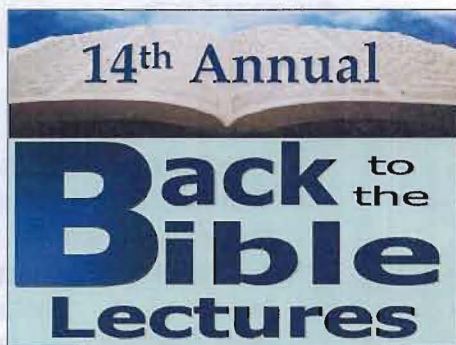


Theme:

**Thought Provoking
Questions from the
New Testament
Part 2**

September 23-25, 2011

**WEST JEFFERSON
CHURCH OF CHRIST**



Theme:

Thought Provoking Questions from
the New Testament ~ Part 2

September 23-25, 2011

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FORWARD



Last year, we began a study of some thought provoking questions found in the New Testament. Our Lord, as well as the inspired writers of the New Testament, understood the power of a question. When used properly, a question can spark a thought in our minds quicker than a simply statement. There are many thought provoking questions recorded in the Bible. This year, we continue with part two of these thought provoking questions from the New Testament.

We want to emphasize that, although many answers may be given from those in the world, the only correct answer is the one that comes from God through His Holy Word! Our modern world tells us we cannot know absolute truth; that what is true for one person may not necessarily be true for another. The Bible clearly rejects such false philosophy (compare John 8:32; Ephesians 3:4). It is our sincere prayer that you will honestly consider these ten "Thought Provoking Questions from the New Testament" and seriously ponder either the answer provided in the Word of God or implied, and that by them, you may either enter into that covenant relationship with God or having done so, you may be built up in the most holy faith!

Tim Canup
July 28, 2011

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2014 ~ What Must I Do To Be Saved?

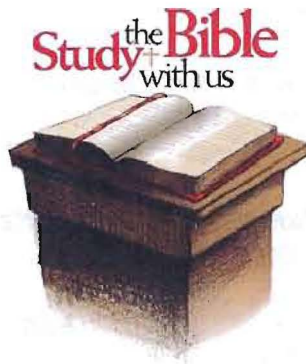
2015 ~ What It Means To Be A Christian

2016 ~ The Eternal Kingdom of God

2017 ~ A Study of Worship

2018 ~ Great Sermons from the Book of Acts

Please make plans now to join us the last week-end in September for a study of these great topics. Books, audio & video material will be available.



Chapter 1

If God Be For Us, Who Can Be Against Us?

Tracy Dugger

Tracy Dugger was born in Bethesda, Maryland in 1963. He graduated from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville with a Bachelor's Degree (1985) and a Master's Degree (2006) in Agriculture. He graduated from Tennessee Bible College in Cookeville with a Bachelor's Degree in Bible in 1991. He has worked in the graduate program at the Memphis School of Preaching and Austin Graduate School of Theology. He and his wife, Julie, have three daughters and one son. Tracy has been preaching in since 1989 and has preached for congregations in Tennessee, Virginia, Arkansas, and Texas. He presently preaches for the Crandall church of Christ in Shady Valley, Tennessee and teaches high school agriculture in Mountain City, Tennessee.

Imagine the fierce persecution that must have occasioned the following words

And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they

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wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and *in* mountains, and *in* dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. (Hebrews 11:32-40)

Imagine the amount of strength needed by the Christian to endure diseases like multiple sclerosis, cancer, or other devastating physical conditions. The description of Job's condition sends chills up our spines and occasions us to ask, "Could I have endured?"

What of us who have not suffered like these but still are faced daily with trials and temptations? A question to ponder: Is it any easier to live a Christian life in the absence of physical persecution? In reading the Corinthian letters, if there was significant physical persecution we are not told. And yet, it was difficult for many of them to live pure lives. The same would be true in comparing the seven churches of Asia. Some were under severe persecution, while other congregations had little to none. However, Satan used another tactic to lure them away from God – materialism, life of ease, pleasures of sin, worldliness. I submit to you that there is great difficulty living the Christian life whether you are commanded to denounce Christ under the fear of death or trying to live in a Sodom-like world. In our society, there are multitudes of false doctrines – religious, moral – that strike at the very essence of who we are and our purpose in life. These are serious threats to our faith. Contemplate how much attention is devoted to false doctrine in the Bible? And what of our daily problems that arise when we try to do the right thing? There is often pressure from friends and family to

compromise. But we resist the temptation to *get along* in sacrifice of our divine values. Truly, there is a war:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3-4)

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. (Ephesians 6:10-18)

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Let us remember that Satan is responsible for much, if not all, of these threats (1 Peter 5:8). In the midst of all struggles and attacks by Satan, what can keep us? What are we to do? What can we do to protect our souls, our families, and the church? Our text provides the answer: "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

GOD AND HIS PEOPLE

The One True God

One of the purposes of the physical world of creation is to present us evidence of the existence of a higher power who made it all. Paul reminds us that "the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20). We learn some general things about this being from the natural world (eternal power).

However, there are many things we cannot discover about God without Him revealing to us that information in a special way – divine revelation (the Bible) (1 Corinthians 2:11-16). We learn that it is God's purpose to save us (Romans 8:1, 32a). We learn that we have an obligation to serve Him ("debtors" Romans 8:12). We also learn that He works in our lives to bring about our good (Romans 8:28).

Us, His People

Elaborating on the idea of God's desire to save us, the chapter of our text reveals to us that work. Paul describes God's people in the following ways:

1. As being in Christ and therefore justified (verse 1).
2. As having a new life (verses 2-3, 10).
3. As walking after the Spirit and not the flesh (verse 4).
4. As living according to a spiritual influence from God (verses 5, 9, 11, 14).

5. As being adopted into the divine family (verses 15-16).
6. As being heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ (verse 17).

Who are these people? Simple, New Testament Christians.

BECAUSE GOD IS FOR US SUFFERING MEANS SOMETHING

(8:17-18)

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are not worthy to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:17-18). These verses, as well as the remainder of the eighth chapter reveal to us the struggle of God's people. We learn that these people are a suffering people.

One does not have to read at length in the Bible to understand that God's people have suffered and will suffer in this life. And yet there are members of the church today who express surprise that they are suffering or have to suffer. Suffering comes with the territory in this life. Sometimes members of the church think they should be exempt from it. In fact, some have left the faith because they did not accept the fact of suffering in their lives.

Suffering comes in many forms – physical sickness, mental or emotional problems such as depression (Psalm 6), loss of a loved one (2 Samuel 18:32-33), persecution (Psalm 70:1-5; 2 Timothy 3:12), famine (Acts 11:28), and other natural disasters like flood and storm. We can even suffer because of people in the church. One preacher said that some of the meanest people he had ever seen were members of the church. Yes, Jesus had His Judas and Paul had his Demas, but they also had their John's and Mary's and Barnabas' & Silas'. The sweetest and nicest people in the world have been God's people.

Chapter 1: If God Be For Us, Who Can Be Against Us?

How can we stand up to the pain and trials of this life? Verses 17-39 provide the answer.

Again in verse 17 we read, "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together." To "suffer with him" requires an understanding that this type of suffering for the cause of Christ is to be expected. Our suffering is said to be *with* Him. How can that be when He is not here? We believe He sympathizes with us, knowing what we are enduring (Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:14-16). As long as suffering, pain, sorrow, and difficulties are *with* Him, they have purpose; they point to the victory that lies ahead. And as long as we see the big picture including the end, and as long as we can see a spiritual benefit in it, no suffering is too difficult to endure. What does Paul mean when he says, "that we may be also glorified together"? Here is the end of the big picture; here is the perspective. We are glorified with Christ by receiving eternal inheritance with Him. If we suffer with Him in this life then we shall receive with Him the glories of eternity. In the words of Paul to Timothy, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with *him*" (2 Timothy 2:12). Yes, there is meaning to suffering. In the face of an evil world, we must live right, even if it causes us to suffer. In the face of a world of sin, we must face suffering and trials with a Christian attitude. This can preach a sermon to an unbelieving world.

BECAUSE GOD IS FOR US THE SUFFERINGS AND DIFFULTIES OF LIFE ARE NOT COMPARABLE TO FUTURE GLORY

(8:18)

Continuing on this theme of suffering, Paul contrasts *present* suffering with *future* glory. In verse 18 he states, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us." How much comfort has this passage given faithful saints throughout the years? Suffering may be

mental, emotional, or physical. It may be brought on by nature or come as a result of bad decisions of self or others. Unbelievers have seen it as an evil and conclude that if God is good and all-powerful, He would not allow it.

"Evil" is not the way the Bible presents suffering. Suffering has great benefit.

1. It can be precious and rewarding (1 Peter 1:6-7).
2. It can be used for a higher purpose (2 Corinthians 4:17).
3. It can be used to make one more effective for Christ (2 Corinthians 12:7-9).
4. It can deepen one's trust in God (1 Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 2:18).
5. It can cause maturity (Hebrews 12:5-11) and strength (1 Peter 5:10).
6. It gives patience (James 5:10).
7. It gives experience so as to comfort others (2 Corinthians 1:4-6).
8. It shows our worthiness in the kingdom (2 Thessalonians 1:4-5).

Becoming a Christian does not spare us suffering. The difference between a Christian and an unbeliever is, not that the Christian is exempt from suffering and sorrow, but that God will help him overcome it (emotionally, not necessarily physically) and use it for good (Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Philippians 3:10; 1 Corinthians 10:13).

The reason this passage (Romans 8:18) is true is because suffering is temporary and man is eternal. Our bodies will at some point decay and disappear but our souls will "live for ever" (Psalms 22:26). Perhaps a commentary on this passage is the song, *Heaven Will Surely Be Worth It All*.

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BECAUSE GOD IS FOR US THE BODY WILL BE REDEEMED

(8:19-23)

Waiting for the end, Paul explains "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God" (8:19). The word "For" indicates that he is explaining the truth of verse 18. The "creature" I believe to be a reference to the church because the church is said to be created (Ephesians 2:15) and its inhabitants are called new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17). Remember that Paul is trying to help us endure suffering. These things were written to encourage the Christian to endure suffering, not the non-Christian. If "creature" here is speaking to the whole creation, how does this encourage the Christian? Who the "sons of God" are has already been revealed. I do not believe it is referring to mankind waiting for the plan of redemption so that man can become children of God. This is not the context. The context is glory to be revealed – resurrection and eternal life in the future (8:23). These Christians are eagerly anticipating the resurrection of the body - "waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." He is providing these Christians something to help them in facing suffering.

Paul states the present status of Christians in verse 20: "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected *the same* in hope." By "the creature was made subject to vanity," Paul speaks to the suffering Christians must endure. They did not choose to suffer because of sin ("not willingly"), but this was the consequence of man's sin placed upon us by God. God subjected man to the consequences of sin but He also subjected man to hope. He did this even in Genesis 2-3 (which is the background of these passages). They were told the consequences in chapter two. Additional consequences are found in chapter three. Also, in Genesis 3:15 there is the hope – the promise of a Redeemer.

That hope of the Christian begins to be discussed in Romans 8:21. "Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Sin alienated humanity from God, but Christ (the seed of woman) brought redemption and made possible adoption back into God's favor as His children. This will lead to resurrection and eternal life. Verse 21 is future. Verse 22 is present.

"For we know that the whole creation groaneth & travaileth in pain together until now" (8:22). I believe that "creation" prior to this was referring to Christians, instead of all of mankind. By using the word "whole" to refer to "creation," Paul is now using "creation" to refer to all of mankind instead of merely Christians. The whole human family has suffered together the consequences of the fall of man up to this very moment of time.

In verse 23, Paul says, "And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body." Now Paul speaks of the Christian again. By "firstfruits of the Spirit" Paul is talking about the first of the Christian harvest – the first Christians. He may even be specifically talking about the apostles. These Christians suffer along with others as they wait for deliverance from corruption. As they do this they wait for adoption. By adoption he is referring to "the redemption of our body." This is the change from the mortal to the immortal (1 Corinthians 15:51-54). Adoption here refers to the resurrection, the putting on of immortality, and not sonship as it is used in verse 15. It looks forward to the time when the full harvest will be gathered. And so, we ought endure suffering because the body, in which suffering is endured, will be redeemed.

BECAUSE GOD IS FOR US WE ARE SAVED BY HOPE

(8:24-25)

Being saved by hope is the hope of immortality. Paul explains, "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" (8:24). Hope lets us endure. We are saved (kept/preserved) by hope. By hope we anticipate the rewards of the future and are thus sustained in our trials. We do not despair when suffering. The hope that saves us here is a future thing. It is a preservation until the time of deliverance from mortality. We do not live in dread, fear, or doubt – wishing something good would happen. Hope is a confident expectation. Hope of deliverance is what sustains us. It is what sustained POWs. I have read of personal accounts of those who suffered awful abuse in concentration camps – those who gave up died (many died anyway). But one could possibly survive if he did not give up. Hope is desire plus expectation. **Wish** means desire without expectation. Hope is the anchor of the soul (Hebrews 6:18-19). It encourages the endurance of trials. Hope that is realized or attained is not hope. How can one desire or anticipate that which he already has. Realized hope ceases to be hope. There will be no hope when we get to heaven because we will have attained what we hoped for; we will possess it.

"But if we hope for that we see not, *then do we with patience wait for it*" (verse 25). Paul is saying that if we anticipate or expect that which is yet to come (resurrection of the body which will know no suffering) then we patiently endure in this life. There is light at the end of the tunnel.

BECAUSE GOD IS FOR US THE SPIRIT HELPS OUR INFIRMITIES

(8:26-27)

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the

Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (verse 26). Just as we get help by hope and resurrection, we get help from the Spirit. Before we jump to unfounded conclusions, note this is what the Spirit does "for us" & not to us. The Holy Spirit helps our weakness and inability. Paul says, "also" - just like hope does. What infirmity? "for we know not what we should pray for as we ought..." This does not mean that we do not know how to pray for anything - the Bible instructs us regarding prayer. But there are longings and needs of the heart ("groanings") which are difficult to be verbalized or expressed ("cannot be uttered"). The Holy Spirit takes these groanings and makes intercession to God on our behalf. He does not give us direct guidance in prayer - the passage says He intercedes. This passage shows us four things:

1. The Fact that the Spirit helps our infirmity
2. Our Weakness - "we know not what we should pray for as we ought"
3. The Help Given - "the Spirit itself maketh intercession"
4. The Means Used - "for us" and not **to us**.

Further on the Spirit's work in interceding, Paul states, "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*" (verse 27). God knows what is in the mind of the Spirit, or our own spirit. God searches our hearts via the agency of the Holy Spirit. Intercession is made because the Spirit knows our groanings and God knows the mind of the Spirit.

The word "intercession" means to go into the presence of another for the purpose of supplication. A mediator does much more. Only Christ mediates, but any can intercede (Genesis 18:22-33; 1 Timothy 2:1; James 5:16). An intercessor is not always a mediator. An intercessor makes a petition on behalf of another. A mediator in New Testament terms is one who mediates

Chapter 1: If God Be For Us, Who Can Be Against Us?

between two parties trying to bring peace between them. A mediator acts as a guarantee so as to secure something which otherwise would not be obtained.

BECAUSE GOD IS FOR US ALL THINGS ARE MADE TO WORK FOR OUR GOOD

(8:28-30)

All things are made to work together for our good because God rules. In verse 28, Paul explains, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." This passage has been called the **Golden Text** of Romans. We learn that God is in control and will work all things (even suffering and pain) to the good of those who love Him. The context of "all things" shows this to be speaking to the fact of suffering, sorrow, persecution, trials, and tribulations (verse 18). Of course to expand this to include other things would be a true Biblical principle taught in other places. God is in complete control of things - all things which threaten to result in evil. God directs suffering, sorrow and pain so as to make it ultimately result in good for the sufferer. How He does this every time I do not know. The identified target for God's good is especially "them that love God." These are His children; those who obey His will (John 14:15,21,23-24; 1 John 2:3-6). These are also the same who are "the called." They are called by the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14), according to His own purpose and grace (2 Timothy 1:9).

Paul has something further to say about those who love God and are called according to His purpose: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (verse 29). God called those He foreknew. This speaks of the foreknowledge of God. God predetermined the kind of character a person must have to be saved and not the individual himself. He foreknew the called and predetermined the way they would

walk – that they might be conformed to the image of Christ. Biblical foreordination refers to the *kind* of a person (character) and not a *certain* person. These passages depict Scriptural selection and not Calvinistic election on a purely arbitrary basis. God foreknew or approved what type of characters He planned to save – the obedient. These were appointed to be conformed to the image of His Son – people born of the water and Spirit and then would grow into the likeness of Christ. Christ was “the firstborn among many brethren.” He would be the beginning of many that would follow. In verse 30, we are reminded of our salvation: “Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” They were justified by Christ. They are glorified by being saved. God has it all worked out – thus I can endure.

BECAUSE GOD IS FOR US WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?

(8:31-34)

These are conclusions drawn from the encouragement given to overcome suffering in the previous verses. Our text: verse 31 – **“What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?”** If God gives us deliverance, who or what can object? If He justifies, who or what can condemn? If He unites us with Himself, who or what can separate? If we conquer in Him, who or what can defeat us? If God is on our side, as He clearly proved by what He did and does for us, who is against us?

Verse 32 – **“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”** God gave us the greatest possible gift, His only Son; surely then He will without restraint give us the lesser gifts of all things of verse 28.

Verse 33 – **“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? *It is* God that justifieth.”** Who can bring charges (as in a court of law) against God’s

Chapter 1: If God Be For Us, Who Can Be Against Us?

chosen people so as to condemn them? No one! See 8:1. God provides the means of justification through the death of His Son

Verse 34 - **"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."** In order to condemn an individual who God justifies, four things would have to be true:

1. Christ did not die to pay man's sin debt.
2. He did not rise from the dead.
3. He is not at the right hand of God.
4. He does not make intercession for us.

BECAUSE GOD IS FOR US WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS

(8:35-39)

Verse 35 - **"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"** Seven things are used to try to dislodge our loyalty, love, and obedience to Him. However, these are outside influences. They can tempt, but they cannot force. We make our own choices. Our love for Him should be intensified in time of trial so that His love for us will not be in vain.

