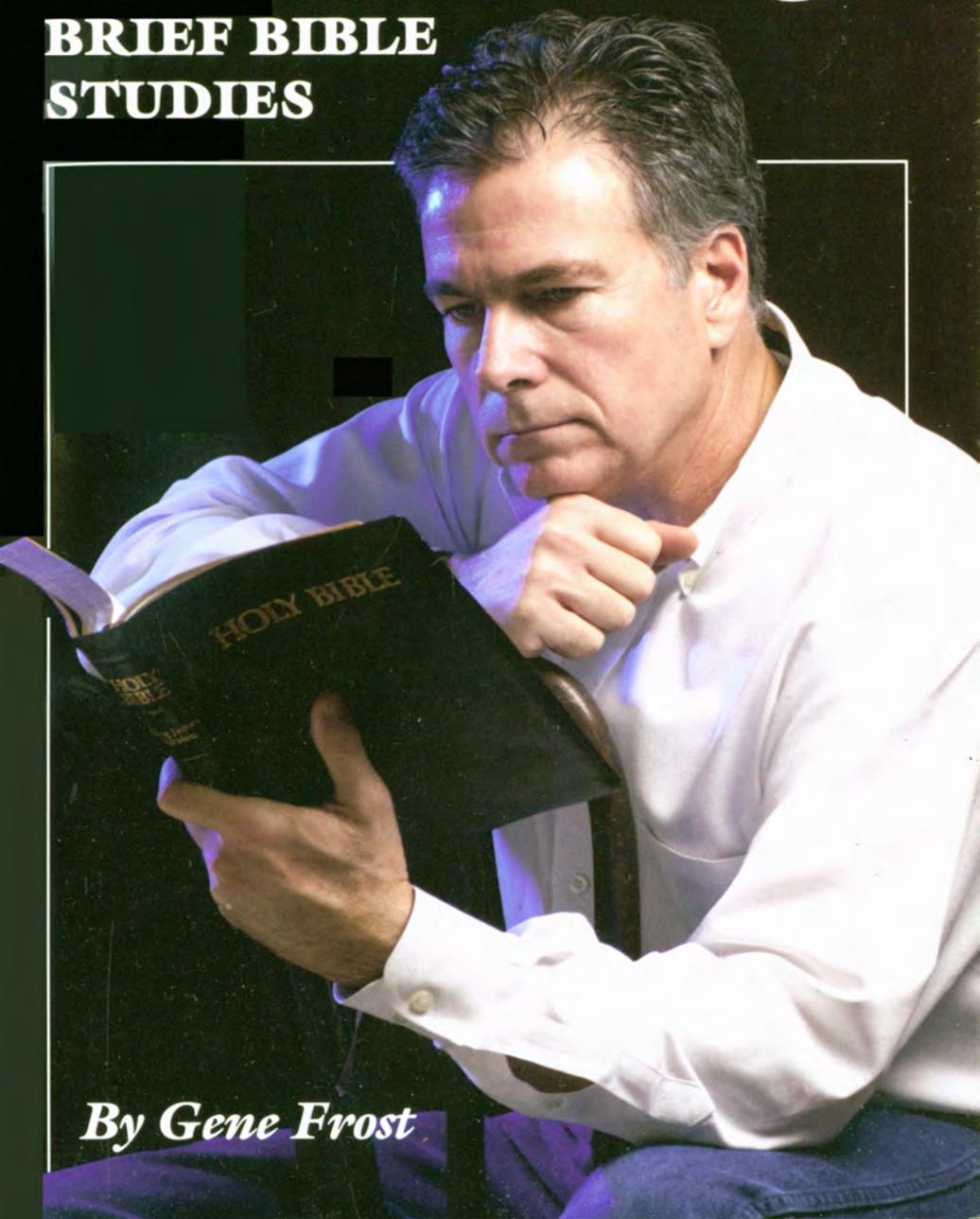


# Think On These Things

**BRIEF BIBLE  
STUDIES**



*By Gene Frost*



# **Think On These Things**

Brief Bible Studies

by  
Gene Frost

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## Think On These Things

The brief Scripture studies published in this book are scripts prepared for telephone recorded messages, and were presented as a Thought for Today. They date back to 1974, when dial-in telephone presentations became possible. This was a new media by which to spread the "Good News," and for a time was fairly popular.

The scripts have found greater circulation in church bulletins unto this day. And now we hope that their availability in a book format will promote their circulation and influence even further for good.

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I hope that you, the reader, will find the articles interesting, helpful, and inspiring enough to provoke a desire to engage in a more thorough examination of the word of God. Even as you read, the articles will be more complete if you read all the Scriptures which are referenced. Jesus said:

"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31-32)

— *Gene Frost*

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*“A wise man will hear, and will increase learning;  
and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels”  
- Proverbs 1:5*

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## Doing Righteousness

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Righteousness is the state or condition of being right with God. What is right is not subject to every man's designation or definition. What is right with God, God himself designates. We can know what this righteousness is by reading the revelation that God has given us. In Romans 1:16-17, God, through Paul, states that in the gospel of Christ is revealed, or made known, the righteousness of God. This refers not to the fact that God is righteous, which is true, but to a state of righteousness according to God, which He prescribes in the gospel: "The just shall live by faith." On the other hand, there is a righteousness that man prescribes, which if one lives by he will fail to be right with God. (Rom. 10:3) If one would know how to achieve that state or condition which is right before God, he must study the Bible, the gospel of Christ.

Sadly, many are ignorant of the gospel of Christ. They have their own ideas about what is right and pleasing to God. Acting upon their own evaluations, they perform those things which they suppose make them right before God. Of course, outside of God's word they have no assurance that their conclusions are correct. A way may seem to be right yet *not* be right. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." (Proverbs 14:12)

The Jews fell into this trap. They had a zeal of God, and tried to establish a condition approved of God, but they failed. Failing to submit unto the righteousness of God, i.e. the gospel, they went astray. (Romans 10:1) Jesus told them that "in vain they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:9)

In other words, more is involved in worshiping God than a mere desire to please God and be accepted. Not everyone who says "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, Jesus says. (Matthew 7:21) Faith in Jesus as Lord is not enough. Even commendable deeds to his honor, in and of themselves are not enough. Jesus said, "But he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." In Judgment, many will plead their cases, how they did so much to His honor, only to hear Jesus say, "Depart from me. I never knew you, ye that work iniquity." Some people are deluded into thinking that they can be right with God

without obeying Him. Some think they can know God even when disobedient. But this cannot be. (1 John 2:3-4) Let “no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous” (John 3:7). If one thinks he is righteous while doing unrighteousness, he deceives himself.

Are you righteous? Are you keeping the commandments of God?

*Think on this.*

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## Preach the Word

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The apostle Paul, as an experienced preacher, wrote to Timothy, his son in the gospel, to “preach the word; be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering 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)

Paul urged Timothy to be instant, i.e. to be ready, to be at hand, thus signifying the urgency of the task before him. At every opportunity he should be ready to declare the truth of God. Not only should he await opportunity, i.e. be ready when opportunities come, but he should make his opportunities. He had a responsibility to declare God’s will, whether his message was welcomed or not—“in season and out of season.”

This charge brings to mind two other Bible references. In 1 Peter 3:15, the child of God is told to be ready to give every man a reason for his hope. In Ezekiel 33, God told His spokesman that he was a watchman. The warning should go out to all, to those who would heed it and repent, and also to the rebellious. All need to hear warnings from God in order that the pure and honest in heart may make correction in their lives.

God’s word is His power to save, and the directive for man is right conduct.

Not all men want the truth. At times, even in the church, men will rebel against the teachings of God. Then they will find and support teachers who will preach what they like. The greatest defense against such compromising preaching, against this soft, weak attitude ever

developing, is sound preaching. A steady diet of pure uncompromising teaching makes for sound spiritual health.

*Think on this.*

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## One Body

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What is the Bible talking about when it speaks of the *body... the* body of Christ? Perhaps the clearest explanation is found in Ephesians 1:22-23. Here we are told that God “hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” Here it is plainly stated that the church is the body, or the body is the church.

In Colossians 1:18, Paul writes, “And he is the head of the body, the church...”

This simply means that all of the “called out” compose the body of Christ. And since we know that the called out are the saved (Acts 2:47), we know that all of the saved compose the body of Christ. And Paul says this in Ephesians 5:23, “And he is the saviour of the body.” Yes, all spiritual blessings are in Christ (Ephesians 1:3), and the body of Christ is the fulness of Christ. (Ephesians 1:22-23) So, all spiritual blessings are in the body. All of the saved are in the body. Christ is the head and saviour of the body, and the body is the church.

In Ephesians 4:4-6, the inspired writer says that there is only one God and Father. Despite the fact that some modern religionists teach that there is a whole quorum of Gods, fathers of many worlds, we must conclude that all who deny the Scriptures are false teachers. The same reference declares that there is one Lord, who is Jesus (Acts 2:36) Only an infidel would deny this. Even so, the same writer declares that there is one Spirit. This one Spirit, with the one Father and the one Lord, compose the Godhead. Yes, there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God the Father, and one hope of calling.

Now, please note that in this same reference, where we are told that there is one Father, one Spirit, one Lord, etc., it says, (and I quote), “There is one body.” One body. But wait—this body is the church! (Ephesians 1:22-23) Does this mean that there is just one church, that all of the saved are in one church? That all spiritual blessings are in one

church? That Christ is head and savior of one church?

The Bible means what it says. There is *one* body, and the body is the church.

*Think on this.*

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## One Faith

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In Ephesians 4:4-6, the apostle Paul informs us that in the keeping of the unity of the Spirit there is one body, one Spirit, one hope of calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God the Father.

Of all seven items, I do not know of one which is not contradicted by some human doctrine. This very fact is proof of the Apostolic warning that there will be false prophets and teachers. (1 John 4:1, 2 Peter 2:1-3) And yet, most religious people practically deny that there are false teachers. They will give lip service to the Bible statement, but when it comes down to the fact, they are hesitant to acknowledge anyone as a false teacher.

Most religious people of our day say that the statement of belief is not important, that one faith is as good as another. The important thing, we are told, is the attitude one has toward what he does believe. And this very concept contributes to religious error and division.

God reveals that there is *one faith*. (Ephesians 4:5) This is the faith once for all delivered unto the saints. (Jude 3) It is the faith that Paul preached. (Galatians 1:23) And yet Paul said if any man preaches any other gospel than that he preached, let him be accursed! (Galatians 1:8-9)

In contrast to this truth that there is one faith, and that it was delivered from God once for all — so exclusive is it that one who preaches otherwise is accursed—we have the idea of man that one faith is as good as another. This is to say that faiths created by men, human creeds, are as good as the faith revealed by God, or the gospel of Christ. And this simply is not so!

Everyone who says that one faith is as good as another is teaching false doctrine. The reason false teachers preach this false idea is to forestall investigation into their false doctrines and systems. If it really does make no difference, why would one even bother spending the time

and effort to discern the one faith from all of the creeds of men? This is the way false teachers would have it. But it does make a difference. And we must discern truth from error. To teach or follow any doctrine other than the *one faith* of the Bible is to be accursed.

You and I need to study the Bible to know the truth.

*Think on this.*

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### Know of Whom You Have Learned

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When Paul wrote to Timothy in the second epistle, in chapter 3, verse 13 following, he stated that “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But,” he adds, “continue thou in the things thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

Timothy, from his youth, had been taught the holy scriptures, the word of God that testified of Christ.” (John 5:39) The revelation of Christ he likewise accepted, knowing that it was of God. Paul refers to this as he admonishes Timothy to continue in the things he had learned, knowing of whom he had learned them. This is very significant. We need to know the source of what we learn.

In other words, it is not enough simply to be told of Jesus. We are not to accept everything that is taught about Jesus, or that is represented as being pleasing to Jesus. Many people have the attitude that if we are sincere in hearing about Jesus, it really is not important as to the substance of what we hear, or what is the source of one’s ideas about Jesus and His will. But the apostle Paul says otherwise. Not only do we need to learn, but we need to be assured of its truth. This involves knowledge of the source of the teaching. It is not enough that the preacher commends Jesus, and tells people what will please the Lord. We need to know the basis of what he says. Is he telling what one can read in the Bible, or is he relating the speculations or philosophical conclusions of a theological class?

A false teacher will praise Jesus, while at the same time undermining His authority and denying His deity. Jesus depicts such teachers as

“wolves in sheep clothing.” (Matt. 7:15) He says that they “honoureth me their lips; but their heart is far from me.” (Matt. 15:8-9) They speak “lies in hypocrisy,” i.e. they state what they know to be false, representing it as truth revealed from God. (1 Tim. 4:2) They will even deceitfully claim to be “apostles” of the Lord. (2 Cor. 11:13) No wonder we are admonished not to believe every spirit, but to “try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1) It is extremely important to know whose teachings you receive. If the source of teaching is not found in the word of God, it matters not how persuasive it may be, or how reasonable it may seem, or how attractive its appeal is, it is not the source of faith. Faith must come by hearing the word of God. (Romans 10:17)

Teachers of divine matters have a responsibility to be a trustworthy source. We must be concerned about what we preach, making sure that it is of God. We must strive to give a “thus saith the Lord,” with book, chapter and verse, from the word of God.

