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Back To The Bible
Lectureship



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What Is Truth?
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FORWARD

“What is truth?” This question asked by Pilate so long ago is still being echoed throughout the ages. Although man denies the ability to know truth, the truth can and must be known to be freed from sin. Jesus said, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Jesus not only told us we can know truth, He gave us the source to obtain it: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Many, it seems, reject truth because of what it demands, wholly submitting to the will of God.

It is our sincere plea that all men will come to a knowledge of the truth. Not one single author from this book claims to be the source of truth, there is only one source, the Word of God. Therefore, we hope the serious Bible student will be lead, by these series of lessons, to the truth of God’s Word. We also pray that when men find the truth that it will be valued as a great prize. Solomon said, “Buy the truth, and sell it not...” (Proverbs 23:23).

Tim Canup
July 16, 2004

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Chapter 1

What Is Truth?

Mike Hogan

Mike Hogan was born in Fayetteville, Arkansas 1960, but grew up in Lincoln Nebraska. He joined the US. Navy in 1978 where he served his country as a U.S. Navy Diver, honorably discharged in 1990 he joined a commercial diving company where he traveled around the world as an under water welder and supervisor. After conversion to Christ and shortly after preaching his first lesson he enrolled with the North West Florida School of Biblical Studies, preacher training school, graduating in 1997. Currently Mike is completing his degree with the Tennessee Bible College. He has served the Lord in Florida, Louisiana, Alabama, Tennessee, and North Carolina where he currently labors with the Broad Street church of Christ, in Statesville, NC. He has been married for 23 years to Anita, and has two wonderful Christian children. Brandon (21) serves in the US Navy and Ashley age 17 is home-schooled and is in her 11th grade of study and attends Mitchell College.

INTRODUCTION

This question has been asked by all of us at some point in our lives; it is an honest query that gets to the heart of our quest to find real objective truth in a sea of subjectivity and postmodernism. Agnosticism and pragmatism fuel the fire of unbelief in the existence of any objective truth. During His sinister trial, our Lord stood before the Roman Governor, Pilate, answering questions about His kingship, and kingdom, (John 18:33-38), "*Are you the king of the Jews?*" Jesus clearly imparts the truth about the nature of His kingdom, and the reason for coming to this world, "*That I should bear witness unto the truth*" (John 18:36-37). Jesus then makes a remarkable statement about men and their relationship to the truth, "*...every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.*" Each person must be of the truth as active participants (John 8:32; 18:37).

Pilate's question, "*...what is truth?*" can be seen as either seeking truth or simply mocking the Lord. No matter his intentions, the question still must stand the test of objective reason and argumentation (John 18:38). When asking any question, one must either seek for the right answer, or wait for one to be given; Pilate appeared to do neither. Some reasons may be: (1) He cared not for an answer. (2) He might have been a true skeptic (*doctrine that true knowledge is uncertain*) regarding the existence of any so-called truth. (3) He might have believed the only truth he cared for was keeping Jerusalem peaceful for Caesar. (4) Or, he might have simply been agnostic (*A belief system that one can't really know anything*).

It is unclear which camp Pilate was in, but this we are sure of, Jesus said we can know the truth (John 8:32), and therefore, we should acknowledge the existence of such! The word truth appears over 235 times throughout the Bible; it is from the Greek word "*aleôtheia*" meaning: fact, or truthfulness.

We will begin by exploring some differing positions concerning truth, along with revealing the accurate and trustworthy cause of it. This two thousand year old question cries out to be answered, and unlike Pilate, we will use God's truthful word along with his created laws to communicate the reality of objective truth (John 17:17; Acts 17:11; 2 Tim 2:15; etc).

ATTITUDES CONCERNING TRUTH

There are three branches of philosophy that are relevant to our question concerning truth: (1) Epistemology - study of what can be known. (2) Metaphysics - study of what is outside the physical experience. (3) Ethics - universal idea of right and wrong. The ancient philosophers of the 6th and 4th centuries B.C. struggled with the perceived problem of permanence and change; how can there be any such thing as real objective truth when all things about us are ever changing. Heraclitus of the 6th century B.C. said that "*all things are in a state of flux,*" suggesting that one can't step twice into the same river, because water is ever flowing. Then we have the Sophists who were educated men that advanced the art of rhetoric; their idea about truth was that of skepticism, who can really know

anything? They were relativists with regards to anything factual and or knowable; matters of morality varied as to the particular need of each person with respect to its outcome, "true pragmatists." Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle recognized in varying degrees from each other the need to go beyond the physical and observable. In their search for the ultimate source and standard for truth they turned to the realm of ideas and logic utilizing the tool of deductive (*provable deduction and reason*), and inductive (*employing mathematical or logical induction*) reasoning. Using a simple syllogism of what is known: (1) The Bible teaches that salvation follows belief and baptism (Mark 16:16). (2) The Bible is the only source of spiritual knowledge about salvation, because it is from a changeless God (Mal 3:6), therefore the message will remain the same until the Lord returns (Matt 24:35; 1 Peter 1:23, 25). (3) One believes but rejects baptism as necessary for salvation, therefore, this person is not saved (John 12:48).

It must be noted these men were heathens and often in contradiction to God's biblical truth, and each other. What we need to understand is their contribution to the idea of objective truth being a reality. All three branches of philosophy are utilized to prove what can be known.

Plato understood that anything true or knowable must meet a certain criterion, such as, infallible and real, possessing both characteristics simultaneously. True knowledge must be constant and permanent, capable of being understood in clear logical definitions, such as a "*Fixed concept of goodness, or morality.*" Although goodness appears to change, the concept or idea of it never changes and by this we know when something has changed from good to bad.

Brother Warren recognized AGNOSTICISM (*One can't really know anything to be true or false*) in the Lord's church, meaning the truth is somehow relative or unknowable. He writes in general about some items he had been hearing and reading in the brotherhood, describing it like this:

"None of us is infallible. Every man makes mistakes. Therefore, none of us can ever be certain that he is right about anything. No one can ever be certain that what he believes is the truth. Therefore, it is clear that none of us ought ever to say that anything which he himself believes is right or that anything which any one else believes and teaches is wrong. Since none of us is infallible, we all, for all any of us know, may be 100% wrong about everything. The main thing is that we be loving and kind to one another. Let us all remember that great men differ as to what the Bible teaches, so none of us should demonstrate that he is so arrogant, presumptuous, hypocritical, and divisive as to declare emphatically that one doctrine is true and that another is false. What each man should do is say, 'I think or believe that what I teach is true, but I do not know that it is true. I am convinced that it is true, but I do not know that it is true. Since other men-who are just as sincere and intelligent as I am strongly differ with what I believe and teach, it seems clear that I should not say that I am right and that they are wrong. Rather, I must realize that, in a sense, we 'live and let live.' We must love one another and fellowship one another even though we differ in our views as to what the Bible teaches."

To say that man cannot know anything for certain is a contradictory statement, in that, if one claims you can't know something, that person is in fact claiming to know something, such as you can't know anything. This claim violates the known law of contradiction; "*a thing cannot be true and false at the same time.*" This nonsensical statement falls flat upon logical reason and investigation. Our brethren need to reengage the spiritual fight of truth, "*Fight the good fight of faith...*" (1 Tim 6:12; Jude 3). If we can't know anything, why preach the gospel? After all we can't even be sure that the world is lost in sin, or that the gospel message is really the power of God to save those who believe (Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 1:18; 21). The fact is faith is produced by evidence and that evidence is supplied by the creator (2 Tim 3:15-17).

If we can't know anything, how can one be charged with neglecting the truth (John 3:21), worshiping in truth (John 4:24), bearing witness to the truth (John 5:33), believing the Spirit of truth [*Inspired Bible*] (John 14:17, 16:13), holding the truth in righteousness (Rom 2:18), changing the truth (Rom 1:25), being disobedient to the truth (Rom 2:8), or rejoicing in the truth (1 Cor 13:6) if it does not exist? The Bible and all that it claims would then be a collection of lies and thus unnecessary.

Many today are so sure that truth exists that they feel it necessary to help God along by adding to his word. We must be careful to safeguard against judging individuals and other churches by the standard of opinion. Opinion is: (1) a judgment or appraisal formed about a particular matter, (2) a belief stronger than impression and less strong than positive knowledge. Many good religious people fall into the trap of law making because they hold a strong opinion about something and omitting the freedom of Christian liberty; they use the unwritten rule of necessary inference to define and hone their laws. This then becomes part of their faith system and thus a tool by which others are condemned. Passages like Acts 2:38 and Eph 5:19 are not in the category of inference but they are direct commands. One can know their sins are washed away and with confidence worship God according to truth (John 4:24). Clear objective truth is what we use as faith to guide our lives in faithfulness. Prayerful consideration and a great deal of study should be employed before conclusions based upon inference can be classed as part of ones faith system and used to divide Heaven or Hell.

THE NATURE AND SOURCE OF TRUTH

The world exists within the realm of truth and lies (John 8:44-47). Man is caught in the middle with his eternal destiny hanging in the balance depending upon the choices made here (Josh 24:15; Ecc 12:13-14; John 12:48; Psa 25:10; 2 Cor 5:9-10). We, as God's created beings, have been given the challenge to seek after God according to truth, using our inquisitive nature and our God given ability of reason as tools to aid in our quest to find truth, "*Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding*" (Prov 23:23).

It has been recognized by believers and infidels alike that there are certain laws which co-exist in our world, both physical and philosophical which stand as fact and therefore undeniable. If we recognize that such laws exist, why not spiritual laws as well? If a man said to himself, "Gravity does not exist today," while standing on top of the Empire State Building, he then decides to jump without a parachute; based upon a wrong conclusion about the nature of gravity, certain death will be the result no matter what he/she believes. Our jumper rejected a known physical law because his definition or idea about gravity was false. When one denies the existence of moral law, he/she will soon find, as a result, broken families, loss of health, and or incarceration as the result of their denial and rejection.

In the area of logic and philosophy there are laws, which govern the logical outcome of any question; the result is usually clear and a line is drawn between truth and error. When our justice system steps outside the boundaries of right and wrong, the result is undeniable. When one has been wronged by the justice system, outrage and unrest are a reality with those involved. Why, because justice and morality are a very real part of who we are as humans (Psa 89:14). And so, justice and morality stand as fact. We must appeal to the area of reason and epistemology (*study of what can be known*) "*1+1=2*" to expose that which owes its existence to God, the one Divine Eternal Nature (Psa 100:105; 108:4), "*Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth*" (Psa 119:142).

In the Bible we find that which can be known about God, nature, and the after life (Deut 29:29; 2 Peter 1:2-3). By way of evidence, the Bible supports its claims as fact and truth much like physical evidence in the scientific world. In the realm of physical things, we know they exist because of God, not only by design, but by sufficient power to bring them into existence (Gen 1:1; Deut 4:32; Psa 19:1-4). Physical things are contingent (*dependent upon another*) and therefore, owe their being to something that is non-contingent (*self-dependent*); this would be God. The life we see about us owes its existence to the source of all life as the law of biogenesis would apply; "*life comes from life*," no exceptions.

Paul reminds us about God's Divine Nature in the book of Romans, chapters one and two to show what man did with his natural and special revelation. Paul said that men of old clearly *understood* what they had *seen* and it was enough to know with certainty God was the source and cause of all things. God's power and attributes (divine nature) are imprinted in creation so that they were without excuse. If this premise is true, we can look to the physical world and see part of God's nature and power as evidence of His truth.

David said, *“For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations”* (Psa 110:5). The evidence of his kindness and truth can be witnessed by those who are seeking to know objective truth, *“Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness”* (Acts 14:17). All of mankind is dependent upon God for their very being, Paul said (Acts 17:25-29):

Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

Thus, we must look to God for all truth because he is the source of it and we are contingent upon it. His very nature or attributes are imprinted into his creation, such as love, justice, mercy, power, knowledge, etc. The Bible points out that God is truthful, it is impossible for him to lie (Titus 1:2), therefore, He can be trusted with our soul's salvation. We depend upon this reality of truth and fact to sustain our hope and confidence in spiritual matters.

WHERE DO WE FIND THE TRUTH?

This question might be obvious to some but not as much to others. God's nature is unchanging (Heb 6:18) and infinite in knowledge, articulated through His word. God's word contains all truth, and was given to direct the steps of those who care (Jer 10:23; Prov 3:6), and is designed to benefit and aid us in all good things (2 Tim 3:15-17) that we may be approved of God (2 Tim 2:15) and thus, obtain salvation through faith (Eph 2:8-10; Rom 10:17; etc). Paul said, *“How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ”* (Eph 3:3-4). It is of great value to understand where to find truth and that it is logical and reasonable to every believer.

The truth meets with the criterion established by the early philosophers, infallible and real, as God is infallible and real himself. The fact is, God's word is inspired and contains all truth (John 16:13; Gal 1:6-12); it has been revealed (1 Cor 2:11-13); it is authoritative (Matt 28:18; Heb 1:1-2) and sufficient to provide hope along with sanctification (John 17:17; Acts 20:32).

Truth does not need updating: There is a story of a man who came to his old friend, a music teacher, and said to him, *“What's the good news today?”* The old teacher was silent as he stood up and walked across the room, picked up a hammer, and struck a tuning fork. As the note sounded out through the room, he said, *“That is A. It is A today; it was A five thousand years ago, and it will be A ten thousand years from now. The soprano upstairs sings off-key, the tenor across the hall flats on his high notes, and the piano downstairs is out of tune.”* He struck the note again and said, *“That is A, my friend, and that's the good news for today.”*

Isn't it wonderful to know you can count on something that will never change with time? The truth is like the tuning fork, it never changes and will always be the standard by which we can know real things. David said, *“Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day”* (Psa 25:5). The Bible gives us all the information we need to serve the Lord.

WHAT IS THE TRUTH?

Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”* (John 14:6). Everything the Bible says can be summed up in Jesus. He is the very reason for the truth and those

who choose to recognize this will see Jesus as the Lamb and the King, thereby, gaining life eternal through Him (John 6:44-45; Rom 6:23). No matter how hard some try to change this fact, it will remain the same truth, *"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever"* (Heb 13:8). *"All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies"* (Psa 25:10). May all of us remember this, *"For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ"* (John 1:17).

CONCLUSION

Many today claim to believe in God's word but in their preaching and teaching they deny the very existence of real objective truth. Their fallacious position allows the Devil to continue his attack upon the truth and therefore, the church. We must be knowledgeable about the source of truth and the value of it in order to sow the seeds of hope and life eternal (Luke 8:11; 1 Peter 1:23-25). I am not sure why Pilate asked his question, but I do know this, Jesus said we can know the truth, and that truth will make us free. I will therefore stand on the foundation of this declaration and reject the lie of subjectivity and relative attitudes about the nature and source of all truth. Paul said, *"For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth"* (2 Cor 13:8). People cannot change truth, but truth can change people. Thus David was able to put his eternal trust in the Lord, *"Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth"* (Psa 13:8).

End Notes:

- 1 Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th edition.
- 2 Strong's Greek and Hebrew Dictionary.
- 3 A History of Philosophy. Frederick Copleston, S.J. (Vol. 1: Greece and Rome).
- 4 The Bible Only makes Christians Only and the Only Christians. Thomas B. Warren, Ph.D. (p. 14-19).

Chapter 2
The Truth About The Bible
Clifford Newell

Clifford Newell, Jr., was born and reared in Michigan. He attended Memphis School of Preaching, Southern Christian University (B.A.; M.A.; D.Min.) Kentucky State University (M.P.A.). He has taught religious courses at colleges, universities, and schools of preaching. He is the co-director of the Tri-Cities School of Preaching. Clifford is married to Diane Elaine (King), and they have two children and four grandchildren. Clifford has been preaching since 1976.

INTRODUCTION

The Bible has been in the fiery furnace of human investigation and opposition for many centuries, yet it emerges without the smell of fire upon its garments. It has stood the acid test of practical experience. It has never failed when fairly tried. We have seen it in the forum of public discussion, we have seen it at the bedside of the dying, and we have seen it at the graves of the dead; yet we have never seen it weighed and found wanting. It is God's book.

A glory gilds the sacred page,
Majestic like the sun;
It lends its light to every age;
It lends to all, but borrows none.

The Bible is here, and no one of sound mind can doubt its existence. How did it come into existence? Is it the work of God or is it the work of man? The truth is the Bible is the result of the cooperative work of God and man. It is not solely the work of man, for he could not have produced it if he would. Its contents are beyond the reach of human authorship. He would not have written it if he could, for it condemns too many things which men, by nature, hold dear. It did not come, written on tables of stone by the finger of God as did the original record of the ten commandments (Exo. 31:18). Friends, the Bible was produced by the cooperation of God and man. Peter taught, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost [Spirit]" (2 Pet. 1:21).

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE BIBLE MUST INCLUDE REVELATION AND INSPIRATION

The matter of inspiration regarding the Bible is of vital importance. If the Bible is not of divine origin, we cannot rely upon its statement of fact, we need not bow to its claim of authority, and we cannot derive hope and comfort from its promises. If it represents only the efforts of uninspired men, we may, for sure, view its contents with little or no concern. On the other hand, if the Bible came from God, its authority is unquestionable and its statements are infallible.

The nature and contents of the Bible are such that its readers in all generations have recognized God as its author. Man would not have written such a book if he could, and could not if he would. It moves on a superhuman plane in design, in nature, and in teaching. The Bible does not cater to worldly desire and ambition. It condemns much which men highly prize and commends much which they despise. The thoughts recorded are not the thoughts of men. Even the casual reader has been impressed with the frequent use of such expressions as: "Thus saith the Lord," "God spake," "The Lord testified, saying," and "The Lord hath spoken it." These expressions occur over 1,300 times in the prophets, and in the entire Old Testament they occur over 2,500 times.

The writers of the Bible proclaimed:

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures,

which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:14-17).

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say (Exo. 4:12).

Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue (2 Sam. 23:1-2).

Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth (Jer. 1:9).

And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me (Luke 24:44).

The above-mentioned Scriptures affirm that the writers claimed to write as they were borne along by the Holy Spirit of God. Thus, it should be evident that "theories of inspiration" did not enter their minds. In fact, the Bible writers did not believe, nor did they contend, that the Bible contains the Word of God. They set forth the Bible **IS** the Word of God.

A question is in order at this point: What is meant by inspiration as applied to the Bible? Almost any modernist will admit that the Bible is inspired if allowed to define his own terms. Generally, the modernists believe the Bible is inspired in the sense that Shakespeare was. Hence, let us observe the inspiration of God. Our word *inspiration* literally means "a breathing in." It is derived from two words (Latin), *in* and *spiro*, which means "to blow or breathe into." Originally, the Greek word *theopneustos* is employed. *Theopneustos* is composed of two words, *Theos* meaning God; and *pneustos* meaning "breathed." Thus, we have the Word of God as God-breathed or filled with the breath of God. The book that is in this sense inspired is one into which something of another spirit or mind has been breathed; in other words, its writer has been overshadowed by a power outside himself. Therefore, inspiration involves that influence which God exercises through the Holy Spirit over the minds of Biblical writers.

It must be kept in mind that a difference exists between revelation and inspiration. Revelation has reference to the communication of knowledge. It renders its recipient wiser. It is the means through which God imparts facts and truths not previously known. Inspiration has reference primarily to the accurate communicating of knowledge. It preserves its recipient from error in teaching. It must be kept in mind that the words and the thoughts of the sacred writers are inspired. Jesus promised this very type of inspiration. He said that the Holy Spirit would teach the apostles how and what to speak. The "what" has reference to the thought; the "how" refers to the verbiage used in expression. Thus, we have verbal inspiration. Friends, it would be most interesting for someone to explain how God could inspire the thoughts without at the same time inspiring the words. How can one carry on a conversation without words? How can one express thoughts without words or their equivalent? Jesus said, "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Mat. 5:18). Thus, Christ asserts the verbal inspiration and guarantees the verbal indestructibility of the text. We might say not even a jot (small letter) or tittle (part of a letter) shall pass until the law shall have been fulfilled.

It is true, however, that, while the Holy Spirit moved the penman of the Bible to write, yet they were free to speak through their own individual background, personality, vocabulary, and style.

Inspiration did not involve the suspension or suppression of the human faculties, so neither did it interfere with the free exercise of the distinctive mental characteristics of the individual. Please consider the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Their plan, style, and peculiar expressions are strikingly different. Matthew was a Jew, and he writes with a Jewish background. He gives detailed reports of what Jesus said, quotes often from the Old Testament, and speaks of the “kingdom of heaven,” whereas the other writers say “kingdom of God.” Mark features the mighty works of Jesus, and he uses the words “straightway” and “immediately” many times. Luke was a Gentile and a physician, and he frequently uses the expression “a certain.” His medical background is evident in his writing. When Jesus said that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, Matthew and Mark use the Greek word *raphis*, which means “an ordinary needle”; but Luke uses the word *belone*, which means “a surgeon’s needle” (Mat. 19:24; Mark 10:25; Luke 18:25). Luke uses *hudropikos* to describe a man who had dropsy (Luke 14:2). John records much that is not mentioned by the other writers. He uses the solemn “verily, verily” twenty-five times. He is the only writer who used this expression.

Inspiration does not vouch for the truthfulness of all statements which it quotes. Certain statements made by Satan are quoted by the inspired writers—for example, “And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). While it is true that the Devil said this, what he said is not true. Inspiration never lies, but it sometimes records the statements of those who did lie.

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE BIBLE WOULD INCLUDE ASCERTAINING BIBLE AUTHORITY

Christianity is the religion of Biblical authority. To reject the inspiration and authority of the Bible is to reject Christianity, which, in turn, is to reject Christ; and that means rejecting the only hope of salvation (Col. 1:27). To say that the Bible is God’s Word is to say that it can be trusted completely to teach the truth. Since God cannot lie (Heb. 6:18), then the Bible cannot lie. Truth is absolute; i.e., it is free from, or independent of, the subjective condition of the person. The truth of a proposition is not changed by individuals drawing conclusions about it. This is in contrast to the theory of relativism, a popular point of view wherein there is no such thing as absolute truth. According to this view, truth varies from time to time, person to person, and place to place. When it is stated there is no such thing as absolute truth, we need to ask, are you absolutely sure?

Jackson observed:

Relativism alleges that all moral judgments depend upon the present circumstances. There is no ultimate “right” or “wrong”; rather, the rightness or wrongness of a situation is to be determined by the contingencies of the moment (6).

So, the philosophy of relativism holds that truth is relative depending on the circumstance or situation and truth is neither objective nor absolute; therefore, truth is subjective.

The divine Volume soundly defeats relativism. The peerless Paul affirmed that the Scriptures were written so that even a child could become “wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15). The Ephesian elders were so commended: “And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). Inspiration says that Timothy “shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church” (1 Cor. 4:17). The case is “the judgment of God is according to truth” and that standard, the truth, is the Word of God (Rom. 2:2; John 17:17). It is absolute, for “the scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). Although heaven and earth shall pass away, the word of God shall not pass away (Mat. 24:35).

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE Bible MUST INCLUDE ITS RELEVANCE

The Bible makes many claims, and one of the claims is that it is relevant. The case is that the Bible “as it is” is relevant and adapted to man “as he is” in any generation. That is why the Scriptures proclaim:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The Bible “as it is” without further revelation, without further confirmation, and without a direct operation of the Holy Spirit is ready for man. Man “as he is” is an intelligent, reasoning, thinking, accountable being in need of the Word of God.

The Scriptures are relevant to meet man’s every need. The Bible meets man’s need for salvation (2 Tim. 3:14-15). Accountable men are lost, and the gospel is adapted to man in his lost condition (2 The. 1:7-9). The Bible meets man’s need to worship (John 4:24). The Bible meets man’s need to remain faithful, for we learn:

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:5-11).

The Bible is relevant to produce needed changes in our lives. It is not a “dead letter” as some prefer to call it. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Hebrews writer said, “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). It will accomplish what God intended for it to do (Acts 26:18).

The Bible is relevant for every mood. The truth is that man needs the “assurance” and “care” of God in his life. The beautiful twenty-third Psalm is so relevant:

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

The Bible is relevant for every relationship. It teaches what a child should do (Eph. 6:1-3). It teaches what fathers are to do (Eph. 6:4). It teaches the duty of wives (Eph. 5:22). It teaches the duty of husbands (Eph. 5:25, 28). It teaches the duty of servants (Eph. 6:5-8). It teaches the duty of masters (Eph. 6:9). It teaches the duty of government (Rom. 13:1-3; Pro. 14:34). It also teaches the duty of citizens (1 Pet. 2:13-14; Acts 5:29).

The Bible is relevant for morals. We are bombarded on every side today about situational ethics. Some in the religious climate pretend to be religious and say that love in a certain situation means you can do what you want to do and this is all right. While it is true that love fulfills the law, love keeps the Lord’s moral commandments. The Lord said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

Friends, the only morality that is clear in its course, pure in its precepts, and efficacious in its influence is the morality of the Gospel.

