Adam and Eve left the garden, God didn't say anything to anyone about how to live - but they did have "the knowledge of good and evil." There were no stipulations set down as to how man was to behave, until after the flood. But "death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." In spite of this fact, God did not deal with men on the basis of their personal sins on an eternal basis, He, nonetheless, did deal with them on a natural basis. Thus, He brought in the flood.

Between the time of the fall of Adam and the flood of Noah, the basis of God's judgment upon man was the revelation that a redeemer will come: a redeemer will come from, "The seed of the woman" (Genesis 3:14-15). This was the promise embraced: the pledge, that a Redeemer would appear on the scene in that Day - *One* who would bring redemption to mankind. The men who believed that record and offered offerings to God in accordance with that revelation: Abel, who "*brought the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering*" (Genesis 4:3-5; Hebrews 11:4.); Enoch, who "*was not found because God had translated him*" and . . . "*he had this testimony, that 'he pleased God'*" (Genesis 5:22-24; Hebrews 11:5); Noah, who was, "*moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of righteousness which is according to faith*" (Genesis 6:14-22; Hebrews 11:7); etc. , all stood in righteousness before God. And as a result of their standing (Ephesians 6:12-17), they maintained a sensitivity in the sphere of their inner man, their conscience. Conscience, being the rule of God written on the heart of every man, the "knowledge of good and evil," as the apostle Paul states. But the men who did not operate in that record, moved farther and farther away in sensitivity to the Lord, who created them. "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil" (Genesis 6:5) - so when the Lord, the Spirit of God, spoke, they could not hear.

The word *conscience* is a contraction of two Greek words, which means *to know together*. The idea is the Spirit has an utterance and the soul has an attitude. When the Spirit speaks, if the soul of a man can not embrace the words with an attitude of sensitivity to the Spirit, what the man has is a grieved conscience. An individual can grieve their conscience long enough, and to the point where there is no sensitivity to the speaking of, or better, the hearing of the Spirit of God to that man, therefore the man cannot hear what the Spirit is saying. The Spirit's words cannot then push through the seared conscience.

Before the flood, the men of the earth grieved their conscience, defiled their conscience, and finally seared their conscience - so the Lord brought the Flood. Only Noah had a conscience that wasn't seared; he believed - "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:8).

Today we have approximately six billion people living on the earth. Fifty years or so ago, we had only two or three billion. The earth's population grows exponentially as time goes on, becoming more and more rapid. The population of the world reached one billion in 1804, two billion in 1927, three billion in 1960, four billion in 1974, five billion in 1987, and six billion in 1999. It is projected to reach seven billion by late 2011, and around eight billion by 2025. By 2045-2050, the world's population is currently projected to reach around nine billion, with alternative scenarios ranging from 7.4 billion to 10.6 billion. The earth's population, in the space of two hundred and forty six years (246), has grow from one billion in 1804, to a projected seven or so billion by 2011. This fact made me wonder what the population of the earth was at the time of Flood.

It is theorized (by secular science) that during the 4th millennium B.C. the earth's population was approximately seven to fourteen million people, "when men began to multiply on the face of the earth" (Genesis 6:1). If we take their secular numeric guesswork, we can guesstimate that there was most likely a few million people living on the earth in the years before the flood - approximately the time of Methuselah's birth (Noah's grandfather).

But how many people were living on the earth at the time of Methuselah's death? Methuselah lived almost a century, "nine hundred sixty and nine years" (969) and died the year of the Flood. I am not an expert in or student of mathematics, but after "nine hundred sixty and nine years" the population must have been enormous! Yet, out of the myriads of fallen humanity, only one man, Noah, had not grieved his conscience. This seems strange unless you consider that the Lord could not find "ten" righteous in the city of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18, 19).

Noah lived in a world where "all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God," but Noah believed. Noah could hear the Spirit of God because of that belief. The Lord quickened Noah's spirit and he believed - God saves sinners. The man who is sensitive to the Lord can maintain that relationship, i.e., spirit and soul, before the Lord. As he remains in that sensitive state, he can walk in righteousness, in obedience before the Lord, as far as that obedience is revealed. But since "sin is not imputed when there is no law"; and man, at that time had no Law - no Law had been given between the fall and the Exodus - God was not dealing with man during that time on the basis of individual actions, but on the basis of his nature given him from his father Adam. Even at that time, those who believed were saved. They had the Word from God, "the seed of the woman;" and they believed God. So God saved them in the Ark.