Verses 36-39 - **"As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."** We ought to be entirely convinced that as long as we are in Christ we are secure (John 10:28-29). No power in heaven or earth can change the love Christ has for us.

Regardless of what we have to endure, He will love us. This is not to suggest that this union cannot be broken by internal forces – us; we can change masters and fall from grace.

What a text! There is not a more comforting portion of Scripture than Romans 8:18-39.

Chapter 2

Is There Unrighteousness With God?

Joshua Day

Joshua Day is a graduate of the Tri-Cities School of Preaching and Christian Development. He is also pursuing a B.S. in Geology and a B.A. in Spanish from East Tennessee State University. He and his wife, Andrea, currently work with the Stoney Creek Church of Christ in Elizabethton, TN.

"What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!" (Romans 9:14). It's not a complicated question; it's not a difficult answer. It is, however, asked in the midst of an incredibly complex passage of scripture, which makes the purpose and application of this verse significantly harder to determine. Yet, despite this relative difficulty, it is a question packed with meaning and is a critical element in Paul's letter "...to all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints" (Romans 1:7).

GROUND RULES

Since the passage containing our question is rather complicated, it would be helpful if we set up some ground rules for examining these verses. These rules are based on general guidelines that are essential for "rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15) in any passage of scripture, but a specific application to our verses will be particularly useful.

1. The meaning of the passage must fit the context of the passage.
2. The meaning of the passage must fit the teaching of the whole Bible.
3. The verse and chapter divisions in the passage are man-made tools (albeit useful ones) that do not affect the meaning of the passage.

4. The definition a word has today is not necessarily the exact definition that it had when the Bible was written.
5. Figurative language is a valid literary technique used in the Bible (although it must be indicated/allowed by the context).

Rules 1 and 2 are demanded by the concept of biblical inerrancy. If there are no errors in the Bible, then any passage considered must be in harmony with every other passage. Rules 3 through 5 aren't technically rules at all—they're really just facts; but they should definitely be kept in mind as our particular passage is considered.

A LITTLE PERSPECTIVE

Imagine being handed a single piece of a 5,000 piece puzzle. You have never seen this piece before, nor have you seen the picture that the finished puzzle composes. The piece itself has no distinguishing features, just some different colors and swirls. Now imagine that you study this piece as diligently as can possibly be imagined. You memorize every shade of color; you analyze every swirl, shape, and shadow; you even inspect it with a microscope so powerful that you can count each individual dot of ink that covers the piece.

Question: Do you know what the piece represents? By no means! You could be intimately acquainted with every possible detail about this particular piece and still have no clue what it represents. Why? Because you haven't seen the "big-picture"! Is that yellow patch part of a flower or part of the sun? Is that subtle brown streak a tree branch in shadow, or the stray lock of a girl's hair? Are they all the random bits and pieces of an abstract? Until we see the complete picture, it's impossible for us to know.

If we want to truly understand the meaning of the question, "Is there injustice on God's part?" as Paul uses it, we've got to put everything into a "big-picture" context.

Chapter 2: Is There Unrighteousness With God?

When we are studying a particular verse or question, it's very easy to get locked in on the particulars—details, specifics, individual words and phrases—to the exclusion of everything else. While it may feel like we are really “digging deep” when we spend hours or days on these details, we are guaranteed to fail with this kind of study technique.

Don't misunderstand me—I'm not saying the particulars are unimportant. They are vital! They are not, however, self-sufficient. If all we know about a particular passage is the minute details and nuances, we still don't have a proper understanding of the passage because we have no context. In fact, without context we are probably still lacking a full understanding of even those details.

Proper Bible study will contain both of these elements—a thorough grasp of the “big-picture” context and an intimate knowledge of particular details.

THE BIG PICTURE

If Romans 9:14 is our piece of the 5,000 piece puzzle, what does the picture on the box look like? What is the “big-picture” context for our passage? Well, there are several layers of context at which we can look.

First, there is the immediate context of chapter 9. When I was in preaching school, my classmates and I dubbed this the “Greenian Principle of Hermeneutics” in honor of a fellow-student, Brad Green. The director of the school was playing “devil's advocate” and alleging that there was a contradiction in a particular verse. When challenged to explain this alleged contradiction, Brad (still in the process of organizing his thoughts) mused aloud: “Well, there's verses before it and verses after it.” Much to our amusement, the director piped up immediately, “I know there's verses before it and verses after it; I want you to deal with **this** one!”

While we were greatly amused at his predicament at the time, his simple statement actually describes perfectly the idea behind context. Any time we study a passage we

should remember: "There's verses before it and verses after it." These verses are vital in understanding the actual passage that we are studying. With regards to our passage, the immediate context of chapter 9 contains information that we have to understand before we will have a proper understanding of verse 14.

Second, we can take a step back and look at the broader context of Paul's letter to the Romans as a whole. I suppose part 2 of the "Greenian Principle" would be, "There's chapters before it and chapters after it." How does chapter 9 fit into the overall theme of the book? Remember Ground Rule #3: *The verse and chapter divisions in the passage are man-made tools (albeit useful ones) that do not affect the meaning of the passage.* Paul's thought in chapter 9 doesn't necessarily begin in verse 1 and end in verse 33. The surrounding chapters and even the entire book contain themes and ideas that chapter 9 references and builds upon.

Third, we can move even further back and consider the entirety of the New Testament. What is the overall setting for this letter? While this may have less impact than the context of the book itself, it is still incredibly important information. Surely we couldn't properly interpret Paul's statements in Romans, in isolation from his statements in other letters or the statements of other inspired writers. Indeed, "There's books before it and books after it" as well, each of which can influence our understanding of the question, "Is there injustice on God's part?"

A PANORAMIC VIEW

We'll look first at the broadest context for the book. The setting for this letter is typical for a letter by Paul. The church as an institution is still very young—individual congregations are practically brand-new. One of the biggest problems the church would face during her inaugural century was now starting to rear its ugly head in the

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congregation at Rome—how do we transition from Judaism to Christianity?

The problem was in essence a simple problem of logistics. What, if anything, would be held over from the Old Law? What differences were to be expected under the New Law? These were simple and natural questions. The problem came when people refused to accept the answers. Some were more interested in their traditions than they were in actually serving God; others were too attached to the power or prestige that they had under the Old Law. Whatever the reasons, there were nearly constant problems with new Christians trying to hold on to their Old Law habits, or else being told by false teachers that they needed to start observing some of these traditions. The congregation at Rome had its fair share of these issues, and Paul writes this letter to address the problem.

AT ARM'S LENGTH

Moving a bit closer to our text, we need to consider the context of the letter itself:

Chapter 1 – Paul starts with a statement that neatly summarizes the letter as a whole. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith'" (Romans 1:16-17). He goes on to say that the Gentile nations refused to accept the evidence that God left, and decided to do things their own way

Chapter 2 – The Gentiles weren't the only ones at fault, however. The Jews were ignoring God's precepts as well. Oh, they would make sure they were practicing circumcision, but then they would ignore the rest of the Law. In fact, since the Gentiles who weren't even God's special people were still expected to come recognize the evidence and respond correctly, the Jews were even guiltier.

God doesn't expect His followers to just go through a few ceremonies. He expects a lifestyle of obedience.

Chapter 3 – No one can be justified by the works of the Law of Moses, because the Law only brought knowledge of sin. However, the Law and Prophets did look forward to something that could bring righteousness, that is, the law of faith in Christ Jesus. Because God is a God to Jew and Gentile alike, it is this Law of faith (which was available to both Jew and Gentile) that God used to bring righteousness.

Chapter 4 – If it is really circumcision (or some other act of the Law) that saves, how was Abraham considered righteous before circumcision? If this Law and circumcision are required for salvation, then the promise to Abraham that all the world would be blessed through him is pointless; no one can be saved under that Old Law because 1) it has no sacrifice that can take away sin, 2) it therefore requires perfect law-keeping, and 3) no one but Christ will ever keep the law perfectly (this sentence is not explicitly stated, but is the implication of verses 13-15).

Chapter 5 – Fortunately, God didn't leave us in that predicament. He gave us His Son, even though we were still sinners at the time. At that point, the world finally had a sacrifice that could give true redemption. Just like one man's sin brought death into the world, one man's sacrifice brought life into the world. Sin was reigning through death, but now grace can reign through life.

Chapter 6 – The fact that grace can reign over sin, doesn't mean that you can live in your old sinful ways though, regardless of whether you were circumcised! In fact, if you really have this new life, it means you have to be dead to sin. Basically we changed masters—we used to be slaves to Sin, and his wages were death; now we are slaves to God, and His wages are eternal life. But if He's really our master we have to do what He says.

Chapter 7 – We're dead to the Old Law too. Not because there was something wrong with the law, but because there was something wrong with us—the law-

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keepers! We wouldn't keep the law perfectly, and as soon as we sinned the first sin, the law could never get rid of it.

Chapter 8 – Thankfully, God's New Law of life in Jesus is able to do what the Old Law never could—wash away sins! This New Law requires us to live like God wants us to, and it may even take some sacrifices, but it is definitely worth it because it allows us to be adopted sons and daughters of God. Not only that, but no matter how hard the sacrifices or struggles may get, God will be on our side and no one can change that.

Chapter 9 – The fact that such a wonderful reward is available makes it even sadder that so many Israelites were rejecting that opportunity. Despite their rejection, however, God was keeping His promise with His new chosen people—those who keep His New Law.

Chapter 10 – Israel still has a chance to be saved, but they'll have to do it the same way as everybody else—submit to God's law. This was God's plan all along. He never intended for only one group of people to be the "chosen ones" with regards to salvation! He had been telling them about the coming of the New Law for generations, if they had just been willing to listen.

Chapter 11 – The fact that Israel was not guaranteed salvation because they had been right with God in the past should serve as a warning to Gentiles. Just because you are obedient to God now doesn't mean you can go back to your old lives of sin. Christians have to stay faithful to their new master to receive that new wage of eternal life.

Chapters 12-13 – Since it is necessary to keep living righteously, Paul instructs them how to do so. These basic Christian commands aren't just boxes to check, rather they are placed in the context of this New Law system—God requires a faith that is manifested in Christian living. These things are our way of serving our new Master.

Chapters 14-16 – They also reflect a meaningful respect for one another. If Christ loved us so much that He

gave his life for us when we were still actively serving sin, we definitely ought to love one another enough to do whatever it takes to get us all to heaven. Instead of hanging on to our Old Law habits as marks of prestige or tools for division, or even flaunting our New Law liberties for similar reasons, we should be willing to do what it takes to help our brothers serve our new master.

UP CLOSE...

Now let's look at the text of chapter 9 itself. This text does have some verses that are difficult to understand, but since we already have the "big-picture" context, they should be much more manageable.

Verses 1-5 – Paul expresses his sorrow that so many of his countrymen are missing out on the possibilities that are only offered through the New Law: "peace with God" (5:1), "eternal life" (6:23), "adoption as sons" (8:15, 23), the ultimate realization of "the love of God" (8:39).

Verses 6-13 – Even though the Israelites were choosing to miss out on these blessings, God's promise to bless the world through Abraham's seed is still fulfilled. Apparently the Jews had the attitude that because God had promised blessings through the children of Abraham, then simply being a circumcised Israelite meant you were automatically taken care of. Paul corrects this misconception and shows that the promise wasn't about being a descendant of Abraham by means of the flesh—it was about being a child of Abraham by means of the promise!

Here is the parallel Paul uses. Verses 6 and 7 say, "For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but 'Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.'" On one side of the parallel, you have children of Abraham. But just physically being a child of Abraham didn't make you a part of the promised bloodline, because the line only went through one of Abraham's physical

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children (Isaac), and only went through one of Isaac's children (Jacob). Conclusion: To be a child of Abraham (with regards to being a part of the promised bloodline) was not based on being a child by means of the flesh, but by means of the promise.

On the other side of the parallel, you have descendants from Israel. Being a descendant of Israel physically wasn't enough to be one of the "children of God" (Romans 9:8), because as Paul has pointed out, this group only includes those who submit to the New Law. Just as being a child of Abraham was based on the promise rather than the flesh, the implication of the parallel is that we are not descendants from Israel by means of the flesh (i.e. circumcision, perfect law keeping, etc.) but by means of the promise (i.e. Christ's sacrifice, freedom from the law of sin and death, establishment of the law of faith, etc.).

Many have questioned the meaning of verse 13: "As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." In order to properly understand this verse, we need to use all five of our ground rules. Rules 4 and 5 remind us that the words "love" and "hate" had broader meanings in Bible times than they do in our every day speech today. They certainly had the strong connotative meanings that they carry today, but they also had much milder, even figurative senses in which they were often used. Rule 2 reminds us to check the greater context of the Bible as a whole for qualifiers that will limit the possible meanings this verse can have. Even a basic overview of Bible teachings will let us know that God's justice and mercy must limit our interpretation of this verse. Rules 1 and 3 remind us to check the immediate context, not letting the verse divisions color our thinking.

If we apply these rules, we notice that Paul tells us what is happening in the preceding sentence. "And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that **God's purpose of election might continue**, not because

of works but because of him who calls—she was told, ‘The older will serve the younger’” (Romans 9:10-12). “Loved” and “hated” in verse 13 refer to God arbitrarily choosing one to be the son through which the bloodline would continue. The verse has nothing to do with either individual’s salvation, and creates no contradiction with the nature of God. Not only does this explanation fit the immediate context of the preceding sentence, but it melds perfectly with the parallel that Paul is drawing in verses 6-13 between children of Abraham and descendants of Israel.

Verses 14-18 – Finally, we get to our question: “Is there injustice on God’s part? By no means!” (Romans 9:14). Paul anticipates the reaction of some of his readers: “But how can God pick a different way to bring in salvation? **We’re** the children of Abraham!” The Jews were used to being the ones through whom the promise would come. Now that it had arrived, they weren’t ready to give up that position of prestige and share it with others. Their response is basically to cry, “That’s not fair!” Paul reminds them in no uncertain terms that God can choose whatever method of salvation that He pleases, and that He has chosen to do so through the New Law. “So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy” (Romans 9:16). Salvation isn’t based on works of the Law (circumcision) or perfect law-keeping; it is based on accessing God’s mercy as made available through Christ’s sacrifice. Paul goes on to point out that if God could even use a wicked Gentile like Pharaoh to accomplish His plan, then surely He could use righteous Gentile Christians.

Verses 19-29 – Once again Paul anticipates the petulant response of the Jews: “Well, if God is just up there pulling all the strings to get His will accomplished, how can He hold anybody accountable for their actions?” The Jews knew God’s nature well enough to know that this question wasn’t valid. Accordingly, Paul’s answer is short and to the point: “But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, ‘Why have you made

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me like this?' Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? (Romans 9:20-21).

They knew that God doesn't force anyone to choose a life of sin or a life of righteousness. In fact, there are numerous statements that Paul has already made in this very letter that show each person is guilty or innocent based on their own decisions and actions (e.g. Romans 6:12-13, 17-18; 8:5-6, 13). Since the context of the Bible as a whole and this letter in particular show us that God doesn't take away a person's ability to choose right or wrong (a conclusion these Jews already had ample evidence for), Paul's curt response doesn't even attempt to re-prove this admitted fact. Instead he simply points out that God can create individuals knowing already what choices they will make, and knowing how He will use those choices to further His plan.

Did God know that Cain would kill Abel? Did He know that Jeroboam would bring idolatry to Israel? Did He know Judas Iscariot would betray Jesus? Of course He did! And yet He created each one of them anyways. He did not make them choose their respective paths—they did that with their own free will. But God knew what paths they would choose and already had those poor choices worked into His master plan.

This is why Paul reminds the Jewish Christians, "What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?" (Romans 9:22-24). Skillfully, Paul brings things full circle by pointing out that even in His dealings with people like Pharaoh, God was already preparing for the moment that the Jewish Christians were fighting so hard against—the transition to the New Law. He even quotes from Hosea and

Isaiah, showing that this transition has been prophesied for generations.

Verses 30-33 – “What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works” (Romans 9:30-32). The chapter closes with this concept. The thought, however continues into chapters 10 and 11. All hope is not lost for Israel—the shift to descendants by promise instead of descendants by flesh did not exclude Israel. In fact, Paul says that a remnant would be saved (chapter 11), but they would have to do it like everyone else: “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:12-13).

...AND PERSONAL

So what? I mean, sure we understand the question that was our topic a little better, but who cares? Does all this talk about Jews and Gentiles who lived in Rome two millennia ago and dealt with a problem that’s currently non-existent have anything to do with me? Absolutely!

While the specific problem of transitioning from the Old Law into the New Law may not be immediately relevant to us today, the principles are exactly the same: are we willing to give up what we want/what we are used to/what we think makes sense, in order to obey God? That is exactly what the congregation at Rome was dealing with so long ago.

“Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!” That means anything God requires me to do or anything He requires me to give up is just, fair, and reasonable. How do I know? Because of the evidence all around me of a loving God (Romans 1). Because of the sacrifice Christ made for

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me on the cross (Romans 5). Because of His offer to adopt me as His son (Romans 8). Since I can know without a doubt that there is no injustice on God's part, I can trust when He tells me to be a living sacrifice (Romans 12), to love my fellow man (Romans 13), to give up liberties rather than cause one to stumble (Romans 14). Most importantly, I can trust Him when he says: "...[N]ow that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:22-23).

May we all work to please this just Master and receive His unspeakable reward!

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Chapter 3

Is Any Sick Among You?

Tim Canup

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Tim has been married to his wife, Cindy, for 11 years. They have 2 sons, Andrew (4 ½ years old) and Nathan (2 ½ years old).

INTRODUCTION

James wrote:

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its

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fruit. Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins. (James 5:13-20 – All Scriptures from the New King James unless otherwise noted)

All who have tried know of the challenges of living the Christian life. It is clear that we have an enemy (I Peter 5:8) who is doing all he can to deceive us into allowing sin back into our life, which separates us from God (Isaiah 59:1-2). It is not impossible to live a faithful Christian life (although Satan attempts to convince us we cannot). We have been equipped to “fight the good fight of faith” (I Timothy 6:12; Ephesians 6:10-18). The purpose of the epistle of James was to encourage these Christians to maintain their efforts in the great spiritual warfare in which they found themselves. Some have labeled the theme of this epistle, “Practical Christianity.” James knew of and was well aware of the dangers and consequences of sin. In his writings, he sought to help others overcome sin and temptation so they, too, could win the victory.