*Think on this.*

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## Attitudes

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The sun that softens the resin also hardens the clay. The gospel that motivates the humble of heart is an occasion of rebellion for the proud and stubborn. Men react in different ways to the same message. What one finds interesting and exciting in a sermon, another finds boring. What impresses one, leaves another indifferent. And so it is that we are of different temperaments and attitudes which cause us to react in different ways. Yet the gospel is designed to persuade us all to react in the same way. That is, God would have us all to be saved, all to come into knowledge of the truth. (2 Timothy 2:4; see also Romans 1:16-17) The fact that we all do not react alike in obedience is not a reflection upon the gospel, nor yet an excuse for the disobedient. The reason for this is that each one is responsible for the attitude and disposition he possesses.

When we consider events of the past, we are sometimes prone to overlook the fact that people react according to the attitudes they

themselves have developed. Seeing the outcome of events, as in the crucifixion of Jesus, it is easy to say, "They should have accepted Him," or "If I had been there, I would not have cried, 'Crucify Him!'" This is easy to say, but in fact it may not be true. Many, if then motivated by the same attitudes they have today, would have crucified the Christ had they been there. Let me show you why.

Do you accept Christ today, to do His every will? If not, then upon what basis do you think you would have obeyed Him then? What is your attitude?

Do you fail to do God's will when it is not convenient to do so? For example, do you find yourself staying home from worship services because you are tired or because you find something else more interesting? Then do you think you would have stood in defense of Christ when He was tried, or at the cross when He was crucified? Would it have been convenient to have gone out on a cool night, and before a hostile crowd?

Do you allow the crowd to persuade you, or do you have the courage and conviction to stand for the right in the face of opposition? If you prefer to be one of the crowd, then you would have joined the crowd that cried out for His death.

If you love truth and are determined to do what is right above all things else, and willing to be deprived for your convictions, then you would have stood with Him. You will stand for Him now!

Men crucified Christ nearly 2000 years ago, and men crucify Him afresh today. (Hebrews 6:6) If you had been there then, would you have been of the number that sought His death? Do you reject Him now?

*Think about this and resolve to do His every will.*

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## The Rock and the Church

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When Jesus came with His disciples to the district of Caesarea Philippi, a mountainous region in northern Palestine, He asked them, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" (Matt. 16:13) They responded with the various answers they had heard. Some said Jesus was John the Baptist, or Elijah, or Jeremiah, or one of the prophets,

come from the dead. Then Jesus directed the question to them, “But whom say ye that I am?” It was Peter who acknowledged Jesus to be the Christ, the “Son of the Living God.”

Jesus commended Peter. His answer had not come through human wisdom.

This testimony had come from the Father: He had expressed His approval upon Jesus, at His baptism, in His miracles, and in His message. Peter had perceived the point. He had learned from God.

With that fact in their minds, that He was the Christ, this was the opportune time for Jesus to announce His church, which was God’s eternal purpose in Him. (Ephesians 3:10-11) And so Jesus announced that He would build His church: “I will build my church.” Obviously, then, the church had not yet been established. It was not established within the lifetime of Jesus. In fact, it came after His death and resurrection. He purchased the church with His blood that was shed upon the cross. (Acts 20:28) The church had its beginning on the Pentecost following His death. (Acts 2:1-4, 41, 47; 11:15.)

As one looked about at Caesarea Philippi, and saw towering Mt. Hermon and the great rock formations of the mountainous terrain, he would be impressed with the greatness of the boulders and great slabs of rock. Jesus took advantage of this scene. He used two words: one meaning the great rock, or foundation, and the other meaning a little pebble. In the Greek language, the great rock is a feminine noun, *petra*; the little rock is a masculine noun, *petros* — two different words with different significances.

Jesus said to Peter, which is the anglicized or English transliteration of *petros*, “Thou art Peter,” a little rock or pebble, “and upon *this* rock,” the *petra* or great slab or foundation, “I will build my church.” The church was built, not upon Peter, the little pebble, but upon the *petra*, the great foundation truth that Peter had confessed, that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus Himself, as the Christ and the Son of the living God, is the foundation of the church. (1 Corinthians 3:11)

This scene at Caesarea Philippi, related in Matthew 16, is so revealing. The narrative refutes the ideas of men, that the church was established by Moses, or Abraham, or John the Baptist. It refutes the

idea that the church was built by men, or that Peter is its head. Christ is its head. (Colossians 1:18) It affirms that the church of Christ was established by Christ, and He established only the one. (Ephesians 1:22-23, 4:4) Any church established by men later than Pentecost, AD 33, cannot be the one. And since the saved are added to that one (Acts 2:47), it is imperative that we learn about it, that we be a part of it.

*Think on this.*

## ————— **Obedience is Better Than Sacrifices** —————

Because of the treachery of the Amalekites, who fought against Israel when they left Egypt, God promised to destroy them. In the days of King Saul, God said, "I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." (1 Samuel 15:2-3).

Saul took his army and defeated Amalek. Yet he did not do as God had instructed him. He left alive some of the people and some of the cattle and flocks. When Saul met Samuel, the prophet, he declared, "Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord." Samuel replied, "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" Saul reasoned that the people had brought back the best of the animals to sacrifice to God. He tried to justify his disobedience. God had said to destroy all of the living, even mentioning specifically the oxen and sheep. Saul had reasoned, upon the insistence of the people, that to delay the destruction and fulfill it in sacrifices would be as good, and surely something pleasing to God. Samuel's reply was stinging: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (1 Samuel 15:22)

The principle is: in order to please God, one must do exactly as God directs. No substitution, however innocent in appearance, or sincere they are who make it, can make it right. No substitution can be justified.

We need to remember that all of these things are recorded for our benefit. (Romans 15:4) If God was displeased when Saul altered His command, even in what might be considered so slight a way, and with good intent, will He not be displeased with us should we add to, subtract from, or substitute ever so slightly what He commands of us?

For example, Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” (Mark 16:16) But many people find baptism distasteful, and since more persons would be attracted without it, would it not be good to replace baptism with prayer (or something else)? Now people can believe and pray to be saved. More can be reached when not repulsed by baptism. Is not God pleased with this “wise change”? The answer, of course, is “no.” It is better to obey than to substitute for whatever reason. Nothing is ever an acceptable substitute to justify rejecting what God said to do!

Consider that God ordained, among things in worship, that we *sing*. (Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16.) Yet some people find instrumental music more to their liking. Also, if we can attract more people to the worship with it, will not God be pleased with this? The answer is, “no.” There is no excuse to presume a prerogative of God, the right to sit as it were upon the throne of God, to state what is right or permissible in worship to Him. It is better to obey.

Oh, how we need to learn this lesson.

*Think about this.*

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## Salvation by Grace, by Faith

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By grace we are saved, indeed. (Acts 15:11; Eph. 2:5, 8; 2 Tim. 1:9.)

God has bestowed His favor upon the human race without any compulsion or by reason of anything we have done, or could do. In fact, this purpose was made from the foundations of the earth. (Ephesians 3:11, 1 Peter 1:18-20) And while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8.)

This grace was bestowed upon all men: “for the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men.” (Titus 2:11.) Jesus is “the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the

sins of the whole world.” (1 John 2:2)

Now if salvation depended entirely upon what God does, then all men would be saved. Yet, not all men will accept God’s grace and be saved. (Matthew 7:13-14) In accepting God’s provision of grace, there is something for man to do. He must do the will of God (Matthew 7:21), which will is revealed in the gospel. (Romans 1:16) Hence, he must obey Christ. (John 14:15) Christ is become the “author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” (Hebrews 5:9) His obedience does not earn the sinner salvation; it expresses his faith, by which he accepts God’s grace.

Before one can obey the gospel, he must hear it and accept it. Without faith it is impossible to please God. (Hebrews 11:6) And faith comes by the hearing of God’s word. (Romans 10:17)

Therefore, salvation is attributed to God who provided the means, and is dependent upon man’s willingness to obey God. “For by grace are ye saved through faith” (Ephesians 2:8). It is not of man, i.e. man did not provide the means, nor did he compel God. Salvation is a gift of God, but a gift which must be accepted. God does not force it upon man. If salvation were of man, then man could boast of his great achievement. But it is not of works so that man cannot boast. (Eph. 2:9)

But because salvation is not after man’s design, nor accomplished by works of which he may boast, this does not preclude obedience. Rather, it necessitates it. Man must turn to God. He cannot lean on his own understanding. He must work out his own salvation, not of himself, but in obedience to God. (Philippians 2:12) This is the kind of works to which James refers when he declares that “by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” (James 2:24)

We rely upon the grace of God when we believe His word and obey His will. One who refuses to obey God does not really lean upon God, but leans upon his own understanding.

*Think on this.*

*“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*

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## His Second Coming

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Jesus warned that we need to watch: “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.” (Matthew 24:4)

Many years have passed since Jesus uttered those words. So many, in fact, some have concluded that there will be no second coming at all. And yet, Jesus did not say when the time would be, or that it would be within a few years.

The apostle Peter points out that *time* is no obstacle with God. The passing of time indicates nothing with respect to God’s fulfilling His word. God has made a promise, and it will be fulfilled. He says, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9) And yet, the one thing that will precede his coming is this matter of scoffing at His promise. “Knowing this first,” the apostle writes, “that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” (2 Peter 3:3-4) Their reasoning and conclusion are not so. All things do not continue as they did from the beginning. “For,” Peter continues, “this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” (2 Peter 3:5-7)

Yes, men may scoff, and they will, but God’s word is sure. What may seem to be a problem for man with that timing is no problem at all with God. He is not slack. And the reason He has not come as yet is because He is longsuffering, not willing that anyone should perish. God would have all men to be saved. (2 Timothy 2:4) What time God yet permits is so that we may have further opportunity to get right!

But he is coming, and when He does, time will be no more; opportunities will be gone forever. And that day, “the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night,” without warning, “in the which the

heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” (2 Peter 3:10)

Are you ready for that day? It is coming. Obey the Lord every day, do his complete will. It is revealed in the Bible. Read your Bible today, and think about the Judgment.

*Think about this.*

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## Inherited Depravity

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Israel posed a question, as recorded in Ezekiel 18:19, “Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father?”

Were this question answered today, many modern preachers would answer, “Yes, the child inherits the sins of the father. In fact, from Adam on, a depraved nature has been transmitted.” The modern answer is most interesting in view of God’s answer. “The soul that sinneth shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.” (Ezekiel 18:19-20)

Could it be stated any plainer: “The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father”? How forcefully God emphasized the fact that the soul that sins shall die! One is not a sinner because of what someone else does. Sin is a transgression of law. (1 John 3:4) How could one be guilty of a transgression committed by someone else? Yet this is the modern doctrine, that because of what Adam did, we are all guilty of sin.

For this reason, some denominations baptize babies, in order to rid them of the sins committed before they were ever born, which were inherited by them. Such an idea is antagonistic to the very definition of terms and is contradicted by the word of God.

What is the condition of children? Are they born totally depraved, incapable of any good whatever? Jesus said, “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:3) Before one can be saved, he must become like a child. This does not sound like the condition of a child is so terrible. Surely Jesus is not suggesting that in order to be saved, one

must become totally depraved.

Do not be deceived into thinking that God gave you life as a depraved sinner, guilty of the sins of someone else. Do not become passive, thinking that all is lost unless God miraculously removes the depraved nature and enables you to love and obey him. The truth is, you were not born depraved. You can now love and obey God. You have this ability, and hence responsibility. (Acts 2:38-40; Philippians 2:12) God wants you to obey Him and has given the words of life. (Romans 1:16; Acts 11:14) You and I need to read the Bible and obey God as He directs us therein.

*Think on this.*

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### Weariness in Service

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When God spoke to His people, Israel, through Malachi, the prophet, He chided them for their inconsistencies in worship. They professed love, devotion, and service to God simply upon the basis of performing various acts of worship. Yet their heart was not in the performance of these deeds.

Malachi 6:1 records God as saying, "O priests, that despise my name." The people would ask, "Wherein have we despised thy name?" God replies, "Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar." Israel replies, "Wherein have we polluted thee?" "In that ye say, the table of the Lord is contemptible." The Lord proceeds to prove this evaluation of the people. The table of the Lord was held in contempt in that they offered in sacrifice the blind, the lame, and the sick. They would not even do this with their rulers. God challenges: "offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person?"

The people also said of their worship, "Behold, what weariness is it!" And they snuffed at it, in that they brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick. God asks, "should I accept this of your hand?"

It is easy for us to sit in judgment upon Israel. We can easily see how inconsistent they were in their thinking, to suppose that they were pleasing to God when they offered only the poorest of service, and even then they complained.