The Bible is relevant to refute false doctrines. It refutes atheism, for it presents God and shows that the atheist is a fool (Gen. 1:1; Psa. 14:1). It refutes liberalism, for it reveals the Deity of Christ, the verbal inspiration, the atonement, the resurrection, and the judgment to come. It refutes denominationalism, because it teaches that the Lord only has one church (Mat. 16:18; Eph. 4:3-4). It refutes materialism, because it points man to the spirit world and makes the kingdom of God and righteousness first in our list of priorities (1 Tim. 6:10). Thus one can see that the Word of God is relevant.

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE BIBLE MUST INCLUDE ITS PROPER DIVISION

The words recorded by the apostle Paul are so important in this regard. He stated, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Notice the wording of the American Standard Version, "Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth." Oftentimes we have stated that the way to rightly divide the word of truth is to handle it aright! It should be obvious that the Bible has been and continues to be, mishandled. This is not a Johnny-come-lately charge against the Scriptures. There were false prophets (Jer. 23:25-26) and false priests (Jer. 5:30-31) who were rebellious leaders in the Old Testament. According to Mark we read:

Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men...And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition... Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye (Mark 7:7, 9, 13).

Thus, through the centuries there have been many who have miserably failed to rightly divide the Sacred Scriptures. How should the Scriptures be handled? They should be divided as follows.

The Two Testaments Need To Be Rightly Divided

The Bible can be divided by its testaments. This should be the most familiar of Biblical divisions. Such is a natural division and is perhaps the most obvious division of the Bible. The Old Testament contains thirty-nine books, and the New Testament contains twenty-seven books. The Biblical text speaks of these testaments as the first, or old, and the second, or new (Heb. 2:9). The first testament became old when the Lord pronounced it as old and removed it. The second testament became a far superior testament. Consider: "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. 3:6). The Old Testament was not old until Jehovah made it old. Man nor time did not make it old. God made it old and gave the second or new in its place.

The Three Dispensations Need To Be Rightly Divided

The Bible can be divided by its three dispensations. God has always had a law by which He dealt with His people. The three dispensations are: the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Christian. The Patriarchal was the first, and it had at its center the rule of the fathers, for this is how the word *Patriarch* is used. The emphasis was upon a family religion, and it lasted until Moses ascended mount Nebo and received the Law. The second was the Mosaic Economy, which was a national religion given to Jacob's descendants. Moses stated:

And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day (Deu. 5:1-3).

The third is the Christian Age, which began at Pentecost and will continue until God shall call all things to an end (1 Cor. 15:24). This religion is worldwide in emphasis (Mat. 28:18; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-47) and age lasting.

The Four Divisions of the Old Testament

The Old Testament can be divided into four parts or sections. First, the law which constitutes the first five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These five books give us the account of the beginning through the death of Moses. The second division is referred to as "Hebrew History," and it records twelve books: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. The books of history describe God's dealing with His people as the nation of Israel was developing. The third grouping would be "Wisdom Literature," and contains five books: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. These books were very important during the days of the Mosaic Economy, for they cover the devotional life of God's people. The fourth and final grouping would be the "Prophets." Sometimes they are further divided into the Major and Minor Prophets. The Major Prophets would include: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel. The Minor Prophets are: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The prophets spoke in a two-fold manner: as a forthteller and a foreteller. The difference being a forthteller sets forth the immediate or the present message for that time frame. While the foreteller predicts future events, times, places, or people. Thus, we have many prophetic statements dealing with the New Testament and all things God had promised to bring about (Gal. 4:4).

The Four Divisions of the New Testament

The New Testament can be divided into the following four divisions: First, we are introduced to the "Biographies of Christ": Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They tell us how to have faith in Him. The second division contains one book of "History": Acts. This book is about the kingdom of God, the church. It records the establishment, growth (by conversion), and persecution of the church. The third division is called the "Epistles": Romans; 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, & 3 John, and Jude. These twenty-one epistles tell us how to live for Him. The fourth and final division is referred to as an "Apocalypse": Revelation.

It should be well established in our hearts (minds) that the Old Testament Law has been abrogated. The Bible states, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Mat. 5:17).

The Fifteen Natural or Major Periods Must Be Divided

This division of the Bible is based upon different periods which number fifteen. The Antediluvian Period—from the creation to the universal flood. The Postdiluvian Period—from the flood to the call of Abraham. The Patriarchal Period—from the call of Abraham to the descent in Egypt. The Egyptian Period—from the descent into Egypt to the crossing of the Red Sea. The Wilderness Wanderings Period—from crossing the Red Sea to the crossing of the Jordan River. The Conquest Period—from crossing the Jordan River to the appointment of the first judge. The Judges Period—from the first judge to the establishment of the kingdom. The United Kingdom Period—from the establishment of the kingdom to its division. The Divided Kingdom Period—from the division of the kingdom to its fall in 722 B.C. The Kingdom of Judah Period—from the fall of Samaria to the fall of Jerusalem. The Captivity Period—from the fall of Jerusalem to the decree of Cyrus. The Restoration Period—from the decree of Cyrus to the end of Nehemiah's work. The Intertestamental Period—from the end of Nehemiah's work to the coming of John. The Life of Christ Period—from coming of John to Pentecost. The Lord's Church Period—from Pentecost to the end of Revelation.

CONCLUSION

The truth about the Bible must include a discussion of revelation and inspiration, authority, relevance, and proper divisions. We sum up this lesson with the following.

THE HAMMER AND THE ANVIL

Last eve I passed beside a blacksmith's door
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
When looking in, I saw upon the floor,
Old hammers worn with beating years of time.
How many anvils have you had, said I,
To wear and batter all these hammers so?
Just one, said he; then said with twinkling eye,
The anvil wears the hammers out, you know.
And so, I thought, the anvil of God's word
For ages skeptic's blows have beat upon;
Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,
The anvil is unharmed—the hammers gone!

(John Clifford)

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Chapter 3
The Truth About The Church
Jimmy Canup

Jimmy Canup was baptized in May 1965 at the church of Christ in High Point, NC meeting on Lexington Avenue. He began part time preaching at Cottage Grove Avenue church in Greensboro, NC and Corinth church in Woodleaf, NC. He accepted full time work with the Florida Street church in Greensboro, NC in June of 1967. He has preached full time since 1967 with churches in North Carolina, Kentucky, and Virginia. Presently located with the Fries Church of Christ in Fries, VA.

His educational background consists of work done through National Christian University in Texas and Freed-Hardeman College in Tennessee.

He is married to the former Mary Bartlett of Galax, VA. They have five children, seven grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Without exception, in almost every town and city you enter into you will find numerous buildings with various religious labels upon them: Baptist church; Methodist church; Lutheran church, etc. From whence came the idea of the “church”? Did this concept of religious life originate with God or with man? If it originated with man, then man can have authority over that which will be practiced and believed therein. If it originated with God, then the authority by which all practices must be governed can (and must) be the Bible, and that alone.

Some of the ideas of men consist of: “One church is as good as another.”; “Since there are so many ‘churches’ it gives us a better choice as to which we wish to belong to.”; “Join the church of your choice.”; and, “Attend the church of your choice.”

Premillennialism teaches that the church is an afterthought; that we are living at present in the church age, and the kingdom is to come later—this during the thousand-year reign of Christ upon earth. There are many other ideas prominent in the religious world too numerous to mention at this time.

Our intention in studying this lesson is to see where the idea of the “church” originated, and what our source of authority is, as far as its existence is concerned.

The first time the word appears in the Bible is in Matthew 16:18 as Jesus says, “Upon this rock I will build my church...” (Greek = Ekklesia). We’ll deal with this passage later in our study. It is our purpose to trace the church’s existence back into history, even into the Old Testament.

First, consider that the idea of the church existed in the mind of God even before it became a reality in outward existence. In Ephesians 3:8-11, Paul says:

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Thus, this passage teaches that the church existed in the mind of God (as God’s purpose and intention for man’s salvation through Christ in the church) from the beginning. That is, if man does sin, salvation will be provided for man.

I have often used the following example, which transpired during my lifetime. When man discovered the atom bomb and unleashed its power on the world in the 1940’s, we were introduced to the possibility that our world could be faced with a nuclear holocaust. Thus, some men got together and, with this possibility in mind, came up with a plan and ‘purpose’: “If we do have a nuclear war, we will make provision that there will be survivors by providing bomb shelters that will withstand a nuclear holocaust.” As a boy growing up in Salisbury, N.C., I can remember seeing numerous buildings with an insignia on them that designated they were bomb shelters to provide cover in which

a person could survive a nuclear war. Thus, beginning in mental state, they came to fruition in shelters stocked and provided with necessities for survival. So it was with God.

The next stage in which we find the church in existence is in the promise made to Abraham in Genesis 12 and 22. In Genesis 12, when God called Abraham out of the Ur of Chaldees, God made to him three promises; two of these being physical and one spiritual. The physical promises having to do with the fact that God promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numberless as the stars of heaven and as the sand of the seashore; secondly, that his descendants would inherit the land of promise. Both of these promises were fulfilled in the Old Testament through the nation of Israel. The third and most important promise, the spiritual, was that through the descendants of Abraham "ALL" the nations of the earth would be blest. This included Jews and Gentiles. God renewed these promises, two physical and one spiritual, to Abraham in Genesis 22 when God called upon Abraham to offer his son, Isaac, upon a sacrificial altar.

Please take note to the fact that the previously mentioned passage, Matthew 16:18, is in the form of a promise, "I will build..." ("will build" = future tense). In Mark 9:1, Jesus made a statement that was directed toward the future: "There be some of them which stand here that shall not taste of death until they see the kingdom of God come with power."

As we move further down the scenes of time in the Old Testament we find the existence of the church in the prophecies of both Isaiah and Daniel. Isaiah 2:2-3 tells us:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Four things to note from this passage:

1. The last days = According to Peter on the day of Pentecost, the last days began on Pentecost about 33 A.D.
2. The Lord's house = According to Paul in I Timothy 3:15, the church is the Lord's house.
3. All nations shall flow unto it = According to Luke in Acts 2:5, Jews out of every nation under heaven were assembled in Jerusalem. In Acts 10, the first Gentiles were baptized into the Lord's church.
4. It was to have its beginning in Jerusalem. Again we go back to Acts 2:5.

In Daniel 2, Daniel interpreted the dream of king Nebuchadnezzar. In his interpretation Daniel explained that the king saw four world empires: The Babylonian, the Median-Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman. Daniel's explanation consisted of the fact that during this last, or fourth, world empire the God of heaven would set up a kingdom that would never be destroyed. During the days of Christ and the apostles, Rome ruled the world and at this time the kingdom (church) came into existence as prophesied. In Acts 2, Peter refers to Joel's prophecy, found in Joel 2:28-32, and Peter states that this prophecy at that time was being fulfilled.

Coming down the further scenes of time to the New Testament, we find that God begins to make the preparations for the soon coming establishment of the church, or kingdom. In Matthew 3:1-2, we find John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judaea. His message was, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." After John was cast into prison we find Jesus preaching the very same message as John, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). In this state of preparation we find Jesus' preparation warning in Matthew 7:15-20. He says that false prophets would come in sheep's clothing. His warning consisted of knowing them by their fruits. Also in this preparation state we find the prayer of Jesus for the unity of all believers. John 17:20-21 says, "Neither pray I for these (apostles) alone, but for them (those down the centuries of time) who shall believe on

me through their word; that they all may be one (united); as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”

In John 19:34, we find the soldier piercing the side of Jesus and blood and water coming forth. Thus, Jesus shed His blood to purchase His church. In Acts 20:28, Paul told the Ephesian elders that Jesus purchased the church with His own blood. In Ephesians 5:25, Paul said, “Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it.”

Following His resurrection and just before His ascension back to heaven Jesus gave the great commission, which is recorded in Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16 and Luke 24:47. His instructions included: the preaching of the gospel, faith in Him as God’s Son, and baptism in order to have salvation (this baptism was to be by the authority of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit). This commission was applicable to “all the world” and “to every creature”. No person was to be excluded from the salvation that God offered through His Son, and this salvation was to be accomplished in the church.

In Acts 2, we see the church coming into existence in a state of perfection. In Acts 2:22-40, Peter preached the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and used Old Testament prophecies to prove that Jesus was the fulfillment of God’s promises and prophecies to bring salvation to all mankind. This brought to the Jews on that occasion the conviction of having crucified their own Messiah, or Savior. Verse 37 says that they were pricked in their hearts and cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we ‘DO’?” In the following verse, 38, by inspiration, Peter gives an answer to their question: “Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” The results of this are found in verses 41 and 47, which says, “They that GLADLY received his word were baptized and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls...Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

Before the cross in Matthew 16:18, Jesus states, “I will build my church...” After the cross we are told in Acts 2:47 that “the Lord added to the church such as should be saved.” The predominant question is, “Which church did He add them to?” No person can name any denomination and say that this is the one the Lord added them to because none of these manmade organizations came into existence until hundreds of years after Jesus established His church.

Please keep in mind the fact that the church does not save, but rather that the church is the saved. A building is not the church, but rather the place where the church meets. The church is made up of individuals who have obeyed the gospel and been added to this institution by the Lord Himself. No person can join the Lord’s church. Joining is an action on the part of the individual. Being added is an action on God’s part and God makes no mistakes. One cannot be voted in or out of the Lord’s church, as is done in many protestant denominations.

Throughout the New Testament there are numerous warnings that apostasy would creep into the church. In fact, the warning of the apostle Paul to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:30 being where the first apostasy took place. Note, “Also, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” Paul warned the Thessalonians in II Thessalonians 2:3-4, “Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first...” To the young preacher, Paul said, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith...” (I Timothy 4:1).

God has given to us a safe and sufficient standard, which is to be our source of authority. II Timothy 3:16-17 and I Peter 1:3 emphasize that all scripture is God breathed, and that it is what is needed to furnish us unto every good work. We are warned under the very curse of heaven not to preach any other gospel than that which was preached by the apostles (Galatians 1:6-9). In John 12:48 we are told by Christ Himself that His word would be the standard by which all mankind will be judged. In II John 9-11 we are forbidden to even bid God speed to any false teacher or teaching. God has forbidden the adding to or taking away from anything in His word (Revelation 22:18-19). Yet, in

spite of all the warnings given, men have not been satisfied to follow God's pattern and have chosen rather to follow the teachings of men.

WHY ARE THERE THEN SO MANY RELIGIOUS BODIES IN THE WORLD?

Sometime during the second century the practice became prominent of selecting one elder to preside over meetings. Finally, this developed into calling this presiding elder "Bishop". This was followed by a distinction of authority. This authority increased until this "Bishop" was given a territory over which to rule. Then, came what was to be known as "City Bishops" and also "Country Bishops". As questions arose and problems began to develop, these "Bishops" came together to discuss these matters, which led to the development of councils and conventions. In 325 A.D. there was a controversy over the doctrine of the trinity. Three hundred eighteen of these "Bishops" attended a council in Nicea, which resulted in the writing of the first manmade creed known as the "Nicene Creed". From this point, as men began writing more and more uninspired creeds, in 606 A.D., Boniface III, "Bishop of Rome," was conferred with the title, "Pope".

As we noted, these departures began about the second century, and by the fourth century there was little semblance left of the original pattern of the New Testament church. As these departures developed, the Bible became chained to the Roman Catholic pulpits, and members were forbidden, under penalty of death, to read the Bible. This period became known as "The Dark Ages".

Following this came a period known as the Reformation Movement, which was led by men such as Martin Luther, John Knox, John Smyth, John Wesley and many others. The first protestant denomination came into existence somewhere around 1521 under the leadership of Martin Luther. It was a far cry from Roman Catholicism, but still not the original, which began in Jerusalem in 33 A.D. Under John Knox, the Presbyterian church came into existence in 1560 A.D.; the Baptist under John Smyth in 1644 A.D.; and the Methodist under John Wesley in 1729 A.D. Over the centuries, from these departures, men have developed more and more manmade organizations in competition with the Lord's church.

Following this, in the late 1700's and early 1800's, a movement was started under a number of men, known as the Restoration Movement. Two of the prominent men of this movement were a father and son team, Thomas and Alexander Campbell. Their plea was to go back to the Bible and restore, not reform, the church to its original pattern. From I Peter 4:11, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." came the motto, "To speak where the Bible speaks and to be silent where the Bible is silent." Also, "To do Bible things in Bible ways, and call Bible things by Bible names." The other men involved in this movement, unbeknown to one another, were: James O'Kelly, a Methodist in Mankintown, N.C., around 1794; Dr. Abner Jones, a Baptist in Vermont, around 1800; and Barton W. Stone, a Presbyterian, in 1801. Numerous others such as "Racoon" John Smith, Jacob Creath, W. W. Otey, and many more became involved in the movement to restore the New Testament church to its original purity.

Men who write and/or follow creeds and doctrines start more and more religious organizations. These institutions have no higher authority than mankind and are not approved of God.

There is a principle stated in both the Old and the New Testament. In Psalms 127:1, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that built it..." And stated by Jesus in Matthew 15:13, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." He went on in the next verse to say, "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."

The plea of the churches of Christ today is for all to come out of the institutions founded by men and, with us, go back to the New Testament for all practices in those matters pertaining to our eternal destiny.

Jesus said, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me..." (Matthew 15:8-9). "Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:22-23). This is referring to the great judgment day, and it will be too late to realize that one has served God in vain.

Chapter 4
The Truth About Worship
Robert Oliver

Robert Caris Oliver is a native of Turkey, NC. He graduated from Union High School in Samson County. Robert married Deborah DuBuisson in 1972 and they have two children, Robert, Jr. and Angela. They now have five GRAND-children. Robert graduated from the Memphis School of Preaching in Memphis, TN in 1983 and has since done some college work in Sampson Community College. During his stay in Memphis, he preached for the church in Bogota, TN and upon leaving Memphis in 1983, he went to Clinton, NC to labor with the church there.

Robert has spoken in several Gospel Meetings and has spoken on lectureships in North and South Carolina, Virginia, Mississippi and Florida. He wrote a weekly newspaper article for two years and spoke on a weekly radio program for thirteen years. He is currently in his 22nd year with the work at Clinton, NC.

Introduction

We currently live in a society that has been overly blessed with the material blessings of this world, creating a people who are used to having what they want. This has carried over into the religious arena, resulting in a desire on the part of most people to have worship that is pleasing to them, without regard to what is pleasing to God. Thus, the great need today for a study of our topic, "The Truth About Worship." There is a great variety of methods and means of worship that are being practiced today in the guise of Christian worship. The denominational world has long been party to the practice of worshipping contrary to and different from that authorized by God's holy word; but now even some within the body of Christ have gotten onto the bandwagon, crying for a rejection of tradition and freedom to worship God in a more contemporary way.

Certainly, any person of reasonable intelligence would wish to know the truth. The value of knowing the truth depends upon the consequences of following that which is error. If one received error concerning how to best prune a bush, the worse that can happen is the death of the bush. If one receives error instead of truth from his financial advisor, it becomes a bit more serious, for he is likely to lose money. If one receives error instead of truth from his doctor, it is even more serious, for he may well lose his life. But, most serious of all is to receive error concerning how to please God, for error will result in the loss of one's soul, and "...what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul" (Mk. 8:36)? Solomon, the third king of Israel and the wisest of all mere men, said in the long ago, "Buy the truth, and sell it not..." (Prov. 23:23). Jesus himself said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn. 8:32). Until one knows the truth about worship, he cannot possibly worship God acceptably.

What Is Truth?

As other lessons in this series have already covered this subject, we shall not cover it in depth at this time. However, a reminder is in order as it applies to our topic, "The Truth About Worship." A quick and easy answer to the question is found in John 17:17, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." As creator, God has absolute authority (Isa. 45:9). His instructions for us are found in the written word. This is true of His instructions concerning every aspect of Christianity. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:16,17). Most every religious organization that claims to be a part of Christianity would agree that God's word, the Bible, is indeed to be the source of authority in all that we say and do. However, to admit this and to make application of this is often two entirely different things; thus the need to consider a couple more issues concerning the word of God being our authority.

Since Christianity is a New Testament institution, the New Testament contains all the instructions given by God for its doctrine and practice. If it is not found in the New Testament, it is not part of God's instructions for Christianity! It is therefore an unauthorized practice.

It is also advisable that we keep in mind that we have no authority to, and God does not allow, the changing of His word in any way. As God told the children of Israel concerning the old law of Moses, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you" (Deut. 4:2). God reiterates these instructions in the New Testament (Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18,19).

One needs also to recognize the difference between generic commands and specific commands. An Old Testament example serves well to illustrate. God gave Noah a command to build an ark (Gen. 6:14). Had God just said, "build an ark," Noah would have been at liberty to built it any size, with any type of material available and with any number of floors, windows or doors that suited him. That would have been a generic command. However, among other instructions, God specified "gopher wood" (Gen. 6:14). This specific command ruled out all other types of material besides wood, and all other kinds of wood but gopher wood. It was not necessary for God to list all the other materials and kinds of wood that He did not want Noah to use, His specific command to build the ark out of gopher wood automatically ruled out all others. When considering "worship," this needs to be considered. If God had commanded us to worship Him, and given no other instructions, then it would have been a generic command allowing us to worship Him in whatever means and manner suited us. However, God did not use the generic command, but instead, specified how He desired to be worshiped.

What is Worship?

There are several words in the original language that are translated "worship" in our English Bibles. Rather than going into great detail doing a word study on each of them, let us just sum them all up by using the following explanation of what worship is: It is to render homage or make obeisance to; it is to prostrate oneself before God, either in actuality or in mind, much like the natives in the old Tarzan movies bowed down before their stone idols.

Worship is a verb, which means that it involves action. It is not something that we get; it is something that we do. Some have been heard leaving the worship assembly saying they did not get anything out of the worship that day. The problem with their thinking is, worship is not something you are to get something out of, it is something that you are to put something in to. Granted, when one worships God as instructed, putting something into it, that person will leave having been blessed. Worship is not entertainment! Once this is understood, it goes a long way toward answering questions concerning what is acceptable worship. Over the years the topic of hand clapping has come up from time to time. However, once one realizes no one is performing for the audience, the question of whether to clap or not to clap is answered. Let God clap if He so desires, the worship is toward Him.

One passage of scripture sums up the guidelines for Christian worship. Jesus said, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:24). According to Jesus, there are two required elements to Christian worship. It must be "in spirit" and it must be "in truth". The "in spirit" element concerns our worship being sincere and from the heart. The scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day were guilty of violating this very requirement (Matt. 15:8). The "in truth" element concerns doing what God has authorized in His inspired word (Jn. 17:17).

Not All Worship Is Pleasing to God

It seems that to many, whatever is done in the realm of Christian worship is pleasing to God if it is pleasing to the one offering it and is sincerely offered. Such is not true. The Bible is full of examples of worship that is not pleasing to God.

The very first example of worship found in the Bible contains both worship that is pleasing to God and that which is not pleasing to God. The account of the worship of Cain and Abel in Genesis chapter four contains the following words: "...And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect..." (Gen. 4:4b,5a). The worship of Cain was not pleasing to God!

Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, "offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (Lev. 10:1,2). The worship of Nadab and Abihu was not pleasing to God!

When Jeroboam set the two golden calves, one in Bethel and the other in Dan (I Ki. 12:29), and told the people of Israel, "...It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (I Ki. 12:28); the end result was worship that was sinful (I Ki. 12:30). The worship of Israel was not pleasing to God!

The worship of apostate Judah at the time when Isaiah received the word from God concerning Judah and Jerusalem, was not pleasing to God (Isa. 1:11-15). In fact, God said, "I delight not" (verse 11), "it is iniquity" (verse 13) and, "my soul hateth" (verse 14), in reference to various aspects of that worship. The worship of Judah was not pleasing to God!

The scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem were charged with "vain worship". Jesus said, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:8,9). Their worship was not pleasing to God! Since not all worship is pleasing to God, it behooves us to ascertain what is pleasing to God and worship in that way.

God Has Legislated in Every Age How He Wishes To Be Worshiped

God has never left it up to man to determine how to worship Him, but has legislated how he wished to be worshiped. Though much is not known concerning the requirements of worship under the Patriarchal age, from creation until Sinai, one can see that God did specify how He was to be worshiped. The account of the worship of Cain and Abel in Genesis chapter four proves God had legislated how they were to worship. God said, concerning Cain's unacceptable worship, "...and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door..." (Gen. 4:7). Sin is the transgression of God's law (I Jn. 3:4). The apostle Paul stated, "...for where no law is, there is no transgression" (Rom. 4:15). Therefore, God had given a law concerning their worship.

Little time or space need be spent in proving that God legislated how the children of Israel were to worship under the Mosaic dispensation. A large portion of the Old Testament is instructions for worship under the Levitical priesthood. See, for instance, the Book of Leviticus.

Christian Worship

The dispensation in which we currently live, that of Christianity, likewise contains legislation concerning how we are to worship God. The remainder of this study will be focused on Christian worship. It is true that one can worship God outside of the worship assembly in certain authorized ways, but our focus for this study will be the worship assembly.

Attendance Required

Lest a gospel preacher fail to take advantage of an opportunity to "harp on attendance," let us first note that our attendance at the worship assemblies is required. The Hebrew writer instructed, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another:

and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:25). In the very next verse we read, "For if we sin willfully..." (Heb. 10:26), showing that the forsaking of the assemblies is sin.