As we examine this passage from the writings of James, we want to honestly consider the context and focus on James’ usage of the word “sick.” Is it a physical sickness or spiritual? The majority believe this to be a reference to physical sickness. Many of the commentaries one will read (even including those from the denominational world) will explain this passage from the view point of physical sickness. The views expressed in commentaries, although they can be beneficial in our studies, have swayed many into a preconceived conclusion, without fully considering the full context of this passage. In other words, many have taken this position simply because they have read it in a commentary somewhere; therefore, it cannot be wrong.

Let me clearly say concerning my interpretation of this passage, it is a **matter of opinion!** It is a "non-salvific" matter; that is, it does not affect our salvation (unless one takes a position that it involves miracles today, which contradicts other passages, e.g., I Corinthians 13). It is not the point of this lesson to try to persuade anyone to accept my position; I simply desire to offer the reasons why I believe as I do and offer to you another possibility. At the same time, I hope to emphasize a very powerful lesson to be learned from the total context; regardless of one's interpretation of the phrase, "Is any sick among you?"

IS IT PHYSICAL SICKNESS?

Most who hold the position that this verse refers to physical sickness, suggest that this passage is limited to the first century; that is, during the time of miraculous healing. Guy N. Woods, a great Bible student, stated:

The author, in verse 13, designates "suffering" in general; here, one particular type of suffering—physical illness—is specifically mentioned. ... We are not informed of the nature or extent of the illness here contemplated; nor is there anything, in this instance, to indicate whether the term is used literally, or figuratively. The context would suggest that it is literal sickness inasmuch as it is mentioned in connection with literal suffering, praying, cheerfulness, and singing. In verse 15..., it is clearly shown that the illness contemplated here is physical in character, in view of the fact that it is mentioned in connection with, *and in addition to*, spiritual illness. (Woods, 302 – italics in original)

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He then further explained, "It seems quite clear from all the facts in the case that the elders contemplated here were miraculously endowed—through the laying on of an apostle's hands—and were thus able to participate in miraculous acts of healing in the manner described" (Woods, 303). Although a great student of the Bible and he did much good in the Kingdom of God, brother Woods merely makes an assertion without any real support for his position. In all due respect, many have (without any serious study of their own) taken brother Woods (and others) position and "ran with it."

If the word sickness here in James 5:14 refers to physical sickness, then there are certain questions that must be answered. First, we must ask, "Why call for the elders?" The text clearly states that the purpose is for them "to pray over him;" or "on his behalf" (cf. Woods, 301). Is the prayer of an elder any more effective than that of any other Christian? Those who hold that it is physical sickness are forced into the position of saying that in the first century, they had the miraculous gift of healing, which is true; however, no where in the Bible does it say that only the elders had this gift or that all elders had this gift.

The second question that must be addressed is, "Why anoint with oil?" Many suggest that it was for a medicinal purpose or symbolical (cf. Woods, 301), which is only true in a very limited sense (certainly not for all sickness). Also, notice the word "anoint," which indicates "an outward anointing of the body" (Rogers & Rogers, 564). Therefore, this application of oil would have been for outward infirmities. Notice the rest of the verse. This anointing is to be done "in the name of the Lord." When this phrase is used, in every other place it denotes, "by the authority of the Lord" such as it is in Acts 2:38 and Colossians 3:17. This phrase suggests a command. If it is a command, are we not bound to do this today? If not, then when did it cease to be binding on the church? Notice the result of the prayer and the anointing: "And the prayer of faith **shall**

save the sick, and the Lord **shall** raise him up..." (verse 15). This suggests the person WILL get well! However, as we all well know, that is not always the case.

Another question to be pondered is, "If this passage deals with physical sickness, then why mention 'sin' in verses 15b-16, 19-20"? Brother Woods suggests that this is in addition to the physical healing, and then he does not give any further comments on it. Many hold the idea, as is stated by Steven M. Lloyd, "He began by asking, 'Is any among you sick?' and then added, 'and if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him' (Jam. 5:15). The clause, 'and if he have committed sin,' merely introduces the idea that sin may potentially accompany the sickness" (Lloyd, 360). However, this certainly is not always the case. I have known many righteous saints who were sick, but not guilty of any ongoing sin (all have sinned, Romans 3:23). James did not begin a new subject or mix subjects in this passage. The context deals with the same subject throughout; that is, sickness and it is either physical or spiritual. There may be some difficulties in an interpretation of spiritual sickness; however, as you can see, there are many more difficulties in interpreting this passage as physical sickness.

SPIRITUAL SICKNESS

In the context for our study, James asks several questions (verses 13-14a). The first question is: "Is any among you afflicted?" Perhaps this is from the trials of life because one is trying to live the Christian life? The solution: Pray! There is no better thing one could do when persecuted or facing trials! The next question is: "Is any merry?" The ultimate source of all real joy is Christianity (having had all our past sins washed away and thus being in Christ). The result: Sing (I believe this is the natural reaction to joy)! Then James asks, "Is any among you sick?" I truly believe the overall context (as will be shown)

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deals with those who are sin-sick! What does James say for us to do: call for the elders! The rest of the passage deals with the problem of sin. The theme of the book of James is "Practical Christianity." James is dealing with things to help them (and us) live a successful Christian life (which will help us to obtain heaven).

Let us now ask some questions concerning the interpretation of spiritual sickness. Is sickness ever used in the Bible for sin? Paul, in dealing with the improper partaking of the Lord's Supper, wrote to the Christians in Corinth:

Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks *this* cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many *are* weak and **sick** among you, and many sleep. (I Corinthians 11:27-30)

Paul apparently applies the word "sick" in a spiritual sense in dealing with this problem in Corinth.

Next, we ask, "Why call for the elders?" The late brother James Tolle noted:

There may have been elders endowed with this gift, but there is no indication that all of them possessed it or that it was given to any of them because there were *elders*. Thus if James had had miraculous healing in mind, his injunction to anyone who was sick would have been, "Let him call for someone in the church who has the gift of healing." But James did not request his sick readers to call for any particular elder who may have had

this gift, but for the *elders*, all the elders, because they were *elders*, bishops, the overseers of the local congregation. (Tolle, 76 – italics in original)

Concerning the work of the elders, the Hebrews' writer wrote, "Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13:17). Paul said to the elders of Ephesus, "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd {to feed – KJV} the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). While it is true that we all have the responsibility to watch for one another's spiritual well-being, the elders of each congregation hold a divinely appointed office in which they will give an account of those they oversee; they have the grave responsibility for the well-being of each member of that congregation! Such is very serious! So, why pray for him? There are basically two reasons: #1, so that he will realize his sin and repent of it, and #2 when he repents, to be forgiven.

Then there is the question, "What about the oil?" Whatever it is, the Bible tells us it is to be done "in the name of the Lord," that is, by the authority of Jesus Christ! With physical illnesses, those of the first century often applied olive oil (e.g., the man robbed in Luke 10 who was helped by the Good Samaritan). In this particular aspect, James is illustrating a spiritual lesson with a physical truth, that is, he is making a figurative application to it. So what would one best apply to heal any spiritual sickness? The oil is the Word of God, figuratively speaking! William Cline wrote, "The oil James mentions is not medicinal oil, but is the anointing of the Word of Truth" (Cline, 253). One objection I have personally heard at this point is, "Is this figure used anywhere else in the Bible?" First of all, a figure

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does not have to be used over and over for it to be true. For example, in Jeremiah 23:29, the Word of God is used in a figure as being a hammer. As far as I know, it is not used anywhere else. Jeremiah 8:22 and 46:11 refers to the balm of Gilead.

In the first part of verse 15, James said, "And the prayer of faith will {shall – KJV} save the sick..." As noted above, this is not always the case; some illnesses cannot be overcome. This, of course, is from the standpoint of the person who is sin-sick having repented of the sin they have committed! There simply is no salvation without repentance, so said our Lord (Luke 13:3, 5). Although a sick person may not always recover from his or her illness, the person who has sinned, when they repent, and pray to God for forgiveness (I John 1:5-10; Acts 8:18-24), God WILL forgive! Marvin R. Vincent wrote concerning the phrase, "...will save the sick..." in verse 15, "Rev. gives, better, the participial force, *him that is sick*. The word originally means *to work*. Hence, 'Him that is *laboring under disease*,' which very well could be applied spiritually to sin (cf. Matthew 11:28-30, "all ye that labor and are heavy laden"). Mr. Vincent then stated concerning the phrase, "And if he has committed sins":

The Greek gives a shade of meaning which can hardly be transferred neatly into English, representing not merely the *fact* that the man has sinned, but his *condition* as a sinner. Literally the words read, *if he be having committed sins*, i.e., *in a state of having committed*, and under the moral or physical consequences of transgression." (Vincent, 763)

This word for sick in verse 15 (*kamno* – Strong's #2577, cf. Vine, 573) is also used in Hebrews 12:3, "For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself,

lest you **become weary** and discouraged in your souls." This certainly is applied spiritually and not to physical sickness.

It is of utmost importance to understand that if a person is laboring under the weight of spiritual sickness, there is no "home remedy" that can be applied to cure his condition! Paul said, "that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, **having no hope and without God in the world**" (Ephesians 2:12).

It is also worth noting that James began verse 15 with the Greek word *kai*, which is a coordinating conjunction, and used it two more times in the verse. This word ties what James had just said with what he is about to say; therefore, there is no change in subject matter. In the middle of verse 15, James stated, "...and the Lord will raise him up..." This is a reference to a restoration of the person who had been guilty of sin and who has repented, back to a proper relationship with God again. Only God can do this (Mark 2:7)! Then James closes the verse with the declaration, "...and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven." Repentance of the guilty person is implied (cf. Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30). If a person sins, and truly repents (turns from that sin), they can be forgiven!

It is my conviction that many have taken the position of this being physical sickness based on the word "if" in this verse; they believe James turns his thoughts from physical sickness to spiritual. Many believe this is a problem in interpreting James' question, "Is any sick among you?" as being spiritual sickness. However, the word used here is a compound word (*kan* - Strong's number 2579), made up of *kai* (and) and (*ean*, which is often translated "if") and is properly translated as, "and if." However, this word can also be translated as, "although" (Perschbacher, 219). James uses this word again in verse 19. James is saying, if a person has sin, they should call for the elders, for it is their responsibility, and when the Word of God is applied, if

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they are willing to repent, God will forgive and restore and although they have committed sins, they will be forgiven. Sin CAN be corrected; it can be forgiven.

Some may then ask: "If a person realizes they have sinned, why call for the elders? After all, is sin not between the person and God (Psalm 51:4)? Could that person not simply go to God in prayer asking forgiveness of his sin?" Yes! A person can go to God at anytime and ask forgiveness for sin. However, the Bible teaches that we are to address public sin with public repentance. Simon the Sorcerer is a great example in Acts 8:18-24. Too many Christians have sinned and have never repented (biblical repentance) and have simply "slipped" back into service. Public repentance is to acknowledge to our brothers and sister that we have sinned and have sought God's forgiveness and desire their prayers and support.

With all this in mind, James then says in the next verse, "Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (verse 16). James continues to connect his divinely guided advice in the original question in verse 14 by using the same analogy, as can be seen in the word "healed." This is evidence that there is no transition in subject or even from physical to spiritual sickness; he had spiritual sickness in mind throughout the entire context.

James then reminds them the power of prayer in verses 17-18. Although this example does not directly refer to the problem of sin, James gives them an example or illustration of the power and effectiveness of prayer with the great prophet Elijah. "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit" (James 5:17-18). When it comes to dealing with the problem of sin, there is great power in prayer. Allow me to clearly state that this is not dealing

with the process of a non-Christian becoming a Christian; this deals with how a Christian deals with sin in his life.

Having discussed the need to address spiritual sickness and not ignore it, he then encourages them to help one another to overcome. James closes this great epistle with the words, which are in the same context which began in verse 13, "Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:19-20). This is in perfect harmony with what Paul wrote to the brethren in Galatia: "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1-2).

CONCLUSION

Unlike physical sickness, sin-sickness has eternal effects! What do you do if a Christian is suffering sin-sickness? James, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, tells us to call for the elders who are to apply the Word of God and are to pray for him to repent, and when he does, then God will forgive! God is faithful; He WILL Forgive (I John 1:5-10)!

Sin is a very serious problem (Isaiah 59:1-2; Romans 6:23)! So often a person is so blinded by it, they cannot even see they have been entangled by it! We all need one another to help in our journey through this life to that eternal shore. May we always strive to seek to honestly examine ourselves whether we are in the faith (cf. II Corinthians 13:15), remove the beam from our own eyes, as we may be able to help our brother remove the speck from his (Matthew 7:1f).

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Chapter 4

**Know Ye Not That The Unrighteous Shall
Not Inherit the Kingdom of God?**

Adam Horn

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INTRODUCTION

The great Apostle Paul, as recorded in Acts, Chapter 26, was standing on trial before the Roman ruler Agrippa, and instead of offering a real defense for his preaching the Gospel, he essentially preached yet another sermon. In the discourse that Paul delivered, he touched on a variety of topics as it pertained to what he preached throughout the various cities that he had visited. He preached on topics such as his own conversion to Christianity, what the prophets revealed relative to the coming of the Messiah, and especially the death of Christ and the meaning of it. But nestled in those exhortations and challenges that Paul issued before the Idumean is a seemingly insignificant statement. Notice the Apostle's words as he quotes what Jesus had revealed to him:

But arise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of

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Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. (Acts 26:16-18)

As the reader may be aware, Paul is often referred to as the Apostle to the Gentiles, and that mission is alluded to in the above referenced passage. But not only does Paul make reference of his charge to preach to the Gentile world, but he also reveals why, as stated in verse 18: "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." Certainly, this would be the same mission, essentially, that all of the Apostles were given; but even so, Paul's mission would have somewhat of an extra challenge. Whereas the Jews were knowledgeable as it pertained to the promise and prophecy of the coming Messiah (even though they rejected Him when he came, Acts 2:36), the Gentiles, however, were not. Paul, as recorded in the first chapter of his letter to the Romans, was very clear in describing the things which the Gentile world had been guilty:

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds,

and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.
(Romans 1:20-23)

Certainly, Paul would go on to explain in that same letter that the Jews too were guilty before in that they too had committed sin, and because of that all men stand in need of the same redemption (see Romans 3:23-26). Even with that being the case, the Gentile world presented a different set of circumstances for the one who would go and preach the Gospel to them. As alluded to above, the Jews (for the most part) were familiar with God and His laws (albeit the Law of Moses). However, the immorality and unrighteousness of the Gentiles seemingly knew no boundaries because of their rejection of God, their continued rejection of Him, and because of their going after false gods and worshiping them.

When one studies the missionary journeys of Paul and his preaching to various Gentile cities, one cannot help but feel saddened by the depraved state that they had created for themselves. For the most part, thanks to the power of the Gospel, Paul was able to enjoy great success in preaching and teaching; but, as one would expect, the background of the Gentiles continually presented problems for those newly converted and added to the Lord's Church.

A classic example of the continued problems faced among these Gentile Christians is that of the church at Corinth. According to Acts, Chapter 18, on his second missionary tour, Paul had come to Corinth and was able to establish the congregation: "After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth... And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:1, 8). Seemingly, from its inception this particular congregation struggled to overcome its pagan background. This is evidenced by the two letters that Paul would later write to these Christians in an attempt to correct many of the false ideas that, until that point

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anyway, had not relinquished. Again and again, especially in his first letter, Paul was forced to address a variety of things that were continuing to plague the church; for example, challenges to his apostleship, idolatry, false teaching of supposed philosophers, and—perhaps worst of all—a man who was committing fornication with his father's wife and that being tolerated by the church, etc. Throughout his writings to this particular church, Paul was very clear and very concise in his statements condemning the various sins that were characteristic of the Corinthian Christians, but perhaps the clearest statement of all is found in the following statement:

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

Clearly, Paul's intent in this context is to exhort these Christians to overcome their sinful past by reminding them of what they have obtained through their obedience to the Gospel. But, nonetheless, we cannot help but focus on one statement in particular that the Holy Spirit reveals through Paul's pen: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?..." How much more clearly could Paul have been? How much clearer could the Holy Spirit have been in revealing these words? It was absolutely essential that these Christians come to terms with the reality that some things simply cannot and will not be tolerated by

our Creator! Things that will, according to what Paul says here, keep them out of the eternal reward of heaven!

UNRIGHTEOUSNESS DEFINED

Hopefully, we understand that what was said to and about the Corinthians is just as applicable to us today. Not because we are necessarily guilty of the same things of which these individuals were guilty, but because it is essential that we also understand that there are, in fact, some things that will keep US out of the eternal reward of heaven as well! Now, if that is the case, then we need to understand what exactly it is. That is, we need to understand what it is that will keep us out of heaven.

If we notice Paul's words carefully, we can see that Paul identifies this dangerous Element. Give careful attention to his words: "Know ye not that the *unrighteous* shall not inherit the kingdom of God?..." (1 Corinthians 6:9, emp. added). Obviously, this would refer to someone who is unrighteous, or we just say more simply, the person who is guilty of unrighteousness. Clearly, then, it is unrighteousness or guilt of unrighteousness that will keep us out of heaven. So now the question: What is unrighteousness?

According to Webster's dictionary, the word unrighteous is defined as: "not righteous, sinful, wicked" (www.miriamwebster.com). Of course, we do not want to allow the dictionary to always define our terms for us; however, it would be safe to say that in this instance this is a fairly accurate definition. As Paul makes clear, it is evident that any action that is against the moral laws of God are what will ultimately cost us the reward that Jesus came to provide. Notice the Apostle's words as he continues:

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of

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themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)

Time and space will not allow us to give a detailed description of each of the unrighteous acts that Paul mentions, but suffice it to say each one carries the same penalty—the loss of heaven.