Are we any better? How many suppose that they please God when they give but the most meager service, and, even then, half-heartedly. Members of the Lord's church may be guilty of this. They attend services to worship, but only when everything is convenient. If they feel in the least ill, it is reason enough to stay home. Not enough, of course, to keep them from work, or from going out for entertainment! Or let the weather look threatening, or it be a little cool, or a little warm, and it is reason enough to miss worshipping God. And when they do attend, it is a bother. They view even going to worship as a great service to God. How pleased God must be that they would make such an effort to worship him on such an inconvenient day!

May we ask, as did God concerning their governor, would you display the same attitude with your boss on the job? Don't go in to work if you feel below par, or if company comes from out of town, or if it is raining, or cold, or hot, or ad infinitum. And when you do go, let him know how honored he should feel that you came in at all. Do you think he would be pleased? Would you hold your job? Would you receive full pay?

Then why do we think God will give us a reward—heaven, and eternal life—for such half-hearted service?

*Think on this.*

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### Genesis 1:1

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“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1) This opening verse of the Bible contains a wealth of information. It accounts for all of creation. It contains the five “manifestations of the Unknowable” — time, power, motion, space, and matter — set forth by Herbert Spencer (*First Principles*, ch.3). These items are “unknowable,” a word used especially of items “lying beyond the limits of human experience or understanding.” Human wisdom cannot fathom how or why these things came to be. Materialists and atheists cannot ascertain their origin and operation. However, by revelation we do understand that they originated in the mind of an intelligent being, a benevolent God, and were created by the power His word.

God reveals the first cause of a world and universe—including

the crowning achievement of life, the being of man—in the opening statement of His inspired Word: “in the *beginning*.”

Time is a physical phenomenon; before matter there was no time, just *eternity past*; and with the annihilation of matter there will be no time, but an *eternity future*. That is why, when Moses asked God who should He say sent Him to deliver Israel from bondage, God said, “I AM THAT I AM ... Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.” (Exodus 3:14) “I AM” is eternal present — before the world, He was I AM; at any present time, He is I AM; in the future unto and throughout eternity, He is I AM. (With this thought in mind, consider Jesus’ declaration: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.” (John 8:58)

“In the beginning, *God ...*”

In this verse we are given an insight into the nature of God. The word “God” here is the translation of the Hebrew word, *Elohim*, which is a plural form of *El* or *Elah*. While it is true that a plural form may be a *pluralis majestatis*, i.e. a majestic way of speaking of one, we must take note of the fact that God in this context relates to Himself in plural pronouns. In verse 26, “God said, Let *us* make man in *our* image, after our likeness...” From a further study in the New Testament, we learn that the Godhead is composed of three personalities, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all referred to as God. (John 1:1, Ephesians 4:4-6)

“God created.” *Created* is a *singular verb* in the Hebrew, showing unity of the Godhead in creation. “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy (Spirit): and these three are one.” (1 John 5:7) The creation is attributed to the Father, the Word (Christ), and the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 3:9, John 1:1-3, Genesis 1:2).

“In the beginning God *created* the *heaven* and the *earth ...*

The world was spoken into existence by the word power of God: “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast.” (Psalms 33:6-9)

By this same word power the world “is kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” (2 Peter 3:7)

What is “unknowable” by human reasoning is made clear by the God who created it all. Trusting in this God who has demonstrated His power, His wisdom, His truthfulness, we may know all things. Heb 11:3 — “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”

We ought to recognize the power of God’s word by these references. It will accomplish the end to which it is spoken. God’s word to us is His power unto salvation. (Romans 1:16) Obey it and you will be blessed as He promised. He has the power.

*Think on this.*

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## True Discipleship

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Jesus: “If you abide in my word, then you are truly disciples of mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31-32, NKJB)

If one would be a disciple of Jesus, he must be faithful in obedience to His word. Obviously then, not everyone who professes to be a disciple is one indeed. The word “disciple” (Greek, *mathetes*) literally means “thought accompanied by endeavor.” It denotes “one who follows both the teacher and the teaching.” (W.E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of N. T. Words*). There is more involved than simply listening to the teaching of God’s Word. A true disciple is one who is obedient, devoted, loyal, and working.

When Jesus said to *continue or abide* in “my word,” as the word signifies, one is not to depart, not to leave,” but “to continue, to be present.” Obedience to His word is necessary. Paul said that the gospel is God’s power unto salvation. (Romans 1:16) The words Jesus spoke, He said, “are spirit and are life.” (John 6:63) Jesus is savior to all who obey Him. (Hebrews 5:9) Many, many references demonstrate the necessity of hearing the word of God and living by it. (John 6:44-45, Colossians 3:10, John 12:48, etc.)

In Luke 14:33, Jesus said, “no one of you can be my disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.” This is another condition of discipleship. One must be devoted to the end that he is willing to give all in obedience to Christ. Love for Christ must supersede everything else. (Matthew 22:37) Christ comes before one’s family (Matthew 10:37-38), and even before one’s self. (Matthew 16:24-26) As Paul said, all things must be considered loss to win Christ. (Philippians 3:7-8)

Another condition of discipleship is *loyalty*. The disciple is not above his teacher. As Jesus was opposed, so His disciples will be opposed, and this opposition must not deter one in his service to God. Regardless of the circumstances, one must not draw back. (See Galatians 6:9, Hebrews 10:38-39.)

And, finally, the disciple is one who *bears fruit*. Jesus said, in John 15:8, “By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.” In other words, the disciple of Christ is not one who is idle; he is busy working in the service of Christ. (Titus 2:14, Ephesians 2:10, etc. )

A true disciple, then, is one who is obedient, devoted, loyal, and fruitful. Actually, I have described a Christian. Yes, a true disciple is a Christian. (Acts 11:26) A Christian is not one who simply wears the name of Christ, but he is diligent in His service.

Are *you* a disciple of Christ ... truly?

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### Study to be Approved

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In 2 Timothy 2:15, the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, telling him to “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of Truth.”

Two thoughts are emphasized with respect to studying, or as the American Revised version says, “Giving diligence...” First, in order to be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. This suggests that there could be reason to be ashamed. The second is, and related to the first, in order to handle accurately the word of God. This suggests that the word of God may be mishandled.

Beginning with this latter thought, we observe the fact that the word

of God may be mishandled. Peter affirms this in 2 Peter 3:16, where he speaks of those who wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction. One may do this in ignorance, as did the Jews. (Romans 10:1-2, Matthew 15:7-9.) And one may do this knowingly, for advantage. Such are the false teachers, as Peter warns in 2 Peter 2:1-3.

One needs to study in order to obtain knowledge sufficient to understand the truth. He needs the ability to put each part in its proper perspective in relationship to the whole. He needs to make correct applications to life situations today. Also one must study so as to be able to discern good and evil, and thereby able to detect false doctrine. (Hebrews 5:14, Titus 7:9.)

Therefore, as formerly stated, one must give attention and effort to being a workman who is unashamed. Consider that one may endeavor to be workman, and yet be brought to shame. If he makes improper application of the word, or is deceived by false teaching, demonstrating immaturity (Ephesians 4:13-14), this may happen to him. It is sad to hear people telling others what they should do to please God, when obviously they do not understand it themselves.

In order to be a workman who needs not to be ashamed, one who accurately handles the word of God, he must study. Modern translations point out that the thought is one of effort, exertion, and diligence. It involves a study of, and meditation upon, the word of God and a close application in one's own conduct so that spiritual maturity is achieved.

I know of no short-cuts to obtaining the knowledge and experience that one needs to be an effective workman. Just open the book; spend time with it.

May we suggest that you begin today? Set aside thirty minutes or an hour a day. When you take a work break, read a chapter or two. And do it with system, not a random reading.

*Think on this.*

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## Calling on the Name of The Lord

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In Romans 10:13, Paul writes, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." This is a quotation of Joel 2:32, and is again quoted in Acts 2:21.

The implication of “whosoever” is that free access is to all. Anyone and everyone may be saved. The only condition is that one call upon the name of the Lord. God has not limited atonement to a few who are predestined to be saved, whereas all others, even though they call upon the name of the Lord, will be lost. God would have all men to be saved. (2 Peter 3:9) The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared unto all men. (Titus 2:11)

The “whosoever” that shall call upon the name of the Lord *shall be saved*. There are no if’s, maybe’s, possibly, or whatever. He “shall be saved.” If you do what God says, He will keep His word!

The question of utmost importance is how does one call upon the name of the Lord?

First of all, note that to *call upon* is not to simply say, “Lord.” Jesus says that not everyone who says, “Lord, Lord,” shall be saved. (Matthew 7:21) It is not prayer. Prayer is the privilege of the righteous, and not a means of becoming righteous. (Read 1 Peter 3:12, John 9:31) Saul was praying, when the man sent of God told him to get up and be baptized, and wash away his sins.

Furthermore, to call upon the name of the Lord is not the act of believing. One is not saved at the point of faith, by the act of believing alone. James says one is justified “not by faith only.” (James 2:24)

Actually, Ananias tells us what it is to call upon the name of the Lord. When he told Saul to “arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins,” he added an apposition, “calling on the name of the Lord.” That is, when he obeyed God in baptism, he was thereby calling upon God to grant the promise He made. Jesus had said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” To call upon the name of the Lord is a Hebraism, meaning to *appeal* to the Lord for what He promised upon doing as He instructed.

Peter made the same application on Pentecost. He quoted the prophecy of Joel, that “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered” (Acts 2:21), and said that the time had come: “this is that” (verse 16). When men asked what to do, he said, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (verse 38).

Have you called upon the name of the Lord to be saved?

*Think seriously about this.*

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## If You Had Been There

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A semi-documentary feature was presented several years ago on television, entitled, *You Were There*. Historical events were covered with modern communications equipment and techniques.

Employing somewhat the same format, I have considered historical religious events. Instead of being mere spectators, I would that each one will consider himself a part of the scene. *If you were there...*

Go back with me through the centuries to the land of Israel during the reign of King Ahab, with his notorious wife, Jezebel. The land had turned to idolatry. Throughout the land there were hundreds of priests who served Baal.

We arrive on the scene, following three and one-half years of drought. The prophet of God, Elijah, has confronted Ahab and issued a challenge for a confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel before the people of Israel. We are among the crowd that makes the journey up into Mt. Carmel.

Elijah challenges the audience, "How long limp ye between the two sides? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal be God, then follow him." We stand there, wondering the outcome. Elijah proposes a test. Let each, he and the prophets of Baal, build an altar to sacrifice unto their God or gods, yet put no fire to it. Let each appeal to his God (gods) to send down fire, and whoever answers with fire shall be acknowledged as God indeed.

The proposal is fair, and we cry out, "The suggestion is good!"

The prophets of Baal build their altar, and cry unto Baal to answer with fire. The day drags on, with no result. They begin to cut themselves, so that the blood flows down their bodies; still no answer. Elijah taunts them.

Now Elijah calls all to look to him. He builds an altar and prepares the sacrifice. Surprisingly, he calls for barrels of water, twelve barrels, and he covers the wood, the sacrifice, and even fills a ditch dug around

the altar with water. How can fire ignite the wood with all that water? Now Elijah prays to God ... and fire falls upon the altar! The wood, the sacrifice, the water, the stones, even the dust are consumed in fire! Everyone falls to the ground and cries out, "The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God!" (This scene is recorded in 1 Kings 18.)

Now, my question is: If you had been there, on whose side would you have stood from the beginning? with Elijah, or with the prophets of Baal? Using hindsight, it is easy to answer. An honest answer would be, "I would have stood then where I stand now." The same attitudes that affect you now would have affected you then. If you stand where the majority stands, you would have been with the 400 prophets of Baal against Elijah. If power is the determining factor, then it would have been with Baal and the power of the kingdom behind him. Or, if it had been friendship, you would have gone the way of your friends, whichever way that might be. Only if you have conviction to do the will of God, whatever the cost, would you have stood with Elijah.

What attracts and commands your loyalty today? Where do you stand?

*Think on this.*

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## The Sword of the Spirit

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The sword of the Spirit is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:17) The power of the word of God cannot be separated from the Holy Spirit. Just as with the warrior and his physical sword, so it is with the spiritual sword and the Spirit. What the warrior does in combat, he executes with the sword. What afflictions or death are inflicted by the sword are done by the warrior. It is foolish to talk of the cutting of the sword as something distinct from the efforts of the warrior. This is the error men commit when they speak of what is done by the word of God, as though it is isolated from what is done by the Spirit; or when they speak of what is done by the Spirit, as though it is separate and apart from the word of God, and sometimes even contrary to the word.

May I suggest that what the Spirit accomplishes in converting and guiding men, He does through the word? Observe:

One is born of the Spirit. When Jesus told Nicodemus that one

must be born again— born of water and the Spirit— He added, “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (John 3:6) Now notice that one is born of the word. “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: *being born again*, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.” (1 Peter 2:22-23) When one is obedient to the truth, does as the Spirit sets forth in the word, he is born again— born of the Spirit, born of the word.