When Do We Assemble?

Let us next consider when we are to assemble to worship. Debates have taken place and entire books have been written on this subject, therefore, we will certainly not be able to fully study it in this short lesson. However, a quick and easy way to determine when we are to assemble to worship is to look through the New Testament and see when the church, in her infancy and still under the guidance of the inspired apostles, gathered to worship.

Every such gathering occurred on the first day of the week. Paul wrote, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (I Cor. 16:1,2).

Possibly the clearest passage to nail down what day of the week the early church gathered is Acts 20:7, where Luke records, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them..." It is understood that Jesus, Paul and others entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day (Matt. 12:9; 13:54; Acts 13:14; 14:1; 17:1ff). However, Jesus lived and died under the old law; Paul and these others went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day to teach the Jews, for that is where and when they were gathered. We nowhere find an example of a congregation of the church meeting on the Sabbath day.

Though the first day of the week is the day that Christians are to assemble to worship God, this does not mean that they cannot assemble at other times as well. However, no other assembly can replace the first day of the week. No matter how many times during the week that a congregation gathers, they must still meet upon the first day of the week!

Taking The Lead In Worship

Rather than dealing with this issue with each element of our worship, let us consider now just who is authorized by God to take the lead in Christian worship. Christian men are to take the lead in Christian worship, when Christian men are present. Paul wrote the Corinthians, "Let you 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 saith the law" (I Cor. 14:34). The phrase, "to be under obedience" is the same as "to be in subjection", and is so rendered in the American Standard Version. To the young evangelist, Timothy, Paul wrote, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (I Tim. 2:11,12). The only way for a congregation to allow women to lead over the men in the worship service is for them to simply reject or ignore these plain statements from God's word.

The Five Avenues Of Christian Worship

There are five ways or avenues of Christian worship that are authorized in the New Testament. The word "avenues" seems a good word to describe the processes used in our fulfilling the command to worship. These avenues of worship are the means of access or approach to God.

Prayer

Prayer is authorized by God and examples of prayer, both when the church is assembled and in private, or semi-private settings, is abundant. For instance, see: Acts 4:24-31; 8:15; 13:3; 14:23; 20:36 and

21:5. These are just a few of the passages authorizing prayer. Paul wrote to Timothy, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; they we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (I Tim. 2:1,2). To the Thessalonians he wrote, "Pray without ceasing" (I Thess. 5:17).

Yet, one can pray without his prayers being pleasing to God! Remember, our worship must be "in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:24). Our prayers are to be to the Father in heaven. In what is often called the model prayer, Jesus, in instructing His disciples how to pray, addresses His prayer as follows: "Our Father which art in heaven" (Matt. 6:9). Though some have been heard to pray to Jesus, He instructed us to pray to the Father. It is not to Jesus that we are to pray, but through Jesus, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5).

It is also required, in order that our prayers be pleasing to God, that our prayers be for that which is in harmony with His will. Note again in that model prayer, Jesus said, "...Thy will be done..." (Matt. 6:10). Things that are outside of God's will should not be prayed for (I Jn. 5:16).

Preaching

The proclamation of God's word, including the hearing of said proclamation, is also a part of the authorized worship of the church. When the saints of Troas gathered upon the first day of the week, as recorded in Acts 20:7, "Paul preached unto them." As with prayer, there are some conditions placed on this avenue of worship as well. The preacher is limited in the realm of content. He is authorized only to preach the word of God. When the great commission was given, it was to, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15). The gospel is the word of God (I Pet. 1:25). Paul's instructions to Timothy was to "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (II Tim. 4:2). Included in this charge to preach the word was the instruction to preach it "in season and out of season." Therefore, preachers are to preach the word of God, the truth, the gospel; and do so when it is popular and well received, and also when it is not.

It should also be added that such preaching should always be done in the right spirit. To attempt to beat people up with the truth is as foreign from true Christian worship as is denominationalism from the Lord's church. Paul advised the Ephesians, "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:" (Eph. 4:15).

Contribution

The return of a portion of our material prosperity to the work of the church is also an avenue of worship to God. This collection is to be taken up upon the first day of the week. Paul wrote the Corinthians saying, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him that there be no gatherings when I come" (I Cor. 16:2). Since God has legislated the day upon which this collection is to be taken up, the first day of the week, then the practice of taking up a collection upon any of the other six days is without authorization from God.

Often the question arises concerning how much one is to give. The truth, God's word, speaks to us concerning this query. It says, "...as God hath prospered..." (I Cor. 16:2); it says, "...as he purposeth in his heart..." (II Cor. 9:7); it says, "bountifully" (II Cor. 9:6); and it says, "cheerfully" (II Cor. 9:7). Nowhere in the Bible does it give us a specific amount that we are to give in Christian worship.

Though we are not trying to deal with every departure from God's word concerning worship, it may be worth our while to note one at this point. Many are the people who practice, preach and demand the practice of tithing. The practice has its roots in the Mosaic law given to the Jews upon Mount Sinai, and did initially require a tenth of all they received, as seen in the statement of Moses,

“And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord” (Lev. 27:32). Without going into all the details of what other gifts they were required to make, suffice it to say that this was a law for the Jews under the Law of Moses, not for Christianity. It is no more reasonable to try to bring this old law into Christianity than it would be to try to bring all the animal sacrifices over. Neither is brought over by our authority.

Lord's Supper

On the very night the Lord Jesus Christ was betrayed, during the eating of the Passover meal, He instituted the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:20-29; Mk. 14:17-25; Lk. 22:14-20). The apostle Paul wrote of this event to the Corinthians saying:

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come (I Cor. 11:23-26).

From these passages we learn that Christians are to partake of the Lord's Supper, that it is to be in remembrance of the Lord's death and it is to be done until the Lord returns. We also learn from these passages the authorized elements to be used in taking of the Lord's Supper, the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. This is a good place for us to see the application of one of our rules for the application of God's word as our authority. We made mention of the fact that one is not allowed to change what God has said in any way. Man is not allowed to add to what God said, take from what God said or substitute something else for what God said. Now, since God specified the elements to be used in the partaking of the Lord's supper, all other elements are unauthorized. God specified unleavened bread and fruit of the vine, thus no other elements are allowed.

When is one to partake of this memorial? One might note that in all of the passages cited to show the institution of the Lord's Supper, not one of them instructed when it was to be taken. Yet, there is a way to determine just when Christians are to partake of the Lord's Supper. By way of divine example, we learn that Christians are to partake of the Lord's Supper upon the first day of the week. Luke, accompanying Paul, records their visit with the brethren of Troas stating, “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight” (Acts 20:7). Thus, we find the first day of the week authorized by God to be the day upon which Christians are to partake of the Lord's Supper. No other day is authorized; therefore, all other days are unauthorized. It would seem the reasonable day anyway, for we have already noted that the first day of the week is the day that Christians are to assemble to worship. Christians are to assemble upon the first day of each week and the Lord's death is to be remembered by the partaking of the Lord's Supper.

Singing

God has legislated the form of music to be used in Christian worship. There are many forms of music that could have been authorized, and there are many forms of music currently being employed in what is called Christian worship; but the truth, God's word, only authorized one, singing! To the Ephesian church, Paul wrote, “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19). There is other instruction also given concerning this music we are to use. From the verse just cited, we note that it is to be from the heart. We might remind ourselves that all worship is to be “in spirit and in truth” (Jn. 4:24) if it is to be pleasing in the sight of God. Just because singing is beautiful to us, is in harmony, at just the right

pitch and all sound as if they are professional singers, does not mean that it is pleasing to God. Our focus should first be on singing from the heart, with all sincerity, and then worry about how it sounds to us. As mentioned in the beginning of this lesson, we are not singing to entertain man, but to worship God.

We are also instructed, concerning our singing, that it be a form of teaching. Paul wrote, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16). Just as the preaching must be truth, so must the words of the song be truth. One can teach error in song form just as surely as one can teach error in preaching.

Though we have, for the most part, concerned ourselves with what is the truth concerning worship, and abstained from dealing with the many departures, we need once more to at least consider one departure in the realm of music in Christian worship. The use of mechanical instruments of music is widespread in the denominational world and has again begun to creep into the Lord's church. It was one of the major issues that faced the church in the nineteenth century, resulting in a division with the loss of a great number of the members of the Lord's church, and much property as well. The same seems to be approaching again. Therefore, consider the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship.

As noted, we looked at what the truth is concerning music in Christian worship. The truth, God's word, authorizes singing. No other form of music is authorized in the New Testament, thus no other form of music is pleasing to God. To add the mechanical instrument is to add to what God said, which we have already noted is condemned (Deut. 4:2). We might also recall our comments concerning the generic and the specific. If God had simply said make music, with no other instruction on the matter, then we would have been at liberty to make music in whatever manner pleased us. We could sing, play an instrument, whistle, sing with the accompaniment of an instrument, make the sounds of the instruments with our mouth, or a host of other methods. But, God did not say make music; He specified the type of music He desired, singing! But, say some, He did not say don't use the mechanical instrument. Neither did He say don't use coffee and doughnuts on the Lord's table, but by specifying what He wanted, He did in effect say, don't use anything else. But David used mechanical instruments, some might say. Yes, and David also offered animal sacrifices and kept the other parts of the law of Moses, since he lived under that law. We are under the last will and testament of Jesus Christ, and no authority is found there for the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God. Singing is the authorized music in Christian worship!

Conclusion

Much, much more could be said concerning "The Truth About Worship." We have not tried to cover every possible aspect, nor have we tried to consider all the many departures and innovations that have come into practice. What we have seen is: (1) God desires and requires us to worship Him; (2) God has specified how He is to be worshiped; (3) To refuse to do so, or to change what God has authorized, results in the displeasure of God; and (4) The truth about worship is found in the pages of God's word.

May we ever be honest, sincere and devoted enough to abandon all our fleshly desires, our likes and dislikes, our cravings to be pleased, and simply "worship God in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:24).

Chapter 5
The Truth About The Family
Bill Haywood

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The truth about the family is a subject of paramount importance. We are living in a culture in which many do not acknowledge the most basic truths about the family and cannot answer the most basic questions about the family.

We should not have any problem understanding that the basic components of a family are a husband and a wife (Ephesians 5:22-6:4). God's ideal is a Christian husband and a Christian wife raising children to become Christians. It is true that sometimes the ideal components are not possible. Because of the death of a spouse, children can be left in a less than ideal situation. Nevertheless, a single parent and children are still a family. Because of divorce a family can be fractured and found in extremely challenging circumstances, but they are still a family. To say that God's ideal is a loving Christian husband and loving Christian wife is not to say that anything less is not a family. It is, however, to say, "Let's aim for God's ideal."

We need Christian families! But someone will ask, "What is a Christian family?" A Christian family is a family that has made a commitment to put God first (Matthew 6:33). There are many lies and misconceptions that are being spread about the family. Our culture urgently needs to know the truth about the family.

The truth about the family is a subject of importance. Consider some of the reasons why it is important for us to ponder the truth about the family.

- The family is a sacred institution designed and created by God.
- The family is one of the foundational reinforcements for society.
- The family is under attack on numerous fronts.
- The family is ordained to be the initial resource for spiritual instruction.
- The family is the training school for church leaders.
- The family is to be the first responder to family needs.
- The family is a microcosm of society.

Each of the above points could deservingly serve as an individual lesson, and yet we would not exhaust the subject, "The Truth About The Family." In this lesson we want to examine the truth about the family and encourage families to follow the truth about the family revealed in the sacred volume of divine inspiration.

Created By God

In the first three chapters of Genesis we find four creative acts of God. In Genesis 1 and 2 we see that God created the material universe. In Genesis 1:26 and following we see that God created human life. In Genesis 3:15, by implication, we see the creation of the church. And in Genesis 2:21-24 we see the creation of the family. These four creative acts are the foundation for faith and civility. It is worth noting that all four of these creative acts are under attack.

The *idea of creation* is under attack. We are being told that God is not the creator of all things. Those who propagate the unscientific idea that we are here as a result of evolutionary chance, exhibit their contempt for God. This may not seem like a threat to the family, but it is a serious threat. The doctrine of evolution undermines the authority and reliability of scripture. Man becomes his own little god and hence his own standard. This undermines the family because the Bible is the handbook for the family.

The concept that *"life is sacred"* is under attack. Life is no longer considered to be sacred, deserving respect and protection. Those who practice and promote unbridled elective abortions display their irreverent attitude toward life. This is also a threat to the family in that the "rights" and desires of an individual override everything else, even to the point of killing a person's own children.

The conviction that *the church is of Divine origin and is Divinely regulated* is under attack. Those who want to ignore Bible authority and want their own innovations implemented reveal their disrespect for the church. Many preachers have quit preaching; unfortunately, many of these men who have quit are still in the pulpit each Sunday. For some the church is little more than a theological lodge, a Jesus club. The preaching diet preferred by religious social club attendees is one that is light and entertaining. Such preaching will never have the power to transform lives.

Likewise, the belief that *the pattern for the family is revealed in scripture* is under attack. Those who teach and advance divorce for any reason, and those who teach and advance same sex marriage expose their contempt for God's pattern for the family.

The family is a sacred institution designed and created by God. In Genesis 2, we see that the first man is alone. "And the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him'" (Genesis 2:18). God began the process of preparing Adam for a wife and preparing the world for family. Adam named all of the animals "...But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him" (Genesis 2:20). God had a plan. In Genesis 2:21-24 we read:

And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man." And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Matthew 19 is Jesus' classic discussion with the Pharisees about marriage. In this text Jesus appeals to this original garden ceremony as an example of the Divine pattern for the family. Jesus said, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?" (Matthew 19:4-5).

The idea of Divine pattern for the family implies some significant truths. First of all, the family has value in direct proportion to the value of the One who designed and instituted the family. Since God is intrinsically perfect, holy, just, and righteous (Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 89:14; Isaiah 6:3; 1 Peter 1:15) then the family is of great value. Second, since God is perfect, His design for the family is perfect. Man cannot improve on the design. Third, since Jesus has universal authority (Matthew 28:18) man is obligated to comply with God's pattern for the family.

When the pattern for the family is acknowledged and followed, individuals will enjoy the blessings of family. When the pattern is denied, ignored and altered, individuals will face the earthly and eternal consequences (Revelation 22:18-19).

The family is one of the foundational reinforcements for society. If Satan can undermine the family, he can subvert the souls of men. The destabilization of civilization is certain when the family is weakened.

The Family Under Attack

The family is under attack on numerous fronts. To many in our culture, the simple belief that God is the author and designer of marriage is repulsive. These people hate God and they hate the Bible because they hate the morality of God that is expressed in the Bible. Consequently, the enemies of the family are ready to undermine the family in anyway that they can.

The Family Under Attack: Same Sex Marriage

One of the prevalent enemies of the family is homosexuality. Homosexuality is being promoted by an appalling series of lies! One of the biggest lies is that same sex marriage will not hurt the institution of marriage. Same sex marriage will harm and seriously injure every aspect of our society as will other gross sins. In Proverbs 14:34 the wise man declared, "Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people."

It is stated by some that homosexuality is never condemned in scripture. However, this is one of Satan's lies. Consider a few of these passages that clearly condemn homosexuality; Leviticus 18:22 states, "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination." An abomination is something that is scandalous; it is a disgraceful atrocity. The infinite God of the cosmos classifies homosexuality as an abomination. How can finite man legitimately redefine homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle?

Leviticus 20:13 declares: "If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them." God recognized that certain crimes were so devastating to society that they could not be permitted to continue and spread. Hence, not only was homosexuality a crime, it was a crime punishable by death.

In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, we have a list of ten types of impenitent people who will not go to heaven. That list of ten includes fornicators, adulterers, homosexuals, and sodomites. The avalanche of scriptural evidence clearly proclaims that practicing homosexuals are lost. To say that the scripture does not condemn homosexuality demonstrates either scriptural ignorance or personal dishonesty.

It is stated by some that homosexuality is natural. This is another lie that Satan is spreading. Some have said, "Fixed homosexual behavior is found in the animal kingdom." Defenders of homosexuality reason, "If the animals do it, it must be okay for man?" We have no authentic evidence of such behavior among animals. However, even if we did have evidence of homosexual behavior in the animal world, since when have animals been our standard? Animals sometimes cannibalize their young, and they have sex with multiple partners. Surely, we know that we are above the animals. By inspiration, the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 1:26-27, "For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due." There is nothing natural about homosexuality.

It is stated by some that homosexuals should be able to marry. As we have already pointed out in this lesson, God has set out a pattern for marriage; a man and a woman for life (Matthew 19:4). To advocate same sex marriage, one would have to reject Bible authority. In connection with this, please carefully consider: *to buttress those who support same sex marriage is to help those who hate God and His word.* After Jehoshaphat returned from battle in which he entered an ungodly alliance with Ahab, Jehu asked Jehoshaphat, "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD?" (2 Chronicles 19:2). When we cast votes for those who will promote anti-family positions such as same sex marriage and abortion we are helping the wicked and those who hate God. There is no justification for voting for pro-homosexual and pro-abortion candidates.

Under Attack: Divorce For Any Reason

The casual destruction of marriage is rampant today. It seems that we are living in a time when marriage and the destruction of this sacred institution are taken very lightly. There are few families that have not been touched by divorce in some respect. Divorce is almost as prevalent in the church as it is out of the church. The institution of the family is being ravaged by divorce. This pandemic problem facing the family is serious for a number of reasons.

First, divorce is a serious problem because many souls will be lost in eternity because of the sin of divorce. Jesus said, “[W]hosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery” (Matthew 5:32 KJV). Divorce is a sin that often creates more sin. This is serious because, *“For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God”* (Ephesians 5:5).

Second, divorce is a serious problem because of the horrible effect it has on innocent people. In Malachi 2:16 we find that the one who engages in unscriptural divorce “covers one's garment with violence.” Divorce by nature is violent! External violence may not be witnessed, but the internal emotional violence of divorce is catastrophic! I have been acquainted with many more divorces than I ever wanted to be. I have personal knowledge of a divorce that occurred about 60 years ago. The two individuals that divorced one another some 60 years ago have both been dead for many years. Yet the wounds of that divorce are still affecting completely innocent victims to this day. Children born before and after this divorce still struggle because a family was destroyed. Aunts, uncles, grandparents and arguably grandchildren suffered and the survivors continue to suffer. Divorce is worse than death.

The truth about the family cannot be presented without presenting the horror of divorce and the sanctity of marriage. In Matthew 19 Jesus proclaims both the sanctity of marriage and the horror of divorce. Jesus presents the Pharisees with five reasons why individuals should protect their marriage and stay married.

First, marriage is too sacred to divorce for just any reason, because from the beginning God made them male and female. In the beginning if you are Adam, you marry Eve. If you are Eve, you marry Adam. Jesus says that's the pattern, one man and one woman for life! It is God's design! Incidentally, under the Patriarchal and Mosaical law, God permitted a deviation from His original pattern, probably because of incomplete revelation (Acts 17:30). We have numerous Old Testament examples of individuals who did not follow the original pattern. The results are disastrous! Likewise, today the results are disastrous!

Second, marriage is too sacred to divorce for just any reason, because in marriage there is a union. In the first part of Matthew 19:5, Jesus says, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife...” The King James version uses the word “cleave.” This word carries with it the connotation of being glued together. The marriage relationship is likened to God gluing a couple together. Engineers who glue wood together (like the wood archways used in many church buildings) tell us that the glue line is stronger than the wood itself. In fact, in engineering tests, we find that when engineers try to break the glue line, the wood breaks before the glue line breaks. The glue is actually stronger than the wood itself. In marriage, there is a gluing that takes place. Imagine that I painted my hands with superglue and slapped them together. Then after a few moments, when I would try to separate my hands, I would find it impossible to get my hands apart. Yet, if I was determined, I could enlist helpers to pull in either direction. Still the superglue would not release from itself, rather as my hands began to separate, flesh would be ripping and tearing from flesh. That is the reality and the horror of divorce. The emotional pain of divorce is like ripping flesh from flesh.

Third, marriage is too sacred to divorce for just any reason, because in marriage the two become one flesh. In Matthew 19:5b and 6a Jesus said, “‘the two shall become one flesh.’ So then, they are no longer two but one flesh.” The husband wife union is so strong that there is a oneness that takes place.

I appreciate the sublime symbolism of the unity candle that many couples have as part of their wedding ceremony. I encourage young people to incorporate the unity candle into their ceremony. I have spent much time in premarital Bible studies explaining the imagery and its Biblical significance.

Near the end of the wedding ceremony, I will address the bride and groom by name and say, "These two outside candles have been lighted to represent your lives to this moment. They are two distinct lights, each capable of going its separate way. To bring joy, there must be a merging of these two flames into one. As you take your own individual candles and together light the center one, you will extinguish your own candle, thus having the center candle represent the union of your two lives as one. You will no longer be two, but one. As this center light cannot be divided, let not your lives be divided."

A preacher told me about a ceremony in which there was a terrible mix-up. At the beginning of the ceremony, the center candle was lighted and the outside candles were not lighted. When they got to that point in the ceremony the couple used the center candle to light their own candles and then extinguished the center flame. Ouch! It was a ceremonial blunder! It is a breach of matrimonial decorum that would humiliate the meticulous wedding consultant and mortify the socially conscience guest. But wait! Why are so few mortified when this is actually acted out in the lives of married people? With reference to marriage, why is individuality and personal achievement applauded over quiet sacrifice and private dedication?

I remember hearing an interview with Reba McIntyre in which she explained that she had to leave and divorce her husband (I believe her first marriage) because he was holding back her career. Friends, that attitude is prevalent among us in our culture! Don't forget in marriage there is a oneness that takes place! How can you divide ONE? You cannot do it without pain and without sin. Someone has to sin for a divorce to take place. When people trivialize divorce, they are belittling the word of God!

Fourth, marriage is too sacred to divorce for just any reason because, in marriage God has joined the two together. Matthew 19:6, "Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." You may not realize it, but God was the best man at your wedding. Malachi 2:14 states "...the LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth." We may take this sacred union lightly, but the Almighty God takes it very seriously! We must do so as well.

Fifth, marriage is too sacred to divorce for just any reason, because God allows only one reason for divorce. In Matthew 19:9, Jesus said, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (KJV). There is no such thing as "no fault divorce." Our land has legalized adultery, but God has not!

The severity of the consequences of divorce demonstrates the sacredness of marriage. Marriage is designed to be a life-long union. Anything less is against God's ideal. For those who choose to abandon God's standard, there is a strict penalty.

Consider the significance of Matthew 19:12. "For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it." What is Jesus saying? Look carefully at the verse. It is in the context of this same discussion about the sanctity of marriage. Some people are born incapable of sexual relations, some people are made incapable of sexual relations by men, and some people choose to not to have sexual relations so they can be pleasing to God. Why? The text is plain. Because of an unscriptural divorce, a guilty person is not entitled to the blessings of the marriage bed. Some realize this and choose heaven over hell.

Conclusion

We need to teach these truths to our children and instill in them love for God and the truth He has revealed within the pages of the Bible (Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4).

My son, Tim, graduated in the year 2000 from a small, private Christian High School. Each graduate was given the opportunity to give remarks at the graduation ceremony. His mother did not know that he planned to include the following:

I want to thank my parents for the way they raised me. When I was born, my mother wrote a poem for me in honor of my grandfather, H.B. Haywood. I would like to read that poem tonight and dedicate it back to my mother.

We Taught Him How To Pray

A child came into our life today -
Born by man - the normal way.
He'll grow up slowly, day by day -
I hope we teach him how to pray.

Our son grew up a normal kid -
He ran and played as others did.
On swings he'd swing, from mountains skid -
I hope we're teaching him to pray.

Then one day he started school -
Where he would learn to be no fool.
He would obtain knowledge, a vital tool -
I hope he takes time out to pray.

Then came time for graduation -
No more college tribulation.
Our son was filled with jubilation -
He said, "Excuse me now, it's time to pray."

"Thank you God for this wonderful day -
For parents who helped me along the way.
Through sunny skies and skies of gray -
I'm glad they taught me how to pray."

Our son went on to take a wife.
The two lived a normal and happy life.
They shared their joys, they shared their strife -
And every night they knelt to pray.

Then they bore a child one day -
Their child was born the normal way.
He'll grow up slowly, day by day -
I'm sure they'll teach their child to pray.

— Teresa Haywood - June 1982

All scripture references come from *The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, TN 1992

Chapter 6
The Truth About Eternal Security
Terry Townsend

Terry Townsend graduated from East Tennessee School of Preaching & Missions in 1993. He began preaching full time in October of 2000 with the Erwin church of Christ. He has a weekly Radio Program, The Gospel Call; works with the Biblical Viewpoints Television Program; teaches at the Tri-Cities School of Preaching & Christian Development; and has written articles for brotherhood publications. He and his wife, Kerri, have two beautiful children, Leah, age 6, and Nathan, age 3. He has spoken on several Lectureships and has preached for congregations in Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, Tennessee, North & South Carolina and Alabama.