I would think that this is a very applicable point, not just for the Corinthians, but for us as well. It makes clear that God does indeed have a moral law that is intended to regulate our behaviors. It makes clear that what we do in our lives and how we conduct ourselves not only matters, but also impacts where we will spend eternity. It makes clear that there are some things to be avoided and condemned and other things that are to be pursued. As Paul would say in his letter to the Galatians:

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: 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. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. (Galatians 5:19-24)

I realize that to most of those who read these words this is nothing new. That is, these are general principles

that many of us have been taught for many years, perhaps even from our childhood. This concept; however, may run a little more deeply than we initially realize. Certainly, it is a simple concept that we have just discussed—man + unrighteousness = eternal destruction, but do we realize just how much application that these words have in our modern world? ...even in the modern church and the things that we are confronting now? When we look more closely, we find that the more things change, the more things stay the same.

UNRIGHTEOUSNESS STILL EXISTS!

To some at least, it will come as no surprise to find that the idea of morals being absolute is something that is beginning to fade in the minds of a great many in our world. As godless ideologies begin to grow and take a stronger foothold on the minds of more and more, the concept that unrighteousness is in fact a reality is beginning to disappear. Richard Dawkins, one of the world's leading atheists, said in an interview promoting his book *The Selfish Gene*: "You are nothing. You are here to propagate your selfish genes. There is no higher purpose in life..." (Omni Magazine). Most, no doubt, would not go to the extreme position that Mr. Dawkins goes to in his statement, but his logic is consistent with the lives of a great many. Think about it; if one dismisses the notion of God and along with that the notion of a God-given moral standard, then why would I want to do anything less than what accomplishes my own selfish will? Again, though many would not state their agenda or the way they live their lives exactly the way that Richard Dawkins did in his interview, still the way many live contends for complete agreement! Such a statement begs the questions: how can one be so adamant and where is the evidence of the truthfulness of such things?

The evidence is seen more in actions than in words. As Jesus stated: "Ye shall know them by their fruits . . ." (Matthew 7:16). When we examine the actions of many, it

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seems as though the concept of unrighteousness has diminished if not completely gone. Where is the proof? The evidence is seen in a multiplicity of ways. Think of the lack of respect for human life. Since the Roe v. Wade decision in 1973, about 50 million babies have been aborted:

America kills more babies each year than she has lost in 200 years of wars all combined. During the controversial Vietnam war, 58,655, American soldiers died; this country's medical profession takes the lives of that many unborn children in less than a month!" (Wayne Jackson, Biblical Ethics and Modern Science)

It is truly a moral travesty when human beings have no higher opinion of human life than to stamp it out for a multiple of trivial reasons! Another example is that of the destruction of the home. It is a well documented fact that the home has always been a key block in the foundation of any society. When the home begins to crumble, it is truly a reflection of at least the beginning of moral bankruptcy. Yet when we look at our own society we see that divorce is at a fever pitch:

There no longer seems to be much of a stigma attached to divorce; it is now seen as an unavoidable rite of passage. . . Interviews with young adults suggest that they want their initial marriage to last, but are not particularly optimistic about that possibility. There is also evidence that many young people are moving toward embracing the idea of serial marriage, in which a person gets married two or three times, seeking a different partner for each phase of their adult life." (The Barna Group Research Center)

With the growth of divorce the impact is clearly seen in the lives of our young people:

Beginning in the late 1950s, Americans began to change their ideas about the individual's obligations to family and society. Broadly described, this change was away from an ethic of obligation to others and toward an obligation to self. I do not mean that people suddenly abandoned all responsibilities to others, but rather that they became more acutely conscious of their responsibility to attend to their own individual needs and interests. (Whitehead, 18)

Also, it should be no surprise that homosexuality has enjoyed the popularity and acceptance that it has in recent years:

Today we've basically abandoned "old-fashioned" notions of right and wrong in favor of "consensuality," which two people can do whatever they want, no matter how abominable, as long as they "don't hurt anybody else." The problem with that—aside from the fact that it denies the existence of God and His laws—is that in such a deluded state you have no basis for determining if you're hurting another person or not. A pedophile justifies sex with children precisely because he doesn't believe he's hurting the child; rather he believes he's loving him!" (Kupelian, 35)

We could go on and on, but I think the point has been made. Our society is becoming more and more accepting of the most abominable forms of unrighteousness.

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But it is interesting to note that the words of 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 were written to Christians, Christians who were having to battle to overcome unrighteousness. That should make us think that much harder on the seriousness of his statements. Certainly, it would not be fair to say that the majority of Christians approve of the things that we mentioned in the above examples of modern Unrighteousness; but, even so, it would not be completely accurate to say that the accepting mentality of our world has not found its way, at least to a degree, into the minds of many children of God. The Hebrews writer stated the following:

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Hebrews 5:12-14)

The problem that the writer is here addressing was a failure on the part of the Christians to grow in their relationship to God through knowledge. The only way that they (or we) could overcome unrighteousness was to be able to recognize it. This is reflected in the statement "...have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." The statement expresses the idea that they must sharpen their spiritual senses in order that they can properly distinguish between that which is right and good over that which is wrong and unrighteous. This is an area, I fear, in which many Christians are woefully failing to their own detriment. Again, it would be safe to say that the majority

of Christians will never engage in permissive behavior relative to abortion, homosexuality, etc.; however, the reality is that those obvious forms of unrighteousness spring forth from a lack of knowledge, and it is there we find the same danger. Where a lack of knowledge of God's word exists, whether in or out of the church, you can rest assured that unrighteousness will reign. And, that is where we as the church must be diligent and make sure that we do not allow a lack of knowledge of the word of God to lead us to accepting more subtle forms of unrighteousness:

The church of our Lord is the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22-23; II Cor. 11:2; Rom. 7:4). As such, her purity must be maintained at all costs. But, it is worldliness, in its various forms, that destroys the purity of the church (Jas. 1:27). In fact, James says that worldliness constitutes spiritual adultery (Jas. 4:4). Yet, many churches are seething with it. The line of demarcation that the Lord drew between the church and the world has gradually been erased . . . Let us not forget that as long as the ship is in the ocean all is well; but when the ocean gets the ship, we have a broken vessel. (Winkler, 102)

Without question, one of the biggest challenges that we face as the church is making sure that we influence the world rather than having the world influence us! Unrighteousness still exists, and we must learn to recognize it in its various forms.

CONCLUSION

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" Never a truer nor more sobering word has been spoken. It is evident that our souls hang in the balance and with that being true, we must make sure

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that we make the right decisions in regard to living the type of life that our Creator has revealed we should live within the pages of His Word. Unrighteousness condemns the souls; however "...in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:35).

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Chapter 5

For Do I Now Persuade Men, Or God?

Steve Canup

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INTRODUCTION

There are many great questions offered in the Word of God that provoke the thought processes. Such questions should cause us to pause and to give proper analysis and consideration to the question asked as well as to the answer that would be given. The question under consideration in this lesson was asked by the apostle Paul to the churches in Galatia. "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10). Let us investigate and consider what prompted the apostle Paul to write such to those who professed to be Christians and to ask such a question.

TEXT AND CONTEXT

The epistle of Paul the apostle "unto the churches of Galatia" was perhaps his earliest, if not the first, epistle to be written to Christians. The thrust of the letter was Paul's last ditch effort to sway them from "another gospel." This "so called gospel" was a false doctrine being promoted by those who would still cling to Judaism. Paul did not waste any time in getting to the motivation for the writing of the letter. Beginning with a mild rebuke, Paul states, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into

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the grace of Christ unto another Gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:6-7). They were in essence turning away from the truth and moving toward "another" so called gospel. Later in the same epistle Paul would chastise them again, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" (Galatians 3:1). It is interesting that Paul used the word bewitched which is the translation of the Greek word *baskaino* which comes from a word meaning "witchcraft." Paul in essence is asking who has led you astray by using witchcraft. As brother Steven Lloyd points out:

Paul's language was directed against the Judaizers of that day. His reason for mentioning the cross in this connection is that at the heart of the problem with the Galatian brethren was their view of the sufficiency of Christ's work on the cross. They doubted the sufficiency of Christ's death and the effectiveness of the conditions of the new covenant to meet man's need for forgiveness as opposed to circumcision which the Judaizers were requiring. (Lloyd, "Introduction To Galatians" *Studies In Galatians*, 20)

The problem with the Galatian brethren is summarized by Paul when he said, "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage" (Galatians 4:9). As such, Paul expressed his concern for them, "...for I stand in doubt of you" (Galatians 4:20). There was no doubt that this doctrinal problem had its beginnings with the Judaizing

teachers. Their message in essence was "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). So it follows that they were teaching that those who believed, were baptized and were circumcised would obtain salvation. They were attempting to bind certain conditions of the old law upon those who were under the new law, seeking to constrain the brethren to that which had held them in bondage. By teaching this false doctrine they were denying the power of the Gospel! They were preaching "another gospel" which was not according to truth. Paul goes on to remind them, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Galatians 2:16). Later in the book Paul again makes it clear, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4).

Paul had even gone so far as to compliment them for their faith when he wrote, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" (Galatians 5:7). These people had been "baptized into Christ" (Galatians 3:27), and for a time they "ran well," that is, they were obedient to the truth, but something had changed. They had been led away from the truth to which they had been obedient. These are truly some of saddest words to be found in Bible, they ran well, but allowed themselves to be hindered by those who were preaching "another gospel."

THE SOURCE OF PAUL'S MESSAGE

There were those of Paul's time who were questioning and doubting the authority by which he taught and wrote. Once more it is apparent that there were Judaizing teachers who were planting doubt in the minds of the Galatian brethren as to the authenticity of Paul's apostleship and the message he taught. Yet it can be seen

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that Paul presented appropriate argumentation as to the genuineness and validity of his message. "But I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:11-12). Paul is saying "I am declaring, I am making it known, I am making you to understand about the Gospel that I am teaching and that I proclaim unto you." It definitely was not in any way from the thinking or ideas of man. It did not have its origins in the mind of any man, nor was it taught to Paul by a man. Paul with certainty informs them of the genesis of that which he taught, that it was "by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:12). It was divinely given from a divine source. As brother Lloyd points out:

The reason Paul argued so vigorously in his own defense is not for any self-satisfaction or glory that he might hope to attain from men, but rather because the Truth of the Gospel was at stake. If his apostleship were to be brought into question, then his message would be rejected. (Lloyd, 22)

In writing to the Christians at Corinth, Paul very clearly set forth the source of that which he preached. Note:

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (1 Corinthians 2:12-13)

This is not a message that originated in the mind of man, or something devised from man's wisdom. Contemplate the source of this doctrine and you will find the following truths: this message or doctrine is from the most Holy God, through Jesus Christ His Son, given to the apostles by the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is provided to sinful mankind that he might have redemption from his sin. As Paul would write concerning this message, "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 Timothy 3:16-17). Note that Paul here outlines three propositions relating to the nature of the Bible: All Scripture is inspired, all Scripture is profitable, and all Scripture furnishes us all we need to know about God and about His will. The expression "given by inspiration" comes from the Greek which literally means "God-breathed." Paul, how did we get the Bible? Answer, it came from the very breath of God. The *Revised Version* very scripturally states it for what it is... as "the breath of the Almighty." The proper conclusion then is that the Bible is a "God-spirited" or "God-breathed" book. This is simply saying that it is "filled with the breath of God." As such the idea is not to "breathe into men," but to "breathe out of God."

WHO ARE WE TRYING TO PERSUADE?

With this background in mind, we now come to the question in the text, "For do I now persuade men, or God; or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10). So many today have failed to learn from the vital principle that the apostle Paul taught, in the opening chapter of the book of Galatians. Many in the world today are proclaiming a message that is not based upon the truth of God's Word. Accordingly they are "pleasers of men" as their message is one that "tickles the ears" of those who would hear it. There are those even within the Lord's church, who are teaching

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"another Gospel" which is, as Paul had stated, not another, but are perverting the true Gospel of Christ. There is a dire need to heed Paul's admonition:

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (2 Timothy 4:2-4)

As those who stand for the Gospel we must "be instant" which is a phrase translated from the Greek which means "to be at hand, ready." Paul indicates by the expression "in season, out of season," which means "seasonably, opportunely," that we are not only to be ready, but to preach when and wherever the opportunity occurs. Brother Goebel Music made the following observation concerning this passage of scripture:

This does not mean "in the summer," or "in the winter," "when I feel like it" or "when I want to do it." This means "at all times," including the convenient and inconvenient, easy and difficult, opportune and inopportune, at home and abroad, near and far, as there is no "off season" for the Christian. I am speaking of a twenty-four hour a day, seven day a week most urgent matter. We are like those described in 2 Chronicles 24:5, as we, too, "hasten it not." (Music, Sermon, *Preaching the Whole Counsel*)

Furthermore, we must observe that the proclamation of the Gospel is to have a three-fold impact: to reprove, rebuke and exhort. When these three are considered, Paul's charge is two-thirds destructive in nature (reprove and rebuke) and one-third constructive in nature (exhort). David B. Watson makes this comment on this passage of Scripture:

This is a work of the Holy Spirit, which is accomplished by the preaching of the word. Those who preach the Word should first reprove (convict) themselves by their own consciences and be willing to ask others to reprove (convince) them of sin. They, in turn, must reprove every one that doeth evil, convince the gainsayers, have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them and do so sharply. (Watson, "Paul's Final Charge" *Studies in 1 And 2 Timothy and Titus*, p.317)

In Titus 2:1 Paul instructed, "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine." The Greek word for "sound" means "healthy." It is interesting that the same Greek word used here is used in such passages as Matthew 15:31 and Luke 6:10 to indicate individuals being made "whole" or healthy. Brother H. D. Simmons noted:

When applied to doctrine, it denotes the correct form of teaching according to what was delivered by Jesus and the inspired writers, thus promoting spiritual nurture and health. Sound doctrine is often contrasted with false doctrine, which is referred to as "sick" (1 Timothy 6:3; 2 Timothy 2:17). Sound teaching produces spiritually healthy, well-balanced Christians living in conformity

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with pure doctrine. (Simmons, *Studies in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, Duties Enjoined On Various Classes and God's Grace Revealed*, p. 388)

He also indicated that "false teachers were promoting doctrines at variance with apostolic teaching and, by their example, lowering the standard of the Christian life" (Ibid, p. 359). God's Word instructs us in our conduct toward those who would preach another Gospel or doctrine. We are to exhort people to charge others to preach no other doctrine as Paul did to Timothy (1Timothy 1:3). As such we are to mark them that cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine as Paul indicated, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16:17-18). There are two attitudes toward those who cause division by their false doctrine: note or mark them, which indicates that we are to watch them and be aware of the potential danger that they present. And secondly, we are to avoid them. If one is teaching a doctrine contrary to the Bible, then there is a danger. Again Paul warned, "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15). To the young preacher Timothy Paul insisted:

These things teach and exhort. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions

and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmising. Perverse disputing of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself" (1 Timothy 6:2-5).

PREACHING THAT GOD DEMANDS

We must have Bible authority for everything we preach, teach and or practice. Paul instructed, "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" (Colossians 3:17). Thus what are we to preach? We are to preach God's Word which clearly, succinctly instructs us to preach sound doctrine. As Peter unmistakably instructs, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever" (1 Peter 4:11). If our preaching does not glorify the God of heaven and His Son Jesus Christ then it falls under the category of "another gospel." It was the apostle Paul, speaking to the Ephesian elders, who said, "For I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). From this we understand that we are "to preach the gospel," then that is exactly what we are to preach, not just "one facet" of it. To preach the "whole counsel of God" means that we are to preach the positives as well as the negatives. We are to preach that which will edify and encourage as well as that which will caution and warn. To preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

It is sad indeed that we are living in a time when many are not proclaiming doctrine according to that found within the Bible. Yet this is not a new problem as Paul wrote to the first century Christians, "For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple"

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(Romans 16:18). Additionally many will preach the Gospel for reasons other than the saving of the lost. They do such under the guise of proclaiming the truth when at the same time they could not be any further from it. Unfortunately some preach to be popular, or to impress the masses; others do so for the monetary gain that it brings. We ought to be more concerned about winning people than in winning points. Yea more concerned about imparting the Gospel rather than impressing the people. Paul at one time instructed his hearers to ". . . be ye imitators of me" (1 Corinthians 4:16), and then seven chapters later said, "be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ" (11:1). With these two thoughts about "imitation" (Greek is *mimetes*) in our minds, let's note what Paul wrote:

For our exhortation is not error, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile; but even as we have been instructed with the gospel, so we speak; **not as pleasing men, but God who proveth our hearts.** For neither at any time were we found using words of flattery, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness. God is witness; nor seeking glory of men, neither from you nor from others, when we might have claimed authority as apostles of Christ . . . we were well pleased to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were become very dear to us (1 Thessalonians 2:3-8 {ASV}; emphasis mine SRC).

Preachers, first and foremost, need to realize they are not in some popularity contest, seeking to please those to whom they are speaking. What is needed in the pulpit today is what Paul spoke about in the preceding verses just noted. Sadly deception exists on every hand, but the

greatest of all is that of "self-deception" (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:18). We are to be in the pulpit of God, not to show how much we know, not to tell where all we have been, not to elaborate on our education, speak of our credentials, degrees, not to speak of the many jobs we have held, the programs that we have been on, not to be a comedian, a news reporter, a religious politician, a public relations man, as a counselor, but as an evangelist fulfilling the high and noble task of making known the message of the Master. Additionally there should be no competition among those of us who preach. Brother Goebel Music stated:

Unless our preaching is true to the "old paths" (cf. Jeremiah 6:16), and has a distinctive and clarion sound (1 Corinthians 14:8), are we true to the blood that purchased us? If we just preach what any person would preach, without making known the body of absolute truth, which is objective and unchangeable, are we truly His preachers? If we fail to make known "the faith" and let people know they are lost without the gospel of Christ, where do we stand? (Jeremiah 9:3). Does it not behoove each preacher to love the truth more than life itself? (Music)

Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, gave the following warning to Timothy concerning those who would not proclaim the truth of the Gospel. Note some of the key phrases:

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; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron... (6)

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If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained... (11) These things command and teach. (12) Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. (13) Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine...(16) Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee (1 Timothy 4:1-16).