Arthur W. Pink in his book, *An Exposition of Hebrews*, declares:

Faith shuts its eyes to all that is seen, and opens its ears to all God has said. Faith is a convective power which overcomes carnal reasoning, carnal prejudices, and carnal excuses. It enlightens the judgment, molds the heart, moves the will, and

reforms the life. It takes us off earthly things and worldly vanities, and occupies us with spiritual and Divine realities. It emboldens against discouragements, laughs at difficulties, resists the Devil, and triumphs over temptations. It does so because it unites the soul to God and draws strength from Him.

This faith was true of Abraham. He “believed God and it was counted unto him for (*with a view of*) righteousness.” What Word did Abraham have? First, a redeemer will come (“the seed of the woman”) and then “Get thee out of thy country . . .” So Abraham left. He believed God. Because of that Word, and other words God eventually gave him, Abraham believed. And because he believed, Abraham had a relationship with God. The theorem which governed Abraham’s relationship with God was: He believed God, and God called him friend (2 Chronicles 20:7). He was a friend of God. Abraham didn’t want to offend his friend, so Abraham obeyed the word of the Lord. The Law had not been given yet, but Abraham had a friend: God. So he obeyed God out of friendship - because of relationship.

As believers, we have the same basis of relationship with God today. “I call you no longer servants, but friends.” Either He’s our friend, or He isn’t. Either there’s a relationship, or there isn’t. Either there’s a covenant, or there isn’t. Either there’s faith or there isn’t. And because of that relationship, that covenant, that faith, that friendship, we don’t want to offend our friend. No Law can touch that. That is pure grace; pure intimacy given us from our Father because we believe “His only begotten Son.”

There are risks to living by faith in the Lord, but the rewards far outweigh any risk. The key to success is to always keep Christ Jesus (“the seed of the woman” - our Ark) as the object of our faith. He has never, nor will He ever fail.

The Day of Wrath

The “Day of Wrath” incorporates three scenes: *The Seven Trumpet Judgments*, *The Seven Bowl Judgments* and *The Seven-Sealed Scroll* (Revelation, chapters 4 - 16). All three of these events occur concurrently. In other words, the judgment of God, which will come upon the entire human race in that “Day,” happens at one time, not three. There is one, “Day of Wrath,” not three “Day(s) of Wrath,” no matter what you have been told. Read it for yourself.

The Seven-Sealed Scroll, found in the Revelation, chapters 4 - 6 and 8:1, addresses an outline of the entire “Day of Wrath.” *The Seven Trumpet Judgments*, found in the Revelation, chapters 8:2 - 9:21, and chapters 11 - 19 and *The Seven Bowl Judgments*, found in the Revelation, chapters 15 and 16, are the judgments which God pours out at that time; the time of *The Seven-Sealed Scroll*, or the time of the “Day of Wrath.”

The Seven Trumpet Judgments are addressed, for the most part, to the ear of the Israelites. They address one set of details, which are particular to that period of time. *The Seven Bowl Judgments*, which are addressed for the most part to the ear of the Gentiles, address the same time period, yet they illustrate a different set of details. And the Gentiles are about to understand the meaning of those illustrations.

So do we all follow at this point? *The Seven Bowl Judgments* address the same period of time as *The Seven Trumpet Judgments*: The “Day of Wrath,” the time of *The Seven-Sealed Scroll*. Each judgment is emphasizing a different attribute of that same “Day.” One relates to Israel. One relates to the Gentiles. Neither “judgment” relates to the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ!

God judged all sin at the cross! We, as His Body, the Church, have already stood before the court of Heaven and have been judged innocent, redeemed. We have already gone through our, “Day of Wrath,” if you will allow. We have all committed crimes, which are punishable by eternal death! But, the Son, Christ Jesus, has taken our punishment for us. So God judged us . . . not guilty! - because of our belief. Because we have believed on the efficacious work the Son accomplished for us - His work on His cross.

The wrath of God which is poured out, on that “Day,” is poured out on the unbelieving, the unredeemed, the world, the flesh, and the Devil, not on His beloved Bride. But that does not mean we will not face tribulation, percussion and possibly death. All it means is that we will not be judged with the world. “Here is the patience and faith of the saints” (Revelation 13:10; 14:12; cp. 1:9).