INTRODUCTION

As Azariah went out to meet Asa, he said unto him, "The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you" (2 Chronicles 15:1-2). The words spoken by Azariah on that occasion are certainly applicable for us today. It would do us well to keep in memory that passage of Scripture throughout this series of lessons.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this, the 7th Annual "Back to the Bible" Lectureship. I, too, appreciate the timely theme, "What Is Truth?" The topic that has been assigned to me is, "The Truth About Eternal Security." There's a great deal of misunderstanding and mis-representation in our world today relative to man's eternal security. The religious world, as a whole, contends that man has no say whatsoever in his eternal destiny, that God predestines some to be saved and some to be lost, and that those who God selects for eternal salvation can never fall from grace, but is this truth? Is this what the Bible teaches about eternal security? Certainly not! Such devilish dogma stems from the works of a 16th Century reformer by the name of John Calvin. Robert Taylor states:

John Calvin was a Protestant religious leader of Europe who lived between 1509 and 1564. He authored a religious system that has been a blight and curse to humanity for well over four centuries. It, Roman Catholicism and premillennialism have influenced American religion as no other three religious falsehoods have (143).

John Calvin is credited for having developed and created the deadly flower known as "TULIP". I believe it would be only appropriate at this juncture to briefly define some terms so as to better understand what much of the religious world teaches and believes.

T-Total Hereditary Depravity (Doctrine of Original Sin; inherited sin)

U-Unconditional Election (Belief that God foreordains/predestines certain persons to be saved and others to be lost)

L-Limited Atonement (Doctrine that teaches a certain number of people would or could be saved; Christ died only for the predestined)

I-Irresistible Grace (The belief that one cannot resist the direct operation of the Holy Spirit; it's the opposite of free moral agency; faith is not something one does, but rather something that God does for them)

P-Perseverance of the Saints (The doctrine of "Once Saved, Always Saved")

While it would be profitable to examine each of these five erroneous and damnable doctrines (2 Pet. 2:1), time and space will only permit us to examine one. We will focus our thoughts around the "P" part of this fallacious doctrine and discover the "truth" about one's eternal security. We can know the "truth" about eternal security, as well as any other doctrinal subjects for that matter, by simply going to the only source for truth, the inerrant, infallible and all-inspired Word of God (John 8:32; 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17)! And now, let's uncover the "truth" about eternal security.

**WE MUST FIRST ESTABLISH THE FACT THAT THE GRAVE
IS NOT THE END; THE SOUL OF MAN LIVES ON INTO ETERNITY.**

Before we can thoroughly study the topic at hand, we must first confirm that there is an eternity and that there is indeed life after death. The grave is not the end! Solomon writes, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it" (Ecc. 12:7). The Bible clearly teaches that man has an eternal soul and that following physical death, the soul moves on into eternity to await judgment. The Hebrew writer states:

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation (Heb. 9:27-28).

Again, we're reminded of the poignant description Jesus gave concerning eternity in Luke 16:20-31. Whether the accounts of the Rich Man and Lazarus were spoken allegorically or literally does not discredit the fact that there is life after death. When one dies, their soul goes into eternity to await final judgment. And on that Great and Notable Day, all men everywhere will stand before the Lord and give account. Paul writes:

But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ...So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God (Rom. 14:10,12).

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10).

On that final Day of Judgment, all those who have done good will be ushered into the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15). And keep in mind that if the Calvinistic doctrine of *Unconditional Election* and *Limited Atonement* were true, there would be no need for a Judgment!

**SECOND, WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT ETERNAL
SECURITY IS OFFERED ONLY TO THOSE BELONGING TO CHRIST.**

Having established the fact that the soul of man lives on after physical death to await judgment, it's only logical and sensible that we proceed by determining who it is that will spend eternity in heaven, and who it is that will spend eternity in hell. The Word of God makes it abundantly clear that those belonging to Christ Jesus have eternal salvation, while those not belonging to Christ are destined to eternal torment. Paul writes, "There is therefore not *no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus*, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1). Clearly, those belonging to Christ will receive eternal salvation. However, those belonging not to Christ, as John points out, are destined to eternal destruction:

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death (Rev. 21:8).

God is keeping record, and those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life will receive eternal life while those whose names are not found therein will be cast into the lake of fire. "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15). "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27).

That brings us to an all important question; i.e., "How do we get into Christ and have our names written in the Book of Life?" Those who belong to Christ are those who have "put on Christ" in baptism. Paul writes:

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been *baptized into Christ have put on Christ*. There in neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26-28).

Having put Christ on in the watery grave of baptism, we then become members of His body, the church (Acts 2:47; Eph. 1:22-23). Only those belonging to Christ and His church can find such security! It's not found in Mohammed, Buddha, etc. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). Thus, those belonging to Christ and His church, and they alone, have eternal security. Listen to the words of Jesus Himself:

I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. *My sheep* hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: *And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish*, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one (John 10:25-30).

What profit is it for one to cling to the erroneous doctrine of "*Once Saved, Always Saved*," if they have never truly and scripturally been in Christ Jesus? They're lost and without hope! Only those belonging to Christ are offered eternal security.

FINALLY, ONE BELONGING TO CHRIST CAN FORFEIT THEIR ETERNAL SECURITY.

Contrary to popular belief, an individual can fall from grace. The possibility of apostasy exists. *Perseverance of the Saints*, that erroneous Calvinistic doctrine, can be found nowhere in Scripture. The Bible clearly and emphatically teaches against such. In fact, there are more than 2,500 warnings in Holy Writ teaching the possibility of apostasy. Consider just a few:

- Simon of Samaria was saved and then back-slid into apostasy (Acts 8:18ff).
- Paul says we are to take heed lest we fall 1 Cor. 10:1-12).
- The apostle Paul knew he himself could become a castaway 1 Cor. 9:27).
- Peter spoke of some who once knew the truth but then abandoned it (2 Pet. 2:20-22).
- To the Galatian church, Paul wrote of some having fallen away (Gal. 5:1-4).
- Paul warned Timothy of a falling away 1 Tim. 4:1).
- The entire thrust of Hebrews was written to show that one could fall from grace.

Consider a few:

- Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God (Heb. 3:12).
- Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief (Heb. 4:11).
- For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world 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 (Heb. 6:4-6).

Thus, the possibility of one forfeiting their eternal salvation exists. There are a number of examples in Scripture of godly men and women forfeiting their salvation because of disobedience. Let's consider a few:

- Israel fell in the wilderness because of disobedience (1 Cor. 10:1-12).
- Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead because of a lie (Acts 5:1ff).
- Judas, one of the twelve, forfeited his salvation because of betrayal (Mat. 26:24).
- Demas became an apostate deserter of Paul (2 Tim. 4:10).

It's imperative that we remain faithful to Christ Jesus, His church, and His Word, for therein lies one's hope of eternal security! I believe it only appropriate at this point to consider a number of types or shadows that beautifully illustrate this very point (Types and shadows are vague pictures of glimpses of New Testament realities). Consider:

- Noah and his family - To be spared from the impending flood, they would have to build an ark precisely as God commanded, and they would have to remain therein (Gen. 6:1ff).
- Israel, while in Egyptian bondage - They could have forfeited their security had they not obeyed the Lord and put the blood over their doorposts and remained within their homes (Ex. 12:22).
- Rahab the harlot - She, along with her family, could have forfeited their security had they not had a scarlet thread hanging from their window and remained inside their home when Israel came up against Jericho (Jos. 2:18ff).
- Those who sought safety at one of the six cities of refuge - Those having sought security from the avenger of blood could have forfeited their security had they failed to remain within the parameters of that city until the death of the high priest (Num. 35:25-27).
- Those aboard the ship destined to Rome - Paul told them to lighten the ship and remain on board. Had they failed to do so, they would have died (Acts 27:31).

Each of these examples serve as a type or shadow of Christ and the importance of remaining faithful to Him. If we forsake Him, His church, and His Word, we put our souls at risk!

The "*Once Saved, Always Saved*" doctrine has had devastating effects on the religious world as a whole. Tragically, such devilish dogma has infiltrated the church of our Lord. The attitude and actions of many members of the body of Christ indicate that such erroneous beliefs exist within their hearts. If God's people truly and sincerely understand the implications of such error and recognized the fact that **ONE CAN FALL FROM GRACE**, then:

- They would be more faithful in their attendance (Heb. 10:25).
- They would be more diligent in their study of God's Word (2 Tim. 2:15).
- They would be more cheerful and generous in their giving (2 Cor. 9:7).
- They would be more selective in their choice of friends (1 Cor. 15:33).
- They would be more involved in the work of the church (1 Cor. 15:58).
- They would be more eager to win lost souls to Christ (Mat. 28:18-20).
- They would be more cautious of sin (1 Th. 5:22).

Can one belonging to Christ forfeit their eternal salvation? Absolutely! Thus, it behooves us to live our lives in complete obedience to God!

CONCLUSION

What have we learned? We have learned the "truth" about eternal security. The "truth" is, there is an eternity (the grave is not the end); the "truth" is, there is eternal security offered to those belonging to Christ; the "truth" is, there is the possibility that those belonging to Christ can forfeit their eternal salvation. Some questions remain, however: "Are you ready for eternity?" "Where will you spend your eternity?" "Do you belong to Christ?" "Are you a member of His body, the church?" "If so, are you living in such a way that if you were to die right now, eternal salvation would be yours?" Don't allow yourself to be deceived by the devilish dogma of men (Mat. 15:9). We must "*obey God rather than men*" (Acts 5:29). **OBEY GOD TODAY!**

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All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

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Chapter 7
The Truth About Speaking In Tongues
Louis Rushmore

Louis Rushmore has been a minister of the Gospel for over 30 years and with his wife, Bonnie, labors with the Cameron, West Virginia Church of Christ. He has been an instructor at West Virginia School of Preaching since 1995, and brother Rushmore is the author of hundreds of religious articles and several books. He is the Editor of a 20-page monthly religious journal on the Internet, Gospel Gazette Online (now in its fifth year of publication). Bonnie and Louis have three adult children who are faithful members of the Lord's church. They have two grandchildren.

Introduction

About 34 years ago when I was 16-years-old, I was a confused Catholic teenager, looking for the one, true church of the Bible, and not at all sure I would recognize it if I stumbled over it. Consequently, on one occasion I accepted an invitation to attend a Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International meeting. My brother, Larry, and I arrived in a banquet hall where we were served a good, hearty meal. The large gathering was punctuated with some Catholic nuns, wearing their black habits, and I suspect that people from many denominations were present that night. After dinner, we turned our attention to the elevated stage at the front of the hall where we listened to preaching and lively religious music.

When the *altar call* was made, dozens of people, including my brother and I, responded and were directed to kneel at the foot of the stage. **That's when I found out that one could not graciously return to his seat until he had spoken in tongues! Right then I knew that my stone-sober, melancholy personality was not conducive to speaking in tongues and that I was in a heap of trouble. I wondered how in the world I was ever going to get back to my seat and eventually escape the madness into which I had gotten myself.**

Most of the people who had responded with my brother and me had little difficulty speaking in tongues, and they got to return to their seats. Several of us, though, were unable to speak in tongues and our number was becoming fewer and more conspicuous. So, *coaches* worked themselves from person to person across the front of that stage and back again as long as it took, giving starters for the lingerers to say to get them started. I remember being amazed when my brother, one year younger than me and who has cerebral palsy, spoke in tongues and was permitted to return to his seat. (He had never spoken in tongues before and to my knowledge he has never spoken in tongues since.)

There I was, still stuck up front with just a few holdouts who had not been able to speak in tongues. Finally, I just repeated back to my *handlers* the nonsensical syllables they had fed me, and that passed for speaking in tongues, and I was permitted to return to my seat. Brethren, I knew that I had not spoken in tongues, and the promoters of that charismatic or Pentecostal event knew that I had not spoken in tongues. That whole scenario was a valuable lesson and life experience regarding what passes today for the sham or tomfoolery of speaking in tongues.

A word of caution is in order, brethren. Out of context, it certainly will not help my credibility if someone were to go about saying that Louis Rushmore has spoken or speaks in tongues.

In reality, "The Truth About Speaking in Tongues" is not difficult to ascertain. After all, the subject only presents itself in a small number of passages. For instance, the primary Greek word for "tongue" (*glossa*) appears just 50 times in the New Testament; however, many of those occurrences do not pertain to "speaking in tongues." "Only three New Testament books mention the gift of tongue-speaking or glossolalia. (Glossolalia is from the Greek, 'glossa' = tongue, and 'laleo,' to speak)" (Clarke, "Part One" 2). "All that one can find recorded in the New Testament on the subject of 'speaking in tongues' is found in five passages. These are Mark 16:17-18, Acts 2:1-13, Acts 10:47 through 11:18, Acts 19:1-7, and I Cor. 12:1 through 14:40" (Bennett 19).

Tongue first refers to the organ of speech in one's mouth (James 3:5-10). Secondly, tongue is used figuratively to refer to speech. As in English, the New Testament uses the word "tongue" (*glossa*) when

referring to a literal tongue, something shaped like or resembling a tongue and languages. Speaking in tongues in the New Testament pertained to languages, whereas contemporary speaking in tongues are merely ecstatic utterances.

The word *glossa* is used in various ways in the New Testament. In thirteen passages, it is used to refer to the tongue (the organ of speech). A few examples are Mark 7:33, 35; Luke 1:64; 16:24; 1 Corinthians 14:9; James 1:26; 3:5-6, 8; 1 Peter 3:10; 1 John 3:18 and Revelation 16:10. *Glossa* is used of “that which is shaped like a tongue” in Acts 2:3. It is used four times in a poetical or rhetorical sense (Acts 2:26; Rom. 3:13; 14:11; Phil. 2:11). In the majority of passages (thirty-two to be exact), it is used of human *languages*. Some examples are Mark 16:17; Acts 2:4, 11; 10:46; 19:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28, 30; 13:1, 8; 14:2, 4, 5, 6, 1, 14, 18, 19, 22, 23, 26, 39; Revelation 5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 17:5. (Stevens 21)

Curiously, proponents of tongue-speaking today purport to rely on the Bible for authority to speak in tongues, while ignoring biblical regulation of speaking in tongues.

In fact, it is ironic that advocates of modern day “tongue-speaking” would bring up I Corinthians 14, because, this chapter, correctly understood, literally demolishes the argument for the kind of tongue-speaking man claims today... Indeed, the so-called modern day tongue-speakers of today may claim to have the same power as believers in the first century, but they don't want to be governed by the same rules bound upon those first century believers in the practice of these gifts! ...the conduct of women in the assembly where the tongue-speaking takes place. Paul instructed the women at Corinth to keep silence in the church (1 Corinthians 14:34). Therefore, even if women could speak in tongues today, it would be sinful for them to do so in the public assembly. Yet, the modern day “Holy Ghost” meetings freely encourage women to speak out. Paul also indicates that tongue-speaking was to be done by one person at a time (I Cor 14:27-31). This is not like the charismatic meetings of today when all are encouraged to “get the Spirit” at the same time. We need to remember that God is not the author of confusion and all things are to be done decently and in order (I Corinthians 14:33, 40). (Clarke, “Part Three” 1-2)

The balance of this presentation will biblically define and examine the phenomena of first century tongue-speaking, define contemporary tongue-speaking, and contrast the two. The history and modern introduction of what passes for contemporary speaking in tongues will be introduced so that its distinction from the biblical occasion of speaking in tongues can be more easily understood. Finally, the serious ramifications for modern tongue-speaking will be enumerated. Ascertaining the “Truth About Speaking in Tongues” is our goal, which will be relentlessly and definitively pursued in the following material.

Definition of Biblical Terms

According to the apostle Peter, the speaking in tongues of Acts 2 was a manifestation pertaining to the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel 2:28-3:2 (Acts 2:16-21). In addition, Jesus only ten days before speaking in tongues was inaugurated in Acts 2 specifically prophesied about them. “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall **speak with new tongues**” (Mark 16:17). “...Mark 16:17 records the promise of glossolalia, but we must refer to the book of Acts to acquire a more accurate definition of first century glossolalia” (Clarke, “Part One” 2).

It is not until Acts 2 unfolds with the introduction of speaking in tongues that one finds a biblical definition for speaking in tongues. Acts 2 is decisive in its definition of first century tongue-speaking, which definition carries to the explanation of speaking in tongues elsewhere in the New Testament and which definition is the sole standard by which what passes today for speaking in tongues must be critically reviewed.

Almost everyone, irrespective of some people's preference for defining speaking in tongues as ecstatic utterances, recognizes, howbeit for some reluctantly, that speaking in tongues as found in Acts

2 pertains to real, first century languages. To circumvent the evidence respecting speaking in tongues found in Acts 2, proponents of ecstatic utterances resort to either of *two ploys* to offset the impact of the Acts 2 definition of speaking in tongues. They state that (1) speaking in tongues of Acts 2 is different from the speaking in tongues of 1 Corinthians 14, or (2) speaking in tongues of 1 Corinthians 14 is ecstatic utterances and must be applied retrospectively to Acts 2 to define speaking in tongues found there. Both procedures for defending modern day speaking in tongues are fallacious uses of Scripture and miserably fail respecting biblical hermeneutics.

The immediately following quotation demonstrates ploy number one, and we doubt that “[m]ost scholars” concur with it.

Most scholars assume that the phenomena described in Ac 2.4 and in 1 Cor 14.2 are significantly different in that in one instance people understood in their own regional language or dialect and in the other instance an interpreter was required. It is for that reason that many interpret *glossa* in 1 Cor 14.2 as ecstatic speech, which was also an element in Hellenistic religions and constituted a symbol of divine inspiration. (Louw and Nida)

The quotation below, ploy number two, displays a shocking disregard for divine inspiration as it manifested itself through divinely chosen human penman (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

Although it is generally agreed that Luke intended the phrase ‘to speak in other tongues’ to mean that the disciples spoke in foreign languages, this explanation has not been universally accepted. ...In the opinion of most modern scholars the glossolalia of Acts 2:1-13 was similar to that described in 1 Cor. 12-14, and consisted of unintelligible ecstatic utterances. They advance various theories to explain why Luke wrote instead about foreign languages. Some think he may have misinterpreted his sources and inserted ‘other’ (Acts 2:4) on his own initiative; others suggest that he may have interpolated the reference to foreign languages as a more favourable explanation when glossolalia fell into disrepute. (*New Bible Dictionary*).

Doubt is attached to the reference to “most modern scholars” here as well, for among other reasons, the previous source with its viewpoint and the following source with its contradictory viewpoint could hardly both be represented by the “most scholars.”

Several reference works to which one might ordinarily appeal for information about any number of religious topics interject an endorsement for ecstatic utterances. In addition to the sources already cited, these include the *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* and *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Some sources, such as *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, attempt to appease both those who view speaking in tongues as languages and those who favor ecstatic utterances.

Through divine inspiration, the apostle Peter defined speaking in tongues in Acts 2. That God-given definition applies to each instance in the New Testament where speaking in tongues occurs. “In Luke’s writings, the gift of tongues refers to a gift of language miraculously wrought by the operation of the Holy Spirit. There is no indication that Paul used the word *glossa* in a different sense than Luke” (Stevens 21).

It must be remembered that this is the first occurrence of glossolalia. A first occurrence of anything usually requires a detailed description of the event. That is precisely what Luke gives us in Acts 2. Therefore, all other passages that refer to glossolalia are bound by the definition and pattern of “Pentecostal glossolalia” unless otherwise indicated. (Clarke, “Part One” 2)

Lenski, a Lutheran commentator, concurs with following astute observations.

...Luke’s description as given in the Acts is decisive for what Paul writes in Corinthians. This is reversed by some. They seek to determine what happened in Corinth and then either square Luke’s account with what they think occurred at Corinth or posit two different gifts of tongues... Luke is the one who fully describes what the tongues are while Paul takes for granted that his readers know what they are and therefore offers no description. Luke writes

for a reader (Theophilus) who may never have heard of this gift, at least may never have seen this gift in operation. Paul writes for readers who have often heard members of their own congregation speak in tongues. (qtd. in Clarke, "Part One" 2)

The inescapable conclusion from Acts 2 is that speaking in tongues referred to speaking in languages, through the assistance of miracles, that the apostles did not know and had not studied.

What this gift actually was has been a subject of much discussion. Some have argued that it was merely an outward sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit among the disciples, typifying his manifold gifts, and showing that salvation was to be extended to all nations. But the words of Luke (Acts 2:9) clearly show that the various peoples in Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost did really hear themselves addressed in their own special language with which they were naturally acquainted (comp. Joel 2:28, 29). (Easton)

Acts 2

The Holy Spirit baptism upon the apostles (Acts 1:26-2:4) manifested itself in tongue speaking by the apostles. "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other **tongues**, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). The word "tongues" here is from the Greek *glossa*. Verse six explains the "tongues" of verse four through the use of another word (*dialektos*) that is translated "language." "Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own **language**" (Acts 2:6). This same word, *dialektos*, appears in Acts 2:8 where this time it is translated "tongue." "And how hear we every man in our own **tongue**, wherein we were born?" (Acts 2:8).

The Greek word *dialektos* means "a (mode of) discourse, i.e. 'dialect' (*Strong's*). The word *dialektos* appears six times in New Testament, five times translated "tongue" and one time translated "language"; the word always means language (Acts 1:19; 2:6, 8; 21:40; 22:2; 26:14).

The Greek *glossa* again follows in verse 11. "Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our **tongues** the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:11). Clearly, *glossa* and *dialektos* are used interchangeably in Acts 2, meaning that within the context of speaking in tongues and in Acts 2 *glossa* refers to languages, not ecstatic utterances.

Luke uses the words "glossa" and "dialektos" interchangeably. The apostles were speaking in tongues, "glossa." The apostles were speaking in a language, "dialektos." The tongues — or languages — that they spoke were not some heavenly unknown language. The languages were known by the men who heard. What they heard was not a conglomeration of unintelligible syllables. What they heard was their own native tongue — the language wherein they were born. (Jividen 37)

Numerous commentaries and other resources honestly record the obvious and intended sense of speaking in tongues in Acts 2, despite what popular, denominational preferences may be. For instance, Matthew Henry wrote:

They began to speak with other tongues, besides their native language, though they had never learned any other. ...They did not speak here and there a word of another tongue, or stammer out some broken sentences, but spoke it as readily, properly, and elegantly, as if it had been their mother-tongue; for whatever was produced by miracle was the best of the kind. They spoke not from any previous thought or meditation, but as the Spirit gave them utterance; **he furnished them with the matter as well as the language.** (*Matthew Henry's* emphasis added)

Robertson noted regarding the ostentatious verbal, visual and audible display in Acts 2:

Other than their native tongues, each one began to speak in a language that he had not acquired and yet it was a real language and understood by those from various lands familiar with them. It was not jargon, but intelligible language. Jesus had said that the gospel was to go to all the nations and here the various tongues of earth were spoken. ...The gift of tongues

came also on the house of Cornelius at Caesarea (Acts 10:44-47; 11:15-17), the disciples of John at Ephesus (Acts 19:6), the disciples at Corinth (1 Cor 14:1-33). ...Paul explains in 1 Cor 14:22 that "tongues" were a sign to unbelievers and were not to be exercised unless one was present who understood them and could translate them. **This restriction disposes at once of the modern so-called tongues which are nothing but jargon and hysteria.** (*Robertson's* emphasis added)

Albert Barnes, the Presbyterian commentator, likewise underscores the plain, unambiguous sense of Acts 2. **"But the natural and obvious meaning of the passage is, that they were endowed by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit with ability to speak foreign languages, and languages to them before unknown."** (*Barnes'* emphasis added). Don De Welt of the Christian Church concurs (38).

The Purpose of Speaking in Tongues

The Acts 2 context also supplies in miniature the purpose of speaking in tongues, further confirming that speaking in tongues pertained to languages rather than ecstatic utterances. Jews from 15 different nations had assembled in Jerusalem on that Pentecost (Acts 2:9-11).

But, there were but twelve apostles, and at least fourteen different nationalities of people represented. Not fourteen different languages; however, since all were Jews, and some of the countries mentioned utilized the same dialect. The Phrygians and Pamphylians both spoke Greek; the Parthians, Medes, and Elamites all spoke Persian, though of different dialects. Barnes estimates that there must have been some seven or eight different languages known to this crowd. (Woods 11)

...the crowd that gathered around the apostles were amazed and marveled. The men they saw were Galileans, but the language they heard was their own. The marvel of it all was that men who were of one dialect could fluently speak another language. ...some fifteen nationalities are represented by Luke in connection with the "tongue-speaking" sign. These nationalities probably refer to Jews of the dispersion who no longer knew Aramaic. If languages of these nationalities were not meant, why would these different nationalities be mentioned? (Jividen 37)

Speaking in tongues or languages through miraculous assistance rather than through laboriously learning fitted the apostles and other first century Christians for taking the Gospel to the world immediately, in fulfillment of the Great Commission of our Lord (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8).