CONCLUSION

Paul proclaimed, "For though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16). This should be the motto of each and every person who would strive to proclaim the truth of the Gospel of Christ. "Biblical preaching doesn't seek the favor of men. It is from God, about God, and used by God to rescue the lost. It will accomplish its mission in the world when it is proclaimed by bold, unashamed preachers who are not cowards" (Preachers, Wake Up! pg. 168). May God help us to realize there is a preaching that is pleasing unto God, but there also is such that is displeasing unto God. May this help us to strive to please God in our preaching and teaching, proclaiming only the truth of the Christ, of the Cross, of the Gospel, of the Word of God, Remission of Sins, and of the Kingdom of God. It should be said of us, as Jesus said about himself, "And He that sent Me is with Me; He hath not left Me alone; for I do always the things that are pleasing to Him" (John 8:29). For those who proclaim the Gospel we must honestly ask ourselves, "Will this sermon please God?" To every listener, when you hear your next sermon, ask

yourself the question, "Is that the type of sermon (preaching, and I here make reference to the content of it, not the manner of delivery) that is pleasing to God and one that would save the world?" Preacher and listeners, remember this, there is that which is displeasing unto God.

Let us always remember that the Word of God is totally sufficient (2 Timothy 3:16-17), the revelation given is perfect (James 1:21-25). It has "once and for all been delivered" (Jude 3). Again if any man speak, let him speak "as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:1; Romans 3:2). May we each humbly, and graciously thank God for the Gospel, God's completed revelation to man. Let us strive in every way to be pleasing to the God of heaven as proclaim that precious message.

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Chapter 6

How Say Some Among You There Is No Resurrection From the Dead?

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Down through the ages those who have opposed original Christianity have denied the resurrection from the dead. The sect of the Jews known as Sadducees did not believe in the possibility of a resurrection from the dead nor did they believe in the existence of angels or spirits (Matthew 22:23; Acts 23:8). Their attempt to confront Jesus with the scenario of a woman who had been married to seven men during her life with the question of "therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be?" is a clear indication of their contempt for any belief in a resurrection from the dead (Matthew 22:23-30). In Athens the apostle Paul's preaching of the certainty of the judgment, proven by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, was met with skepticism and mocking by those who heard him (Acts 17:30-32). It is obvious that these mockers did not believe in the possibility of the resurrection from the dead. When Paul made his defense before King Agrippa he asked, "Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?" (Acts 26:8) Even within the church of Christ in Corinth there were those who were saying that there is no resurrection of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:12).

In our day the skepticism and rejection of the resurrection of the dead continues. Certainly those who espouse atheism also deny the resurrection of the dead. The modernists in religion reject any element of the miraculous thus denying the resurrection from the dead. The religious organization known as Jehovah's Witnesses teaches that Jesus did not rise from the dead in the same body in which he died. Instead, He rose as a spirit creature and His material body was taken away by God the Father (You Can Live Forever on Paradise Earth, 143-144). This is a clear denial of the physical resurrection of the body of Jesus Christ from the dead. However, Jesus declared, "...Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" and, the Bible says Jesus was "speaking of the temple of His body" (John 2:19-21). The same body that went into the tomb is the same body resurrected to life which came out of the tomb on the first day of the week! To deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus is to deny His resurrection completely.

THE BIBLE TEACHES THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

Acceptance of the resurrection from the dead is absolutely essential for one who would be a New Testament Christian. No one can believe the Bible and fail to believe in the resurrection of the dead. The whole of the Christian faith is built upon the fact of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. If there is no resurrection of the dead then Jesus Christ was not resurrected from the dead. If Jesus Christ was not resurrected from the dead then His religion is nothing more than a sham and would be no better or more essential than a man-made religion. It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead which proves Him to be the only begotten Son of God. Jesus Christ "...was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, **by the resurrection from the dead**" (Romans 1:4). If Jesus was not raised from the dead then Jesus is not the Son of God.

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The resurrection of the dead is taught in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament such passages as Job 14:13-15; 19:25-27 and Daniel 12:2-3 speak to the fact of the resurrection of the dead. However, the New Testament gives far more information on the subject.

Jesus Himself affirmed the resurrection of the dead in both word and demonstration. When His friend Lazarus died Jesus spoke to Martha, the sister of Lazarus, saying, "Your brother will rise again." Martha answered, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus affirms this belief of Martha in the resurrection of the dead saying, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live" (John 11:23-25). Then, Jesus demonstrates the fact of the resurrection from the dead as He comes to the grave of Lazarus and cries with a loud voice, "Lazarus come forth! And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Loose him, and let him go'" (John 11:43-44). Just as surely as Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, as well as the daughter of Jairus (Matthew 5:29-43), and the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-15), He will raise all from the dead at His second coming. The Bible teaches, "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the **resurrection** of life, and those who have done evil, to the **resurrection** of condemnation" (John 5:28-29). No wonder Paul wrote that the appearing of Jesus Christ "has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10).

During His earthly ministry Jesus often taught concerning His own death and resurrection from the dead. "From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day" (Matthew 16:21; See also Matthew

17:23; 20:19; Mark 9:31; 10:34; Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:7, 21, 46; Acts 10:40). The New Testament record contains detailed accounts of the events surrounding the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The book of Acts begins with the words, "The former account I made [a reference to the gospel of Luke, JGH], O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up [His ascension, JGH], after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom **He also presented Himself alive** after His suffering by **many infallible proofs**, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:1-3). Notice from this reading the words "many infallible proofs." The Greek word translated "infallible proofs" is *tekmeerion*. Thayer says the word means "that from which something is surely and plainly known; an indubitable evidence, a proof" (Thayer's Greek Lexicon Electronic Version).

INFALLIBLE PROOFS PRESENTED

One of the greatest arguments for the resurrection of the dead is found in the fifteenth chapter of the book of 1st Corinthians in answer to the question of the inspired Paul "Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (1 Corinthians 15:12). It's obvious that there were those in the church in Corinth who did not believe that it was possible for the dead to be raised to life. The inspired Paul plainly speaks to this error with the following arguments.

First, the chapter begins with the affirmation of the death of Jesus Christ. "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received; that **Christ died** for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3). Some have argued that Jesus did not really die on the cross but that he simply passed out or fainted because of the loss of

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blood and that He was actually still alive when He was laid in the tomb. Thus, rather than being raised from the dead, He simply revived after a period of time, rolled away the stone and came forth from the tomb. This ridiculous argument is the so-called "swoon theory." This denial of the death of Jesus is simply another attempt to deny His resurrection from the dead. If Jesus did not really die then He was not raised from the dead. The "swoon theory" has absolutely no proof but instead stands in direct contradiction to the eyewitnesses who were actually present when Jesus was crucified. The scriptures plainly reveal that when the soldiers came to break the legs of Jesus to hasten his death they found Jesus already dead (John 19:31-33). Pilate investigated whether Jesus was dead and was completely convinced that Jesus was dead and therefore he turned the body of Jesus over to Joseph for burial (Mark 15:42-45). Joseph knew Jesus was dead else why place His body in the tomb. The inspired Paul affirms that Christ died **before** He was buried. Then after His death and burial "He rose again the third day...." All of this is said to be "according to the Scriptures" a term indicating the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Yes, Jesus died, was buried and **rose again!**

Second, inspiration argues for the resurrection of Jesus from the dead by presenting eyewitnesses who saw Him after His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:5-8). There are at least eleven appearances of Jesus following His resurrection from the dead found in the scriptures: (1) He appeared to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9; John 20:11-18); (2) He appeared to the other women as they were returning from the sepulcher (Matthew 28:9); (3) He appeared to Peter (Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5); (4) He appeared to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-15); (5) He appeared to ten of the apostles in the upper room with Thomas being absent (John 20:19-24); (6) He appeared to the apostles again a week later with Thomas present (John 20:26-29); (7) He appeared to over five

hundred brethren at one time (1 Corinthians 15:6); (8) He appeared to James (1 Corinthians 15:7); (9) He appeared to Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, James and John, and two others (John 21:2); (10) He appeared to all the apostles again on the Mount of Olives when He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:6-12); (11) Following His ascension He appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus (1 Corinthians 15:8-9; Acts 9; 22; 26). With hundreds of eyewitnesses to the resurrected Christ how can some say there is no resurrection of the dead? The testimony of far fewer witnesses would be accepted in any court of our land as proof of that which was under contention. How can one reject the testimony of literally hundreds of the very ones who saw Jesus after His resurrection from the dead? The reliability of these eyewitnesses can be proven in their willingness to preach the resurrection of Jesus and to suffer the severe persecution and death which resulted. Who can conceive of men and women putting their lives in jeopardy for one they know for certain to be a fraud? Yet, the apostles and other eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ willingly gave their lives to His service while preaching with confidence the resurrection of their Lord. "And with great power the apostles gave witness to the **resurrection** of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4:33).

Third, the inspired Paul uses undeniable logic in his argument for the resurrection of the dead. He declared, "but if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen, And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty" (1 Corinthians 15:13-14). The whole system of "the faith" stands or falls on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. If the resurrection of Jesus is untrue then Christianity is an empty religion having no substance and no foundation in truth. Not only so but the apostles of Jesus Christ are false witnesses because they testified that God raised Jesus from the dead (verse 15). They would be nothing more than apostates from Judaism preaching empty words with empty results if the

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dead do not rise. And the faith of those whom they taught would be empty as well, and more than that, they would still be unforgiven, lost in sin, with no hope of salvation (verse 17). Those who had died believing in the resurrection of Jesus, basing their actions in their lives upon the fact of His resurrection, well, they would simply have perished in utter hopelessness (verse 18). No wonder the inspired writer ends this thought by saying, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable" (verse 19).

The picture presented in these words is not pretty. Can one imagine accepting that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, submitting in obedience to His will and living faithfully all the days of his life while suffering ridicule and persecution and, in the end, expecting eternal life in heaven only to be disappointed because it was all a big lie? How wretched! How tragic! If true it would be the greatest hoax every perpetrated upon mankind. Every single person on earth, living or dead, would go off into eternity without the slightest chance of escaping the horrors of hell. If Jesus was not raised from the dead this is the horrible condition of all who now follow Him or who have ever followed Him. In view of these awful, terrible consequences, how say some that there is no resurrection of the dead?

BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD

In answering the question of "how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead" the Holy Spirit through Paul includes this argument. "Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?" (1 Corinthians 15:29). Misunderstanding this passage has given rise to the Mormon practice of baptizing live people on behalf of those who are already dead. The following quotation expresses the view of the Mormon Church regarding their doctrine of baptism for the dead:

Many people have died without receiving a valid baptism, and they cannot undergo this precious ritual as mere spirits. Because all on the earth do not have the opportunity to accept the gospel during mortality, the Lord has authorized baptisms performed by proxy for the dead. Therefore, those who accept the gospel in the spirit world may qualify for entrance into God's kingdom. (About Mormonism: Mormon Baptism for the Dead, ldschurchtemples.com
<http://www.ldschurchtemples.com/mormon/baptism/>)

Does 1 Corinthians 15:29 authorize the baptism for the dead as practiced by the Mormon Church? Some commentators point out that the third person pronouns as used in this passage indicate that the writer did not agree with the practice of baptism for the dead. Paul did not use "what will **we** do who are baptized for the dead" but rather "what will **they** do...." Coffman writes:

This is branded by many as a very difficult verse; but the proper regard of the third person plural pronouns in this verse makes it easy. Paul here used an "argumentum ad hominem", that is, an argument based upon what people were doing, indicating clearly enough that some persons known to the Corinthians were practicing a baptism for the benefit of the dead; but the one thing that makes it impossible to suppose that Paul approved of such a thing is the use of the third person pronouns. There are no examples in the New Testament of the practice of Christians being designated as what "they" do. Concerning Christian

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baptism, for example, it is always "we" or "you" who were baptized and addressed in the first or second persons, never in the third person. It is still "they" not "we" who baptize for the dead! (from Coffman's Bible Commentary, Electronic Version, Copyright © 1971-1993 by ACU Press, Abilene Christian University. All rights reserved.)

Could it be that some in Corinth were approving of the practice of baptizing for the dead while at the same time denying the resurrection of the dead? Such would be inconsistent. Why be baptized on behalf of a person who is dead if you believe that he will never be resurrected from the dead? What good would it do? There is no authority in this passage for proxy baptism. Paul was merely making an argument which showed the fallacy of believing in proxy baptism and, at the same time, disbelieving in the resurrection of the dead. It is important to understand that the church in Corinth had several things which needed to be corrected, one of which may have been proxy baptism. Paul indicated that he would correct these errors when he came to them (1 Corinthians 11:34).

EAT AND DRINK FOR TOMORROW WE DIE

Paul's final argument in answering the view of some in Corinth that there is no resurrection of the dead is found in verses 30-32. "And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!" If there is no resurrection from the dead then why endure persecution for the cause of Jesus Christ? Why put one's life in danger to take the gospel to those who are lost as did the apostle Paul? If there is no resurrection from the dead then there is no real meaning to life. If the grave is

the end then what motivation does one have to serve God? If there is no resurrection from the dead then a life of sin would be as good as a life of service to God. How then "say some among you that there is no resurrection from the dead?" It is no doubt true that a great majority of people in our world are living sinful lives because they do not believe what the Bible teaches including what it teaches about the resurrection from the dead. Until one is fully convinced that Jesus Christ died and rose again and that His resurrection assures the faithful of their resurrection to eternal life, he or she will not respond to the Lord's gracious offer of pardon.

THE RESURRECTION AFFIRMED!

"But **now Christ is risen from the dead**, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so **in Christ all shall be made alive**" (1 Corinthians 15:20-22). The infallible proofs for the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead are more than adequate for the objective mind. That does not mean that everyone believes in the resurrection of Jesus or the final resurrection of the dead. Prejudice clouds the minds of many so that they refuse to accept the evidence. When the soldiers, who were given the responsibility of guarding the tomb of Jesus, told the chief priests "all the things that had happened" the prejudiced chief priests and elders refused to believe that Jesus had arisen from the dead. Instead they paid the guards to lie and tell everyone that the disciples came at night and stole the body of Jesus. (Matthew 28:11-14). The guards could not explain the empty tomb apart from the resurrection. They had guarded the tomb under the penalty of death should the body of Jesus disappear. The chief priests and elders could not explain the empty tomb apart from the resurrection so they invented a lie. No one today can explain the empty tomb without accepting the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Chapter 6: How Say Some There Is No Resurrection?

The inspired Paul affirms that "now Christ is risen from the dead." He makes this affirmation without doubts and with the greatest of confidence. Yes Paul wrote these words by the direction of the Holy Spirit, but he also had personal knowledge of the resurrected Lord. That personal knowledge, in seeing and hearing the resurrected Jesus, contributed immensely to Paul changing from the greatest and most zealous persecutor of Christians to the most ardent and faithful defender of the faith he once sought to destroy. Who can explain such a phenomenal change apart from the fact that Paul had personal knowledge of the resurrected Lord? To Timothy, Paul addressed the words:

[A]lthough I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." (1 Timothy 1:13-15)

From Paul's perspective the question of "how say some that there is no resurrection from the dead" was extremely personal. It was because of the death and resurrection of Jesus from the dead that Paul could enjoy the forgiveness of all the evil he had done in persecuting Christians. Therefore he wrote:

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain

Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the **power of His resurrection**, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, **I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.**" (Philippians 3:7-11)

Yes, Paul had experienced the "power of His (Jesus') resurrection" and was looking forward to his own resurrection from the dead at the coming of his Lord.

That brings us to a very interesting statement found in the New Testament book of 1st Peter.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the **resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**. To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1:3-5)

What assures those who are faithful to God of their own resurrection from the dead and an entrance into eternal life in heaven? The answer is that such is made possible "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Every person who has the hope of heaven will be asking with Paul, "how say some there is no resurrection of the dead?" For without the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead there is no hope of heaven, no, not even a smidgen.

Chapter 6: How Say Some There Is No Resurrection?

The Bible tells us that Christ "has become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20). The reference to sleeping refers to death. Christ has risen from the sleep of death but He is only the "firstfruits" which implies that others will follow his resurrection with their own. Paul explains, "For in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order; Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Corinthians 15:22-23). So, yes the resurrection of Jesus from the dead assures us that we will experience our own resurrection at the coming of Christ. Why would any Christian in his or her right mind even think that there is no resurrection of the dead. For if there is no resurrection of the dead then Christ has not been raised from the dead and if He has not been raised from the dead neither will we be and all hope is gone. This is the effect of denying the resurrection of the dead.

Death is our enemy, but Jesus has the power to destroy death (1 Corinthians 15:25-26). That power was shown in His own resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:4). His resurrection gives us the greatest possible confidence that we will experience the resurrection to eternal life which He has promised to those who love and obey Him. "And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power" (1 Corinthians 6:14).

However, it is the case that only those who spiritually participate in the resurrection of Jesus Christ may attain to the resurrection to eternal life. How is that possible? The scripture answers, "For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection" (Romans 6:5). The context of this passage reveals that being "united together in the likeness of His death" is a reference to water baptism. "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the

glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-4). The Bible connects water baptism with the resurrection of Jesus Christ when it declares, "The like figure whereunto even **baptism** doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by **the resurrection of Jesus Christ**" (1 Peter 3:21). When one accepts the truth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (John 8:24), repents of sin (Acts 17:30), confesses faith in Christ (Romans 10:10) and then is immersed in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), he/she has been united together in the likeness of Christ's death and resurrection. One who submits in obedience to what the Lord has commanded for salvation from sin obtains ". . . a living hope through the **resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:3-4). How sad that so many see no connection between water baptism and the salvation which is made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We would plead with each reader to consider carefully the connection the Bible makes and take those steps which are necessary to your salvation from sin to obtain the hope of eternal life.

In view of all the divine arguments presented which prove the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead as a fact, "how say some among you that there is no resurrection from the dead?"

Chapter 7

What Fellowship Hath Righteousness With Unrighteousness?