Likewise, one is sanctified by the Spirit. (Read 1 Corinthians 6:11.) Yet, in John 17:17, Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” One is sanctified by the word; he is sanctified by the Spirit. Obviously then, one is sanctified by the Spirit when he is obedient to the truth, hence, sanctified by the word.

In Romans 8:11, we are told that the Spirit is to dwell in the Christian. In Colossians 3:16, we are told to let the word of Christ dwell in us. The Spirit dwells in the Christian in direct proportion as the word of God dwells in the Christian. When one rejects the teachings of the Spirit, he rejects the Spirit. Stephen accused the Jews of rejecting the Holy Spirit when they rejected the words of the prophets. (Acts 7:51-52) The reason for this conclusion is understood by the fact that when the prophets spoke, they taught what was given them by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:21) To reject the words of the Spirit is to reject the Spirit.

From these passages we must conclude that when one claims that he is being led by the Spirit, and yet he is not obedient to the word, he is deceiving himself. The man who is being led by the Spirit is the one who is obeying the word.

Are you obedient? Or, we might ask, are you being led by the Spirit?  
*Think on this.*

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### Prayer Is Not For . . .

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In our zeal to enlist more persons in the service of God, we must be careful that we do not change God’s will into a practice that we perceive to be more acceptable. Some have succumbed to that

temptation. I realize that not everyone is willing to accept the Lord's terms of believing and being baptized to be saved (Mark 16:16), yet I cannot make the conditions different. It would be foolish of me to say, "I know the Lord says one is to believe and be baptized to be saved, but you don't have to do all that. If you don't like the thought of being baptized, then just forget it. The Lord will be pleased enough if you just believe." I do not have that right.

Yet this is precisely what is being done by so many. Some dismiss the necessity of baptism outright. Others substitute for it. Instead of believe and be baptized, some say believe and pray through. And yet, we never find any inspired man telling an alien sinner to pray, much less to *pray through* to salvation. Really, for what could one, who is in sin, pray?

Note: He could NOT pray ...

1. For God to love him. God already does, and seeks his spiritual welfare. God has demonstrated his love in the giving of His Son. (John 3:16)
2. For light, because "the entrance of (God's) word giveth light." (Psalms 119:130)
3. For understanding, because His word "giveth understanding to the simple." (Psalms 119:130)
4. For Christ to come unto him. Christ has already made possible this contact. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden," He said, "and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)
5. To be reconciled to God. Reconciliation is in Christ. (2 Cor. 5:18) and one is baptized into Christ and into His body wherein is reconciliation. (Galatians 3:27; 1 Cor. 12:13, Eph. 1:22-23, 2:16)
6. For grace. It has already appeared to all men. (Titus 2:11)
7. For faith. Faith comes by the hearing of God's word. (Romans 10:17)
8. For God to purify the heart. This is by faith not by prayer. (Acts 15:9)
9. For God to purify the soul. This is done in obedience. (1 Peter 1:22-23)

10. For God to accept him. In “every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.” (Acts 10:35)

Really, I cannot tell the sinner that prayer is an acceptable substitute for baptism.

I cannot even tell him to pray. I can tell him to obey, to believe and be baptized, and that prayer will then be his privilege.

Are you obedient to God, or are you trying to substitute another way?

*Think on this.*

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### Be Not Deceived

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“Little children, let no man deceive you: *he that doeth righteousness is righteous*, even as He is righteous.” (1 John 3:7)

If no one ever contradicted this fact, there would be no need for warning against deception. Obviously, some have and will teach that one can be righteous without doing righteousness, i.e. without doing what is commanded us in the gospel. (Romans 1:16-17) We know that during the apostasy some taught that one could know God without keeping God’s commandments. (1 John 2:3-5)

The apostle Paul warns against this same deception. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.” (Galatians 6:7-8) Yes, let no man deceive you into thinking you can live after the flesh, live in worldliness, drinking, gambling, fornication, swearing, cheating, etc., and still go to heaven. If you believe in such a doctrine, you are deceived. God will not be mocked; that is the truth of the matter. Because of sin, we are alienated from God. (Isaiah 59:2; James 4:4) Do not think for a moment that God forgives sins, only to allow man to return to sin with impunity. If you sow to the flesh, you will so reap corruption! Some deceivers pretend that this means only that the body will be dissipated, but the soul will be saved. They believe one can give his body and life in service to the devil and that God will preserve his soul. Not so, both soul and body belong to God. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) The corruption here is in antithesis to life everlasting. So, while it is true that a profligate life

will result in a dissipated body, the fate of sin is still worse: it results in a forfeiture of everlasting life. (Romans 6:23)

Why will people deceive themselves and others into thinking they are secure with God while living filthy, ungodly lives? Because they have a mistaken view, thinking that once one enters the grace of God, he is forever in that grace, and can never fall from it. But this is the devil's lie. (1 Timothy 4:1-2) God says otherwise.

In Galatians 5:3-4, the inspired writer says, "For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." Notice that God, through the apostle Paul, told some of the Galatians, "Ye are fallen from grace." This is not an academic question: can one fall from grace? Some did! No question of possibility ... maybe, or it may be that. *They fell from grace.* Only an infidel can deny it.

When one obeys the gospel, and enjoys the grace of God who grants forgiveness, he must continue to walk in the light as God is in the light. (1 John 1:6-7) To leave the light, to walk again in sin, is to leave the grace of God. Have you obeyed? Are you living right?

*Think on this.*

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### Same Sex "Marriages"

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"The Pharisees also came unto (Jesus), tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." (Matt 19:3-6; see Gen. 3:18, 24.)

Marriage involves a husband and a wife, a male and a female. God did not create one man for a plurality of females, or one female for a plurality of males, thereby authorizing polygamy. Nor did He create two males to mate, or two females to mate, and state (or even to intimate) that marriage is for any two persons, thus approving of

same gender marriages. He began with only two, a male and a female, that they might “be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth”—or, we might say, “to procreate the human race.” (Gen. 1:28). Two persons of the same gender could hardly fulfill this purpose. To suggest that God approves of polygamous marriages and same-sex marriages is not Scripturally warranted. They do not constitute “marriage.” God instituted it and He defines it. What belongs to God, man must keep his hands off!

God’s response to same-gender sex I quote without comment:

#### Old Testament

Leviticus 18:22: “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.”

Leviticus 20:13: “If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.”

#### New Testament

Romans 2:26-27: “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.”

1 Corinthians 6:9-11: “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.”

[Modern translations, instead of “effeminate” and “abusers of themselves with mankind,” translate the text as “homosexuals” and “sodomites.”]

In spite of what God says, there are people today (even in religious fellowships) who condone and seek to justify sexual immorality. The word of God is wrested (2 Peter 3:16), even as the prophet Isaiah

observed:

“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

“Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!

“Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!” (Isaiah 5:20-23)

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### Foot washing

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Most people have heard the story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. The account of this is found in John 13. In verses 12-14 we read, “So when he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and sat down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me, Teacher, and, Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet.”

Some people today have misunderstood what Jesus was saying, and have instituted special foot-washing services. These people are not the first to misunderstand this. Peter did not understand it at the time. In verses 8-10 we read, “Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is bathed needeth not save [except] to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.” Peter thought that if it was good for Jesus to wash his feet, it would be even better for Jesus to wash the rest of him also. Jesus explained to him that only his feet were dirty and needed washing.

In those days people wore open sandals. Even though a person might bathe before going to dinner, his feet would be dirty by the time he arrived. It was the custom of that time to have a servant wash the guests' feet. It must have greatly surprised the apostles to find their Lord performing the duty of a servant toward them. However, this was the point Jesus was making. If Jesus was willing to humble Himself to serve

those He was teaching, should we not be willing to humble ourselves and serve one another? As Jesus said, in Mark 10:44, “whosoever would be first among you shall be servant of all.”

Jesus never intended for foot-washing to become a religious ceremony. He used the occasion as an example to us that we should serve one another. When we begin thinking that we are too good to do something for one of our brethren, we are missing the whole point that Jesus was trying to get across to us.

*Think on this.*

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## Woman's Position

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God has quite a bit to say about the position of men and women. In 1 Cor. 11:3 He gives us the general principle: “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.”

You may ask, “How is this general principle to be applied?” Paul answers that in 1 Tim. 2:11-15: “Let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection. But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness. For Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not beguiled, but the woman being beguiled hath fallen into transgression: but she shall be saved through her child-bearing, if they continue in faith and love and sanctification with sobriety.” Paul says the woman is to be in subjection. This is why women are not to enter the pulpit and preach. This is one of the reasons why women are not to be appointed to be elders or deacons.

But someone may say, “What about in the marriage? Isn't marriage a 50/50 arrangement? Doesn't the wife have equal say with her husband?” Paul tells us in Col. 3:18-19, “Wives, be in subjection to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.” Marriage is not a 50/50 role in authority or position. Husbands and wives are to love each other. But Paul also says that the wife is to be in subjection to her husband.

But, what about equality? Doesn't the Bible teach that? All will be *judged* equally and fairly. Here is the way Peter put it in 1 Peter 1:17: “And if ye call on him as Father, who without respect of persons

judgeth according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear." God is going to judge us fairly, without respect of persons. Therefore, we must obey Him in these matters concerning husbands and wives; men and women.

Eternity with God is too great a thing to throw away simply because of our foolish pride.

*Think on this.*

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### What Will You Do With Jesus?

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When Pilate asked the question, "What shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?" he posed a problem that faces every man. You see, we, too, must answer this question. "What shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?" (Matthew 27:22)

The Jews answered, "Let him be crucified." (Matthew 27:23) They completely rejected him. All who reject Him today crucify Him afresh. (Hebrews 6:4-6)

Judas' answer was, "I will sell Him." He went to the chief priests and asked, "What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?" (Matthew 26:15) Judas is not alone. Sometimes professional people will hypocritically join some church, feigning a piety for business reasons.

False teachers see in Jesus nothing but monetary gain. Peter warns of those would make merchandise of you. (2 Peter 2:1-3)

Peter's answer at that crucial period was, I will deny Him. He found himself in a hostile crowd, while Jesus was on trial. He was weak, and succumbed to the pressure of the crowd. We need to learn that evil companionship corrupts good morals. (1 Corinthians 15:33)

Pilate's recourse was to attempt neutrality. He washed his hands. (Matthew 27:24) He was too fearful to deny Jesus, but too weak to stand for Him. Yet there is no middle ground. Either we are *for* Jesus, or we are against Him. To fail to stand with Him is to be *against* Him. (Matthew 12:30)

Years later, Saul's attitude was, I will persecute Him. In persecuting His church, Saul persecuted Jesus. Jesus asked, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4) When men persecute, war against,

misrepresent, or otherwise oppose the church of our Lord, they persecute Christ.

The attitude of Felix was, "I will wait. At a better time, I will obey." (Read Acts 24:25) There is no record that he ever obeyed. It is tragic that so many today are of the same attitude, who, knowing the will of God, delay in obeying it.

Agrippa's attitude toward Jesus was, "Almost." "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. (Acts 26:28) But good intentions don't count. (See Hebrews 5:9, Matthew 7:24 following.)

Now contrast those people with the people on Pentecost. When they heard of Jesus, and the need to repent and be baptized into Him (Acts 2:38), as many as gladly heard were baptized. (Acts 2:41)

Which attitude describes you? What will you do with Jesus, who is called Christ?

*Think on this.*

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## Discipline

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"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." (2 Thessalonians 3:6)

Discipline is essential to the health and prosperity of God's people. As one is called by the grace of God, he is delivered from the world of sin and translated into the kingdom of Christ, where he is to walk soberly, and righteously, and godly. (Colossians 1:13; 2 Peter 1:4) "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world..." (Titus 2:11-12) What one expects of himself in living right before God, he should expect of others who make the same profession, even as God expects of both of them. However, when one will not follow God's expectations, then he must be marked and fellowship withdrawn from him. To allow sinful behavior to go uncorrected is to jeopardize the entire body: "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." (1 Corinthians 5:6)

To walk "disorderly" is to *break rank*. (2 Thess. 3:11, 14) It is a

military term used metaphorically. Just as a soldier threatens the safety of his fellow-soldiers when he breaks rank, turns from the battle and leaves a vacancy, even so the child of God, in turning back to worldliness, thins the ranks and jeopardizes the church of which he is a part. Such conduct would not and could not be tolerated in military ranks. And God does not permit such among His people.

Our marching orders are in the word of God, i.e. in the Scriptures. Paul speaks of the tradition received of us. (2 Thess. 3:6-7) The word "tradition" simply means that which is handed down. It may be good or bad. Human ideas, doctrines and practices handed down are bad. They are human traditions. They make one's worship vain. (Matthew 15:9; Colossians 2:8, 20-23) However, that which is handed down from God is good. What Paul preached, he received from God. (I Corinthians 2:7-13; Ephesians 3:3-5) This tradition is good. We are to follow the tradition originating with God.