The prevalent belief of the Church has been that in the Pentecostal gift the disciples received a supernatural knowledge of all such languages, as they needed for their work as evangelists. The knowledge was permanent, and could be used at their own will, as if it had been acquired in the common order of things. With this they went forth to preach to the nations. ...**We never read of foreign tongues creating any impediment to the spread of the Gospel, or requiring laborious application for the acquisition of them.** If we look into modern missionary reports, we meet with a great deal about learning the languages of natives. Why is there nothing of the kind in the New Test., unless because they were acquired supernaturally? ...The account in Acts 2 is explicit, and allows of no uncertainty or evasion. The speakers were Galileans, capable at most of expressing themselves in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew; and a multitude of foreigners from a great many regions heard themselves accosted as in the land of their birth. If the apostles spoke just as they might have been expected to speak, and with no more compass of expression than suited their condition and history, why should any astonishment have been produced by their attainments? But the multitudes were confounded, and they were all amazed and marveled, not merely at the doctrines propounded, but, specifically, because every man heard them speak in his own language. How came Galileans, they asked, to be

such linguists? to be so familiar with languages alien to their annals? There is here an obviousness of meaning which no subtlety or sophistry can ever explain away." (*McClintock and Strong* emphasis added)

The affect of speaking in tongues in the first century was to undo the confusion of languages that God caused at the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:9). "...[A]s Babel brought as its penalty the confusion of tongues, so the Pentecostal gift of tongues symbolizes the reunion of the scattered nations" (*Fausset's*). Adam Clarke, Methodist commentator, adds:

At the building of Babel the language of the people was confounded; and, in consequence of this, they became scattered over the face of the earth: at this foundation of the Christian church, the gift of various languages was given to the apostles, that the scattered nations might be gathered; and united under one shepherd and superintendent (episkopos) of all souls. (*Clarke's Commentary*)

Besides affording early Christians an expedited means of fulfilling the Great Commission, first century speaking in tongues was proof (a "sign") to unbelievers that God was working through the tongue speakers (Mark 16:17; 1 Cor. 14:22). The scenario in Acts 2 portrays a lot of excitement by unbelieving Jews over the ability of obviously inexperienced yet fluent multilingual Galileans to speak in a number of languages. "Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" (Acts 2:6-8). Speaking in tongues was an attention-getter.

Still another purpose for first century speaking in tongues was to receive and tell new revelation from God. On some occasions there may be little distinction between speaking in another language through the assistance of miracles and at the same time relaying new information from God to man through the same vehicle. Especially in Acts 2, one sees **verbal inspiration** at work through the vehicle of speaking in tongues. The apostles could hardly have been expected to choose the appropriate words from their vocabularies to express, for instance, the bogus, so-called **thought inspiration**, when those foreign words were not in the apostles' vocabularies.

The promise of a new power coming from the divine Spirit, giving not only comfort and insight into truth but fresh powers of utterance of some kind, appears often in our Lord's teaching. The disciples were to take no thought of what they should speak, for the Spirit of their Father would speak in them (Matt 10:19-20; Mark 13:11). The lips of Galilean peasants were to speak freely and boldly before kings. In Mark 16:17 we have a more definite term employed: "They will speak with new tongues." It can hardly be questioned that the obvious meaning of the promise is that the disciples should speak in new languages that they had not learned as other men learn them. (*Unger's; McClintock and Strong*)

Acts 10-11; 19; 1 Corinthians 14

Even charismatics who reluctantly admit that the Acts 2 speaking in tongues pertains to languages suppose that ecstatic utterances are meant in 1 Corinthians 14. In truth, though, speaking in tongues is the same creature each time it is represented throughout the Book of Acts and in 1 Corinthians 12-14. Mark 16:17 introduced speaking in tongues and Acts 2 defined it, after which its use appears in Acts and 1 Corinthians without the need for any further explanation.

As to what Jesus meant in Mk. 16:17 by new tongues one must examine subsequent historical material in the New Testament. ...The inspired Luke does not leave us in doubt that the "other tongues" were actual languages. Visitors from some fifteen nations asked, "How hear we, every man in our own language-dialektos-wherein we were born?" (2:8). Certainly it was a miracle that the apostles could speak in languages which they had never learned, thus in "new

tongues.” ...While Peter was preaching in the house of Cornelius at Caesarea, the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles assembled there and they spoke “with tongues” (Acts 10:46). Since Peter later declared that this was “the like gift” which the apostles received on Pentecost, it is clear that the Gentiles also spoke in actual, contemporary languages which they had not learned. The next reference to glossolalia is found in Acts 19:1-7. Paul baptized twelve men at Ephesus, laid his hands on them, and “the Holy Spirit came on them and they spake with tongues, and prophesied” (verses 5-7). It is reasonable to assume that they also spoke in actual languages, for, had the phenomenon been different from that of Acts 2 and 10, Luke would surely have given some explanation. We thus conclude that in all the incidents in Acts it was the miracle of speaking in contemporary languages which the speakers had not by natural means learned. “...gave them utterance” (Acts 2:1-4). ...Lenski [504-505] has aptly stated: “Luke’s description in Acts is decisive for what Paul writes in Corinthians. ...Luke is the one who fully describes what the tongues are while Paul takes for granted that his readers know what they are and therefore offers no description.” ... received on Pentecost, it is clear that the Gentiles also spoke in actual, contemporary languages which they had not learned. (Bennett)

Gus Nichols had a picturesque way of summarizing the first century abuses of tongues in Corinth, which description aptly describes modern day speaking in tongues, too.

Before the apostles had died, and before miraculous gifts had ceased (1 Cor. 13:8-13), the church at Corinth was in confusion, and were conducting a sort of **frog-in-the-mill-pond kind of public services** (1 Cor. 14:26). God was not the author of their confusion (1 Cor. 14:33). They were not doing things decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40). They were following after things of show and pomp, rather than after charity or love (1 Cor. 14:1). They desired the wrong kind of gifts (v. 1). The church was permitting speakers of a foreign, or unknown tongue, or language, to address the assembly, when no one but God could understand them. Such was forbidden unless there was some one to interpret the speeches so the audience could be edified (1 Cor. 14:2-4, 26-28). We would not permit a foreigner in his unknown tongue to lead a prayer in our services, unless he had an interpreter; for we speak only in English. Some things are not expedient (1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23; 1 Cor. 14:5). **Even back there when they had the gift of tongues, there was no profit in speaking in tongues, and it was forbidden, when the audience could have been addressed in its own tongue or language** (1 Cor. 14:6-12). (25 emphasis added)

Over the years, I have studied (besides English) Greek, Latin, German and Spanish. If I had learned any of these foreign languages sufficiently, and if I still recalled them adequately, what purpose would be served by orating to an English-speaking audience in one of these other languages, with or without an interpreter? In an effort to draw attention to oneself and to superficially enhance the spirituality of the worship assembly, aided by miracles, some Christians at Corinth arbitrarily decided to do just that. They were abusing the miracle of speaking in tongues and detracting from instead of contributing to the edification of the church. Though edification could be had through an interpreter, there was no good reason in the first place to unnecessarily speak in foreign languages under the circumstances described.

Paul indicates that he is not discouraging the use of the gifts, but that he is arguing for the necessity of correcting the misuse of the gift of tongues (1-19). ...In appealing to the church to use the spiritual gifts as they were intended, Paul sets forth certain rules and regulations to be followed (20-40). (Applebury 248-249)

The regulation of speaking in tongues that applied to those in the first century who really did have miraculous ability to speak in tongues would apply equally today to contemporary people who claim to speak in tongues. It is truly remarkable that one’s pitiful use of Scripture purportedly sanctions an act but ignores to be regulated by the same Scripture. That is either moral dishonesty or mental deficiency!

Charismatics and Pentecostals have manufactured the doctrine of ecstatic utterances, what they call speaking in tongues, based on an italicized word that only appears in one standard translation. An italicized word in a Bible translation represents the insertion of a word by the translators for which there is no corresponding word in the original language; translators do this, hoping to help rather than hinder English readers to understand the meaning of a text. The King James Version has “unknown” preceding “tongue” in 1 Corinthians 14:2, 4, 13-14, 19 and 27, whereas “unknown” does not appear in those verses in the ASV, NKJV, NIV, RSV and NASB.

It was never mere “ecstatic speech” without discernable meaning. Rather, it involved one man speaking in a language which was foreign to him but which was readily understood by those who normally spoke that language. ...Thus there has never been any such things as an “unknown tongue.” The insertion of the adjective “unknown” into the King James Version by the translators (I Cor. 14:2,4,13,14,19,27) was unjustified and most unfortunate for many Bible students. In the English text the word appears in italics, which means that the word is not found in the original Greek text. Someone may object to this by saying that Paul wrote of a man speaking in a tongue “unto God; for no man understandeth.” (cf. I Cor. 14:2). It may be contended that this is a categorical statement meaning that there is a tongue which men can not understand and which is intelligible only to God. In reality this verse only refers to a situation where no man present at that particular service understands the speaker. In such a case as this — where the speaker was given a language not represented by those hearing him — the man speaking in that tongue would be understood only by God! And since there would be no edification for the hearers in such a situation, Paul commanded that such persons not speak publicly until an interpreter was present. (I Cor. 14:27). Thus it is shown that the tongue was never “unknown” in the absolute sense, for it was capable of interpretation. (Shelly 44-45)

Cross-referencing 1 Corinthians 14:21 with its Old Testament counterpart further aids in ascertaining the nature of the tongues mentioned in 1 Corinthians 14.

Finally, Paul’s quotation from Isaiah 28:11-12 in I Corinthians 14:21 shows that languages are meant. Isaiah’s prophecy was not about ecstatic utterances, but a foreign language. Isaiah was referring to the Assyrians who would be used by God as an instrument of punishment. (Stevens 22)

Gus Nichols further illustrated the sense of languages with which one is unfamiliar as it is introduced in 1 Corinthians 14. Other instances of similar circumstances to what appears in 1 Corinthians 14 occurs elsewhere in the Bible.

The “new tongues” promised here were new languages — tongues to the apostles who formerly did not know such languages. Moses said unto Israel. “The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from afar... a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand” (Deut. 28:49). To Israel their tongue would be an “unknown tongue.” That is, it would be such to the Israelites. To them it would be an “new tongue” — a strange or unknown language. The fact that Israel would not understand the foreign language does in no wise mean that those speaking were merely jabbering. In fact muttering and jabbering are no tongue at all, any more than a baby is speaking in a tongue when it is jabbering. (22)

Careful attention to the context of 1 Corinthians 14 reveals that the intent of the apostolic writer is for miraculous gifts — mainly speaking in tongues — be used in such a way as to edify the church rather than mystify and confuse it. Edification is stressed repeatedly in the chapter (1 Cor. 14:3-5, 12, 17, 26). The purpose of using tongues in 1 Corinthians 14 was to promote “understanding” (v. 15) and “teach” (v. 19). Ecstatic utterances appeal to the emotions but they do not edify, increase understanding or teach. Consequently, 1 Corinthians 14 was a **prohibition** of speaking (then, with the aid of miracles) in languages that the audience did not know and which did not edify (cause understanding and teach) the assembly. Likewise, the 1 Corinthians 14 **prohibition** applies to ecstatic utterances that pass for

speaking in tongues (and which are not the result of miracles) because they do not edify (cause understanding and teach).

The End of Miracles

Common sense demands that one concur with brother Roy Deaver that there were nine miraculous gifts, all of which remain if one remains, but miracles have ceased (44-46).

But before the New Testament was all written, they had nine gifts of the Spirit, or Spiritual gifts in the church (I Cor. 12:1,8-10). Tongues and interpretation of tongues were two of the nine. Some contend for tongues today, but leave the other eight behind. But they all ceased together. These gifts were bestowed by the laying on of the apostles' hands (Acts 8:18; Rom. 1:11; Acts 19:5-7; II Tim. 3:5-6). All know that when the apostles all died they ceased to lay on hands and bestow these gifts, and they naturally ceased. (Nichols 24-25)

Miracles were never an end to themselves, but they served a specific purpose, which when that purpose was fulfilled, miracles ceased. Miracles were *provisional* in nature; when they completed that which they were intended by God to do, they were no longer needed and they ceased. The apostle Paul addressed the use of miracles in first century Corinth, namely their abuse, in 1 Corinthians 12-14. In 1 Corinthians 13:8-13, the apostle foretold that miracles would end. Specifically respecting our topic, "...tongues...shall cease..." (v. 8). Verse 9 introduces that through miracles new revelation from God was received in parts — partial and piecemeal, respecting several inspired speakers on a number of occasions; speaking was provided them by the Holy Spirit. The New Testament had not been completed yet, but it was in the process of being written (e.g., 1 Corinthians). However, Paul contrasted that situation of partial, piecemeal revelation with a counterpart that would be complete or perfected, thereby displacing the partial piecemeal revelation attributed to miracles (v. 10). "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (1 Cor. 13:9-10). James 1:25 refers to God's Word as "the perfect law of liberty."

First Corinthians 13:11-12 present two "before and after" illustrations to contrast partial, piecemeal revelation received through miracles with the superior completed revelation that was to displace miracle-assisted revelation. Verse 11 resorts to childhood versus adulthood, miracles represented by childhood and adulthood representing completed revelation. Verse 12 refers to polished metal or other reflective surfaces such as water used anciently for mirrors versus the clarity with which one sees someone face to face. The former represents the miracle assisted, partial piecemeal revelation whereas the latter represents the completed revelation that we call the New Testament.

Ephesians 4:11-14 parallels the 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 passage and also uses the illustration of childhood contrasted with adulthood for the same purpose. Miracle assisted workers appear in verse 11 on whom the early church relied for revelation from God. That situation, though, was temporary and to last only "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and knowledge of the Son of God... (v.13). Ministers, for instance, today must study God's Word rather than rely on miraculous assistance from the Holy Spirit.

The purpose of miracles appears in Mark 16:20: "...confirming the word with signs following." Miracles already confirmed the Word in the first century (Heb. 2:3-4). Therefore, when the last apostle died, and when the last person upon whom an apostle laid hands to transfer miraculous power died, miracles ceased. The death of miracle-workers and the collection of the New Testament books occurred around the end of the first century and the beginning of the second century (Col. 4:16; 2 Pet. 3:16). Incidentally, this was a long time before the Catholic Church got around to officiating the New Testament canon.

Linguistically Contemporary Tongue-Speaking Non-Languages

The very sounds passed off today as speaking in tongues fail the test, on many fronts, for being languages, earthly or heavenly. Whereas so-called tongue-speakers today string together nonsensical

syllables, one mark of speaking in tongues in the first century was the use of real **words**. Peter said he was using “words” (Acts 2:22), and Paul specified the use of “words” in tongue-speaking. It is no wonder then that first century speaking in tongues could be interpreted.

It is important to notice that the apostle speaks of **words** in connection with tongue-speaking. Hence, the tongues of which Paul speaks were not comprised of syllables randomly strung together in incoherent fashion. Rather, the tongues under consideration by Paul were connected with actual **words**. This shows conclusively that the tongues under consideration here at Corinth, were actual languages, just as the tongues were on the Day of Pentecost. (Clarke, “Part Three” 1)

The significance of ascertaining that speaking in tongues in 1 Corinthians 14 pertains to words cannot be overemphasized. Though some charismatics and Pentecostals admit the Acts 2 speaking in tongues pertained to languages, none of them acknowledge that speaking in tongues found in 1 Corinthians 14 pertains to languages. Uniformly, contemporary tongue-speakers view 1 Corinthians 14 as justification for their ecstatic utterances.

Speaking in tongues in the first century, as already noted, aided early Christians in fulfilling the Great Commission. Yet, today, those who claim to speak in tongues must use the services of an interpreter or learn the new language — like every other human being under the same circumstances. Pentecostals just laugh and offer no explanation when this glaring inconsistency is brought to their attention (Crain 2). James Bales observed: “Missionaries today must learn the language of the people to whom they preach, they do not get it by inspiration” (qtd. in Clarke, “Part Three” 2).

Contemporary speaking in tongues has been the focus of several critical reviews by numerous skeptics. These reviews range from astute observations to scientific analysis by professional linguists. In both instances, contemporary speaking in tongues fail to pass for genuine languages. Sellers Crain has noticed that those who profess to be speaking in tongues in our society only reflect knowledge of the English language in their selection of syllables. “First, why were the people who said they were speaking in tongues, speaking only English syllables? If it was a different language why did it not sound like another tongue instead of English?” (3).

E. Mansell Pattison disclosed some pertinent data in his article, “Behavior Science Research on the Nature of Glossolalia” in the *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*. He concluded, “Thus, glossolalia does not appear to be a ‘strange language,’ but rather the aborted formation of a familiar language” (qtd. in Stevens 22). Stevens summarized respecting the linguistic quality of contemporary tongue-speaking:

Ecstatic utterances do not produce a language capable of being interpreted. ...Structural studies of glossolalia as performed by charismatics today shows that it is nothing more than the aborted formation of a familiar language that has been acquired through imitation and rehearsal. The true gift of tongues and the modern glossolalia stand worlds apart! (22)

Butler, a Christian Church commentator, recorded in his commentary these telling linguistic evaluations of glossolalia.

It is clear that Paul is speaking of *actual* human languages when he says “tongues” and *not* of the modern phenomena called *glossolalia* (a word not found in that form in the New Testament at all). The modern, alleged, “speaking in tongues” has been thoroughly analyzed by linguistics and philologists and their conclusions repudiate it as being any form of language at all (see *The Psychology of Speaking In Tongues*, by John P. Kildahl, pub. Harper and Row, 1972). Dr. Kildahl also documents cases where actual human language, spoken in an audience where the language was not understood except by the speaker, received a so-called miraculous interpretation and it was not at all what the speaker said. **Modern glossolalia is pseudo-miraculous!** (307 emphasis added)

B.J. Clarke gleaned the following summaries of studied evaluations respecting contemporary

speaking in tongues.

One definition of tongue-speaking in a modern context is given by R.R. Williams: “ecstatic speech often connected with religious excitement.” Ira J. Martin describes it as a “frenzied, inarticulate jargon with a sprinkling of incoherent ejaculations whose inflections and fonal qualities have characteristics of speech. In his book, *Tongue Speaking*, Martin R. Kelsey gives the following definition: “It is a spontaneous utterance of uncomprehended and seemingly random speech in sounds... (qtd. in Clarke, “Part Two” 2)

The book, *Speaking with Tongues, Historically and Psychologically Considered*, published by Yale University Press, makes this assessment of modern day speaking in tongues. “They are... but a ludicrous and silly mistake of the man’s imagination allied to some species of humorous hallucination and are not to be considered seriously, or they are a perjury, or a ghastly jest, or a very profound mental trick, or the loose jargon of a maniac” (qtd. in Clevenger 28). “Jividen points out, the explanation of tongue-speaking experiences today are to be found in abnormal psychology and not in the New Testament” (qtd. in Clarke, “Part Three” 1).

Historical Reference to Ecstatic Utterances

Pagan religions that were contemporary with Christianity in the first century practiced ecstatic utterances and claimed that such displays were evidence of inspiration and revelation from their pagan gods. However, what was ascribed in Acts 2 and elsewhere in the New Testament to the apostles of Christ and other Christians was discernible immediately as something different from merely ecstatic utterances with the *mere claim* of inspiration and revelation. Only being enabled miraculously and spontaneously to speak in real languages that they had not studied set the early, tongue-speaking Christians apart from babblers of their day.

Pre-Christian Graeco-Roman religions had their priests and priestesses who delivered oracles which they claimed originated with the gods, messages spoken “with obscurity and unintelligibility” and requiring interpretation. ...A further evidence that the “tongues” of I Corinthians refers to living languages is that the tongues needed interpretation. ...In none of these passages is there any suggestion that unintelligible jargon is “interpreted.” Through careful linguistic studies of these Greek terms, appearing in both the Septuagint (Greek) Old Testament and the Greek New Testament, J.G. Davies concluded: “The word used by St. Paul of interpreting glossolalia carries with it the strong suggestion of translating of foreign language.” [“Pentecost and Glossolalia.” *Journal of Theological Studies*, N.S., Vol. 3, Pt. 1 (April, 1952). p. 230.] (qtd. in Bennett)

McClintock and Strong chronicles some of the occasions of ecstatic utterances among nonconformist groups sporadically throughout the centuries.

More distinct parallels are found in the accounts of the wilder, more excited sects which have, from time to time, appeared in the history of Christendom. Tertullian (*De Ania*. c. 9), as a Montanist, claims the “revelationum charismata” as given to a sister of that sect. They came to her “inter dominica solemnia;” she was, “per ecstasin, in spiritu,” conversing with angels, and with the Lord himself, seeing and hearing mysteries (“sacramenta”), reading the hearts of men, prescribing remedies for those who needed them. The movement of the mendicant orders in the 13th century, the prophesyings of the 16th in England, the early history of the disciples of George Fox, that of the Jansenists in France, the revivals under Wesley and Whitefield, those of a later date in Sweden, America, and Ireland, have, in like manner, been fruitful in ecstatic phenomena more or less closely resembling those which we are now considering. (*McClintock and Strong*)

Butler summarizes ecstatic utterances throughout the ages. “Ecstatic, esoteric glossolalia similar to Christian glossolalia has been practiced, and is being practiced, by pagans in ancient and modern times

(Hittites, Phoenicians, Egyptians, Greeks, East Africans, Islamics, American Indians, Caribbean voodoo practitioners, and many others)” (309). Clearly, ecstatic utterances lack the credibility to validate themselves as being divine in origin.

The resurgence of ecstatic utterances is attributed to a college student in the early twentieth century “...on New Year’s Eve, 1900 at Bethel Bible College of Topeka, Kansas” (Clarke, “Part Two” 2). The very nature of the emotional display attached to ecstatic utterances is “contagious” to persons of like emotional composition. “...ecstasy and convulsive movement that became contagious, and many who were thus seized prophesied and uttered unintelligible expressions in an unconscious state.” (qtd. in Clevenger 28).

The modern Pentecostal revival is said to have begun on Jan. 1, 1901, when Agnes Ozman, a student in a Bible College in Topeka, Kansas, spoke in tongues. Today, tongue-speaking is practiced by most Pentecostal bodies. “Neo-Pentecostalism” is the term that refers to the spread of glossolalia to the established churches, both Catholic and Protestant. Hoekemag documents claims to tongue-speaking in such denominations as: Episcopal, Presbyterian, Reformed Church of America, Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, and among several smaller religious fellowships. (Clevenger, 28-29)

Clevenger adds that speaking in tongues occurs also among the Catholic Apostolic Church, Mormons, Shakers and some French Huguenots (28). B.J. Clarke adds, “For the first half of this century [twentieth century] the ‘tongues movement’ was restricted to the Pentecostals. However, at present there are many different kinds of churches who claim tongue-speaking. They are called Neo-Pentecostals and their glossolalial claims are identical to their predecessors” (“Part Two” 2).

Whether ancient pagan or contemporary worshipper, simply claiming to speak in tongues lacks evidence to substantiate any valid connection with Almighty God. “Experiential claims are empty and vain unless Biblical proof is found in support of these claims. A million claims will not change the teaching of the Bible on the matter” (Clarke, “Part One” 1).

The claims of modern-day religionists to speak in tongues are without any scriptural basis whatsoever, and they prove absolutely nothing as far as the speaker’s relationship with God is concerned. The history of glossolalia furnishes clear and abundant evidence that tongue-speaking has not been confined to worshippers of God and servants of Christ, but pagans, unbelievers, and all kinds of people in religious error have made the same claim and demonstrated it to their own satisfaction. (Clevenger 27)

Ramifications of Modern Day Speaking in Tongues

Modern-day speaking in tongues dare not be relegated to the amusing, emotional outbursts of gullible and delusional persons, as though the whole matter were of no real consequence. “If one claims the ability to ‘speak in tongues,’ he is contending that his message is a revelation from God. In such a case, his words rival those of the Bible. Are we to understand that this is not a dangerous teaching, worthy of censure?” (Jackson 23).

It is evident that charismatics and Pentecostals have very little regard for the Bible, which is how we should expect it to be if they are animated by and their very words, howbeit ecstatic utterances, are attributable to the Holy Spirit. Their view of authority in religion condescends to crude subjectivism, displacing any objective view of the absolute truth of the Bible. The emotionalism of ecstatic utterances and attendant bodily demonstrations become the sole object of their religion.

Those who have embraced it largely abandon objective truth considerations in order to cling to what they deem as a “better felt than told” religion. It matters little to them what the Bible actually teaches — they just take their hand, pat their chest and say, “I’ve got it right here!” Whereupon Scriptural logic and reason flies out the window. (Boren 9)

However, an ecstatic utterance (unlike miraculously speaking in unlearned languages as the

apostles did, Acts 2:1ff) lacks the credibility to validate itself.

Let it first be pointed out that no claim of miraculous power to speak in tongues, heal the sick or perform any other supernatural act should be accepted at face value. Human claims are not self-authenticating in religion! There must be an absolute standard by which all men may objectively evaluate such claims. There is such a standard—and that standard is the New Testament. The New Testament must sit in judgment upon human actions, not vice versa! (Deaver 42)

Seth Wilson, Dean Emeritus of Ozark Bible College (Christian Church), denotes persons professing to speak in tongues today (ecstatic utterances) claim to be above critical review or amenability to the Scriptures.