Jim Hobbs

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INTRODUCTION

How many of us, as fathers, have sat down with our children to express our concerns over their safety, the contents of their thoughts, or the direction they seemed to be traveling in their lives? As fathers, we do not hesitate to open our hearts to our children. Without doubt, we have offered reasons as to why they should listen to what we have to say, and we probably offered examples of what we have witnessed in others. This situation is analogous to the circumstances that the apostle Paul found himself confronting in 2 Corinthians, chapter six.

The apostle was attempting to gain the attention of some of the brethren who lived in that great city. "I speak as to children..." he declared in verse thirteen, just after he bemoaned, "O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections" (2 Corinthians 6:11-12). What was the object of the affections of some members in Corinth which had caused Paul such concern? Paul's worries were based in his knowledge that some had engaged in improper fellowship. The outcome of such fellowship defined the theme of the whole chapter, the concern by the apostle that these Corinthian Christians may have received the grace of God "in vain" (2 Corinthians 6:1).

Chapter six of Second Corinthians is an argument that outside influences may well steer some in the church away from Christ, resulting in the loss of their salvation. The scope of this examination is confined to verse fourteen of Second Corinthians, a verse in which Paul leaves no doubt but that there are limits to Christian fellowship. In effect, Paul is asking his "children" why they have chosen to turn away from his teachings in order to follow those who teach lies.

TEXT AND CONTEXT

The text of 2 Corinthians 6:14 reads, "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?" In this chapter, the apostle sets forth an aggressive stance in his description of what the relationship is to be between a believer and an unbeliever. What Paul explicitly points out is the fact that any expectation of a harmonious relationship between a believer and an unbeliever is unrealistic.

When Paul poses the question, "For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness," lawlessness being sin, he knows that the answer is obvious to every faithful Christian. The same is true when he asks about the communion between light (truth) and darkness (lies). These two rhetorical questions are put forth as lines of demarcation for his "children," describing the degree of separation which should exist between a believer and an unbeliever. Through the use of absolute terms such as "righteousness," "lawlessness," "light," and "darkness," Paul sets the scene for the teaching of the absoluteness of separation that is to exist between the believer and the unbeliever.

The question of fellowship between righteousness and lawlessness would not have been raised if it were not for the existing fellowship that was occurring between believers and unbelievers in Corinth. Therefore, the

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admonition found in verse fourteen is aimed at the unequal yoking together of these believers and unbelievers, and it is the boundaries of such fellowship which shall be examined at this time.

The strong warning given in 2 Corinthians 6:14 can be traced back to the first two verses of the chapter. The situation facing the church in Corinth was no different than one that faces many congregations today, the struggle of a God-centered congregation attempting to survive in a Godless city (Dunn, *Know Your Bible*, 495). The reality for Paul was that false teachers had, to some degree, been successful among some brethren in stealing away their affections for the apostle. In response, a plea for loyalty ensued, along with the warning that some could possibly lose God's grace (Coffman, "Commentaries on 2 Corinthians 6," *Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament*). It would appear that the principle of Christian liberty, which had been explained in the first letter to the Corinthians, had been used as an excuse to fellowship with evil people (Highers, "Fellowship with Denominations?" *Spiritual Sword* October 1969: 29-30). The cry then goes out to the Corinthian brethren for "faithfulness in fellowship" and to also discontinue the practice of pushing the limits in Christian fellowship, a practice driven by self pride (Clark, "Appeal for Christian Loyalty, 2 Corinthians 6," *Expositions of the Expositor, Vol.1*, 162). Paul teaches that Christians cannot be naïve, unthinking, and willing to place themselves in a position of vulnerability. We must be discerning; otherwise, we may "lose those things we worked for" (2 John 8).

Paul, in verses three through thirteen, placed his ministry for Christ and himself in a proper position to deliver the admonition of verse fourteen. The foundation of his argument was the fact that both he and his ministry were indeed "blameless" (Winkler, *A Time for Defense-A Study of 2 Corinthians and Galatians*, 34). As fathers, we are likely to give our children one or two reasons for them to listen to

what we have to say. However, this apostle gave his Corinthians "children" twenty-eight reasons why they should take his advice as a minister of God. Within these verses a listing of sufferings, virtues, and paradoxes is used as definitive proof of the blameless nature of his ministry. It is at this point of his argument that Paul placed himself in a position to speak with authority, while also building in the Corinthian church the proper attitude with which to receive his message.

In a final plea to those in the Corinthian church who had strayed from the teachings of the apostle, he begs with the guilty to give their love back to him. Paul makes the point that he has not stopped in his love for them, but it is they who are restricting their hearts from loving Paul. It is with this plea in verses eleven through thirteen that the background is set for the bold exhortation of Second Corinthians 6:14.

A CHRISTIAN MUST BE SELECTIVE

It is at this carefully chosen time that Paul delivers the verse which is the focal point of this study, Second Corinthians 6:14, which declares: "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?" These strong words are directed toward those who have left the apostolic teachings and toward the men who are guilty of pulling his "children" away.

It was entirely possible that Paul realized the critical period of time into which the Corinthian church was entering, in terms of soundness of doctrine, and that he saw the possibility of history repeating itself (*Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 19. 152-153). Well did Paul know that the associations with heathens were responsible for Israel's downfall in 722 and 586 B.C. The warning against being "unequally yoked together with unbelievers" was Paul's "trumpet call" to his brethren-it was forbidden! The apostle was concerned that

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the never-ending fascination of man with idolatry could have caused God's grace to have been in vain for some in the Corinthian church.

Though the contact of believers with unbelievers was, and is, understood to be inevitable due to casual social interaction, business contacts, and teaching opportunities, the fact remains that entangling alliances with unbelievers was, and is, to be avoided. Paul made this point by asking his brethren five rhetorical questions in Second Corinthians 6:14-16, including, "For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness?" (Winkler, 36).

AVOID BEING "UNEQUALLY YOKED TOGETHER WITH UNBELIEVERS"

In verse fourteen, Paul draws upon a figure used in the Law of Moses, specifically from Deuteronomy 22:9-11. The analogy cited there was the picture of a working team of animals pulling a tool for the plowing of fields. The Old Testament warning attested to the folly of yoking mixed teams together, and then thinking that efficient work would be the outcome. In the Law of Moses, mixed animal teams were forbidden (McGarvey and Pendleton, *A Commentary on Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians and Romans*, 203). The word used by Paul in Second Corinthians which is translated as "unequally" is the Greek word "*eteroxugos*," which in fact implies a difference in kind, and not merely an inequality. The Greek word literally carries the idea of one leaving his own rank (Perschbacher, *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon*, 177). The rule being set forth is that when animals are used to pull a plow, the animals yoked together must be of the same kind, size, and temperament (Winton, *Outlined Commentary on Second Corinthians*, 81).

Likewise, Paul declared, the Christians in Corinth were to be matched up only with others of like precious faith. Otherwise, believers would be negatively influenced by unbelievers. What kind of atmosphere would exist among those who shared little in common, other than an air of

discontentment and conflict as a result of sharing no common ground (Winton, 81)? As Burton Coffman asked, if different kinds of animals were to be yoked together, what should be the expectation? If believers and nonbelievers were to be yoked together in business, recreation, or marriage, should anything other than discontentment and disharmony be expected (Coffman)? Indeed, the argument can be made as to how believers should even consider the possibility of close relationships with the ungodly in terms of religious fellowship, friendship, business, or marriage (*Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 19. 159).

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY CAN BE TAKEN TO EXTREMES

One of the purposes of Paul's strong admonition in Second Corinthians 6:14 was to make the point that Christian liberty can be taken to unhealthy extremes. Such stretching of these limits can, as the apostle stated in 6:1, come at the price of a Christian's salvation. No doubt, the goal of Paul's terse questions found within verses fourteen through sixteen is to show the "utter folly" of alliances which entangle God's children with the children of the devil (McGarvey and Pendleton, 203). How can opposites reasonably expect to get along together; indeed, it is true that believers and unbelievers are as different as righteousness and unrighteousness, as light and darkness. When one considers the likely ramifications, is not unequal yoking in fact unreasonable? Who can deny but that the following conflicts would arise: righteousness before God versus the love of a sinful life, a life of truth versus a life of lies, one purchased with the blood of Christ versus a servant of Satan, a life of God dwelling within a believer versus a life of Satan dwelling within the unbeliever (*Pulpit Commentary*, Vol.19. 159)?

Unequal yoking between believers and unbelievers is expressly forbidden by God in Second Corinthians 6:17, which includes the declaration, "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord." This is not a divine

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suggestion, but a divine command. It comes through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, divine wisdom, giving believers a pathway which leads away from misery and loss (*Pulpit Commentary*, Vol.19. 160). The misery found when a believer is bound to an unbeliever can include personal unhappiness, a trying marriage, and the likelihood of difficulty in raising children. Not least of all, as Bob Winton says, "The way we live has a tremendous impact on our relationship with God" (Winton, 82). There can be no denying of the fact that a binding of "different kinds of animals," Christians and non-Christians, can be detrimental to the spiritual life of the Christian. Evil has a way of overcoming one's good intentions, and in the case of such unequal yoking, it is the believer who has taken the false step. The hard truth is that believers are to avoid touching the contaminated people of the world and their activities, choosing to grow in the ways of the Christian graces and not in the ways of the world (Winton, 82.) The fruit of this separation is the voice of our creator saying, "I will receive you."

A BELIEVER MUST CHOOSE HIS OR HER FRIENDS WISELY

Can any argue the fact that few things help one more than well-chosen Christian friends? Unworthy friends may well affect a believer's relationship with God and at the same time affect his Christian influence upon others. Situations in which a believer allows himself to be placed under the dominance of an unbeliever must be avoided (Winton, 81). This means that a believer must avoid all sinful activities of unbelievers, thereby keeping his distance from that which makes the worldly wicked. By being separate from such activities, anyone could clearly see that there is a difference between the manner in which a believer conducts himself and the ways of an unbelieving world (Sain, "Come Out From Among Them," *First and Second Corinthians*, 493).

If, indeed, believers are to separate themselves from the sins of the world and from those who willfully commit these sins, then to what extent are the relationships between believers and nonbelievers to be limited? Certainly, friendships must be examined, as must also any close relationships in the realm of employment. How does the apostolic declaration that any believer is not to be unequally yoked with an unbeliever affect the marriage relationship? Clearly, Second Corinthians 6:14 is not meant to be applied exclusively to marriage, but to all social relationships, including those which may lead to marriage (Sain, 493). Here, Paul is not alluding to existing marriages, for First Corinthians 7:12-15 states that an existing marriage between a Christian and a non-Christian is not inherently wrong. Indeed, the subject of marriage is not even discussed within the text of chapter six of Second Corinthians (Winton, 81). However, the admonition has strong implications for those who are considering the prospect of entering into a marriage relationship.

Burton Coffman made a strong statement in relation to the apostle's admonition in Second Corinthians 6:14 and marriage. He declared that, "No Christian had any business making alliances with any kind of pagans...certainly including marriage...There should be no such alliances in the first place" (Coffman). Therefore, while Paul had already said that an existing union between a believer and an unbeliever was scriptural in the eyes of the Lord, the future entrance into a marriage between two such individuals is not to be encouraged (Winton, 81).

Why should a believer reconsider before marrying an unbeliever? The answer is found in the fact that a never-ending friction will most likely envelop the relationship. The believer shall strive to live a holy life, recognizing the price Jesus paid for him and the need to live a life of service in Him. Shall the unbelieving spouse seek to live such a life? Are serious problems to be anticipated? What common interests and bonds can be enjoyed between two such

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people? In the contemplation of marriage and in Christian fellowship, God drew the line in the sand when He said to those in the church, "Come out from among them" (Sain, 494).

THE LINES OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

There can be no doubt but that the Lord's church is unique among Christian institutions; otherwise, there would be no reason for it to exist. Special blessings are found within the body of Christ which cannot be found elsewhere. Indeed, God has blessed believers with "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). One of the unique blessings to be found in His church is that of enjoying fellowship with the saints of God. However, this fellowship is conditional, for one must "walk in the light" and not in the darkness of error (Highers, 29). The extension of Christian fellowship must be selective, for it must not be extended without regard to the beliefs and practices of others. Such extension of Christian fellowship is certainly an example of believers being "unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Since the fellowship of the Lord's church is of a divine nature, it must not be compromised; otherwise, it will become an institution of men, having effectively removed God from its' equation (Holland, *Spiritual Examination Sermons*, 70).

Do strict requirements of Christian fellowship exist? Absolutely, and Alan Highers has put forth a unique manner in which to view these requirements. According to Brother Highers, one must possess a vertical fellowship, that is, a fellowship upward to God, before any fellowship can exist outwardly toward men. In other words, the true basis of fellowship is the existence of a relationship with God first. Therefore, how can one be in fellowship with another if that other individual is not himself in fellowship with God? Further, to be in fellowship with God, one must have obeyed His steps of salvation and therefore displayed an understanding of God's will (Highers, 29). It follows then,

that Christian fellowship can be extended to any penitent believer who has obeyed the baptism of the Great Commission and who continues to walk in the light of God's word (Warren, "The Extent and Limits of Christian Fellowship, Number 1," *Spiritual Sword* October 1969: 12-13). Another definition of the limits of Christian fellowship was offered by Brother Paul Sain, who declared that upon gospel obedience, fellowship may be offered to anyone who continues to abide in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9), maintains a life of living soberly, godly and righteously, and who is not unequally yoked together in fellowship with one who is not a follower of Christ (Sain, 496). As Paul writes in Second Corinthians 6:14, "For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness?" Just as a righteous God can have no fellowship with lawlessness, neither can a righteous believer have fellowship with the purveyors of lawlessness in the world. We would do well to remember the words of Luke in Acts 10:35, "But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him."

A sound principle to follow in deciding whether to share in fellowship with another can be summed up as follows: "There can be no Christian fellowship with darkness." There can be no Christian fellowship with anyone who opposes the light, that is, the truth. As Paul wrote in Second Corinthians 6:14, "...And what communion has light with darkness?" This idea is also expressed by the same apostle in the book of Ephesians, in which he wrote, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them" (Ephesians 5:11). This warning followed directly after Paul told the Christians in Ephesus to avoid the "sons of disobedience," upon whom the wrath of God shall come. Paul then admonished believers to "not be partakers with them" (Ephesians 5:7). Clearly, the admonitions advanced by Paul in Second Corinthians 6:14 are not unique to the Corinthian church, but applied also to the church in Ephesus, and by example, to Christians today.

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By applying this principle, to whom should believers not be unequally yoked together with in fellowship? Brother Warren offers the following list: with one who does not believe that Jesus is the Son of God, nor with any unbaptized person, nor with a member of the Lord's church who refuses to "walk in the light," nor with a member of any denomination. This final category may seem to be harsh, yet many in denominations reject both baptism and the fact that there is but one body of Christ. It is easy to see that if Christian fellowship is extended to such individuals, the result would be the loss of the distinctive character of the Lord's church (Warren, 13-14). The simple truth is that a believer cannot condone the false doctrines of man and the doctrines of God at the same time. A believer who is unequally yoked together with an unbeliever may well find himself guilty of attempting to serve two masters, the commandments of God and the doctrines of the world. It was Paul's realization that his "children" in Corinth were heading toward a life of trying to serve both God and other worldly gods that led him to give the warning that is the theme of Second Corinthians chapter six, "We...plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain."

CONCLUSION

In his appeal to the Christians in Corinth to avoid outside influences of the sinful world, Paul directs believers to be faithful in their Christian fellowship. The warning is for **believers to be selective** in fellowship (verse fourteen), to **be submissive** to God (verse seventeen), and to **be separate** (verse seventeen). One is selective by not being unequally yoked together with unbelievers, whereas a believer is submissive to God by following His command to "come out from among them." One is separate by listening to God when He directs believers to "not touch what is unclean." Could these inspired words be taken as anything other than a divine call for a complete separation from the world in terms of close associations, a complete separation

from those who teach false doctrine, and a complete separation from those who practice unacceptable worship (Winkler, 36)? As Burton Coffman so concisely concluded in his summation of Paul's admonitions in Second Corinthians 6:14-18, "...Paul was not quoting scripture here; he was writing scripture" (Coffman).

The rewards for faithfulness in Christian fellowship include: an acceptance by God, assets to enjoy by being in the family of God, and an assurance that an inheritance is in the future (Clark, 162). God desires that His family, the church, remain pure. For those who do so, He gives the promise that "I will receive you." Some Corinthian Christians had used their Christian liberty as a license to associate with idol worshipers to such a degree that their salvation was in jeopardy. Paul, therefore, warned these believers that danger awaits those who engage in alliances with unbelievers, that they must "not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers." A believer must not allow his light to turn to darkness, nor allow his righteousness to be drawn into unrighteousness. For indeed, "What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness?" Believers, after all, have a distinction to preserve, a church to respect, a standard to uphold, a faith to maintain, and a master to obey (Clark, 162).

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Chapter 8

**Am I Become Your Enemy
Because I Tell You The Truth?**

Dale Barger

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Paul questions, "Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" (Galatians 4:16). We can clearly see from this text that enemies exist because of the truth. We have enemies in the world and in the church. We have enemies because we stand opposed to sin. In this lesson we are going to discuss this question and relate it the life of the modern Christian.

First, let us notice the background of the book of Galatians. The people of the region of Galatia collectively, were known as the Gauls. Dunn notes, "The Celtic people who migrated there from the country now known as France...They were famous for the courage and enthusiasm, and equally so for their quick impressions, sudden changes, and fickleness" (Dunn, *Know You Bible*, 500-501). They were involved in whatever was popular and fashionable. Biblical evidence of this is clearly displayed in Galatians 1:6, where Paul marveled because they had so soon changed. Their beliefs had changed so suddenly because they were not grounded in the truth. They were much like people in our society today, following whatever may be fashionable.

One peculiarity with this epistle is that it seems to be harsher than any other epistle Paul wrote. Hester observes, "It is one of the most vigorous and impassioned of all Paul's

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letters" (Hester, *The Heart of the New Testament*, 303). The address is very simple and stern (Galatians 1:2). As greeting, Paul did not mention any individuals, or the sanctification of the members of the churches. Many of the salutations of Paul generally include some mention of the sanctification of the Christians at that location, but here no such acknowledgment is given. Paul later mentions that he desired to change his voice. He had been so stern and firm, he wished that he could have said it differently (Galatians 4:20). Paul did not desire to be this stern with these brethren, but was given no other choice due to their behavior

Let us consider the question in the context of Galatians 4:12-20, as Paul himself asked it.

Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all. Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them. But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you. (Galatians 4:12-20)

Am I become your enemy? Paul wanted to know if he had become someone they had feelings of animosity toward; he wanted to know if he had become the enemies of the Galatians. These brethren previously had great affection for the apostle Paul, which was not an uncommon development for those who Paul had labored with in the work of the Kingdom. They had such great affection for the apostle Paul that they would have given him their eyes if that were possible.

Paul mentioned that he had some sort of physical illness while in the epistle. Many suspect that Paul's thorn in the flesh (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:7-9) was some sort of problem with his eyes. Consider also his words at the close of this letter, "Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand" (Galatians 6:11). The large letter or large letters also seems to indicate that Paul had some issues with his eyesight. They recognized that Paul had troubles and they wanted to help him. Whatever this problem was Paul thought he might be rejected because of it, but the brethren accepted him as a messenger from God.

Most likely you come into contact, almost daily, with someone who has some sort of disease that is very painful and destructive to their body; a disease such as cancer. Human nature generally causes people to have compassion on the sick and a desire to help them. Would you help a person with such a disease? Most likely we would, even if we do not know them. What if that person was a friend or loved one? You certainly would do all that is within your power to help them overcome their illness. That type of affection is the kind that these brethren had for the apostle Paul. Paul loved the ones that he had worked with and they loved him. So how did they get from that love to becoming enemies?

The Christian will have enemies. We will have enemies because we stand opposed to sin. Jesus even taught that, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated

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me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:18-19). There will be those who stand opposed to you when you stand up for the truth.

If you tell a sinner he is wrong for his way, is he going to become your friend? Most likely not! People do not like to be told they are living in sin. If you want to make enemies today teach the truth about homosexuality (Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:26-27). According to these verses, homosexuality is not the natural, beautiful thing that the world teaches. It is vile and an abomination before the Lord. If we teach the truth about consumption of alcoholic beverages, we will also make enemies (Proverbs 20:1). When a Christian speaks the truth concerning the immoral activities of the day, sadly, you will make enemies. More often than not those who hear the truth will become your enemies rather than obeying it.

We may also make enemies when we talk to our denominational friends. When you explain that the system of salvation they believe, practice, and teach is wrong, they will likely become your enemy. They do not want to hear the idea that there is more than faith involved in salvation. The fact that more than faith is required for salvation becomes very clear simply by reading James 2:14-26. A Christian may also gain an enemy when they teach that God must not be worshipped with mechanical instruments of music. He must be worshipped in an appropriate manner (John 4:23-24). This does not include: piano, electric guitar, drums, saxophone, etc. Our denominational friends may become our enemy when they hear the truth on such matters

When you begin teaching the truth about the one true church, you will likely gain enemies. How many churches do you read about in the New Testament? There is only one! There are different congregations but they are all one church. Jesus only promised one church (Matthew

16:18-19). Jesus only bought one church with His blood (Acts 20:28). This is the church which practices and preaches what is found within the pages of the New Testament. When you start teaching this truth to people in the world today, you will have enemies.

Having enemies in the world is a sad fact that Christians must face. Tragically, we may even gain enemies within the Church when we teach the truth. That is the situation Paul encounters with the churches of Galatia. He was not writing this epistle to people of the world, but to the churches! (Galatians 1:2). Likely, many of these could have been baptized because of Paul's preaching and while he was present with them in that region. Yet they had become enemies! Why does a Christian become the enemy of someone who cares enough for them to teach the truth of God's Word to them?

There may be several reasons why a Christian may become upset with a preacher of righteousness. One such reason develops sometimes a Christian may not fully cast off sin when they obey the gospel. When this happens, many desire to continue in sin to enjoy its pleasures, even though they are but for a season (cf. Hebrews 11:24-28). When a person is baptized into Christ, they must put off the old man of sin. There is no reason for a child of God to continue in the ways of the world. Paul wrote to the Roman Christians and condemned them for their practice of sin. They had apparently thought that since they received the grace of God while in sin, continuing in such sin would allow them to receive even more grace from God (Romans 6:1-2). This context clearly displays that a Christian is dead to the old man of sin, (continue reading through verse eight). When you stand for the truth and condemn a Christian for continuing in sin, you may upset them, and they may become your enemy.

Another way the proclaimer of truth can make enemies within the church today is when they speak against a Christian that is involved in an adulterous marriage. Jesus

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taught there is only one reason for a scriptural divorce and remarriage: adultery. Notice His words, "And I say unto you, 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" (Matthew 19:9). It seems that many marriages today will end for various reasons, and then the individuals will search for acceptance in their new marriage. Tragically, even many Christians are living in unscriptural marriages. What is even more tragic is that they are not confronted about it. When you do confront the couple and teach the truth about marriage, divorce and remarriage, they likely will not be happy about your message. Friend, it is terrible to tell a couple, with tears in their eyes, that their marriage is an adulterous relationship. However, if they are living in such sin they must be told their marriage is not acceptable in the sight of God! They may become your enemy, but that is what God requires of us.

Consider another situation that will cause Christians to become upset. When one teaches that we ought to faithfully worship God, we can make enemies. This is an area that I struggle to fully comprehend; I cannot understand why a Christian would not want to worship God. Jesus taught that God should be worshipped in in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24). This is not something that we are to occasionally do, but rather faithfully be in attendance with the congregation (Hebrews 10:24-25). Our attendance provokes others to good works, uplifts the weak, and is a great benefit unto each person present. Sadly, there are Christians that act like it is a miserable experience to come together and worship God. They put off their arrival until the last possible moment, and then are out the door as soon as the dismissal prayer is spoken. When the preacher preaches on faithful attendance they quickly become angry and become enemies of the preacher.

The preacher of the truth may also make enemies when he teaches that Christians should give as they have

been prospered. Paul taught that giving should be done liberally and as prospered (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:9; 1 Corinthians 16). When that is pointed out to Christians today, many will get extremely upset. Under the Old Law they were commanded to give a certain amount; above that amount they also gave free will offerings. I wonder how many Christians today would fare under that system of giving. I wonder, would they rob God like the Israelites did (Malachi 3:6-8)?

The Galatian brethren had become enemies with Paul simply because of truth. This is something that Jesus taught would happen. Notice His words, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Matthew 10:34-36). How did Jesus come to make enemies? He made enemies because He brought grace and truth; the truth is what makes the enemies. This does not happen because family members should be enemies, but because not all of them will believe and obey the truth.

What truth changed the affection the Galatians had for Paul to contempt? Remember, the Galatian brethren had such affection for Paul that they would have plucked out their eyes for him (Galatians 4:15). Yet by this point, they had feelings of animosity toward him. Which truth had Paul told them that caused this change?

Was it the fact that they had believed a perverted gospel? "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:6-7). Apparently a very short time after Paul had left the region of Galatia and continued his missionary journey; Judaizing teachers filled his empty footsteps. They proclaimed a perverted gospel, and the fickle Gauls followed their

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teaching. He told these brethren they believed something that is false. Was that the truth that turned them from Paul?

Could the change in disposition be from the fact he called them foolish? "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" (Galatians 3:1). Have you ever been called a fool by someone with whom you had a close relationship? Why were these brethren foolish? They were foolish because they had been so quickly removed from the gospel of Christ unto another gospel. From this verse we also could note another reason they may have changed their feelings toward Paul. Paul explained they had been deceived or "bewitched". Generally speaking a person does not like to be told they have been deceived. Paul questioned who had twisted their beliefs and perverted the gospel before them which they followed after? Was that the truth that had turned them away from Paul?

One final truth pointed out by Paul in Galatians 3:1 is that they were not really obeying the truth even though they thought they were. We can make many enemies today by pointing this out to our denominational friends. When they believe they are obeying the truth of the New Testament and we point out they are not, what happens? Many times they become upset and become our enemies. That could have happened here with the Galatians as they thought they were obeying God. They thought they were living a life of faithful Christianity. Paul's pointing this out could have been what turned the Galatians against him.

Paul also points out in the letter to the Galatians that the Law of Moses was no longer binding upon the Christian. Paul writes, "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Galatians 3:24-25). They thought they were following Christ as they should, yet they attempted to follow

the Old Law. When Paul pointed out the fact that the law had been abolished, they could have become enemies.

There are many truths that could have turned these brethren from an attitude of such concern for Paul unto his enemies. However, that was not the purpose of these truths that Paul had taught. He had no desire to make enemies. Paul did not want to write an epistle unto these brethren that would anger them; rather Paul desired to save their souls. This desire motivated Paul to preach and write the truth of God's Word unto all that he had the opportunity.

Paul wished he did not have to speak to these brethren with such abrasive words. Notice his confession, "I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you" (Galatians 4:20). This would likely have reference to the tone of this letter. The Galatian epistle had one of the most abrasive tones of any of Paul's epistles. Paul was more stern with these brethren than any other to whom he wrote. The desire to change his voice could also refer to the actual words he was saying. He did not want to point out their foolishness; he did not want to tell them they had believed a false doctrine. He wanted to see them fully following the truth of the gospel, but he had doubts. Paul was not certain that even this epistle could change their direction and draw them back unto the ways of God. He was not even certain that his presence would cause them to repent. How heart breaking that must have been for the apostle Paul.

Paul's desire for these brethren to be right in the sight of God stems from his love for the souls of man. That is clearly demonstrated by his statement, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Romans 10:1). This was spoken by a man who had been charged, beaten, and imprisoned by these foolish Jews. Yet, he still had a desire to see them in a right relationship with God! Paul's affection was just as deep for the churches in the region of Galatia. He displayed his love by rebuking them for their sin (Revelation 3:19). Many of

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Paul's epistles were largely letters of rebuke. Even within the Galatian epistle, Paul speaks of rebuking the apostle Peter (cf. Galatians 2:11-21). Why did Paul rebuke Peter? It was not because Paul wanted to be a superior apostle! It was not because he had a personal vendetta against Peter! It was because Peter was guilty, and Paul wanted him to correct the situation. Love for the lost will cause us to rebuke those in sin!

Does love cause us to be enemies? The sad truth is, yes. It is love that causes us to rebuke our neighbor that is living in sin. Many times that rebuke will bring about feelings of animosity. Those who were once dear friends can become our enemy all for the truth's sake.

The question Paul has asked, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" has long been considered one of the greatest questions in the New Testament. When one studies this question, they will begin thinking about the motives of those who proclaim truth. When a person teaches you the truth, it means they have deep affection for you. They want you to live a life that will lead you to eternal bliss rather than eternal torment. Jesus taught that it is only the truth that make us free (John 8:32). When someone loves you enough to teach you the truth without reservation they should never become your enemy. They have taught you the truth because they see your need. They love your soul and want you to go to heaven. The person who loves you enough to teach you the truth should be your best friend.

The truth is you must obey God if you want to go to heaven. Paul taught that the Galatians had foolishly followed a false doctrine and stood in jeopardy of losing their souls. Through the serious tone of this letter he likely led some back to God. However, it is also likely that some became Paul's enemies until death and they died lost. How tragic to think that some will be condemned eternally because the truth made them enemies with the very one who taught it to them.

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Chapter 9

Carest Thou Not That We Perish?

Tom Duff

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INTRODUCTION

It is probably safe to say that most Bible students have thought at one time or another about being in the presence of Jesus and being able to witness one of His miracles. It would have been amazing to have seen Him heal the blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10). How wonderful it would have been to see and hear Him say to a man, that with great effort was lowered to Him through a roof top, "...arise, take up your bed and walk!" (Mark 2:9). It would have been glorious to witness the Lord speak "...Lazarus, come forth!" (John 11:43). However, with all the examples of Jesus' great power many did not and to this day do not put their trust in Jesus. One example is the time in which the disciples did not have the faith (trust) in their Master (Mark 4:35-41). A song writer from the late 19th century, Mary A. Baker put this event to song. The hymn, *Peace Be Still* expresses within the first verse the fear seen by the disciples.

Master the tempest is raging!
The billows are tossing high!
The sky is o'er-shadowed with blackness;
No shelter or help is nigh.
"Carest Thou not that we perish?"

How canst Thou lie asleep
When each moment so madly is threatening
A grave in the angry deep?

Within the lyrics of this hymn lies the question the disciples asked that dark and stormy night. "...Carest thou not that we perish?" Does Jesus care; can one put their trust in Jesus? The answers to these questions will come from a careful study of God's Word.

THE WINDS AND WAVES

After a day of teaching by the seaside about *the Sower* and *the Seed*, Jesus now enters the ship. First, teaching at the seaside and now He will teach in the sea. The evening had come, and Jesus from a long afternoon of teaching had retired for a long deserved rest from his labors. The disciples not long into their journey found themselves in the midst of a storm on the Sea of Galilee. The geographic location of the Sea of Galilee is such that great storms would come down through the mountains, striking the water with sudden and violent impact; these storms were typically unexpected but not uncommon to the area. As the storm of wind and waves arose, the boat was rapidly filling with water. Robert R. Taylor in *The Power Lectures: The Miracles of Jesus* further illustrated the storm from Luke's point of view:

The beloved physician adds that this storm of wind came down upon the lake. This shows geographical accuracy as this storm came from the winds of the hills above and surrounding this low-lying sea, nearly 700 feet below sea level, only to meet the warm air on the surface of the sea. Storms, in like manner, are produced frequently in the southern part of our country when the cooler air from the north and the warmer air of from

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the Gulf make violent contact. Severe thunderstorms and deadly tornadoes often result from such weather collisions. (Taylor, 469)

The storm described in Mark 4:37 must have been especially fierce if it frightened experienced fisherman like the disciples. The disciples; Peter, Andrew, James, and John had made their living fishing on the Sea of Galilee and should have been familiar with such storms. In his commentary *The Gospel According to Mark*, C.E.W. Dorris makes this assessment; "The disciples were accustomed to the lake, the winds and the waves. This, then, was to them a terrific storm to fill them with such terror" (Dorris, 114). Being the evening, this allows for the backdrop of nightfall. Many uncertain things happen because of darkness, in other words, bad things happen at night. When is a child more likely to be afraid, in the daylight or when it is dark? One does not need a child's perspective to understand that it is harder to see, function, and to be in control of a situation in the dark. Lots of bad things often occur at night. Someone who has lost a spouse will often say that the night is the hardest time in which to cope with the loss. Loneliness is a factor, but many will say they no longer have the comfort and protection in which comes from a spouse, especially in the uncertainty of the darkness.

Jesus was in the "hinder" part of the boat asleep, resting comfortably while the storm approached. Jesus was like any other man in that respect; He had spent all day teaching and now needed some rest. Jesus was truly a man; He had a body that needed food, drink, and required rest like anyone else (this account, found in Matthew 8:25, Mark 4:38, and Luke 8:24 is the only time in the New Testament where it is recorded that Jesus slept). Jesus, in whom one is to submit their trust, is as real of a man as He is God. Jesus knows the trials and temptations of a man, because He has experienced them. He knows the bodily infirmities of

a man, because He has felt them. He can understand what it means to cry as He has felt the emotion of one who cries. Jesus is the very One that men and women, with weary frames and aching heads, in a weary world, require for their comfort every morning and night. "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Hebrews 4:15).

The question for some is, "Did Jesus know that the storm was coming?" Of course He did. Life is full of storms, some are like puddles of water and others are like floods filling a ship. Warren W. Wiersbe in his commentary, *The Bible Exposition Commentary of the New Testament* states: "The storm was a part of that day's curriculum. It would help the disciples understand a lesson that they did not even know they needed to learn: Jesus can be trusted in the storms of life" (Wiersbe, 124). Everyone encounters storms. Christians should not expect everything in life to be smooth, and must not count it a strange thing, if one must endure sicknesses, losses, bereavements, and disappointments, just like other men. The rich and the poor encounter death and despair, the healthy get sick, the happy get sad, and the hopeful suffer loss. The young, the old, the wise, the foolish, both male and female, whatever color of skin, all encounter obstacles, problems and troubles. In the book that bears his name, James, the brother of Jesus and an inspired writer tells those who follow Christ to "...count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience" (James 1:2, 3).

THE DISCIPLES: STILL UNSURE

There is an old joke that has been told for many years, it asks where you were when the lights went out? The answer to that question is, "In the dark." The disciples found themselves in the dark, full of fear (and no faith). Some of these men were experienced fisherman and should have been accustomed to the wind and the waves. Why were they so fearful? The disciples had the promise of Jesus to

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take them to the other side of the lake (Mark 4:35). Jesus did not promise that the trip would be smooth without difficulties, but He did assure the disciples arrival to their destination. Also, Jesus was with them, physically in their presence. They had seen Jesus perform many signs, wonders, and miracles in their company. So, what was to fear? The disciples should have had complete confidence that Jesus could handle the situation.

Some may look at the situation and say; at least the disciples went to Jesus before it was too late. That was not the point of this particular lesson. The disciples should have seen how peacefully Jesus was resting even in the midst of the storm. Knowing this, it should have encouraged them to react in a similar manner. It is recorded by the psalmist that the Lord will comfort in times of distress and give peace of mind; "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep, for Thou, Lord only makest me dwell in safety" (Psalm 4:8). The disciples had spent much time with Jesus and should have been growing in faith by his teachings. The Word of God stresses the importance that our faith grows by hearing His word; "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). The Bible also describes, for one to be pleasing to God, one must have 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" (Hebrews 11:6). The disciples were fearful because there was unbelief in their hearts.

Earlier in the day while Jesus was teaching, He had gently rebuked His disciples (Mark 4:13) for their inability to understand the parables in which He taught. The storm, too, was a teaching tool, and the disciples failed miserably. These men were completely oblivious to the fact that the Lord was in total control; and how they were completely safe in the confines of the ship. It is however important to note that Jesus did hear their request and rebuked the sea; "And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the

sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm" (Mark 4:39). The disciples were again privy to the power of Jesus. Wiersbe in his commentary makes this statement:

They already knew that He had the authority to forgive sins, to cast out demons, and to heal diseases. Now they discovered that He even had authority over the wind and the sea. This meant that they had no reason ever again to be afraid, for their Lord was in constant control of every situation. (Wiersbe 125)

The disciples had the privilege of spending many days, weeks, and months learning first hand from the teachings of Jesus. Yet, those same teachings have been made available to the world by inspired men guided by the Holy Spirit. When one's faith is strong and is doing those things in accordance to God's will, Jesus is the security and comfort one will need to make it through the winds and waves of this life. "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30, 31).