A good soldier follows orders. He demands of himself strict discipline and he expects the same of others. It is in respect of authority that Paul writes, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," i.e. by the authority of Jesus. Let every Christian respect this authority to walk in soberness, righteousness and godliness. And he is to withdraw from every professed Christian who breaks rank.

Are you a disciplined child of God, serving God so as to be well-pleasing?

*Think on this.*

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### Abhor Evil

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In Genesis 19:12-18, we read the story of Lot. When Lot separated from Abram, he pitched his tent toward Sodom, and finally became an inhabitant of it. Sodom was a very wicked city; its depravity is marked by the sexual perversion that bears its name: sodomy. Yet in this environment Lot remained righteous. This was difficult in view of the fact that what becomes commonplace and acceptable to society tends to lose the stigma of wickedness. This is what happened in Sodom and Gomorra: there were none righteous. We often hear justification for some immorality: "Everybody does it!" Although everybody did wrong

where Lot lived, Lot did not!

I think the answer as to why Lot was able to persevere in such a wicked place is to be found in his attitude. In Romans 12:9, we are told: “Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.” To abhor is to *utterly detest*, to view something as *repulsive* and to be *avoided*. It is this attitude toward evil that one must develop and maintain. When sin is no longer viewed with *horror*, we are susceptible to it. But as long as it is nauseous to us, we are able to discern and guard ourselves. Lot apparently viewed the wickedness of Sodom with profound disgust.

Peter tells us, in 2 Peter 2:6-8, that God, “turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that should live ungodly; and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)...”

Yes, Lot’s soul was vexed. That means “worn out.” The word defined carries the idea of “to tire down with toil, exhaust with labor.” Lot was worn down, his spirit exhausted, by the sins he saw the people committing! Evil ought always to be oppressive to the Christian.

As we read our newspapers, we ought to be moved with abhorrence at the crimes reported. As we view our televisions, and witness unlawful conduct—yes, often before we can reach the dial—we ought to be repulsed by it. The filthy language, the indecent exposure, and glorification of adultery, fornication, homosexuality and other sins, are nauseating to the righteous soul.

We need to be indignant, and let it be known.

*Think about this.*

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## Equivocation

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Words are important. The Holy Spirit selected words to convey the mind and will of God to man. (1 Corinthians 2:13) We need to take care that we properly understand the words employed if we are to understand the will of God.

Some words, though different, sound alike (perhaps even spelled alike). For instance, define for me the word “fast.” Immediately you

wonder how I use it. “Fast” may refer to abstaining from food, as “the man fasts”; or it may refer to tenacity, as “the colors are fast” or “the board holds fast”; or it may refer to speed, as in “the horse is fast.” To use the word without distinction, to substitute a definition for the one contextually intended by the author is to commit the fallacy of equivocation. Because words may sound alike does not mean that they are the same in definition.

Now, what does this have to do with the Bible? It just happens to be one of the ways in which the unlearned and unstable wrest the Scriptures. For example, in Romans 10:13, Paul writes, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” One definition of “call” is to speak forth. To arbitrarily define the word “call” in this text as an act of *speaking* the name of the Lord would be to equivocate. This is not the case: Paul is *not* saying, “whosoever shall speak the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Jesus said in Matthew 7:21, “Not everyone that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven.” There is no contradiction between these statements. Notice that Romans 10:13 says “call upon.” The word means “to invoke,” or appeal to authority. Remember that Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” (Mark 16:16) This means that “whosoever “appeals” to the Lord for salvation will do what He says. When one believes and is baptized, he is calling on the name of the Lord to be saved.

Ananias so explains the statement in Acts 22:16, “And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” Yes, when a penitent believer is baptized, he is thereby calling on the name of the Lord.

Obviously, then, when one says that prayer to God is calling on the name of the Lord, he is equivocating. There is no such thing as “praying through” to salvation. Saul was praying, but he was told to arise, and be baptized to wash away sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Have you called upon the name of the Lord to be saved?

*Think on this.*

*“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” - Hebrews 4:16*

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## Proof of Love

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In 2 Corinthians 8:8, the apostle Paul wrote: "I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love." Paul would have proved the sincerity of the Corinthians' love, that is, the genuineness or truthfulness of their professed love. It is one thing to profess to love, to say that one has love for another, but it may be something else in reality. The genuineness of love is demonstrated when it is put to the test. Whereas the Corinthians' immediate test was in the matter of their giving to help relieve the distress of Christians in Jerusalem, this of course is not the sole test of love.

Jesus showed the proof of His love by His death: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13) God demonstrated His love in sending Jesus. (Romans 5:8)

How do we show the proof of our love? Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15) And again, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me..." (John 14:21) A man may say he loves Jesus, but unless he obeys Jesus, he gives nothing but lip service. His is but an empty profession. Sad but true, we have many in this condition as they were in the days of Jesus. For example, Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16) Now if one loves Jesus, he will keep his commandments. Yet I have known people who loudly protest their love for Jesus, but stubbornly refuse to be baptized. Some will even proclaim, "I don't care what the Bible says, I'll not be baptized!" Yet the Bible says what Jesus said. Not to care what the Bible says, is not to care what Jesus said! Is it not the height of inconsistency to claim to love Jesus, and then immediately refuse to do what He says? "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." One who refuses to be baptized for a remission of his sins does not really love the Lord. (Acts 2:38, 10:48, 22:16, etc.)

In whatever we are directed, if we love the Lord, we will do it. When the Christians gave of their means, their money, to relieve the poor saints in Judea, Paul said that thereby "shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf."

If one refuses to do as the Scriptures direct, he should not be so brazen as to claim that he loves the Lord. It is like the one who says he knows God, and yet fails to keep His commandments. John says such an one is a liar and the truth is not in him. (1 John 2:3-4)

To love God, to know God, is to keep His commandments. Do you love God?

*Think about it.*

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### Baptism: for Remission of Sins

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Baptism is commanded of God. (Acts 10:48) Jesus stated that he that believes and is baptized shall be saved. (Mark 16:16) As he was directed to preach this, Peter declared on the day of Pentecost (the first following the resurrection of Christ) that those who were then convinced that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, should repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38) On that occasion, those who loved the Lord and gladly received the word, were baptized. (Acts 2:41) However, not everyone gladly receives the word of God. Many reject it, and are not baptized. Inconsistently, they claim they love Jesus (John 14:15), and at the same time they try to justify their rejection of His word.

Even though Jesus commanded baptism in order for men to be saved (Mark 16:16), or as His apostles stated it: for a remission of sins (Acts 2:38), to wash away sins (Acts 22:16), to put on Christ (Galatians 3:27), to walk in a newness of life (Romans 6:3-4), to be saved (1 Peter 3:21), some strongly contend that one need not be baptized; that it is NOT for a remission of sins, to wash away sins, to put on Christ, etc.: that all of these things are obtained before, and without baptism. (Is it not strange how some men know more about salvation than the Lord and His apostles?) Some try to justify their rejection of baptism by claiming that “for a remission of sins” means *because* of, i.e. one is to be baptized *because* his sins are already forgiven. But this is a perversion, for the reason that we find the same expression in Matthew 26:28, where it says that Jesus shed His blood for many “for the remission of sins.” Now, for whatever reason Jesus shed His blood, one is to be baptized. Both are said to be *for* “remission of sins.” Who is

so brazen and defiant as to say that Jesus died because sins were already forgiven? Forbid! The truth is, Jesus died in order that men's sins may be remitted—"for the remission of sins"—and for the same reason one is commanded to be baptized.

Have you been baptized scripturally, i.e. have you been baptized for a remission of your sins?

*Think about this.*

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### What Must I Do to be Lost

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What must I do to be lost? Did you hear the question? I did not ask, what must I do to be saved, but what must I do to be lost? And the answer is: *nothing*.

Yes, to do nothing will result in damnation. In other words, in order to be saved I must do something.

Too often, people think of salvation in terms of being a good person. They do not mean a righteous person, but one who is acceptable in the community. He pays his debts, is friendly and helpful to his neighbors, and is honest in his dealings. Sometimes one will justify himself by declaring, "I don't steal; I don't lie; I don't commit adultery; I don't gossip; I don't murder; I don't fight; etc." So this is supposed to add up to eternal life? Do a little figuring. Write it down in a column. Put down a zero for "not steal." Under it put another zero for not lying. And so, on down the page, place zeros for not committing adultery, gossiping, murdering, fighting, etc. Now add up the column: zero plus zero plus zero - what is the sum total? Yes, zero!

By this we simply mean to say that to be saved involves more than *not* doing something. True, freedom from sin is involved—not lying, stealing, etc.—but it involves doing something! Since we all have sinned (Romans 3:23), we all need salvation in Christ. One must come to Christ. (John 6:40) In John 14:6, Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." In John 10:9, He said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved..."

Coming to Christ involves more than just simply believing Him. As He said, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things

which I say?” (Luke 6:46)

More is involved than just professing faith. “Not everyone that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 7:21) “Christ is the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” (Hebrews 5:9)

Salvation requires faith (Hebrews 11:6), plus obedience. So “ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” (James 2:24)

Cornelius was a good man, as we would evaluate a good man. God commended him. But his commendable conduct could not save him. Peter, in speaking words whereby he must be saved (Acts 11:15), commanded him to be baptized. (Acts 10:48)

What must I do to be lost? Nothing. What must I do to be saved? Obey Christ, in whom are all spiritual blessings. (Ephesians 1:3).

Have you obeyed Christ?

*Think about it.*

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## False Teachers

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If one believes the Bible, he will have to accept the fact that there are false teachers. The Bible says so, in 1 John 4:1 and 2 Peter 2:1-3, and other references. And yet *most*, I would say ... most religious people don't really believe it, because they think that what one believes is not important, but that if one is sincere, regardless of what he believes, he is pleasing to God. On this basis there is no false doctrine.

How does the modern religionist reconcile this inconsistency? He will say there are false teachers—he's just never seen one! And I may add, according the false view which he has accepted, he never will!

Yet the Bible says there are false teachers who will propagate false doctrine. So there are, and I see them across the land. I hear them on the radio. I read their false doctrines in papers and tracts. You may inquire, “How do you know they're false?” Because they deny and contradict what God says, and only God is true. (Romans 3:4)

For example, God says, “there is...*one* God and Father who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” There is *one* God and Father. Now

compare this statement:

“A General Assembly, Quorum, or Grand Council of *the Gods*, with their President at their head, constitute the designing and creating power,” (underline added) declares this:

“Wisdom inspires the Gods to multiply their species...”

and add this phrase, found on the same page:

“a family of Gods.”

These quotations are from an authoritative book published by a church that claims allegiance to Christ. This church and its preachers declare that there are many “Gods,” a whole family of Gods, and that the Gods are increasing in number. Oh, yes, they have wives and children.

Now, you tell me, is this false doctrine or not? If the Bible is true, then the doctrine of a plurality of Gods is not! The very concept is contradictory to the Scriptures. It is false doctrine.

Since there are false teachers and error is being taught, we ought to recognize that some now believe this error, and others will be deceived by it. We could be deceived. So what protection do we have against deception?

The only safeguard against false teaching is to know the truth. And the only way to know the truth is to study the Bible.

*Think on these things.*

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### False Doctrine: Three Makes One

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“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” (This is the reading of Ephesians 4:4-6.)

Just as there is one God the Father, there is one Lord and one Spirit. The one Lord is Jesus. Peter declared, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both *Lord* and Christ.” (Acts 2:36) The Holy Spirit is the Comforter whom Jesus sent to His apostles. “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even

the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.” (John 15:26)

Notice that in the text of Ephesians 4:4-6, we have reference to one Father, one Lord, and one Spirit. This totals three personalities of Deity. One plus one plus one equals three. Also notice that they are distinct personalities. Jesus said, *He* would *send* the *Spirit from* the *Father*. We have in contradiction of this truth a modern doctrine which claims that the Father is Jesus and Jesus is the Holy Spirit: that these three are but one and the same personality. The claim is made that “Father,” “Son,” and “Holy Spirit” are but titles of the person, Jesus.

Observe how absurd this false doctrine is when we make its application to Scripture. It is a rule of grammar that pronouns take the place of nouns, and in determining the accuracy of reference, one may replace the pronoun with the noun and the sentence will retain its sense. Let us do this, plus replacing the titles with the name of the person. If the contention is true, the sentence will retain its sense. If the result is nonsense, it demonstrates that the contention is false.

John 15:26 reads: “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me...”

With pronouns and titles replaced: “Jesus” instead of Father or Spirit:

“But when Jesus is come whom (Jesus) will send unto you from Jesus, even Jesus, which proceedeth from Jesus, Jesus shall testify of Jesus...”

This makes no sense, and readily demonstrates a false doctrine. The truth is, there is one Spirit *and* one Lord *and* one Father. (This is only one of many ways to expose the fallacy of this false doctrine.)