The tongues-speaker (modern-day) who says, “You cannot understand or give any true judgment about a gift from God which you have not experienced and do not believe in,” is saying, in effect, that it is not subject to critical examination in the light of Scripture. An error which grows out of this is the belief that one cannot understand the Bible unless he has been “baptized in the Holy Spirit.” To say that only the believer in the tongues experience is qualified to comment on it begs the question, supposes that it is always from God, and puts the subjective (inward and personal feeling) above the Scripture as a source of truth. **This takes the attitude that tongues speaking is something that is beyond the realm of reasonable evidence or factual investigation.** (qtd. in Butler 317-318 emphasis added)

Strongly fixated on so-called speaking in tongues, charismatics and Pentecostals firmly argue that no one can actually be saved unless he speaks in tongues (ecstatic utterances). An ecstatic utterance was the sign of salvation in that banquet hall with the Full Gospel Businessmen’s Fellowship International meeting where I found myself trapped, kneeling at the foot of a stage. When a new preacher replaced the retiring preacher at the First Church of God in Greenville, PA (where I worshipped while dating one young lady a few decades ago), the membership discovered what being Pentecostal meant and that they could not be saved unless they spoke in tongues.

Speaking in tongues is emphasized by contemporary charismatics and Pentecostals to the point that they believe one cannot be saved unless he speaks in these ecstatic utterances. The United Pentecostal Church is another case in point. Yet, as DeLoach observed, even in the first century when inarguably Bible miracles existed, not every child of God possessed the ability to perform each kind of miracle.

The glaring error of this is seen in the fact that not all believers in New Testament times spoke in tongues. Paul clearly states in I Cor. 12 that not all possessed every gift. “To another divers kinds of tongues” indicate that not everyone possessed that gift even when the spiritual gifts were being exercised. (15)

One of the ramifications of modern day speaking in tongues displaces the water baptism of the Great Commission. In the first century, there were two means by which miraculous power, including speaking in tongues, was received: (1) Holy Spirit baptism like the apostles (Acts 1:26-2:4) or at least directly from heaven without human intervention (Acts 10-11), and (2) as a result of the imposition of apostolic hands (Acts 19:6). All those upon whom the apostles laid their hands admittedly have died. Hence, anyone today claiming to speak in tongues, at least indirectly, is claiming also that he has been baptized in the Holy Spirit. However, from the time of Ephesians 4:5 forward there has been only one baptism available to humanity — the water baptism of the Great Commission (1 Pet. 3:20-21).

Obviously, the man who now claims to speak in tongues has not had apostolic hands placed upon him. Therefore, he is claiming to have received Holy Spirit baptism. But, if the baptism of the Great Commission (Mark 16:16) is baptism in water (and it is) and is for all men (and it is), and if — in addition to water baptism — there is Holy Spirit baptism, then there are now two baptisms. But, this would contradict Paul’s statement in Ephesians 4:4, 5 — “There is...

one baptism." If the baptism of the Great Commission is water baptism, and if this water baptism is the "one baptism" of Ephesians 4:5, then there is now no such thing as Holy Spirit baptism. And, if there is no Holy Spirit baptism, there is no speaking in tongues. (Deaver 46)

Speaking in tongues today would imply Holy Spirit baptism. There is only one baptism today, and that baptism is baptism in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21). Therefore, contemporary speaking in tongues would imply that there are too many baptisms today.

Conclusion

James Meadows succinctly summarizes the topic of speaking in tongues *miraculously*.

In Acts 2 tongues are definitely called languages (Acts 2:1-8). Tongue speakers in the first century understood what they were saying (1 Cor. 14:3-5, 16-19); that which they spoke could be translated into a language so as to be understood (1 Cor. 14:5); tongues were regarded as the least of the gifts (1 Cor. 12:8-10; 12:18-20); and they were for the purpose of convincing unbelievers (1 Cor. 14:22; cf. Acts 10:44-46). ...There are no apostles today to transmit the miraculous power to others (Acts 6:6-7; 8:13-18; 19:1-6). (2)

However, for every genuine article, there is a fake that is but a fleeting shadow of the real thing. Even a sham such as ecstatic utterances is a left-handed compliment to first century speaking in tongues, the real thing. The counterfeit item testifies to the existence and worthiness of that which it emulates. "Like all God's gifts, tongues had their counterfeit. The latter are morbid, the forerunners or results of disease. The true tongues were given to men in full vigour, preceded by no fanatic madness, and followed by no prostration as the reaction" (*Fausset's*).

Of course, every person today who speaks, speaks in a tongue, howbeit not miraculously, but through learning and practice. The signal difference between first century speaking in tongues and the present is that early Christians were afforded the ability (miraculously) to speak in languages they had not studied, but anyone today needing to speak in a foreign (unknown to him) tongue must study to learn it. The same principle applies to first century interpreters of tongues versus bona fide interpreters of tongues (languages) today; formerly during the period of miracles Christians could interpret languages aided by miracles, but today anyone interpreting must already know the respective languages (having before learned them).

Do men speak in tongues today? Yes. In fact, there is not a speaking individual alive who does not speak in some tongue. Some are capable of speaking in several tongues: English, French, Spanish, Russian, and the list goes on. The crucial question is whether men can speak in tongues in the same manner as the apostles and other first century Christians did. (Clarke, "Part One" 1)

On May 17, 2004 while I was string-trimming the back edge of the shed that I call my print shop, spontaneously and without presence of mind, I found myself briefly, but vigorously, embraced in *ecstatic utterances* (for which there was no interpreter) and *rapid dancing*. However, I assure you, brethren, it was not the Holy Spirit that moved me. Rather, a snake shot out from the foundation of that building between my legs, and I hate snakes with a capital "H."

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Chapter 8
The Truth About Love
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The Dearman family have served congregations in Tennessee, Alabama, and Houston, Texas. Also, they did mission work in Malaysia, where Jim founded and directed the Malaysia School of Preaching. Upon returning to the States, Jim was a faculty member of the Memphis School of Preaching.

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Definitions of the word "love" range from "strong affection for something or someone" to "a score of zero in tennis." It is clear that the misuse of the word "love" in our society has caused many to lose sight of the true biblical concept of love. What did Jesus mean when He used the word in this statement: "...You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:37-39)?

What did Jesus mean by "love," when He said "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Mt. 10:37)? And what did the Lord intend by His use of this word "love" in John 13:34-35, when He told His disciples: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another"?

In all of these statements, Jesus used the Greek word "agape," the highest form of love, the kind of love that extends itself to others based upon the value of the object of the love. Of course, there is nothing as valuable as an immortal soul. Since all humans possess such a soul, all human beings are to be the objects of the Christian's "agape" love. This love demonstrates itself in acting toward others in keeping with what is best for them. It does not always require the deep warm affection that is indicated by "phileo," another word for love in the New Testament. For this reason, "agape," rather than "phileo," is used in the Lord's command to love our enemies.

The Lord does not require His followers to show warm affection toward those whose aim it is to hurt or destroy them. However, He does require that His disciples demonstrate agape love, a love that acts in harmony with the best interests of all men. By doing so, the faithful followers of Christ reflect the love of God and Christ in their lives, and show themselves to be different from those in the world. Of course those who are brothers and sisters in Christ should manifest both the "phileo" and the "agape" forms of love for one another, based upon the special relationship they sustain to one another and to God.

With this brief background in view, let us now look at some of the defining characteristics of biblical love. It is impossible within the scope of this lesson to examine every passage on love. However, there is a passage in the New Testament that reveals three principles about love that permeate all of God's Word and that provide us with an excellent summary of the truth about love.

The text is Matthew 16:24-26:

Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

While the word “love” is not found in this text, the concept clearly pervades these words of Jesus. The text contains three characteristics of biblical love that may be seen throughout God’s Word: desire, denial, and decision. These three characteristics provide great insights into the truth about love in both the Old and the New Testaments.

In the first place, love desires. Throughout the Bible, love is held out to man by the God of heaven as the supreme and overwhelming motivation for service. It is love that should create the desire to follow the Lord. Discipleship begins with desire, and desire is produced by man’s recognition of what God has done for him. This has always been the case, even under the former dispensations.

One of the great patriarchs, Jacob, provides a great study in spiritual growth based upon His increased understanding of the goodness of God. We first see Jacob as one who deceived his father and thereby obtained the birthright and blessing of his brother Esau. However, as we follow Jacob further in his relationship with God, we see a faith that is growing, and we see a greater dependence upon God.

There is a very revealing incident concerning Jacob’s faith in Genesis 35. It occurs after the dream of the ladder and his wrestling with the angel, two incidents that served to strengthen the man whose name was changed to “Israel.” In Genesis 35:4, we find the household of Jacob bringing to him all the strange gods, the idols, to which they had clung to this time. Why did they do this? They did it because Jacob commanded it. Notice Genesis 35:2-4:

And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone. So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hands, and the earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which was by Shechem.

These verses depict a very important point in Jacob’s life. His faith had grown because of his clearer picture of the nature of God. Notice how he referred to God: “Who answered me in the day of distress, and was with me in the way which I went.” Here Jacob is expressing his gratitude to a gracious God for His blessings. Jacob has now come to realize that God will not forsake him if He does not forsake God. This is a beautiful picture of spiritual progress through Jacob’s realization of the love of God and Jacob’s desire to love in return.

In the Mosaic dispensation, we find the same principle of service motivated by love. Love was to produce the desire to keep God’s commandments. A brief look at some passages in Deuteronomy will reveal the relationship between love and law.

Deuteronomy 7:9 reveals: “Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments.” This statement reminds us that God blesses and approves those who “love Him and keep His commandments.”

In Deuteronomy 30:16, Moses depicts love as the motivation for keeping God’s commandments: “In that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess.”

Moses reinforces the motivation of love in verse 20: “That you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days;

and that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”

In all these verses, and in others that could be cited, love precedes law keeping. God has demonstrated His love to man in every dispensation. Such demonstrations were designed to motivate man to serve God from hearts filled to overflowing with gratitude and love for God’s goodness.

In the present age, the final dispensation of time, the light of God’s love has been brilliantly and beautifully displayed in His Son. John 3:16, the Golden Text of the Bible, summarizes it: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Such boundless, matchless love desired the salvation of all mankind. Paul declared it to be so in 1 Timothy 2:3-4, when he wrote: “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” The love of heaven desired the salvation of every soul on earth, and Christ denied Himself the continual glory of heaven and came to earth to make such salvation possible.

Recognition of such love should create within us the loving desire to become His disciples. Jesus said, “If you love me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). However, love that produces desire is not sufficient. In the text under consideration in Matthew 16, Jesus declares that denial is an essential characteristic of love. Biblical love denies self.

In his admonition to Christians to adopt the mind of Christ, Paul, in Philippians 2:5-8, depicted the denial that Christ’s love prompted Him to make:

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

The finite mind can scarcely comprehend the depth of this denial Jesus made for mankind. He sacrificed the splendor of heaven and descended to earth to die the most horrific and humiliating death known to man, “even the death of the cross.”

Jesus made it clear that, just as a cross was necessary for Him, a cross would also be necessary for all who would follow in His sinless steps. Taking up our cross involves a denial of self and a sanctifying of the Lord in our hearts and lives. The follower of Christ must dethrone self and enthrone the Savior in his heart if he is to be a worthy disciple. All other earthly relationships must be secondary to our service to the Savior. Jesus made this abundantly clear in Matthew 10:32-39:

Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven. Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it (Mt. 10:32-39).

The confession Jesus discussed in the above text is not merely the one made with the mouth before baptism, but also the continual confession of a faithful life by the obedient disciple. Love prompts one to believe in Christ, to repent, to confess Him to be the Christ, and to be baptized for the remission of sins. However, once saved and added to the church by the Lord, the disciple must then live his confession daily before others. He must demonstrate to everyone that a new master rules his life, and that no other earthly bond, however sweet or special, supercedes his loving relationship with the Lord of his life. If told he must give up Christ to save any of these earthly associations, he must be willing to take his stand with his Savior.

In Luke 14:33, Jesus said: "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple." Notice, Jesus did not say, "Whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be one of My best disciples." The Lord made it clear that denial is necessary to discipleship—period!

The apostle Paul understood that love denies self. He expressed it powerfully in Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Paul calls his self-denial a crucifixion in which the sinful, selfish man has been put to death and a new selfless servant has been born.

In Paul's reference to Jesus as the one "who loved me and gave Himself for me," we see love as the motivation for the self-denial. Thus, we learn that biblical love denies self to serve the Savior. This denial leads to our final defining characteristic of love. This characteristic is implied in our text in Matthew 16:24 and is clearly stated elsewhere by Jesus. Biblical love involves a conscious decision to love. Thus, another truth about love is that love decides.

Love must decide between two masters, God and Satan. In Matthew 6:24, Jesus said: "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." Jesus, in this portion of the great Sermon on the Mount, says, in effect, that the love that decides also divides. We cannot "falter between two opinions, as Elijah told the prophets of Baal. We must choose between the lust of the world and the light of the world. It is a decision that leads to a distinction in the disciple that the world clearly acknowledges and, many times, abhors. However, the Christian is to gladly suffer the reproach of the world for the rewards of godly living here and hereafter.

To the Christians at Rome, Paul issued this fervent plea: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be 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" (Rom. 12:1-2). Paul calls upon these believers to completely commit to the Christ above and not to conform to the crowd around them.

The concept of sanctification permeates God's Word. When one is sanctified, he is set apart for a holy use. He is different because he has made a decision to set his mind on things above and not on things on the earth. Love influenced his decision to obey, and the love that influenced the decision is the love that should direct his every thought and action thereafter.

The words of Paul provide a succinct and splendid summary of the truth about love: "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:14,15).

Chapter 9
**The Truth About The Relation
Between Grace, Faith, Law & Works**
Jonnie Hutchison

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This lectureship has been a highlight of my year for the past several years. I appreciate the invitation to participate in this wonderful series of lectures. I appreciate the West Jefferson congregation and the good work that you are doing for the cause of Jesus Christ. You have a reputation in this area of being a congregation sound in the faith and true to "the Book" and you are appreciated for that.

I also appreciate the theme of these lectures. Far too many people have no idea what truth is. Both in society and in the church of the Lord there are those who have accepted the well-worn sentiment that truth is relative and unobtainable. We can only say that such a view is not only contrary to what the Bible actually teaches (John 8:32) but it is also illogical. For if one claims no one can know the truth then it is impossible for his conclusion to be proven as true, because he could not know for certain that no one can know the truth. Jesus said we can know the truth. I believe Jesus!

The title of our study in this hour is the truth about the relationship of grace, faith, law and works. What the Bible teaches concerning the relationship of these four items has been so perverted that the majority of religious people do not know the truth concerning them. Some of the errors that are taught about grace, faith, law and works are: (1) The lost are saved wholly by grace. (2) The lost are saved by "faith only." (Obviously both of these claims cannot be true). (3) God gives faith directly to individuals who "pray through" separate from the written Word of God. (4) Law and grace are mutually exclusive. (5) Knowledge and faith are mutually exclusive. (6) Faith is a "leap in the dark." (7) The Law of Moses was strictly a law of works and the New Testament is strictly a law of faith. (8) Faith and works are mutually exclusive. (9) One who believes that any kind of works is necessary to salvation is trying to "earn his salvation." This is only a small sampling of the lack of knowledge of the truth concerning the relationship of grace, faith, law and works.

GRACE - ITS RELATIONSHIP TO SALVATION.

Grace has often been defined as the "unmerited favor of God," and so it is. God in his infinite wisdom and unlimited knowledge has provided the means whereby undeserving sinners may receive the forgiveness of sins. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Romans 5:8-9 NKJV). The phrase "while we were yet sinners" implies that as sinners we do not deserve, nor may we in any sense of the term merit, by our own character and feeble efforts, the salvation God provides through Jesus Christ. The inspired Paul so declared in Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by **grace** you have been saved through faith, and **that not of yourselves**; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (NKJV). Man cannot be saved apart from the grace of God - period! There is no one who will ever be "good enough" to be saved. If man could originate his own plan of salvation (and it be effective), there would be no need for the grace of God or the blood of Christ; but that is an utter impossibility.

Both Romans 5:8-9 and Ephesians 2:8-9 prove that the teaching that a lost person is saved "wholly by the grace of God" is not true. Coupled with grace and love in the Roman passage is the blood of Christ. The blood is what justifies the sinner. God's grace is the vehicle by which God extends the

opportunity for remission of sins. The blood of Christ is the agent, which does the cleansing (Revelation 1:5). To receive the benefit of the grace of God, one must contact the death and thus, the blood of Christ (Romans 6:3-5). When one accepts the doctrine that a sinner is saved “wholly by grace” he of necessity rejects what else the Bible says is necessary to salvation.

The grace of God is extended to all through Jesus Christ. “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11 NKJV). Though God’s grace is extended to all, it is rejected by many. One cannot reject Jesus Christ and accept God’s grace for it is through Jesus that grace is available. “For the law was given by Moses, but **grace** and truth **came by Jesus Christ**” (John 1:17). The inspired Paul wrote, “to the praise of the glory of **His grace, by which** He has made us **accepted** in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the **riches of His grace**” (Ephesians 1:6-7 NKJV).

One often overlooked aspect of God’s grace is its connection with the word of God. God’s grace is inseparably connected with the revelation of His divine will in the Bible. The inspired Paul wrote that God’s grace teaches us the way to live our lives in this present world (Titus 2:11-12). Twice in the New Testament the phrase “the word of His grace” is used showing the connection between grace and the Word of God (Acts 14:3; 20:32).

What then is the relationship of grace to salvation? “For by **grace you have been saved** through faith...” Grace is God’s part in the matter of salvation as faith is man’s part. It is God who has extended His grace to mankind. It is man who must accept it by faith. A good summary of the relationship of grace to salvation is found in the following passage:

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus**, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one **who has faith** in Jesus” (Romans 3:23-26 NKJV).

FAITH - ITS RELATIONSHIP TO SALVATION

Faith has been defined in a number of ways. Those who believe that faith is merely “a leap in the dark” would most likely accept the definition that faith is “a firm belief in something for which there is no proof.”ⁱ This is the idea that faith does not have a sure and certain foundation based upon evidence but is merely a feeling. As one man put it, “What is faith? Quite simply, it is the acceptance of a theory without any logical or empirical basis...knowledge and faith are mutually exclusive.”ⁱⁱ Is faith nothing more than “a wispy, feel-good emotion that simply ‘leaps’ into the dark, and believes based upon a sort of ‘holy hunch’?”ⁱⁱⁱ Are faith and knowledge mutually exclusive?

The Bible defines faith differently. The Hebrew writer declares, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

No better definition than this inspired definition or description could be found. We must know that faith is something not seen; yet, there is full assurance and conviction relative to the unseen. Faith, therefore, must be predicated upon certain testimony and evidence, resulting in certain convictions and expressing itself in definite action.^{iv}

The source of faith is the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Knowledge of divine truth has the power to create faith in the human mind based upon the evidence it presents (John 20:30-31). **Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary** defines evidence as “something that tends to prove; ground for belief.” “Evidence and belief compliment one another; they are not mutually exclusive. Evidence prepares the way for belief; belief does not exist independent of evidence.”^v Evidence does not exist independent of knowledge. The evidence for ones personal faith and trust in God is the knowledge revealed in the

scriptures and further substantiated by the empirical evidence of nature (See Romans 1:20-21; Psalm 19:1).

The Bible clearly teaches that the lost are saved or justified by faith. Romans 3:28 reads, "Therefore we conclude that a **man is justified by faith** without the deeds of the law." Again in Romans 5:1, "Therefore **being justified by faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:" It is faith that gives access to the grace of God and the hope it brings. Romans 5:2 reads, "By whom also we have **access by faith into this grace** wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." None of these passages, which emphasize the truth that man is saved by faith, support the modern denominational doctrine of justification by "faith only." Is man justified by faith? Yes! Is man saved by "faith only"? Let the Bible answer, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and **NOT by faith only**" (James 2:24). This is the only time the words "faith" and "only" appears in the Bible in the same passage and the point is clearly stated that justification is **NOT by FAITH ONLY!**

More fully expressed, the idea of salvation by faith only or faith alone is the idea that the sinner is saved the moment he/she believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God without any further response or acts of obedience. However, the claim of salvation by faith only and the actual practice of those who teach it are inconsistent. Most who claim to believe in "faith only salvation" also require the sinner to pray "the sinner's prayer" for salvation. When pressed, some who claim to believe in salvation by faith alone would admit the necessity of repentance on the part of the sinner (Acts 17:30). Salvation is either by faith alone or it is not. One cannot have it both ways. If it is by "faith alone" then there is nothing else required of the sinner but to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God - no sinner's prayer, no repentance, etc.

The truth is that faith is the sinner's response to God's grace. "For by grace are you saved through faith..." (Ephesians 2:8). In the Bible, faith is expressed in obedience to the Word of God. The statement found in the book of Habakkuk and quoted in the New Testament that "the just shall live by faith" indicates that faith requires action on the part of one who processes it (Habakkuk 2:2-4; Romans 1:17). How may one "live by faith" without outwardly expressing faith by how he lives?

Hebrews chapter eleven gives clear illustrations as to the expression of faith required to please God, which may be summed up in the word obedience. "By **faith** Abel **offered** unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, **by which** he obtained witness that **he was righteous**, God testifying of **his gifts**: and by it he being dead yet speaketh" (Hebrews 11:4). Since faith comes by hearing God's Word (Romans 10:17) and Abel offered his sacrifice by faith, it follows that God told both he and his brother, Cain, what type of sacrifice He required. Abel obeyed God. Cain did not. By expressing his faith in obedience to what God commanded, Abel "obtained witness that he was righteous." Cain did not obtain witness that he was righteous. Why? He did not express his faith in obedience. One may believe that God exists (Cain obviously did) but genuine saving faith which justifies one before God is shown in active obedience to the will of God as per the example of Abel, Noah (vs. 7), Abraham and Sarah (vs. 8-12; 17-19), Isaac, Jacob and Joseph (vs. 20-22), Moses (vs. 23-28), and God's chosen people (vs. 29-30).

What is the relationship of faith to salvation? Faith is man's response to the grace of God expressed in active obedience to the Will of God. Without faith one cannot please God (Hebrews 11:6).

WORKS - THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO SALVATION

Works is an ugly word in the minds of many religious people when it comes to the subject of salvation. Inspired statements found in the Bible regarding works that are incompatible for salvation are applied to any and all kinds of works. The conclusion then is that any type of works that man may do in response to God's grace annuls grace and constitutes an effort to earn ones salvation.

The Bible certainly teaches that certain kinds of works are excluded from man's response to God's grace. The inspired Paul **excluded** certain works in the matter of salvation by "grace through faith" saying, "**not of works** lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Yet, in the very next verse he

included “good works” that were ordained by God saying, “We should walk in them.” Is this a Bible contradiction? No. Man cannot be saved by his own works. On the other hand the works that God has ordained are absolutely essential to properly responding to the will of God. Would anyone believe that he can please God while refusing to “walk” in the “good works” as God has ordained? Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your **good works** and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Good works are works that can be seen by others. When these “good works” are done they glorify the Father. If man could originate his own plan of salvation and specify requirements (works) to do whereby he could be saved, he would have a reason to boast. Man cannot originate such a plan. In that sense, man cannot save himself. He must depend entirely upon the plan of salvation originated by God, which is revealed in the Bible. Thus, works originated by man in an effort to save him are excluded from the salvation; this is by “grace through faith.”

The book of Romans speaks of **another kind of works** that are **excluded** in the matter of contributing to one’s salvation. Consider Romans 4:2-6:

For if Abraham were justified by **works**, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that **worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace**, but of debt. But to him that **worketh not**, but **believeth** on him that justifieth the ungodly, **his faith is counted for righteousness**. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.

Many read these verses and improperly conclude that Paul is condemning all types of works regarding the matter of salvation. Do these passages warrant such a conclusion?

Consider that the overall context of the book of Romans concerns the fact that all are under sin (both Jew and Gentile - Romans 3:23), and thus, all need the gospel, which is the “power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16-17). There is a kind of works by which Abraham was not justified. What were these works? The context of Romans chapters three and four indicate that Paul was addressing the Jews, some of whom continued to trust in the Law of Moses even after it had been taken out of the way and nailed to the cross of Christ (Colossians 2:14; Ephesians 2:14-16). This included the law of circumcision which some of the Jews believed was to be bound upon the Gentiles for salvation (See Acts 15:1). Paul uses Abraham as an example of one who was justified apart from the Law of Moses. His justification came “by faith” before the Law of Moses was ever in force. Paul’s argument is that if Abraham could be justified by faith apart from the Law of Moses and before he was circumcised, then the Gentiles may be justified by faith apart from the Law of Moses and without submitting to fleshly circumcision. The same conclusion is reached in the account of Galatians 5:6 where inspiration declares, “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.” Thus, the works of the old law are excluded from man’s salvation this side of the cross. Those works do not avail. What avails is “faith which **works** by love.” Again in Galatians 3:11 the Bible reads, “But that **no man is justified by the law** in the sight of God, it is evident: for, **The just shall live by faith.**” To attempt to be justified before God (or attempt to bind it upon others) by a spiritual law that was no longer in force was pure folly. As the Bible tells us in Galatians 5:4, “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are **justified by the law**; ye are fallen from grace.” However, those who are just “live (an action word) by faith.”