DOES JESUS CARE

The account given of Jesus resting peacefully on the ship and where He is abruptly awakened by His disciples is explained in greater detail in the book of Mark than in the books of Matthew, and Luke. So, when the storm was at its worst and the disciples feared for their lives, they awake Jesus and ask Him, "...Master, carest thou not that we perish?" Implying that, He was not concerned about them. The disciples obviously already believed He could do something about the storm. If they did not, then why wake

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Him, implying that He didn't care for them? What they did not have was faith in Christ's love and concern for them.

This was not a new question; the question has been around since the beginning. Does God care about me? The answer has been and always will be, "Yes." Yet, why do so many continue to ask? King David wanted to know if God cared for him; "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring" (Psalm 22:1)? Jesus Himself would ask God the Father a similar question as He hung from the cross at approximately the ninth hour "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me" (Matthew 27:46)? This is a common response to the human condition. It is important that one knows someone cares for them. Jesus showed His immediate care by stopping the storm, but ultimately Jesus showed He cared by the giving of His life on the cross of Calvary.

Does Jesus care? Does it not seem strange that they should ask Him this question? Had they not witnessed Him perform many miracles—healing of the sick and casting out demons? One may wonder how their faith in Him could be so weak and why they would think that He would let them perish. On the other hand, it is instructive to note that they had enough faith in Him to recognize that it was He who was the only one that could keep them from perishing in the storm. How often does one let others say and do things that hurt and disturb to the extent that one cannot have peace of mind? How often does one let the problems of health in one's life and the lives of loved ones consume one to the extent that one can seemingly no longer cope? The encountering of such challenges, tests the faith of those even strong enough to appeal to Jesus as to whether or not He cares if one perishes, or do the troubled blame God and Jesus for one's difficulties in this life? It is the failure to remember the clear teachings of the Bible regarding the care and concern that God and Jesus have for mankind.

There is no need to wonder. God cares about the sparrow, and He surely cares about His own dear children. Jesus would tell His disciples "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Jesus truly cares for man; He left a home in heaven with God the Father in order to die in man's place in order to redeem (buy back) the world back to God. The Creator of all life was willing to come and die for the sins of the world; "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). God the Father is greatly concerned about man's welfare in this life. God is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Peter 5:7). God provides for all our needs (Matthew 6:30-33; 2 Peter 3:4; Ephesians 2:4-6). God gives His children a way to escape from temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13). Jesus, too, cares for mankind; He came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). Jesus is pictured as a shepherd seeking lost sheep (Luke 15). Jesus has now gone to prepare a place of eternal rest for all those who follow after Him (John 14:2; Ephesians 5:25-27). Jesus wants man to have all of life's necessities, but that is not what should take priority in one's life (Matthew 6:33). Jesus cares because He gave His life; He came to save from sin, He cares to give hope, He came to give joy and comfort, but greater than all these; He came to show that one can have victory over sin.

It is interesting to note that Jesus calmed the storm by merely speaking and saying "Peace, be still." There is great power in the words of Christ. There is power in the word of God. The words of God and of Christ can calm the storms of our lives. The disciples were amazed that Jesus calmed the sea. They did not fully understand or comprehend the man Jesus. Their faith was not fully developed. There are many in the church today who do not fully understand or comprehend the man Jesus. Many in the church today do not have a clear picture of who Jesus is and how He could easily say to them: "...how is it that ye

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have no faith?" One must find the courage and strength to do the right thing; a Christian must have faith. Not simply faith in the existence of God and Jesus and their power, but also faith in their love and concern for mankind. One must take to heart and never forget the love shown by God the Father and Jesus the Son.

DO WE TRUST IN JESUS

Once the Bible student acknowledges through faith in the Scripture that Jesus does indeed "care for us," it inevitably begs the question, "Do we trust in Jesus?" What is trust? Webster's dictionary defines trust as: "having confidence; a reliance or resting of the mind on the integrity, veracity, justice, friendship or other sound principle of another person." Trust is the act of depending upon someone else to do what is needed. In order for one to trust another, one must let go of self to trust someone else; "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5, 6). "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). Trust means to take someone at their word. Jesus has promised all those that are faithful to Him will receive a home in heaven. Often due to the pressures of this life, it can cause one to put trust into the world and not Jesus; "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1Timothy 6:17). One's trust must be in Jesus to gain the reward of eternal life.

Another word that comes to mind and its meaning can be synonymous to that of "trust," is the word "faith." Do you have faith in Jesus to provide for the necessities of life, to care when there is sorrow in life, and to reward those who follow after Him? The written Word of God states; "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" (Hebrews 11:6). That particular verse speaks of putting one's faith (trust) squarely on God, and in return God will reward those who diligently trust in Him.

Noah had faith in God; Noah built an ark although he had never seen the rain (Hebrews 11:7). What about Abraham, did he put his trust in God? Abraham left security of family and friends and left his country because he had trust in the Lord. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Hebrews 11:8).

How does one put trust in Jesus? **In all things:** there are those who delight in their independence and cherish it so much, they try to remove every barrier to achieve it. The world (primarily the United States) is becoming famous for this type of behavior. Those who consider themselves to be independent and self-sufficient have no room for God in their lives. Their faith is directed on the world. The psalmist makes this statement in regards to where one must put their trust: "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about" (Psalm 32:10). Putting one's trust in the Lord in all things shows the realization of one's own insufficiency and the desperate need for God's help, "And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him" (Psalm 37:40).

How does one put trust in Jesus? **For all things:** the beloved physician, Luke, made it clear that if it were not for God there would no mankind. "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" (Acts 17:28). All that one has comes from God and belongs to God. The very existence of mankind is owed to God. David expounds on the fact that man must do his part both physically and

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spiritually (trust in Him for salvation), "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass" (Psalm 37:5).

How does one put trust in Jesus? **With all things:** some will cling to their possessions as though they are to have them forever. That truly is the mindset of most of the world today. Time and again the Bible warns man about the wrong attitude toward the possessions of this life. God will provide for the necessities of life. Jesus, himself gives a beautiful illustration in about having the correct attitude toward one's possessions.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Matthew 6:19-21)

Jesus would further comment on this subject as discussed in Luke's account; "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). God has made sure His creation is with all things, but God wants His creation to put their trust in Him; "...hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness..." (2 Peter 1:3).

Finally, how does one put trust in Jesus? **Through all things:** Paul in writing to the Ephesian brethren wrote; "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:6). One must put **ALL** trust in Jesus in order to be pleasing to God the Father. During times of trials, tribulations, and the difficulties of life one must trust in Him. These times can be hard to understand and one may even question it much like the disciples did on

that stormy night on the Sea of Galilee; but through it, one must develop a deeper trust in God the Father and Jesus the Son. Why put one's trust in Jesus, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17). Jesus wants the world to be reconciled with the Father in Heaven; it just takes faithful followers of Jesus to take up their burdens and follow Him. Why? "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

CONCLUSION

Does Jesus care about you? Absolutely He does and without fail. Jesus has proven without a shadow of doubt the love and care He has for His creation. The life that He led shows the example in which one should follow (1 Peter 2:21). The selfless willingness to die on the cross in our stead shows His care. Through the precious blood of Jesus it has been made possible for one to have the opportunity to access the Father (John 14:6). It is now time for each one to put their trust (faith) in Jesus by obeying the Gospel (Hear, Believe, Repent, Confess and be Baptized for the remission of sins). Why? Because He is preparing for you; "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 14:3).

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Chapter 10

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

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INTRODUCTION

We would begin by suggesting that the question, "What must I do to be saved?" is the greatest question in all the world. Why? Because it deals with the salvation of our souls. Most questions deal with issues that have no lasting significance, but this one deals with matters of eternal consequence. That alone makes it vitally important.

Furthermore, the question, "What must I do to be saved?" carries a very definite implication; namely, that man is lost—without God and without hope in the world. The apostle Paul spoke of this in Ephesians 2:12 when he wrote: "That at that time [prior to their conversion-MEB] ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Ever since Adam and Eve disobeyed God and partook of the forbidden fruit, man has been separated (alienated) from God. The prophet Isaiah wrote: "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and

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your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1,2).

"What must I do to be saved?" is perhaps the most asked question of all ages and ironically has probably been given the most answers (many of the answers contradicting other answers). Depending upon who you ask, you may be told that salvation is by faith only, by works, by Divine predestination, or by any number of other things. Invariably these conflicting answers leads to confusion, disgust and even infidelity. Many an honest truth seeker has turned away from religion in disgust saying, "If all these preachers and/or 'Bible Scholars' can not agree on what the Bible teaches, how can I hope to know the truth?" Yes, denominationalism is a direct cause of infidelity. Perhaps this is why Jesus prayed as He did in John 17: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; 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" (John 17:20-21). Surely God cannot be pleased with all the division and discord that exists in the religious world today.

In view of the eternal nature and consequences of this question, let's examine it in some detail. Please understand that we will be looking to the Bible for our answer. It really doesn't matter what I think or what you think. It doesn't matter what some priest or preacher says or what some man has written. We are going to follow Peter's inspired admonition of I Peter 4:11: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God..." We pray that you will listen with an open mind as well as an open Bible.

THE QUESTION

First of all, notice that it is a very personal question. "What must **I** do to be saved?" It's not, what must **God** do. God has already done His part by sending Jesus into the world to take our place. John 3:16 tells us: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that

whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It's not a matter of what must **Christ** do. Christ has done His part by going to the cross for us. There are numerous passages that address this issue. For example: "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8). Again; "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3). It's not a matter of what must the **Holy Spirit** do. The Holy Spirit has done His part in revealing God's will to us. Jesus promised His 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). It's not what must **my parents** do. There is nothing they can do to save us. Granted, they can teach and encourage us; they can pray for us, but that's as far as it goes. Our eternal destiny (i.e., salvation) will not be determined by our parents. Their goodness cannot help us, nor can their wickedness hurt us. It's not what must my **husband/wife** do. Again, they can pray and encourage, but they cannot be saved for us. So again, this is a very personal question.

Second, we notice that it is a very practical question. "What must I **do** to be saved?" It's not, "What must I experience, feel, get, think or say?" This question demands action. Over and over the New Testament emphasizes the need for obedience to God's will. Notice the following passages: "Seeing ye have purified your souls **in obeying the truth** through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Peter 1:22). "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). "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made

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perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto **all them that obey him**" (Hebrews 5:8,9). In 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9, inspiration pronounces the "vengeance" of God on the disobedient as well as on the unbelievers. Even after one is saved, the Bible makes it clear that true Christianity involves work and activity (James 1:27).

Notice also that question is imperative, not optional. "What **must** I do?" The word "must" makes the answer stand between man & salvation. If you think about it, God's Word is full of imperatives. Jesus told Nicodemus, "...Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). In Hebrews 11:6 we are told, "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."

Fourthly, this question is one of vital importance. Notice, "What must I do **to be saved?**" It has to do with the eternal destiny of the soul. We ask and answer numerous questions every day; some of little or no consequence, others of some importance. In view of the fact that our soul is the most precious thing we possess, this question is of vital importance. Those who fail to deal with this question in this life will regret it for all eternity.

THE ANSWERS OF MEN

Just briefly let's consider some of the answers that are offered by men. In considering the answers offered by men you need to ask yourself just how they compare with what we find in the New Testament.

The Infidel would have us believe that the question is of no importance. The unbeliever denies the reality of sin, heaven and hell; therefore, there is no salvation to be sought after. This is perhaps the saddest answer offered since it provides no hope of any kind.

The Universalists tells us that all men are going to be saved unconditionally, so there is nothing for us to do. This

answer is a hopeful one, but what is this hope based on? It certainly is not based on Scripture!

The Calvinists says, "If you are of the elect, you are saved already; if not, you are doomed unconditionally. Therefore, there is nothing to do."

The Moralists says that to be saved we only need to live a good moral life. They would suggest that man's salvation is not dependent upon anything other than a good moral life. They believe that to teach otherwise is to teach salvation by works.

The Faith Only theorist says that we are saved by faith and nothing more. They refuse to accept the idea that there is something man must do in order to be saved. They reject the clear teaching of James on the necessity of works in conjunction with our faith (James 2:24).

The Direct Operationists says that one only needs to come to the mourners' bench, repent and pray until the Holy Spirit manifests Himself in some miraculous manner. This usually involves a "better felt than told" experience.

We simply ask those who offer these answers, "Where is such taught in God's Word?"

THE SAVIOR'S ANSWER

Since Jesus is the Savior of the world (Luke 19:10), we must look to Him for words of salvation. As Peter affirmed, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). Acts 4:12 says, "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). So you see, it really doesn't matter what man thinks or believes unless those thoughts are based upon the words of Christ. Since Christ authorized the apostles to speak for Him (Matthew 10:40; 16:19), their inspired words should be studied and followed.

What many people fail to realize is that the answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" depends on where one is spiritually speaking. Suppose a man wants to

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travel from West Jefferson, North Carolina to Los Angeles, California. Before he begins his journey he asks someone, "How far is Los Angeles from here?" According to Map Quest the answer is 2,306 miles. He gets in his car and drives west about twelve hours and stops in Memphis, Tennessee. He stops at the Cracker Barrel and asks the same question, "How far is Los Angeles from here?" The waitress tells him that it is 1,738 miles to LA. He gets back in his car and drives to Oklahoma City (ten or eleven hours depending if you are traveling with a wife and children). He stops at a service station and asks the same question: "How far is Los Angeles from here?" This time he's told that it is 1272 miles to Los Angeles. He gets back in his car and drives another twelve hours to Albuquerque, New Mexico. This time he's told that Los Angeles is 729 miles away. Think about it, he asked the same question four times and received four different answers. Something's wrong, isn't it? One (or more) lied to him! No, the reason he was given four different answers was because he asked the question at four different locations on his journey. If he had received four different answers in the same city, there would be a problem. In much the same way, the answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" depends upon where you are (spiritually speaking) on the road to salvation. Some are farther along the road to salvation than others.

"What must I do to be saved?" If you are an unbeliever, you must believe on the Lord just as the Philippian jailor did in Acts 16. When he asked Paul and Silas, "What must I do to be saved?" they told him, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). Some have tried to use the words to teach the doctrine of faith only, but the story doesn't end with these words. Look at verse 32 -- Paul and Silas "...spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." Here was a man who knew little if anything about Jesus Christ or His church. He had to be taught what

to believe. Perhaps several hours of study followed (we are not told how long the sermon lasted). He would need to be shown the prophecies regarding Christ and his coming. He would need to be taught about the birth of Christ as well as His death, burial and resurrection. He would need to be taught regarding the establishment of the church on Pentecost, the coming Day of Judgment and many other things. He would have needed to be taught the necessity of repentance and confession. Verse 33 records the results of their preaching: "And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway." Clearly the jailor and his family understand the good news of the gospel and believed it. The Hebrews writer affirmed that "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" (Hebrews 11:6).

"What must I do to be saved?" If you are a believer, you should repent of your sins, confess the name of Christ and be baptized just as the folks on Pentecost did (Acts 2:27,28).

"What must I do to be saved?" If you are a penitent believer, you must confess your faith in Christ as the Eunuch did in Acts 8:36,37. Notice what happened after Philip preached Jesus to him (Acts 8:35). "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:36,37). In verse 38 the Eunuch "...commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."

"What must I do to be saved?" If you are a believing penitent, having confessed your faith in Christ, you must be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins, just as Saul of Tarsus did. When Ananias found Saul in the city of

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Damascus, he told him: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). If the New Testament said nothing else about the importance of baptism, this verse would make it very clear to the open-minded student of God's Word--baptism is essential. But the fact is, this is not the only New Testament passage showing the importance of (the necessity of) baptism.

"What must I do to be saved?" If you are a "babe in Christ" (i.e., a new Christian), you must add the Christian graces to your life and character. Listen to Peter's admonition:

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." Babes in Christ are instructed to "...grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ...." (II Peter 3:18)

How do we do this? By feeding on the "...sincere milk of the word..." (I Peter 2:2). This simply means that we must daily read, study and meditate on God's Word.

"What must I do to be saved?" If you are an erring child of God, an unfaithful or lukewarm Christian you must repent and confess your sins and ask God for forgiveness. As Peter told Simon the Sorcerer, after Simon tried to buy the gift of imparting spiritual gifts, "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22). John assures us, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).

We don't usually associate the question, "What must I do to be saved?" with those who have obeyed the gospel, but it is still a pertinent question to ask. As a child of God, I must continue faithfully in the work that God has given me. I must faithfully attend all of the services of the church (Hebrews 10:25). I must read and study God's Word (II Timothy 2:15). I must try to teach others the good news of the gospel (Matthew 28:18-20). Clearly, it is not enough to simply obey the first principles of the gospel. That's only the beginning of the Christian life. Each day must find me trying to grow and mature in the faith. Jesus has promised "...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

Conclusion

My friends, knowledge of the way of salvation is vain unless you have the desire to obey God and be saved. Knowledge is like medicine; if one does not apply or take the medicine prescribed by the doctor it will do him no good. Unused (untaken) medicine is of no value; in much the same way, knowledge of the gospel (i.e., God's plan of salvation) is of no value unless one applies it in obedience.

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The Scriptures clearly affirm that God has given man a plan to obey. If we desire to be saved we must follow that plan without addition or subtraction.

Just as the walls of Jericho did not fall until the Israelites marched around it seven days (Joshua 6:2ff); so the gift of salvation will not be ours until we comply with all of God's commands. Just as Naaman was not cleansed of his leprosy until he dipped seven times in the Jordan River (II Kings 5:6ff), so we will not be cleansed of our sins until we obey all of God's commands. Many want to stop after believing; others want to stop after faith and repentance. But we must obey all of God's commands if we expect to be saved.

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