Yes, there are false teachers about us. We need to study the truth, the Bible, to be able to detect their false doctrines.

*Think on this.*

*“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.  
To him be glory both now and for ever.” - 2 Peter 3:18*

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## The Future

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It's a good idea to take an interest in the future because that is where you will spend the rest of your life, and after death, eternity.

All too often, we are burdened with the present. We are concerned about the day to day activities of life to the extent that any thought of tomorrow—the eternal tomorrow—is crowded out. But in direct contrast, Jesus said,

“Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?” (Matthew 6:25) The expression, “take no thought,” is derived from a word which means to be anxious, to be troubled with cares. And the idea is that we are not to be overly concerned, that is to fret about temporal matters to the neglect of spiritual matters. Jesus said further:

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:33) When one has his priorities right, and he serves God as directed, the physical things will be provided without over-anxiety and, more importantly, provisions will be made for the eternal future.

One may wonder, what awaits us in the future? (We may speak of eternity as that “distant future,” and yet it may not be as distant as we suppose.) After this life, what then?

The writer of Hebrews declares: “And as it is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment ...” (Hebrews 9:27) And, again, in 2 Cor. 5:10, the apostle Paul writes: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

Jesus said of those who seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, that they shall enter eternal life, but the unrighteous shall go away into everlasting punishment. (Matt. 25:46)

And so for this reason, we ought to prepare for the future. You have a Bible, study it. The way of life is revealed therein.

*Think on this.*

*Jesus: “I am the way, the truth, and the life:  
no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” - John 14:6*

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## All Authority

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Following a successful ministry upon this earth, including His death upon the cross and resurrection from the dead, Jesus made a tremendous claim. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matthew 28:18) The American Revised version, the New American Standard translation, and others read: "*all authority* has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." The "power" of the King James version and the "authority" of later translations refer to the same thing, namely the power of authority. The word in the original language is derived from an impersonal verb meaning literally "it is lawful." Jesus has this right, the power of authority to state what is the law, or what is right.

James declares, in James 4:12, "There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy..." Jesus, of course, is this lawgiver. His words constitute the law. And so for our religious service to be right, it must be according to His word.

In John 12:48, Jesus said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." At the same time, if one will accept Him and keep His word, he will be saved. "If ye continue in my word," Jesus says, "then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31-32)

Yes, Jesus has all authority. He has not delivered it to any man or group of men, so that they may assume that, while Jesus retains authority in heaven, His authority belongs to them on earth, as an earthly head. No! No man has the authority of Christ on earth. This is why people who are "Christians only" submit to no council or conference; they recognize no earthly legislative body in spiritual matters. Jesus is the sole authority, and His authority is expressed in His word.

Yes, the word recorded by the apostles is His word. Jesus promised them the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth. What the Spirit would hear from Jesus He would convey to them. (John 16:13) Thus the apostles spoke for Jesus as His ambassadors. (2 Cor. 5:20) When we read the New Testament, we read the authority of Jesus. The apostle Paul so acknowledged: "If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are

the commandments of the Lord.” (1 Cor. 14:37)

Since Jesus has all authority, and it is lawful to do only as He directs, this means that any service I may give, any worship in which I may engage, if it is to be right, or acceptable, it must be set forth in His word. I do not have the right to go beyond what is written. (2 John 9)

*Think about this.*

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### Workers of Lawlessness

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It is not enough to simply say, “Lord, Lord,” to be acceptable unto Jesus. One must obey Him.

“Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46)

On another occasion, Jesus emphasized this thought by saying, “Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” (Matthew 7:21-23)

Sadly, in the Judgment, many religious people will find themselves rejected and lost. Yet they professed Jesus as Lord, and did many things intended for His honor. What is their failure? The answer is found in the Lord’s denial, “depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” The word “iniquity” is otherwise translated “lawlessness,” and is descriptive of the condition of one without law, either because ignorant of it, or violating it. Obviously those whom the Lord addresses were not sensual, depraved violators who sinned without regard to Christ. They called Him, “Lord, Lord.” They were guilty of acting without law, that is, without His authority. They professed that Jesus has authority, and yet they did not act in obedience to it. Without His direction, they did many things, some of which they describe as “wonderful,” but they worked lawlessness.

The lesson ought to be clear to every one of us. If our devotions are to be acceptable unto God, they must be according to His directions.

We must not presume to do more or less than we can read about in the gospel of Christ.

Can you read in the Bible of all that you do in devotion to Him? Do you have authority for all that you do in worship to Him?

Think about it, and examine your practice. Read your Bible so you can discern; and be prepared to give up everything for which you have no authority. Saying, "Lord, Lord," will not make it right!

*Think about it.*

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## What is Written

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Jesus states that He will reject those who act without His authority. (Matthew 7:21-23) We observe that it is not enough to simply profess faith in Christ, nor even to do wonderful things in honor to Him. For our faith and practice to be acceptable, we must be of the mind to comply fully with His will. The apostle Paul said this is the mind of Christ. (Philippians 2:5-8) As we have the mind of Christ, we will imitate His example. "For even hereunto were ye called," the apostle Peter writes, "because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow in his steps..." (1 Peter 2:21)

When we are tempted to engage in some practice without the authority of Christ, we should remember His example. Christ came not to do His own will, but the will of the Father who sent Him. (John 6:38) Observe such an occasion in His life, when the devil tempted Him.

Jesus was hungry, and the devil tempted Him to use His power selfishly, by turning stones into bread. Jesus replied, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4) In meeting temptation, Jesus quoted Scripture: "it is written." More important than even the necessities of life is the word of God. At every suggestion, Jesus referred to Scriptures to show that He had no right to go beyond what God had authorized. We, too, need to learn this lesson. We have no right to go beyond what is written.

In every act of worship, we have no right to engage in any practice other than what is written in the New Testament. To do otherwise is

to do lawlessness.

Why do we, as Christians, worship? Because it is *written*: “God is a spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:24) Why do we sing? Because it is written. (Colossians 3:16, Ephesians 5:19) Why do we pray? Because it is written. (1 Thessalonians 5:17, Ephesians 6:18) Why do we teach? Because it is written. (1 Timothy 3:15, Acts 20:7) Why do we contribute? Because it is written. (1 Corinthians 16:2, 2 Corinthians 9: 7-8) Why do we partake of the Lord’s Supper every Sunday? Because it is written. (1 Corinthians 11:23-28, Acts 20:7)

Some go further than what is written. Therefore we have the right to ask, *why*? Why do you play musical instruments? Why do you wear vestments? Why do you light candles, or burn incense? Why do you have altar calls? Why do you wear non-Biblical names?

And we could go on. But unless one can say, “It is written,” he has no right to engage in any religious practice. To act without authority is iniquity. (Matthew 7: 21-23) And to be guilty of iniquity is to be rejected.

*Think on this.*

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## Silence of Scriptures

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Since Jesus has all authority, all that we do in worship and service to Him must be according to His word. (Matthew 28:18) Many who give assent unto this truth are not consistent in practice. They engage in practices which are not to be found recorded on the pages of Inspiration. When questioned about such activities, they may counter, “Where does the Bible say not to?” The assumption is, that whatever the Bible does not prohibit is permitted in the authority of Christ. But is this assumption true? The Bible has the answer.

The principle involved is illustrated in the case of the priests of Israel. In Hebrews 7:14, the writer says, “For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.” Notice that God through Moses ordered that priests should be of the tribe of Levi, He did not say, a priest shall not be of Benjamin, or Naphtali, or Simeon, or Judah, et al. In fact, of Judah he

said nothing concerning priesthood. Now, if silence gives consent, then priests could have been appointed out of the tribe of Judah. God did not say, “not to.” Rather than consent, silence meant that priests could not be appointed out of the tribe of Judah. In Hebrews 8:4 we read of Jesus who was of the tribe of Judah, that “if he were on earth, he should not be a priest...”

You see, the point is, that when the Bible is silent on a matter one can not presume to act without authority. The Bible does not have to say, “thou shalt not,” in order to exclude a matter of faith or practice. The very fact that Jesus does not authorize it means that we do not have the right to legislate for him.

Another example: when God told Noah to build an ark of gopher wood (Genesis 6:14), He did not say, “Do not use oak. Do not use pine. Do not use elm,” et al. The very fact that God said to use gopher wood meant that He wanted gopher wood. When God specifies what He wants, He does not have to list everything He does not want on the basis that silence gives consent.

To go beyond what God authorizes, is to go without God. Make special note: that “whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.” (2 John 9)

The very suggestion of transgressing, of going beyond, signifies that some will be guilty of this very thing. And the consequence of doing so is disastrous. It behooves us therefore to examine all that we do in serving God, and to ask ourselves, “Am I acting by the authority of Christ ... or without it?”

*Think about it, and make application to your worship, to the church of which you are a part: to its organization, name, mission, and practice.*

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### Let God Be True

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“For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.” (Romans 3:3-4)

Yes, “let God be true, but every man a liar.” This Scripture is not

saying that every man is a liar. But rather, when the choice is to be made between what God says and what men say, let God be true. Every man who contradicts God is a liar.

This should ever be our attitude toward God and His word. We should always respect His authority. Men may say that a doctrine or practice is true, but unless God says it is, such men reason in vain. Men also may say that what God says is not so, but just remember, God is true.

For example, Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” (Mark 16:16) Now there are some men who say that this is not true. Those who teach predestination declare that God, before the world began, predetermined who would be saved and who would be lost, and this without regard to anything they might do or not do. So, then, if one is predestined to be saved, it matters not how rebellious he might be, how devoid of faith he might be, and how wickedly he might behave, he will be saved anyway. On the other hand, though one believes, loves God, studies His word, obeys His will, or whatever, unless he is predestined to be saved, he will be lost anyway! Therefore not all who believe and obey will be saved. But Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Who are we to believe: Jesus or men? “Let God be true, and every man a liar.”

In the same context of Mark 16:16, Jesus said to be baptized to be saved. Some men deny that baptism is necessary to salvation. Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Men say that baptism does not save. (I suggest you read 1 Peter 3:21.) Now, whom shall I believe, men or God? The answer again is, “Let God be true, and every man a liar.”

Are you willing to let God be true? What would you do if you learned that a matter of faith or practice was only the word of men, that you believed or practiced something without the authority of Christ? Would you have conviction enough to give up the human creed and do the will of God?

*Think about it.*

*“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.” - Romans 6:23*

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## Author of Salvation

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Jesus is our great example. (1 Peter 2:21) “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” (Hebrews 5:8-9)

Jesus suffered death on the cross in order to provide salvation for all men. His coming was by the grace of God. And so, this grace that brings salvation has appeared unto all men. (Titus 2:11) This Scripture shows that all men have the means by which to be saved, and that God has not willed that any should perish. (2 Peter 3:9)

And yet, some will perish. (Matthew 7:13-14; 25:46) Why is this? It is not because of unwillingness on God’s part, but in their failure to obey Christ. As Jesus obeyed, thus making salvation possible, we must obey in order to obtain it. He is the author of eternal salvation unto all that obey him.

It is sad that some will reject the words of Christ, and will deny that obedience is necessary to salvation. Yes, some will even go so far as to say that one may experience salvation without obedience, and that if he tries to obey as a condition of salvation, he cannot be saved. You may wonder, “Upon what basis, then, can one be saved?” Those who reject obedience will answer, “On the basis of faith alone.”

We certainly recognize that faith is essential to salvation. (Hebrews 11:6) But the question is, Does faith exclude obedience? Or, is obedience a reflection of one’s faith?

Observe that the devils believe. (James 2:19) Are they saved? Many of the chief rulers believed, but would not confess Jesus because they loved the praises of men more than the praises of God. (John 12:42-43) Were they saved? Dare we say that devils are saved by their faith alone, but if they obeyed God this would void their salvation? Or if the chief rulers had confessed Jesus, this would have voided their salvation? (Rom. 10:10) Is it true that one is justified by his faith alone without obedience, or is Jesus the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him, to those who express their faith by their obedience?

In James 2:24, the writer says, “Ye see then how that by works (here speaking of obedience) a man is justified, and not by faith only.”

“Yea, a man may say, Thou has faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.” (James 2:18)

You say you believe? Do you show it by obedience? Have you changed your way of life, to live soberly, righteously, and godly? Have you changed your state in life? Have you been baptized into Christ and put Him on? (Gal. 3:26-27) Do you worship Him every day, in prayer and study? Do you worship with the saints at every opportunity?

*Think on these things.*

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## Anger

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Over the past few weeks I had the opportunity of witnessing some short tempers in our busy traffic, and some wild and foolish driving as a result of it. Just this morning, as I stood by the side of the road, I saw a driver apparently irritated when the car in front of him slowed down. He floored the accelerator, his tires squealed, and as the car lunged forward it jumped a low curb. With one set of wheels on the pavement and the other off the road, the car passed the car ahead of him while throwing rocks and emitting a cloud of smoke. The result: he reached the stop sign at the end of the block perhaps a second earlier.