The White Throne Judgment

God deals in this final judgment, with people’s failure to respond to the truth He manifested. Here, at the White Throne Judgment, we are speaking of the eternal judgment of the world’s peoples - the unredeemed. Their eternal judgment is not predicated on what they do - it is too late at this point, to plead their case. But rather their judgment is established on Who they did not know, or in Whom they did not believe. So, when the unredeemed come into this eternal judgment, where they are eternally judged, the judgment will be predicated on what they did.

The unredeemed are judged, Revelation 20, (when death and Hell are cast into the Lake of Fire) according to the things which are written in the “books.” The unredeemed are judged according to their works. These works are written in the “books” spoken of in Revelation 20:12. This White Throne Judgment will not determine whether or not they will be in the lake of fire - they will all be in the lake of fire eternality - but rather, it will determine what position they are in when they get there. I want this to be very clear:

We are *not* discussing the basis on which one is redeemed or unredeemed.

We are *not* discussing the place the redeemed will occupy.

We are discussing the place the *unredeemed* will occupy due to their obedience or lack of it - in their failure to believe in the Son of God.

The people at this judgment are all going to Hell - they didn't believe on that name: Jesus. Their names are not written in the Lamb's Book of Life. They are being judged by their works which are written in "the books"; which are opened. The redeemed are not standing in this line, waiting to be judged on whether they're going to go to Heaven or Hell. This queue is for the unredeemed only - and they're all going to the Lake of Fire.

There are different levels of rewards and positions the redeemed will occupy in glory. As we pointed out earlier, we believers will be judged, not at the White Throne Judgment, but rather at the *Judgment or Bema (rewards) Seat of Christ* (2 Corinthians 5). We will be judged with the view of rewards, not of condemnation. ". . . if any man's work abide which he has built upon it, he shall receive a reward" (1 Corinthians 3:13), not condemnation, nor damnation. No believer will wind up in Hell, because our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Glory! We've all been judged at the Cross. But the position we each will occupy in that day will depend on our work done in the Body - while we were on the earth. Some of us will be judged as "wood," some as "gold," and rewarded as such. "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth" (1 Timothy 2:20) - but, we'll be there. No believer will wind up in the Lake of Fire.

Judging the Unredeemed.

There also will be different levels of positions the unredeemed will occupy in Hell - the Lake of Fire. It is not my place to judge, it is the Lord's, but it may be that an unredeemed Hitler-type will not occupy the same place of torment as some unredeemed philanthropic individual. Their works, done in their earthly life which are written in those books, are different. One of the unredeemed may have spent their life feeding the world's hungry. The other may have spent their life trying to wipe-out the Jews and the Christians. They will both be in Hell, but on different levels, so to speak.

There will also be different levels of punishment throughout eternity. Both will be punished, yet in different degrees. "He that knew His master's will and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes. He that knew not His master's will and did it not, shall be beaten with few stripes." Both are beaten. It is not a question of, "Will they be punished?" but rather, to what degree will they be punished? It is not an issue of whether or not they are going to be judged for their obedience or lack of it. The only obedience that could have kept them out of the flames of the Lake of Fire was their

obedience in believing on the name of Jesus while they were still alive on the earth. These are the “once born” dead and they are being prepared to be in torment forever. This is eternally dying; yet as one who is alive. Burning, forever in the Lake of Fire. The issue then is, what was their response in this life?

They did not believe on the work accomplished for the whole world by Christ Jesus on His cross, but rather they believed that their good works would outweigh their bad works, and God would let them into His heaven because of their good works. They are, at this point, standing at the White Throne Judgment, relying on their good deeds, their good charitable giving, their good (so called) righteous works, hoping to get into heaven. But remember, “all of our righteousness is as filthy rags” to God - there is no good righteous deed they could have done, in the name of a good righteous deed doing, which could have kept them out of Hell. “Man must be born again to enter the kingdom of heaven.” If you’re born once, you’ll die twice. If you’re born twice you’ll only die once. “On such the second death,” (Hell), “has no power, but they” (the ones who believed on His name) “shall be priest of God and of Christ” (Revelation 20:6) - eternity.