Another type of works by which no one can be justified is the “works of the flesh” or the “works of darkness.” Rather than contributing to salvation, participation in the works of the flesh or the works of darkness bring damnation. After naming the works of the flesh the New Testament declares, “. . . of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Galatians 5:19-21). The Bible tells us in Ephesians 5:11, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”

Though it is evident that man’s own works of human merit, the works of the Law of Moses and the works of the flesh, are all works that are excluded from salvation. It is equally evident that there are

works associated with and that are necessary to man's salvation from sin. In the book of James chapter two, the Bible reads:

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath **faith**, and have not **works**? **can faith save him?** If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so **faith**, if it hath not **works**, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast **faith**, and I have **works**: shew me thy **faith** without thy **works**, and I will shew thee my **faith by my works**. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that **faith without works is dead?**" (James 2:14-20).

The following points may be gleaned from this reading:

- (1) Faith without works cannot save (verse 14).
- (2) Faith unaccompanied by works does not profit (verses 15-16).
- (3) Faith is shown by works (verse 18).
- (4) One is no better off than the demons if his faith is not shown in making the proper response to the will of God through his works (verse 19).
- (5) There is a type of works necessary which prevents faith from being dead. (verses 17, 20).

To deny that any and all types of works are excluded from God's plan for man's salvation from sin is to deny what the Bible clearly states in these verses. Faith without works is dead! What works are necessary for one's faith to be a living faith rather than a dead faith? In John 9:4, Jesus said, "I must work the **works of Him that sent me**, while it is the day; the night cometh when no man can work." In John 17:4, Jesus declared, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have **finished the work which thou gavest me to do**." Jesus stated that it was imperative for Him to be doing the works that God had given Him to do. In doing those works, which God had given Him to do, Jesus was submitting in obedience to the will of God. "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38).

Jesus taught that those who would enter into the kingdom of heaven must also do the will of the Father. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but **he who does the will of My Father** in heaven" (Matthew 7:21 NKJV). Doing the will of the Father is obeying what He has commanded as revealed in the New Testament of Jesus Christ. This fits perfectly with the statement of the Hebrew writer which says, "Though He was a Son, yet He learned **obedience** by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who **obey Him**" (Hebrews 5:8-9, NKJV). The works that are necessary to man's salvation from sin and continued faithfulness to God are works of obedience to what God has commanded in response to His divine grace. This is faith in action!

The Bible is clear as to the final destiny of those who do not obey the gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9; 1 Peter 4:17). When one's faith has been expressed in obeying God's commands he still has not earned salvation. In regards to obeying commands Jesus said, "So likewise ye, when ye shall have **done** all those things which are **commanded** you, say, We are **unprofitable servants**: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10).

When one obeys God's commands, he is in essence working the work of God - not his own works. When Jesus was asked, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" He answered, "This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:28-29). Those who deny the necessity of works in the matter of man's salvation, to be consistent, must also deny the necessity of faith, for Jesus called believing in Him a "work of God." That places faith along side of repentance (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30), confession of faith in Christ (Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10) and baptism into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Acts 10:48) on an equal footing, for each is a command from God and thus each is a work - not of men - but of God.

Even when one has become a Christian, works of obedience are to continue. How else will one maintain faithfulness to God without continued submission to His divine will? Christians are to: “maintain good works” (Titus 3:8, 14), “work out” their “own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12), be “abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58), engage in the “work of faith and labor of love” (1 Thessalonians 1:3), and be “prepared unto every good work” (2 Timothy 2:21).

What then is the relationship of works to salvation? Works of obedience to the commands of God is the means by which one’s faith is expressed, which results in receiving the benefits of the grace of God through the blood of Jesus Christ.

LAW - ITS RELATIONSHIP TO SALVATION

Some, even among members of churches of Christ, express the idea that we are not under law, but grace. The passages to which those who hold this doctrine direct us include John 1:17 where the Bible reads, “For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (NKJV). Of course the passage itself identifies the spiritual law that is contrasted with “grace and truth.” It is the law, which was “given through Moses” an obvious reference to the first covenant which God made with His chosen people Israel (the Old Testament Law). The conclusion that John 1:17 includes any and all spiritual law simply is not warranted.

An appeal is also made to the statement of Romans 6:14, “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for **you are not under law but under grace**” (NKJV). This clear contrast between law and grace supposedly proves that none of us are subject to **any** spiritual law today because we are “not under law but under grace.” Of course this contention is disproved by the very context of Romans chapter six:

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! 16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? 17 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you **obeyed** from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered (Romans 6:15-17, NKJV).

What does it mean to obey? The dictionary defines “obey” as “(1) to follow the commands or guidance of; (2) to conform to or comply with [obey an order].” (*Merriam Webster Online*). What had the Corinthians obeyed? What commands did they follow? With what orders did they comply? The very fact that they had “obeyed that form of doctrine” indicates that the “form of doctrine” consisted of commands, or orders, else they could not have obeyed it. The truth is that the “form of doctrine” is a reference to the gospel of Jesus Christ which is also called in the New Testament the “law of faith” (Romans 3:27), the “law of God” (Romans 7:25), the “law of the Spirit” (Romans 8:2), the “perfect law of liberty” (James 1:25), and the “law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2). Paul declared that he was “under law to Christ” (1 Corinthians 9:21). When Paul discussed becoming all things to all men in order to save them he stated, “To them that are without law, as without law, (**being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ**), that I might gain them that are without law” (1 Corinthians 9:21). These passages clearly show that the New Testament of Jesus Christ is the spiritual law to which all of mankind is subject today.

The Old Testament prophets described the “new covenant” which Jesus would institute as a law (See Genesis 49:10; Isaiah 2:2-4; 42:1-4; 51:5-6; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 11:17-21; Micah 4:1-2). In the New Testament, obeying commandments is emphasized. Jesus declared in John 14:15, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” Again, in verse 21, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” Where are the “commandments” of Jesus Christ to be found? The answer is in the “law of Christ.”

To deny that man is subject to spiritual law today is to deny that man sins. In Romans 5:13 the Bible tells us that “sin is not imputed when there is no law.” That means that in the absence of law there is no such thing as transgression. “Were there not speed limits imposed upon your network of highways in this country, there would be no speeding violations. Before there was a Federal Income Tax Law in our nation there could be no violators of this civil precept. If God has no law for us, then there is no such thing as our sinning against him.”^{vi}

The Bible makes it very clear that there is sin today. Consider the statement of Romans 3:9, “What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that **they are all under sin**” (NKJV). Note the use of the present tense of the verb, which indicates that at the time these words were penned, people were then sinning. In the same chapter Paul concluded, “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). The inspired John addressed Christians when he wrote, “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). Since where there is no law, there is no sin; and since the Bible clearly affirms that sin exists, then we must conclude that there exists today spiritual law to which all of mankind is accountable.

It is regrettable that so many sincere religious people fail to see the proper connection between grace and law. In Romans 3:24 inspiration affirms that one is justified freely by the grace of God. Yet, three verses later, inspiration affirms that all are under “the law of faith” (Romans 3:27). In the same book the apostle affirms that the “law of the Spirit of life makes one free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2).

The “justification” of Romans 3:24 is the same blessing as “being made free” in Romans 8:2! Therefore, the rule that things that are equal to the same thing are equal to each other applies here. In fact, beloved, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is Jehovah’s glorious grace in action!”^{vii}

The Bible teaches that Christ is our law-giver. The New Testament book of James declares that “there is one Lawgiver....” (James 4:12). Since the Old Testament has served its purpose and has been taken out of the way (Colossians 2:14-16), it is obvious that James could not have been referring to Moses. The “Lawgiver” of whom James wrote must refer to Jesus Christ. A lawgiver must have a law. The New Testament is the law of Christ.

Jesus promised that, “ye shall know the truth and the **truth** shall make you **free**” (John 8:32). But Paul wrote, “For the **law of the Spirit** of life in Christ Jesus made you **free** from the law of sin and death.” Since both truth and the law of the Spirit are said to make one free spiritually then it follows that the truth and the law are one and the same thing (See also John 17:17; Psalm 119:142, 151).

The New Testament of Jesus Christ is the spiritual law to which all people are amenable this side of the cross. This spiritual law contains the revelation of God’s grace, love and mercy extended to man through Jesus Christ (John 3:16; Romans 5:8-9; Ephesians 2:8). It tells man the proper response he must make to God’s grace and mercy in order to receive the forgiveness of sin through the blood of Jesus, and to enjoy the hope of eternal life, which God has promised to the saved. It reveals the means by which the child of God may continue walking in the light, and thus, maintaining spiritual fellowship with both the Father and the Son. Without God’s spiritual law, man would be adrift in the sea of life with no compass or anchor, no sense of direction, no hope of ever reaching the gilded shores of heaven. Salvation from sin is impossible without it. How thankful we should be for the spiritual law God has made available to us in the New Testament of Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

What then is the truth about the relationship of grace, faith, works and law? Each is inseparably connected with man’s salvation from sin. Thus, each is indispensable to the salvation of souls. Each is an integral part to the whole of God’s plan for man’s salvation from sin.

ⁱⁱ *Websters Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, copyright © 1991 by Merriam-Webster Inc.

ⁱⁱ The Science of Modern Propaganda Website [Hhttp://www.propaganda101.com](http://www.propaganda101.com)H

ⁱⁱⁱ Wayne Jackson, *Is Evidence Related to Faith?* Christian Courier Online – Questions,
H<http://www.christiancourier.com/questions/H>

^{iv} V.E. Howard, *Grace, Law, Faith, Works, Love*, Central Printers and Publishers, West Monroe, LA 1977, pg. 41.

^v Wayne Jackson, *Is Evidence Related to Faith?*

^{vi} V.E. Howard, *Grace, Law, Faith, Works, Love*, Central Printers and Publishers, West Monroe, LA © 1977, pgs. 6-7

^{vii} IBID, pgs. 9-10.

Chapter 10
**The Truth About The
Work Of The Holy Spirit In Conversion**
Wesley Simons

He has preached for 33 years. He preaches and is one of the elders at the Stoney Creek Church of Christ. He is in his eleventh year with the Stoney Creek Church of Christ; He has been married to Elva (Cook) for 36 years. He has two daughters: Karen Blevins (34) and Candy Phillips (25). Both are faithful members of the church. Both sons-in-law are faithful members of the church; He is a graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching; He has B.A. and M.A. degrees from Tennessee Bible College; He has done post-graduate work at Tennessee Bible College; Past instructor (Extension Classes) for Tennessee Bible College; Past director of Crandull School of Preaching; Founder and director of the Tri-Cities School of Preaching and Christian Development; Extensive TV work; Extensive experience hosting live radio call-in program (Between 70-100 converted as a result of program. Five of these are denominational preachers); Has done taping for World Video Bible School; He has written for various brotherhood publications; He has begun three brotherhood papers; He has been involved in numerous debates.

Introduction

There is a tremendous need for a good study on the Holy Spirit. The denominational world makes all kinds of false claims relative to Him and His work. Some people claim that they have been baptized with the Holy Spirit. Others claim they receive modern-day revelation. We also have those who claim that they can work miracles. There are those who declare that they can speak in tongues. We do not want to forget those "so-called" faith healers. We have those proclaiming loud and clear that they can cast out demons, and on and on we could go.

However, in this study we want to look at the Holy Spirit's work in conversion. When I was attending the church of God, they held the view that when it was time for one to be saved, the Holy Spirit would let him know. This meant that a force so overwhelming would engulf a person and he would not be able to resist such. There are some obvious questions that need to be asked. (1) Why doesn't the Holy Spirit do this for all people? (2) If I am lost, whose fault is it? (3) Why doesn't the Holy Spirit overwhelm people in Africa, Russia, etc.? (4) Why is it that where the Bible has not gone, one will not find Christians? (5) Why should we be concerned about preaching the Word to the entire world if the Holy Spirit is converting people by His over-powering, direct influence?

Before we consider more on the subject of how the Holy Spirit works in conversion, we want to take a look at the Holy Spirit Himself. We must know some things about Him before we can understand His work.

The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Godhead

We have those who call our radio program who try to deny the being known as the Holy Spirit. They try to turn Him into a force or an energy of some kind. This is also promoted by various cults. Listen to this view set forth by the Jehovah Witnesses:

The holy spirit is the active force of God. It is not a person but is a powerful force that God causes to emanate from himself to accomplish his holy will (Reasoning, p. 81).

One of the first things that one must understand about the Holy Spirit is that He is a being. He is the third member of the Godhead. We will set forth a simple argument that all can see. Notice the following facts:

- (1) If it is the case that the Holy Spirit possesses all the attributes of a being, then He is a being.
- (2) The Holy Spirit does possess all the attributes of a being.
- (3) Therefore, the Holy Spirit is a being.

We can prove the aforementioned argument by showing some of the attributes, which He possesses. (1) The Holy Spirit speaks: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (1 Tim. 4:1). (2) He has knowledge: "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:11). (3) He has a will: "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will" (1 Cor. 12:11). (4) He can be lied to: "But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?" (Acts 5:3). (5) He is spoken of as a person: "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come" (John 16:13). (6) He has a mind: "And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:27). (7) He is eternal: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb. 9:14)? (8) He can be grieved: "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30). (9) He can be resisted:

Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers (Acts 7:51-52).

We could go on and on, but this is enough evidence to prove that the Holy Spirit is a Divine Being and not just a force like that of a magnet as some have declared. If He is the third member of the Godhead, and He is, then we need to revere Him and His work.

So, we can see that the Holy Spirit is part of the Godhead. Matthew tied Him into the Godhead this way: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Mat. 28:19). John said this: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one" (1 John 5:7).

The Holy Spirit Has Been Very Active in the Scheme of Redemption

There are those who believe that the Holy Spirit did not become active until Jesus went back into heaven and sent the Comforter namely the Holy Spirit. This is totally false. The Holy Spirit has been very active down through the ages. We wish to notice some of the things that He did. (1) He moved men to speak by inspiration: "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue" (2 Samuel 23:2); "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:20-21). (2) He was involved with the birth of Jesus:

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost (Mat. 1:18-20).

(3) He helped to lead Jesus: "And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness" (Luke 4:1). (4) Do not forget the creation: "In the beginning God created the heaven 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" (Gen. 1:1-2).

We have given just a small amount of evidence to prove that the Holy Spirit has always been involved in the scheme of redemption. However, the issue is, what is He doing today to help convert those who are lost?

The Work of the Holy Spirit in Conversion

We will notice some things that we know to be true about His work in conversion. (1) The Holy Spirit revealed the Word of God that is designed to set men free from sin:

Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore, said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you (John 16:13-15).

(2) He is to convict the world of sin:

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged (John 16:7-11).

(3) He is also involved in the new birth:

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit (John 3:1-8).

(4) He invites people to obey: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). (5) He proved the gospel to be true by being involved in the resurrection of Jesus: "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:4)

These are a few of the great things the Holy Spirit was and is doing. However, the real question is, what is His work in conversion today?

The Work of the Holy Spirit in Conversion...Today!

We contend that the Holy Spirit influences the heart of the alien sinner by means of the Word of God. The parable of the sower proves this:

Now the parable is this: The seed is the **word of God**. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the **word** out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, **receive the word** with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and

are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having **heard the word, keep it**, and bring forth fruit with patience (Luke 8:11-15).

The seed is the Word of God v11. The Devil tries to remove the Word from the hearts of those who hear it lest they should believe and be saved v12. Those on the rocky ground received the Word, but would not let it take root. Therefore, in time of temptation, they fell away. Notice the emphasis the Lord placed upon His Word in this parable.

This proves that what He said in John 8:32 is true: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Paul put it this way: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Rom. 1:16). Paul also states the very way in which an alien sinner is called to become a Christian:

But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thes. 2:13-14).

Paul said that when one refuses to hear and obey the Word of God then he judges himself unworthy of eternal life: "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). Jesus built upon this thought by teaching that the wise man will hear the Word of God and obey while the foolish man will refuse to do such:

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it (Mat. 7:24-27).

We will be judged by the Word of God, not some direct operation of the Holy Spirit: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). "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" (Rev. 20:12). One cannot claim Jesus as the Lord of His life if he will not do what Jesus says one needs to do: "And why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say" (Luke 6:46)?

We are saved by faith. The question is how does faith come? Faith is acquired by hearing God's Word: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). So then, no one is going to have saving faith without the inspired Word of God! If the Holy Spirit operated upon one directly, how would this individual acquire faith? The Hebrew writer says that we cannot please God without faith: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). We cannot have this kind of faith without God's Word!

The Holy Spirit Works Through the Word

From the aforementioned facts, we can see that the Holy Spirit works through the written Word. Consider this chart:

Holy Spirit	Their Work	The Word
Neh. 9:30	Instructs	2 Tim. 3:16-17

John 3:5	Begets	1 Cor. 4:15
John 3:5	Birth	1 Pet. 1:23
John 6:63	Quickens	Psalms 119:50
John 14:26	Teaches	John 6:44-45
John 16:8	Convicts	Titus 1:9
Acts 9:31	Comforts	1 Thess 4:18
Rom. 5:5	Gives love	1 John 2:5
1 Cor. 6:11	Saves	Acts 11:14
1 Cor. 6:11	Washes	Eph 5:26
1 Pet. 1:2	Sanctifies	John 17:17
Rom. 8:2	Makes free	John 8:32
John 16:7-8	Converts	Psa. 19:7
Eph. 3:16	Strengthens	Deut. 11:8
Eph. 5:19	Dwells	Col. 3:16
Rom. 8:14	Leads	Psa. 119:105

There is no question that the Holy Spirit works upon the one to be converted, but the question is How? The person does not live who can prove that the Holy Spirit works upon the alien sinner separate and apart from the Word of God. Again, we ask the question, why don't we find Christians in areas where the Bible has not gone? Doesn't the Holy Spirit love those people? They would need a direct operation of the Spirit more than anyone else because they do not have access to the Bible.

The Holy Spirit Speaks To Us Today

We have those today who claim that the Holy Spirit speaks to them personally. However, they nearly always wind up affirming what the Holy Spirit opposes. Paul said this: "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37). Why do these "so-called" Holy Spirit preachers contradict one another? The truth is, they are not being directly led by the Holy Spirit. One affirms there is one in the Godhead. Another affirms there are three. One affirms one must be baptized with the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues to be saved. Another declares such is false. We could list many other contradictions, but these are enough for one to see that the Holy Spirit is not working through them.

We believe that the Holy Spirit speaks to men today. The question is how does He do this? The book of Revelation shows us how He does it. Notice these facts: "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus **write**; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" (Rev. 2:1). The Bible states: "He that hath an ear, let him hear **what the Spirit saith** unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7). In these verses, what is written is what the Spirit is saying to the church of Ephesus. It is like this as He writes to all seven churches. So today, as we listen to the inspired Word of God, we are listening to the Holy Spirit.

Examples of Conversion

The examples of conversions prove that the Holy Spirit converts people through the Word of God. (1) On the day of Pentecost, what was spoken was what convicted the people: "Now when they **heard this**, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do" (Acts 2:37)? Notice they were responding to what they had heard. (2) The Samaritans were changed by the preaching of God's Word: "But when they believed Philip **preaching** the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men

and women" (Acts 8:12). Again, we see they obeyed because they were convicted by the preaching of the Gospel. (3) The Ethiopian eunuch was converted by the Word of God: "Then Philip **opened his mouth**, and began at the same scripture, and **preached unto him Jesus**" (Acts 8:35). The preaching of Jesus was what convinced this man that he was lost and needed a savior. (4) The conversion of Saul shows without a doubt that one must hear the Word of God to be saved: "And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, **and it shall be told thee what thou must do**" (Acts 9:6). "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Saul was to be told what he had to do in order to obey God. (5) Why did Cornelius have to send to Joppa for Simon Peter? "**Who shall tell thee words**, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts 11:14). Some try to get Cornelius saved because the Holy Spirit came upon him and his household. However, the Bible says that he was to hear words whereby he and his household could be saved.

We could site other examples of conversions to illustrate that the Word of God is a **must** in converting the alien sinner, but these are enough. Paul shows the importance of the Gospel in these verses:

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:13-17).

What The Direct Operation of the Holy Spirit Would Eliminate

Some teach that it takes a direct operation of the Holy Spirit for one to be saved. We want to show some objections to the direct operation of the Holy Spirit doctrine. This doctrine would eliminate certain things. (1) It eliminates the purpose and mission of the apostles: "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, *that* shall He speak: and He will show you things to come (John 16:13). (2) It eliminates the gospel: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). (3). It eliminates the work of the church: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:10-11). "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). (4) It eliminates the work of evangelists. "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21). Also see 2 Timothy 4:1-5. (5). It eliminates the New Testament (Heb. 9:16-17; Matt. 26:28). (6) It eliminates obedience. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8-9). It eliminates true Biblical faith: "So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). (8) It denies the all-sufficiency of the word: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: [17] That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17); "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. 1:23). (9) It rejects God's method of conversion:

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me (John 6:44-45).

(10) It makes God a respecter of persons. "For there is no respect of persons with God" (Rom. 2:11). "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). (11) It contradicts Christ:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it (Mat. 7:21-27).

(12) It makes the Word of God a dead letter. "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 discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). (13) It gives no light to the heathen:

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them (2 Cor. 4:3-4).

(14) It makes Satan's word more powerful than God's word. (15) It creates confusion and division. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). (16) If true, how can one be judged by the word? "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). (17) There is no Bible authority for this theory. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17).

Conclusion

The power to convert lies in God's Word: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). This is why we are told to go into all the world and preach the Gospel: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. [16] He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16).

May God help us to spread His Word all over the world. However, I am afraid that some of us do not care about the lost. Therefore, we live as if some other force is going to teach the lost other than God's people. We trust that we will take our responsibilities to teach others seriously and be busy about our Father's business.

End Notes

All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible.

Much of the material in this lesson was taken from Roy Hearn's class notes on the Holy Spirit. Ca.1971.

Reasoning from the Scriptures (Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society), 1985.

Chapter 11
The Truth About Christian Living
Michael Jordan

Michael Jordan was born in Texas. He finished high school in Memphis, TN in 1973. He attended Memphis School Of Preaching from 1973-1975, Freed-Hardeman College from 1975-1976. Other educational background includes Magnolia Bible College in Mississippi, Itawamba Community College, Northeast Mississippi Junior College, Northwest Mississippi Junior College, Southern Christian University where he received his B.A. in 1997.

He began full-time preaching in 1992 and has preached in Mississippi and North Carolina. He is currently laboring with the South Stokes congregation in King, NC, where he has been since 1996 and also serves as one of the elders. He married Jewel (formerly Attebury) in 1977. They adopted 2 children in 1994, Deborah and William. Deborah is married and lives in Mississippi. He has one granddaughter.

First of all, let me thank Tim Canup and the West Jefferson Congregation for the invitation to come and have a part in this lectureship. This is my third year to speak at this lectureship, and I trust the topic I have been assigned will help each one of us understand and appreciate more what truth really is.

The song, "Have Thine Own Way," has a phrase in the last stanza that reads, "till all shall see Christ only always living in me." **I Peter 4:16** reads, "...if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed." Isn't it interesting that before this he said "...let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busy body in other people's matters." We are to suffer as a Christian, not as any of the other previously mentioned. It's our purpose in life.

What is this thing called "Christian living"? What is it all about? What is the truth about it? I believe we fail to understand what living the Christian life is all about. Many in the world today do not truly understand what it means to be a Christian. Sadly, even many who call themselves "Christian" do not really comprehend what it is all about, they don't know the meaning of it. One person put it this way, "It's one thing to be called a Christian, but it's another thing to be a Christian." How have you thought about it? We could probably talk from now till the end of the world about how to be a Christian, about what to do to be a Christian, and still not know enough about it. Let's see for the next few moments if we can't get to the very heart of the matter.

Just when is one a Christian, or when can he call himself a Christian? Is it when he comes up out of the watery grave of baptism, or is it when the world sees him living or professing to be a Christian? You recall what Jesus says as recorded in **Matthew 10:32- 33** - "*Whosoever will confess me before men, I shall confess him before my father in heaven. But whoever will deny me, him will I deny before my father in heaven.*" Now we made the statement before "It's one thing to be called a Christian, but it's another to be a Christian." Is Jesus confessing us before His father in heaven as a Christian or as a non-Christian? There are 6 things we need to understand about the Christian life.

In **Hebrews 11:6** it is recorded, "*for without faith it is impossible to be pleasing unto God, for he that cometh to God must believe that He is and He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.*" We can see from this passage that we need to have more than faith, for James said in chapter 2 that the devils believe and tremble. Are we no better than devils? Do we just believe? Or do we diligently seek to serve and please God?