We all have seen such events, and perhaps have even found ourselves in the seat of the one who is irritated. And what does it profit?

Perhaps we react in anger, and gain a second. Or, lose a life! How foolish we feel when the emotion of the moment subsides and we realize how unkindly, and even dangerously, we have acted. And foolish we should feel, because foolishly we reacted. This should tell us something. How well do you keep yourself under control? What does it tell others of your character and ability to cope with problems?

Someone has observed: “The emptier the pot, the quicker it boils—so watch your temper.”

Yes, anger makes of men what reasonably they would not want to be. But no one can be reasonable and angry at the same time. Anger is a wind that blows out the lamp of the mind. In anger men do unreasonable and evil things. And so the Psalmist declares, “Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.”

(Psalms 37:8)

Certainly things occur which disturb us, things which are not to our liking, and a flush of anger is experienced. The problem is the second reaction. Do we control the emotion, or does the emotion control us?

“Be angry, and sin not,” the apostle Paul advises the Ephesians; “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” (Ephesians 5:26)

Anger harbored is self-destructive. It is a work of the flesh which comes under the condemnation of God. (Galatians 5:19-21) “Wherefore,” James writes, “let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” (James 1:19-20)

What the world needs are fewer hot heads and more warm hearts.

*Think about this.*

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## Old Covenant

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I understand that the state of Kentucky some years back adopted a new criminal code. This means that statutes once in effect have become void. A new code is in effect.

The fact that the first code is abrogated does not mean that criminals may commit crime with impunity. No; the condemnation of criminal acts is provided in the new code.

Any time a new set of laws are ratified, the previous laws becomes old. By “old” we refer not to time or age, but rather to authority. The “old” law is simply the invalidated or abrogated law.

This is true whether it be of civil law or divine law. In the Bible we have a “new” covenant and an “old” covenant, or testament. When we speak of the *Old* Testament, we do not mean the older one, referring to age or time, but rather of authority. When a new law is given, the first becomes old, or invalid.

God gave a covenant through Moses, which served as a tutor to bring Israel to Christ. (Galatians 3:24) Then with Christ came a new covenant, the expression of His authority. (Matthew 28:18) Of this Paul writes, “But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was

established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt..." (Hebrews 8:6-9) In verse 13, he concludes: "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."

Notice that the first covenant did not become old as a natural result of the passing of time. Rather, God *made* the first covenant old. God did something to it. He made it old. The word "old" here defined means to be "obsolescent: Hebrews viii.13 (to be deprived of force and authority ...)" (Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 115.) Yes, God made the first covenant of no authority. When Jesus died, He nailed the first covenant to His cross. (Colossians 2:14)

Now we live under the authority of Christ. (Matt. 28:18, Col. 3:17) We are to live in harmony with the New Testament. We are not to live under the old covenant. We are not to offer animal sacrifices, incense, or keep holy days, etc. "Let no man there judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ." (Colossians 2:16-17)

Yes, we are not to be judged by the old. We will be judged by the words of Christ. (John 12:48)

*Think on this.*

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## Hope in Christ

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The hope of the Christian is eternal life in God's presence. Jesus assured His disciples that this hope has a basis in His resurrection. He would go to the Father to make provision for the coming of His people. "In my Father's house," He said, "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 14:2-3)

Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. In my Father's house, Jesus said, are dwelling places. The Father's house is heaven. "Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven," Moses records in Deuteronomy 26:15. It was here that Jesus went. (Acts 1:11) He went to prepare a place for His followers. He calls the abode "mansions." This means literally, a staying, abiding, which suggests that heaven will not be a place of temporary abode. It is eternal. (Matthew 25:46)

The fact that Jesus is our forerunner into heaven is of great comfort. This is our hope, "which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus..." (Hebrews 6:19-20) Yes, when trials beset us, temptations discourage us, and the way grows weary, it is of great comfort to know that just a bit farther down the road we may find rest in abiding places in the realm above. We must, therefore, maintain faith. As the Hebrew writer says, "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." (Hebrews 4:11)

On the other hand, how futile life must be for the man who has no hope in Christ. How sad to live this life and miss heaven. The tragedy, however, is that in missing heaven, one hits hell. Only two places are prepared for the after-life. Heaven is prepared for the righteous. Hell is prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41), and will also be the fate of those who choose to serve Satan.

Our plea, of course, is that all men will resolve to serve God. Where do you plan to spend eternity? Better yet, where are you *prepared* to spend eternity?

*Think on this.*

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### Scriptures Inspired

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"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17, *New American Standard* version).

"Scripture" is a specialized word in Hebrew culture. The word means writings, but in the special sense, more than just any writings:

holy writings, sacred writings. Jesus said to the Jews: “You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life...” (John 5:39) They searched the writings, not simply writings, but the writings of God’s words. These writings are sacred because they are inspired of God.

“Inspired” literally means God-breathed, signifying that the words of Scripture originated with God. The words that one breathes forth are his own. He expresses the thoughts of his own mind in words he chooses to speak, or breathe forth. God-breathed words are God’s thoughts that He expresses. The Scriptures are sacred because God is the author of them.

The means of communicating this word is the Holy Spirit. He conveyed the word of God to the prophets, who spoke for Him. David, a prophet of God, stated it thus: “The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue.” (2 Samuel 23:2) The apostle Peter stated it as follows: “No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” (2 Peter 1:21)

From these statements we learn that God revealed His will, the thoughts of His own mind, through the Holy Spirit to the prophets. These words they spoke or wrote. The written word constitutes the Scriptures.

The Scriptures include both the Old and New Testaments, the new also being referred to as scriptures. (2 Peter 3:16)

The Bible, as we have it today, constitutes the Scriptures inspired of God. It must be read, respected, and obeyed as the revelation of God to man.

To reject the word is to reject God. (2 John 8-9) What is your attitude toward the Bible? It reflects your attitude toward God.

*Think on this.*

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### No Private Interpretation

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The Bible is inspired of God. It is, as the apostle Peter writes, a “more sure word of prophecy.” It is true; it is reliable; it is the firm foundation for faith. This is true because “no prophecy is of any private

interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:19-21)

Prophecy is that which is spoken for God as it was received by revelation. Holy men spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Prophecy is reliable for this reason, and because it is not of any private interpretation. Now this does not mean that the Scriptures are not to be privately interpreted. At least, this is not what this text says. It does not say that the understanding or sense of prophecy is not of private interpretation, but that the prophecy itself is not a private interpretation. What the writer is saying in 2 Peter 1:20, is that the prophecy is not simply human evaluation of religious experiences by the prophets. They did not set forth what they thought to be religious truth. Rather than the prophecy being of such private interpretation, it is revelation from God. Prophets of God did not set forth their own private ideas, but they spoke as the Holy Spirit moved them, or communicated with them!

God spoke through His prophets. They spoke not their own words or thoughts, but words divinely conveyed to them from God. And so the Bible reads:

Luke 1:68-70: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel... as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets...”

Acts 3:18: “But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets...”

1 Peter 1:10-11: “Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify...”

Yes, holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. This is true of the New Testament scriptures as well as the Old. (Acts 2:4) When Paul preached, he preached the commandments of Christ, and not his own will. (1 Corinthians 14:37) To the Thessalonians he wrote:

“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received

it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God..." (1 Thessalonians 1:13)

How do you accept the Scriptures? The answer is not in what we may say, but in what we do. Do you obey the word as obeying the commands of God? Or do you refuse to do what is contrary to your own interests or ideas?

*Think about this.*

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## Interpretations

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A study of the word of God is serious business; it is necessary business. If one is to be approved before God, he must exert diligence to understand His will. (2 Timothy 2:15) He must be careful that his understanding is of God's will, not his own will which is injected into what he calls God's will.

That one would insert his own will, while contending that it is God's will, might seem incredible. How could one possibly do this? Of course, one with ulterior motives would do this to promote a false religion. That some will do this is a fact. (Read 1 John 4:1, 2 Peter 2:1-4) However, I would suppose that the larger part of those who may be guilty, do so without realizing the nature of their action. You see, many people have a strange attitude toward the Bible. They do not view it as a book to be understood intelligently, as are other books. They view it mystically, as a book of hidden meanings and secrets. They believe that only a few are qualified to unlock these secrets, only a few are specially qualified. Some think that it is the prerogative of their religious leaders by reason of their office. Therefore the members cannot understand the Bible for themselves; that it can only mean what the leaders say it means. Others claim that the prerogative to understand belongs only to those who are specially endowed. Many lay claim to being specially endowed, who themselves are in conflict as to the meaning of many scriptures.

Still others view the Bible as a great allegory; that is, as a story which has no meaning in itself, but conveys a hidden spiritual lesson. Elaborate systems of interpretation have been built upon this idea, each of which contradicts the others.

Some superstitiously view the Bible as a storehouse of truths without order or system. It is to be approached with a question in mind, allowing the book to fall open, as if God miraculously guides the finger to point to the truth in answer to their questions.

All of these approaches remove the Bible from a sane and sensible approach. They all agree that one cannot understand the Bible simply by reading it. However, may we call attention to what the Bible itself says? Ephesians 3:3-4: “How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery of Christ; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when you read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)...” Notice that the divine intervention is in the *giving* of the word, not in the *reading*. When we read, we may *understand*.

Notice again Ephesians 5:17: “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but *understanding* what the will of the Lord is.”

Yes, you need to read the Bible for yourself. It can be understood if you apply yourself.

*Think on this.*

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## All Truth

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The wisdom of God is made known in the Scriptures. He did not, of course, personally pen the words on parchment and lower the Book to earth. Rather, He inspired the word, conveying it to His prophets by the Holy Spirit.

A *prophet* is one who speaks for another. A prophet of God is one who speaks for God, not in behalf of, but in the stead of. The apostle Paul affirms this process in these words: “How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit ...” (Ephesians 3:3-5)

Notice that what Paul preached, he received by revelation. This revelation was made known to him by the Holy Spirit. He not only spoke what he received, but also what he wrote. When we read, then we may understand what he had received from God. In other words,

we have the very message that God gave to the apostle Paul, and others, by the Holy Spirit. It is in writing. And the same may be said of all the Scriptures. They are indeed the word of God. (I Thessalonians 2:13)

Jesus had promised the apostles the Holy Spirit so that they might be guided into this truth. "Howbeit," He said, "when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." (John 16:13) The Holy Spirit testified of Jesus (John 15:27), and brought to their remembrance all that He had said to the apostles. (John 14:26)

The apostles received the Holy Spirit as promised. (Acts 2:1-4) They were guided into *all truth*. Today we have the faith delivered once for all. That is the complete and final word. (Jude 3) James speaks of the perfect, complete, law of liberty. (James 1:25) Peter says that God has "given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." (2 Peter 1:3) The revelation from God is therefore complete, and is God's means of leading us to a life of godliness and eternal life. The gospel of Christ is God's power unto salvation. Therein is revealed the means by which one can be righteous before God and live by faith. (Romans 1:16-17)

One cannot come to Christ without a knowledge of the gospel. (John 6:44-45) One cannot live right without living in harmony with the gospel. (Philippians 1:27) For this reason we need to study the Scriptures.

Have you obeyed the word of God? Are you living as the Bible directs?

*Think about it.*

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### Verbal Inspiration

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"All Scripture is *inspired* of God..." (2 Timothy 3:16)

Historically there are three concepts about inspiration. One flatly denies that "God-breathed" means God breathed, that the words of Scripture originated in the mind of God and came from Him as one might breathe forth his thoughts in words of His own choosing. This

is the modernistic approach, which denies supernatural intervention in the affairs of men. Inspiration to them is but emotional stimulation.

A second view is that the Scriptures are inspired, that is, they came from God, but only in the thought or impression which the writers had to set forth in words of their own choosing. Therefore, while one may say that the Scriptures came from God, he cannot be sure as to the truthfulness of every word, or even that the truth has been adequately expressed.

A third view is that all Scriptures are inspired, that the thoughts are set forth in God's exact words.

Which view is true? We will allow the Scriptures themselves to affirm. That process is stated in 1 Corinthians 2:9-13. Notice in verse 13 that the message given from God is in the words divinely selected. "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." This is verbal inspiration of the Old Testament *Hebrew* and New Testament *Greek*. It means that we can trust the Scriptures and have complete confidence, even to each word as it is used.

This is important. Verbal inspiration rules out speculation. It limits the student to speak as the Bible speaks: "if any man speaketh, let him speak as the oracles of God." (1 Peter 4:11)

This means that all Scriptures inspired of God, all God-breathed scriptures, are profitable, furnishing us completely unto teaching, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete. We can be thankful to God that He has given us a perfect revelation by which we can know everything necessary to be well pleasing unto Him.

*Think on this.*

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## God's Drawing Power

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Since the Bible is the *word of God*, it means that God is its author. To do the will of God, or that which is pleasing to God, we must do as the Bible directs.