This is a hopeless scene, this White Throne Judgment. The thought of it is one of the reasons I tell everyone I can about the Lord Jesus. I do not want to see anyone I knew here on earth standing at this judgment, waiting to go into the Lake of Fire for eternity.

“And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and hades delivered up the dead that were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hades were cast into the Lake of Fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found in the Book of Life was cast into the Lake of Fire.”

(Revelation 20:11-15).

“The final judgment. The subjects are ‘dead’ . . . the wicked dead, from the beginning of human history to the setting up of the great White Throne in space. As there are degrees in punishment (Luke 12:47-48), the dead are judged according to their works. The book of life is there to answer such as plead their works for justification, e.g. Matthew 7:22,23, an awful blank where the name might have been.” C. I. Scofield.¹⁰

“And He said unto me, ‘It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely . . . And there came unto me one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, and talked to me, saying, ‘Come here, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife.’ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. Having the glory of God . . . And I saw no temple in it; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God did light it, and the Lamb is the lamp of it. And the nations of them who are saved shall walk in the light of it . . . And there shall in no way enter into it anything that defiles, either he that works abomination, or makes a lie, but they who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life” (Revelation 21:6-27).

The White Throne judgment has no place for believers. The judgment the believer faces is a judgment of rewards. Not wrath. Not death. But Life, Everlasting. I know I am repeating myself again, but the need for us to accept the love, acceptance and forgiveness of our Father is great. I will always remain staggered at the inability or the unwillingness of the people of God to understand - or accept - the degree to which we have been forgiven. There is nothing we can add to the grace of God which will make it any more complete than it is. It’s perfect. There is nothing we can take from it to lessen its strength and integrity. It has nothing to do with us. It is His righteousness in you. Now start enjoying it!

*“And this I pray,
that your love may abound yet more and more
in knowledge and in all judgment;
that you may approve things that are excellent;
that you may be sincere and without offense
till the day of Christ,
being filled with the fruits of righteousness,
which are by Jesus Christ,
unto the glory and praise of God”*
(Philippians 1:9-11)

¹ Matthew 5:20

² Romans 6:21 "What fruit had you then in those things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death."

Proverbs 14:12 "There is a way which seems right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death."

Proverbs 16:25 "There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death."

³ **Pharisees:** from a Hebrew word meaning *separate*. After the ministry of the post-exilic prophets ceased, godly men called *Chasidim* (saints) arose who sought to keep alive reverence for the law among the descendants of the Jews who returned from the Babylonian captivity. This movement degenerated into the Pharisaism of our Lord's day - a letter-strictness which overlaid the law with traditional interpretations held to have been communicated by the Lord to Moses as oral explanations of equal authority with the law itself. (cp. Matthew 15:2-3; Mark 7-13; Galatians 1:14).

The Pharisees were strictly a sect. A member was a *chaber* (i.e. "knit together," Judges 20:11) and was obligated to remain true to the principles of Pharisaism. They were moral, zealous, and self-denying, but self-righteous (Luke 18:9) and destitute of the sense of sin and need (Luke 7:39). They were the foremost persecutors of Jesus Christ and the objects of His unsparing denunciation, e.g. Matthew 23:1-6; Luke 11:42-44.

Sadducees: They were a Jewish sect that denied the existence of angels or other spirits, and all miracles, especially the resurrection of the body. They were the religious rationalists of the time (Mark 12:18-23; Acts 23:8), and were strongly entrenched in the Sanhedrin and priesthood (Acts 4:1-2; 5:17). The Sadducees are identified with no affirmative doctrine, but were mere deniers of the supernatural and the resurrection.

The above is taken from Dr. C.I. Scofield's notes in his study Bibles (1909 & 1917).

⁴ Christ's cry from the cross, "It is finished!" is an accounting term, meaning the debt is "paid in full".

The word in the Greek is *tetelestai*: (ΤΕΤΕΛΕΣΤΑΙ). Justice had satisfied by full payment of its penalty, and thus God could "be just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

⁵ 1 Corinthians 5:7

⁶ Ezekiel 23:17-18.

⁷ Proverbs 25:2.

⁸ Isaiah 34:16

⁹ Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:16; 19:15; Matthew 18:16; 2 Corinthians 13:1; Timothy 5:19; Revelation 11.

¹⁰ *Rightly Dividing The Word of Truth*, Dr. C. I. Scofield., (1900), distributed by: Scripture Truth Book Co.

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