That word "diligently" is a very interesting word. It means to give one's all. On our jobs we are expected to give 8 hours work for 8 hours pay, are we not? Have you noticed how diligently young people train for the Olympics, looking for that gold medal? How much more precious is the crown that the Lord will give to those who love His appearing? How much more precious is this?

The Hebrews writer states we are running a race. We are on a path to the finish line. Everyone is going to finish, but not everyone is going to get 1st place, the prize, the crown that Paul talks about in **II Timothy 4**. This word "finish" is a word we might call "death." Every one of us will die one day; but to be a true Christian, we must act on what we believe. Do you remember what Jesus said in **John 14:1**?

"Let not your heart be troubled, you believe in God, believe in me." Do we really truly believe in Jesus? Do we really truly believe that He is ascended up into heaven and is sitting and interceding for us at the right hand of the throne of God and that He is building a place for the faithful? Do we really understand this?

In **John 8:24**, Jesus said, *"unless ye believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."* Here again this word "believe" is the word that we often use for obedience. You might tell your child, "Unless you clean up your room, you will be grounded." Well, do they really believe that? They might not at the time, but when they don't clean up their room and they hear the Popsicle Man outside and they say, "Momma, can I have a Popsicle?" "No you're grounded for not cleaning up your room." It becomes "reality" to them.

Paul said that *"every knee will bow and every tongue will confess,"* but unfortunately it will be too late for many. Jesus said, *"straight and narrow is the way that leads unto righteousness (which is heaven) but wide and broad is the way that leads to destruction."* Again notice what He says: *"And many there will be who find it."* The problem is we believe but we don't obey.

In order for us to understand Christianity, being a Christian the way the Lord wants us to understand it, we must be a believing and obedient individual. You see, often we don't understand the difference between believing and obeying. It's necessary for both belief and for obedience. You know, when I was growing up I thought it was necessary to obey Mom and Dad so I wouldn't get in trouble, but I didn't know how essential it was. Most of us drive an automobile. Do we know the necessity and the essentiality of keeping it running properly? Some of us do not. We do not understand that improper maintenance could destroy the engine. In order for us to get to heaven it is essential that we be obedient to God. It's necessary. It's essential.

Remember what Jesus said as Mark recorded it in **Mark 16:16**. Now I know this is elementary to all of us, but we're trying to get to the heart of what the truth is about Christianity. What's really going to make me a Christian? Jesus said, *"he THAT believeth and IS baptized shall be saved."* [emp. MJ] You have both the necessity and essentiality of this. They are brought together. It's necessary to believe, it's necessary to be baptized, but it's also essential because without these we cannot have salvation.

Peter put it this way in **Acts 2:38**. He said to *"repent and be baptized everyone of you"* for, looking forward to getting your sins remitted, wiped out, forgotten, like they never existed. Yet, why do we hear teachings day, after day, after day, "I believed and Jesus came into my heart there was this good warm feeling and I was saved," and yet, "We went to a baptismal ceremony where I was baptized to show the world where I was saved." Why do we hear that? Because people do not understand the necessity and the essentiality of baptism. It's as plain as plain can be. Read it for yourself. But that's the true mark of a Christian. Living what one believes. Remember what James said in **James 1:22**? *"Be ye doers of the word."* I like what the original says, "Prove yourselves to be doers of the word."

I know that every one of you have seen Bill Cosby in the Jello commercials, right? Do you realize he has been doing that commercial for over 30 years? Why? Because he likes puddin'. They interviewed him the other day; he likes puddin'! Why is it that we don't act and live like Christians? Maybe we don't like Christianity. So, how are we going to do what **James 1:22** says? "Prove yourselves to be doers of the word and not merely hearers...who will deceive themselves." Remember what God told Paul to write in **Galatians 6:7**, *"Be not deceived, God is not mocked..."* We can't deceive God. God sees all; God knows all; God is all.

In order for us to be what God wants us to be, we must be obedient children according to **I Pet. 1:14**. Remember, he opens up this verse, *"As obedient children."* Now, pay attention to this verse. Underline this verse and put another verse right next door to it as a reference. Here's a commentary on it. **I Pet.1:14**, *"as obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lust which were yours in your ignorance."* Now you want a good commentary on that? You know where I'm headed with this, **Rom. 12:1-2**. What about these things? He says, *"Brethren, I urge you by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship."* Now watch it in verse

2, here it is. Here is your commentary. *“And be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”* You see, you’re changing your mind. You’re not walking after all these works of the flesh anymore. But now you’re having a change of mind and you are looking somewhere else. You’re looking to God’s word. Now you’re going to have the fruit of the Spirit that are talked about in the book of Galatians, chapter 5. This is what Christianity is all about.

People who come here from other countries call themselves Americans, but they aren’t until they conform to the guidelines. Now think about it. If I call myself a Christian, but I do the things the devil wants me to do, I’m not a Christian. I’m lying to myself. I am a make-believe Christian. The Bible says I’m a hypocrite. Think about baptism in **Romans 6**. We are baptized into His death; we are raised *“to walk a new life.”* Paul said in **I Corinthians 12** we are translated. We are no longer here; but were here. I am no longer a follower of the devil but I am a follower of Christ. Paul put it like this in **Colossians 1:13**, he said we’re translated out of darkness into light. It’s time for us to turn the light switch on! It’s time for us to live, to be that light of the world that Christ wants us to be. Then, and only then, will the world know exactly who we are.

Sometimes, we as Christians do not understand that we cannot associate or have fellowship with those who are not in the same state as we? It’s very difficult for us to have fellowship with those in South Carolina because they’re not here right now. Now, we can go to South Carolina and have fellowship with them or they can come up here. It doesn’t work that way in the Lord’s kingdom. Notice what was recorded in **Acts 2:42**. Remember these folks heard the gospel and they obeyed the gospel. It says *“they continued steadfastly, devoting themselves to the apostles doctrine.”* They were not devoting themselves to what they were before, but now, they’re devoting themselves to something new; something that is profitable; something that can make them happy.

What’s the truth about it? The truth about Christianity is that the Christian should live in purity. Their life means purity. *“I’m not of this world anymore. So why should I want to have anything to do with this world?”* Remember what **I John 2:15** says? *“Love not the world neither the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world the love of the Father is not in him.”* Which is greater in us today, the possessions of the world or the spiritual blessings in Christ? Which weighs heavier on us? Now remember, remember! John also recorded by inspiration that the Lord’s commandments are not burdensome. He isn’t going to weight us down. Why would He say in **Matthew 11:28**, *“Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yolk upon you and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest unto your souls.”* How you can find rest with a heavy burden is beyond me. The Lord’s burdens are not heavy. His yoke is light. But He expects us to live a certain way.

We should not love the world. Peter says in **I Peter 2** that we are supposed to be a “peculiar” people. Some people might call peculiar, weird. It’s weird to be a Christian, isn’t it? Have you ever thought about this? But we sing a song in our book, *“Isn’t it grand to be a Christian, isn’t it grand?”* But to the world it isn’t because I can’t do what I want to Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, not even Sunday. *“I’ve got to go to church.”* No, you don’t have to, it’s because you want to. If you really want to know the truth about Christianity, it’s written in God’s word.

The truth about Christian life is, it means service. We’re supposed to follow Christ daily according to **Luke 9:23**. In **Romans 12**, it’s a daily sacrifice. You want to know what pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is? *“To keep oneself unspotted from this world.”* Now look at **James 1:27**, it says, *“pure and undefiled religion before God is this, to visit the fatherless and widows AND to keep oneself unspotted from this world.”* You want to know what pure and undefiled religion before God is, to keep yourself unspotted. And we can do that because we have the most powerful cleansing power called the blood of Christ that cleanses us daily.

The Christian life means blessings. Consider these questions: Is it a blessing for you to be at every service of the Lord? Is it a blessing for you to come and to worship God in Spirit and in truth? Is it a blessing for you to come and be led in prayer to the almighty throne of God? Is it a blessing for you to

come and partake of the Lord's Supper, or is it a mere cracker and grape juice? Is it a blessing for you to come and give of your means, what the Lord has so richly blessed you with? Is it a blessing for you as a Christian to come and sit and to listen to God's word proclaimed, or is it that every one of these things are just "ho, hum." "Well, I was there because Mom and Dad said I had to be there." "I was there because if I'm not I know I'm going to get a call from someone saying, 'Why weren't you there? We missed you.'" You see we have the wrong idea about Christianity. It is a privilege to be here. It is a privilege to serve God, because He has shown us what love is all about. This is just a tiny, tiny, tiny portion of love that we can show Him. The Christian life is more than demanding or rewarding. It's more than a wonderful word of living. You see we need to understand that the Christian life enables you and enables me to rid our lives, cleanse our lives, throw away those things that are bad for us and to hold on to, to cling to, to never let go of those things that are a blessing to us because they're good for us, they're perfect.

If you are not a Christian, we would encourage you to put on the Lord in baptism. Try it. Try it. No it's not like the old cereal commercial you've seen on TV, "Mikey liked it." You see we don't understand that commercial. Mikey was finicky. He did not eat certain things, but he ate that which was good for him. Are you finicky? Is that the reason you have not been obedient to God in baptism?

If you have been baptized and you came up out of the water ready to win the world, have you've become finicky about how you want to serve the Lord? Have you become a Mikey? That's the truth about Christianity. Will you be a part of it or will you shun the Lord's invitation?

Chapter 12

The Truth About Salvation

Tim Canup

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INTRODUCTION

The greatest problem facing mankind is sin. It is the single most destructive agent in the world; therefore, man is faced with a grave problem, overcoming it. The sad reality is that many are steeped in sin and do not realize its destructive nature. Once man realizes that it is sin which separates him from God (Isaiah 59:1-2), that sin brings about death (Romans 6:23, James 1:15), that all men have sinned (Romans 3:23), and that man has no way possible to save himself (in and of himself), he is, therefore, left searching for salvation from sin. Even before creating mankind, God foresaw the problem of sin; thus, in His "eternal purpose," provided a means of salvation from sin. John Waddy wrote, "Of all the topics that man can discuss, none is more important or thrilling than salvation. Truly it is the theme of Scripture from start to finish" (6th Annual ETSOP, Waddy, 149).

Salvation is used in two different senses in the New Testament. In one sense, it is spoken of being alleviated of the stain of past sins (Mark 16:16). It is also used to describe eternal salvation of our souls in heaven (I Peter 1:9). It must be understood that we cannot obtain the eternal salvation of our souls without first obtaining the salvation from our past sins, which involves maintaining that salvation (I John 1:7; Revelation 2:10, et al).

Throughout the ages, mankind has desperately sought the salvation from sin from many different sources. Many have realized a problem in their lives, yet are uncertain exactly what it is. Man has often turned many erroneous sources in an attempt to rid himself of sin. Solomon said, "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (Ecclesiastes 7:29). Many have turned to other men or man-made organizations and devices. Jeremiah said, "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). Again, Solomon wrote, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12). Man has also turned to magical and mystical powers, which usually only excites the senses and leaves him without hope or worse, a false hope.

Upon realizing that the God of the Bible, through His great love for all man (John 3:16), extended His grace to us (Titus 2:11), by sending His "Only Begotten Son," which provides for us a plan by which we, through our obedience (Hebrews 5:8-9), can be saved, both from our past sins and eternally. However, man must be willing to conform to the prescription of the Great Physician in order to be cured from the disease of sin. Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The truth can be a bitter pill to swallow. One of the most difficult things for us to do is to give up our own will and follow that of another! The truth about salvation can be seen in the following three areas:

THE CALL OF SALVATION

Many good religious people believe that God calls them unto salvation; however, they do not understand how He calls. Many believe that it is a literal, direct calling from heaven through the Holy Spirit. So many have gotten themselves worked up emotionally to the point they have convinced themselves they have been touched by the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2:39, Peter said, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, **even as many as the Lord our God shall**

call." It is true that God calls us to salvation, but we must have a proper understanding of how this occurs. We could speculate as to the answer, but we must turn to God's Word for the correct answer.

In the first gospel sermon preached, Peter, quoting from the prophet Joel, said, "And it shall come to pass, that **whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved**" (Acts 2:21; also see Romans 10:13). These words did not originate with Peter, nor with Joel; but rather, these "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Peter 1:21; Acts 2:4). What is involved when we "call on the name of the Lord..."? Is it a literal verbal call to Jesus to save us? After all, Jesus did say, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). Concerning Acts 2:21, Wayne Jackson wrote:

...when compared with information given later in this very chapter, "calling" is equivalent to *obeying*. If calling on the Lord results in salvation (2:21), and yet repentance combined with baptism produces forgiveness of sins (2:38), it logically follows that "calling" is equivalent to penitent baptism (cf. also Acts 22:16)" (Jackson, 21).

We understand that God calls us and that we call upon the name of the Lord. So which is right? Is there a contradiction? Certainly not! We shall see as we examine the Scriptures how God calls us, how we call upon the name of the Lord and how that they are forever connected.

In II Peter 2:9, Peter said, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath **called** you out of darkness into his marvellous light." Paul told the brethren at Thessalonica, "That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath **called** you unto his kingdom and glory" (I Thessalonians 2:12). These verses confirm for us that God calls us, but they do not tell us how. Let us look further.

In I Corinthians 1:2, Paul wrote, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are **sanctified** in Christ Jesus, **called to be saints**, with all that in every place **call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord...**" It is important for us to see the connection between the word "sanctified" in this verse and the concept of being called and calling upon the name of the Lord. What does the word "sanctified" mean? W.E. Vine defined it as, "a separation." He goes on to write, "Sanctification is that relationship with God into which men enter by faith in Christ" (Vine, 545). The question then begs to be asked, "How are we sanctified or how do we enter into that relationship with Christ?" Again, we must continue examining the Scriptures.

In Acts 26:18, Luke recorded Jesus to have said, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are **sanctified by faith that is in me.**" This verse confirms the accuracy of Mr. Vine's definition, yet we must continue our search to understand how we are called or sanctified.

Next, we need to consider II Thessalonians 2:13-14, Paul wrote:

But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to **salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth**: Whereunto He {God} **called you by our gospel**, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God did not, as so many suggest, call us individually. Rather, God has called us to salvation by extending to all of mankind a plan, the gospel. We, therefore, call upon the name of the Lord through our response of faith in Jesus Christ and complete obedience to the commandments of God contained in the gospel.

Peter demonstrated this fact on the day of Pentecost by commanding those who asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:37-38). This can also be confirmed and harmonized by what Ananias told Saul of Tarsus in Acts 22:16: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, **calling on the name of the Lord.**" There is a

definite connection between calling upon the name of the Lord and obedience. The writer of Hebrews wrote concerning Jesus, "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:9).

THE COST OF SALVATION

Many good, moral people, realizing their own need for salvation from sin and the fact they cannot obtain it in and of themselves, never lay hold of such because, upon study, discover the cost connected with salvation. Salvation comes by entering into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Any individual who desires to obtain that salvation must weigh, not only the cost of obtaining that relationship, but also maintaining it. There have been many who have been willing to pay the price to obtain it only to give it up. We must be aware of the disaster of such.

It is of no contradiction to say that salvation is a free gift of God, yet it has a cost. You see, our salvation cost heaven the very best it had—God's own Son (John 3:16; II Corinthians 8:9). Paul said, "For by grace are ye saved through {the} faith {the gospel system faith - tac}; and that not of yourselves: **it is the gift of God**: Not of works {of merit}, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). God's grace is undeserved or unmerited favor that God extended to all mankind in providing a plan by which God redeemed man from his sins. That plan had a cost. We are told over and over in the New Testament that we were purchased, redeemed, justified, cleansed or washed in the blood of Jesus Christ (Acts 20:28, I Corinthians 6:20, Romans 5:9, Revelation 1:5b, et al).

There is no amount of money on this earth that could pay for such a gift. Not even the earth and all that in it is could repay such a debt. Our first step is in understanding the great love God had for us and what it cost heaven. Paul wrote:

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:6-8).

The question still remains, "What does salvation cost us?" Every individual needs to carefully consider the cost of salvation and determine if they are willing to pay that cost. We should view our religion and salvation as David did when he said to Araunah, "Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing..." (II Samuel 24:24). Let us carefully weigh the cost.

In the introduction of his book, *Hard To Believe*, John MacArthur wrote:

Do you want to be forgiven of all your sins, freed from judgment and eternal punishment, to be rescued from Satan's power to become a beloved child of God, and to be lavishly enriched forever with wonders and astonishing experiences in the limitless joys of eternal heaven? That's the question. If your answer is no, give this book to someone else. If your answer is yes, know this: Many people—many, many, Jesus said, who answer a quick yes won't ever receive what their yes wants.

You can want God's love, grace, forgiveness, blessing and the inconceivable bliss of heaven—you can want it badly—and never get it.

Why so? Because you are misinformed about how. Does that make sense? The world is filled with millions of people who think they are headed for heaven—but they are deadly wrong. Probably most people think heaven awaits them, but it doesn't. But what is especially sad, is that many of those people sit in evangelical churches misinformed!

If you are still with me—and you want the truth for yourself and others—keep reading...It's not my truth. I don't have any saving truth, neither does anyone else but God. Here's your most critical opportunity in all eternity—to hear what He has written about the way to heaven (MacArthur, ix-x).

Mr. MacArthur stated very well the hard reality and high cost in obtaining salvation. It can only come from one source—God! It is the case that only truth can make us free and there is only one source for truth, God’s Word. It is unfortunate that Mr. MarArthur, having made such a bold statement in the introduction, went on in his book to teach things that are contrary to God’s Word. This should impress upon our minds that we cannot go to man for salvation, but rather, only to God.

In man’s search for salvation from sin, there are certain truths that must be accepted. Most in the world have been overcome with a life of convenience. Thus, when looking for something in religion, too many people want that which will be convenient to their current lifestyle. Most want a religion that is designed to fit them and not a religion that demands change in order to fit it. This is what Satan wants us to believe. Again, Mr. MacArthur very well wrote:

The first role of successful merchandising is to give consumers what they want. If they want bigger burgers, make their burgers bigger. Designer bottled water in six fruit flavors? Done. Minivans with ten cup holders? Give them twenty. You’ve got to keep the customer satisfied. You’ve got to modify your product and your message to meet their needs if you want to build a market and get ahead of the competition.

Today this same consumer mind-set has invaded Christianity. The church service is too long, you say? We’ll shorten it...Too formal? Wear your sweatsuit. Too boring? Wait’ll you hear our band!

And if the message is too confrontational, or too judgmental, or too exclusive, scary, unbelievable, hard to understand, or too much anything else for your taste, churches everywhere are eager to adjust that message to make you more comfortable. This new version of Christianity makes you a partner on the team, a design consultant on church life, and does away with old-fashioned authority, guilt trips, accountability, and moral absolutes.

One suburban church sent out a mailer recently, promising an “informal, relaxed, casual atmosphere,” “great music from our band,” and that those who come will, “believe it or not, even have fun.” That’s all great if you’re a coffeehouse. But anyone who claims to be calling people to the gospel of Jesus with those as his priorities is calling them to a lie (MacArthur, 1-2).

What did Jesus have to say about the cost of our salvation? Many in the religious world have comforted themselves by preaching a made-up gospel from a made-up Jesus that never really existed. Many have no real concept of the true nature of Jesus nor of His teachings. We have bought into this “do gooder” concept of Jesus who went about expressing a “gushy, mushy” feel good love that does not really exist. Most would be shocked to read and study about His life as revealed in the New Testament to learn about His bold stance for truth. On one occasion, as Jesus talked with two men, they said, “Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” (Luke 24:32).

It is because of this false concept of Christ and the gospel most people have the idea that religion is something that is suppose to benefit us in a material sense. Most are looking for what they can get out of religion and the church to help them have an easier life. Is that the purpose of Jesus coming to this earth, to make our lives easier? Is that the gospel He brought? It is true that Jesus issued a tender invitation to all men who are suffering with the weight and burden of sin to come to Him; however, there were certain conditions attached to it. Jesus said, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:29-30). Jesus has not asked us to pay any higher price to obtain salvation than He was willing to pay to extend it. He is not asking for more than we can give.

There are many passages we could look at from the New Testament. Let us begin with Jesus’ words in Luke 9:23-26:

And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.

Does this sound like an easy, convenient gospel? Does it sound like a religion without costs and commitment, one that promotes a "health and wealth" lifestyle? The truth is that these words of Jesus are hard. They are words that demand one to seriously consider and accept. They are not designed to fit any and every lifestyle. They demand for the lifestyle to conform to fit a new life! The world wants a "Good News" that promotes self-esteem; one that will make us feel good about who we are without any change; without any self-denial! This passage teaches that we must be willing to put our own self-will on the back burner and take up our cross "daily," not once in a while, and follow the will of Jesus. He simply wants from us either our all or nothing.

Jesus demands that we allow our lives to be conformed by the gospel. The sad reality is, as we look at the ever-growing number of man-made denominations, man would rather conform the gospel to fit an already existent lifestyle. In that great Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." Contrast the numbers that are entering into each gate; few versus many. Why do so many enter into the wide gate and travel the broad way? Because Satan, which "deceiveth the whole world," has convinced many that it is the right way to go. Besides, it is the easier way to go.

What was Jesus asking from us when He asked us to enter into the "strait gate"? "Strait" here has the meaning of narrow or difficult. The idea is of being constricted. In essence, Jesus is asking us to conform to the pattern. We must leave all unnecessary "things" behind. We cannot take our old lifestyle and habits with us. This is the idea of which Paul was speaking when he wrote, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1-2). Does this require a cost? If so, what is it and are we willing to pay it?

Jesus spoke of the fact that the cost involved in following Him may very well bring about the loss of family (Matthew 10:32ff). The cost of salvation may bring about great persecution (Matthew 5:10-12), even to the point of the loss of one's own physical life (Acts 7). It may mean leaving a job or career that, perhaps, pays very well. The disciples immediately forsook all to follow Jesus (Mark 1:16f). The question is then, have we counted the cost of our salvation?

Jesus wants us to count that cost? He wants us to understand what is going to be involved in following Him. He also made us aware of the great reward for following Him. In Luke 14:28-33, Jesus taught:

For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

Upon counting the cost, we must be willing to pay that cost! Considering the reward, that cost is not really that great.

I once heard a gospel preacher compare counting the cost of Christianity to that of a man of means purchasing a new automobile, which he desires to own. The man of means asks what the car costs, not for the same reason an average person asks (to determine whether or not he can afford it), but rather, to know what is expected of him to obtain that automobile. You see, he is willing to pay the cost to obtain that which he wants. We must desire salvation to the point that we are willing to pay whatever the cost!

THE CONFIDENCE OF SALVATION

In our world, mankind is constantly searching for that which will give him confidence; a lifestyle that will provide a peace of mind. The majority of men are confident in their current setting; however, most do not realize the danger they are in because of the deception of sin. Satan offers a way of life that seems to provide comfort; however, he is the deceiver of this world. He makes a life of sin seem as though it is what every person wants and needs. In Hebrews 11:25, we are told that Moses chose “rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” If a life of sin were not so attractive, then no person in their right mind would seek to live in it.

So, what gives us confidence? What gives us that peace of mind? The truth is it is salvation; the confident knowledge that our sins have been forgiven and we have that eternal home in heaven waiting. Just before Jesus departed from this world, His disciples became extremely saddened. Jesus sought to give them confidence by comforting them. He said, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:1-3).

We can know that we have been saved from our past sins and we can know that we have eternal salvation waiting when this life is over. John said, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” (I John 5:13). We know we have salvation when we “walk in the light, as he is in the light” (I John 1:7). Walking in the light is living according to God’s Will. Can we know when we are and are not in the light (living according to His commandments)? Certainly! Only when we examine ourselves whether we are in the faith (II Corinthians 13:5). God has not given us requirements that are so burdensome that we cannot keep them (I John 5:3). John also wrote in I John 2:3-4, “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

The confidence we have in our salvation is that we have made peace with God. Paul wrote, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). No person who declares war on God can possibly win; thus, there is no peace and no confidence. There are many who wage war on God without even being aware of it. In James 4:4, James said, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” Only by submitting wholly to His Will do we make peace with God (Ecclesiastes 12:13). When we submit to His Will, we then are no longer under condemnation. Paul said, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” There is great confidence in knowing that we are walking according to the Will of God – that we are not at war, but that we have made peace with Him!

CONCLUSION

We are constantly reminded of the possibility of allowing our salvation to “slip away” (Hebrews 2:1). Having received the greatest possible gift mankind could hope to receive – salvation, the greatest

tragedy then would be to let it go. The question is pertinent, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (Hebrews 2:3). Peter wrote:

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

We must, therefore, realize the truth about salvation, how to obtain it and how to maintain it. We must heed the warnings of the Bible to prevent such a great loss!

We must realize the attacks of Satan on each of us and properly prepare for such attacks. There are many of Satan's ministers in the world who have already deceived many in believing they have something they do not really have. Do not allow him to deceive you! The only way we can know we have true salvation is by doing that which is commanded by God, which is found in His Word. The truth of salvation can be known; it must be known! "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

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