It is through His word that God draws men unto Christ, in whom is salvation. It is God's power unto salvation. (Rom. 1:16) Jesus said in

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

Notice that God’s drawing power is as stated by the prophets, “They shall be all taught of God.” Teaching is God’s means of bringing lost men and women to faith and, eventually, to salvation in Christ. Paul states it thusly: “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” (1 Corinthians 1:18)

Man’s wisdom cannot provide the way by which we may be saved. Men would have God to send a direct influence of the Holy Spirit into the heart in order to instill faith. Instead, God’s will is that faith comes by hearing the word of God. (Romans 10:17) Men would have salvation come as a result of a spiritual experience, independent of the word of God. However, God’s will is that men hear the gospel and obey it. (Mark 16:15-16, Hebrews 5:9) You see, God’s wisdom is not man’s wisdom, and vice versa. (Isaiah 55:8-9)

“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” (1 Corinthians 1:21) To the world preaching is foolishness, but with God it is wisdom. Those, who are willing to lay aside their own preconceived ideas and learn of God, will listen to His word, believe it and obey it. This is God’s way of drawing men to Christ, and the salvation that is in Him.

There are no shortcuts. To learn God’s will, one must study. We must study to be approved before God. (2 Timothy 2:15) Yes, we must study the Bible to know God and His will, to be saved eternally with Him.

*Think on this.*

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## Wresting Scripture

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In studying the Bible, there is a distinct possibility of one injecting his own will and thereby arbitrarily defining terms. One may do so in ignorance, that is, without a proper understanding of language. Or,

one may be unsettled in his thoughts so as to vacillate the positions he occupies. Therefore, each new position introduces a new set of definitions, etc. The apostle Peter writes of this in 2 Peter 3:14-16:

“And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.”

The word *wrest* originally meant “to torture, put to the rack.” It is used here metaphorically “of one who wrests or tortures language to present a false sense.” The *unlearned*, or ignorant, is one without knowledge. The *unstable* is one who is not set fast, not constant or firm, in his thinking. How pathetic it is to hear one who neither knows what he is talking about, nor has any real conviction. He shifts positions and misapplies scriptures to win a point! The end result is that he will be lost, along with those whom he influences.

This consideration makes very important our study of God’s will. First, as to our own attitude. We must desire truth above everything else — yes, above family and friends, above business, even above self, personal comfort and pleasure! A willingness to accept anything less makes one vulnerable to false teaching. God will allow one to believe a lie and be damned. (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12)

Second, it is important that we know of whom we learn. (2 Timothy 3:14) Many false teachers are in the world who would make merchandise of us. (2 Peter 2:1-3) For this reason we need to “try the spirits whether they are of God.” (1 John 4:1)

Third, it is important to study the Bible, using the same rules of hermeneutics, or literary interpretation, that we would apply to any other sensible literature. The Bible was written to be understood. (Ephesians 3:3-5) Never approach the Bible with a preconceived idea, determined to find scriptural justification for it. Rather, we should study with an open mind, prepared to accept what we learn to be God’s will, even though it goes contrary to what you think or desire.

*Think on this.*

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## Try the Spirits

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Since many false prophets are in the world (1 John 4:1), and they are not always easily detected, appearing as they do as ministers of righteousness, how can one identify a false prophet from a true teacher? This is a valid and important question.

The answer is found immediately following John's admonition to "try the spirits whether they are of God." The word "try" means, of course, "to test, examine, prove, scrutinize (to see whether a thing be genuine or not)." (Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon*) The word "try" in 1 John 4:1 is the same word used in 1 Corinthians 11:28, translated *examine*: "let a man examine himself, and so let him eat," etc. In 2 Corinthians 13:5, it is translated *prove*: "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; *prove* your own selves." It is also translated *prove* in 1 Thessalonians 5:21: "*prove* all things; hold fast that which is good." From these usages, we can confirm the definition: to examine, prove, try, or test.

There is nothing amiss in putting a teacher to the test, to determine whether he teaches the truth or not. God says that there are false teachers. It must be untrue then, the idea that all religions and all teachers are good, and that really it doesn't make any difference what one believes. To the contrary, one may believe a lie and be damned. (2 Thess. 2:10-12) To be made free, one must believe and abide in the truth. (John 8:30-32)

How does one examine a religious teacher? Let me suggest that it is not by his appearance or his mannerism, or by his eloquence, or his profession, or his credentials. A false teacher may appear well in all of these; he may be charming, a forceful and persuasive speaker, firm in his professed faith, and have a string of degrees to be called of men, "Doctor of Divinity." John says in 1 John 4:6, "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know, we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." Yes, the spirit of truth will accept as authoritative the teachings of the apostles. A true teacher will respect the Scriptures, not with lip service, but indeed. He will not talk about "non-essential commands." He will not reject Bible authority to please men.

It is in this way also that one can be assured that he knows God, and is not simply walking after men. “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” (1 John 2:3)

*Think about this. Consider further the ...*

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### Spirit of Truth / Spirit of Error

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The inspired writer of the First Epistle of John says “to try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” (I John 4:1) In verse 6, he says that “he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.”

The true teacher of God’s word does not simply give praise to the Bible; he respects it and obeys it, and teaches others to obey it. The false teacher will lay claim to loving God and the Bible, but will expose himself as false when it comes to applying the word. Let us observe some examples.

First, notice that Jesus said in Matthew 19:9, “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.” The true teacher will quote this and in application respect it. The only one who can put away and marry again is one whose mate commits adultery, violates his/her marriage bond. Any one put away has no right to remarriage: “whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.” The false teacher rejects this. He will accept into fellowship the divorced and remarried. He says he believes the Bible, but in practice, he rejects it.

In 1 Timothy 2:12, the inspired writer says, “But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.” The woman is to be in subjection, (verse 11). Under the pressure of women’s lib, many preachers are tearing this verse out of the Bible, and are advocating equal teaching relationships for women. And many women are shamelessly standing before men to preach. They say they respect the Bible, but in practice they reject it.

In Matthew 23:9, Jesus said, “And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.” The context

shows that Jesus is speaking of religious titles. He said before not to call men Rabbi or Master. Titles that elevate one man above another are wrong. (See Matthew 19:25-28, Acts 10:26) And yet, we hear men referring to themselves as Reverend, Rabbi, Father, and other titles. Yes, men will express allegiance to God and His word, when in reality the loyalty is not there.

Finally, in Mark 16:16, Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” The true teacher teaches this. He tells the sinner to believe and be baptized to be saved. The false teacher will say that this command is non-essential, that one does not have to be baptized, as Jesus commands, to be saved. (See Acts 10:48.) He says he believes the Bible, but, actually, he rejects it! Here is the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. Which spirit are you following?

*Think on this.*

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### Authority of the Old Testament

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In 2 Peter 3:16, Peter speaks of those who are untaught and unstable, how that they distort or wrest the scriptures to their own destruction. Lest we, ourselves, be guilty of mishandling the word of God, we need to give some thought as to how the scriptures might be wrested.

One of the most flagrant misuses of scripture is to misapply the text with respect to those addressed: *substituting different persons for those addressed*. What is commanded of certain persons is to be done by them. When someone substitutes others, who are not addressed, to demand that they obey the command, he is guilty of misapplying the text. This is an apparent, but not uncommon, fallacy of application.

For example, I remember a few years ago, as I finished a radio broadcast, I met the manager of the station and some of the announcers. I was asked, “Gene, you don’t believe the Old Testament, do you?”

I replied, “I certainly do. I believe that it is of God, that it is true. Perhaps what you have in mind is that I am not under the authority of the Old Testament. It is not addressed to me. I do not follow the instructions recorded there for people of that time.”

He smiled, and I added, “But, then, neither do you.”

He quickly countered, “What do you mean, I don’t?”

“Well,” I continued, “I read in the Old Testament the command to build a boat. It was called an ark. Are you doing it?”

He grinned, “Oh, but that was said to Noah.”

“Exactly,” I replied. “It was not directed to you or me. The record is true, but we are not under its authority.”

And so this is what is meant by substituting different persons than those addressed. To quote the command that God gave to Noah to build an ark, and insist that everyone today is to do the same, would be to wrest the Scripture. And I think everyone can see this.

Yet when it comes to what God commanded the children of Israel in keeping the law, many fail to see the fallacy, and commit it. There are religionists who refer to the Old Testament to justify instrumental music in worship, keeping the sabbath, and polygamy. Because we find these things permitted or enjoined upon Israel, some assume that they should be enjoined upon Christians today. I think it interesting that they only bring over the parts they like—they don’t demand animal sacrifices, and other commands. Their failure is in failing to realize that the old covenant, or law, is nailed to the cross, that is, it was fulfilled by Jesus and hence abrogated. (Colossians 2:14, Luke 24:44) In Hebrews 8:13, we read, “In that He says, A new covenant, He has made the first obsolete.” (NKJV)

Now we live under the authority of Christ. (Matthew 28:18)

*Think on this.*

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## The Sabbath

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God gave a law of ten commandments to Israel at Mount Sinai (Horeb), which included a keeping of a Sabbath: “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.” (Exodus 20:8) This referenced the seventh day of the week as a day of rest, in which there was to be no work—“Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the Lord: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death.” (Exodus 35:2) This meant that they were to “bear no burden on the sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on

the sabbath day” (Jer. 17:21-22) This included: “Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day” (vs. 3); not even to gather sticks in preparation thereof (Numbers 15:32).

Sabbath keeping was God’s law through Moses to the nation of Israel. God did not give it to all men, nor before the time of Moses. It was a limited covenant, in scope and in time. Yet without Biblical sanction, some deny this, claiming that the Sabbath was instituted from the beginning of time and is to be observed by all people.

When was the Sabbath established, to be observed by anyone? The first observance of a Sabbath rest is found in the book of Exodus, when God gave the law through Moses. In Deuteronomy 5:1-21, Moses rehearsed the event:

“And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them.”

In verses 6 through 21, he cites the ten commandments, as they were given at Sinai (Cf.: Exodus 20:1-17). In verses 2 and 3, He states *when*, *where*, and to *whom* the law was given

Vs. 2: The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb.

Vs. 3: The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.

First, observe that the covenant of ten commandments was made at Horeb (Mt. Sinai), and not before. The commandments were unknown to their forefathers, and made known in no other place.

“Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: and **madest known** unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant” (Nehemiah 9:13-14).

Sabbatarians counter, even though their contention *contradicts* Scriptures that show otherwise, that the Sabbath was made at Creation, and cite Genesis 2:2-3:

“And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.”

The reader will notice that God blessed and sanctified the seventh day because that is the day that He *had rested* from all His work in creation. “Had rested” is past perfect tense of the verb which refers to an action already completed in the past. It was *after* He had ceased creation that He instituted a Sabbath for the people who were at Mt. Sinai. There is no reference or indication of any Sabbath observance before God came down upon mount Sinai and “made known” the holy Sabbath.

“Speak thou also unto the *children of Israel*, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a *sign between me and you* throughout your generations; that *ye may know* that I am the Lord that doth *sanctify you*. Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you ... Wherefore the *children of Israel shall keep the sabbath*, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a *sign between me and the children of Israel* for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.” (Exodus 31:13-14, 16-17)

Why would Gentiles keep the Sabbath as a sign between God and Israel? Moses said to Israel: “The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.” (Deuteronomy 5:2-3) He then related the covenant, even the ten commandments. (See also Deuteronomy 4:13)

It is a wresting of scriptures to transfer to all men today what God told Israel to do. When we examine the nature of the command, and see within its very order the limitation of application, we should be able to see the foolishness of transferring its application. This is one way in which one may wrest the Scriptures. And to do so is not just a harmless exercise. Rather, Peter says that it leads to one’s destruction.

*Think on this.*

*“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” - Matthew 5:16*

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## Changing Word Meanings

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Words are vehicles of thoughts. They convey ideas. These ideas, or thoughts, are inherent in the words themselves. We mean by this that we do not have the right to assign definitions to words arbitrarily. Words do not mean whatever we may want them to mean.

To arbitrarily assign to a word a definition of our own liking is to torture the language. It is in this way that the unlearned and unstable wrest the Scriptures. (2 Peter 3:14-16) One may have a preconceived idea, and to foster it he may take a statement and arbitrarily define its terms so as to reach the conclusion he wants. In fact, I would say that to allow one to define terms as he wills, and thus grant his premise, he can prove anything. It is because of this fallacy that some have concluded that anything can be proved by the Bible. This conclusion is false because the language of Scripture is not elastic, to allow a legitimate defining of words as pleases the reader.

For example, some have the idea that women are not to utter a sound in a teaching-learning situation. With this concept in mind, they will refer to I Timothy 2:11, where it is says to “let the women learn in silence with all subjection.” Without wading through the usages of the English, we go directly to the language in its original. Here the word translated “silence,” we find used four times in the New Testament and is also translated as “quietness.”

In Acts 22:2, “they kept the more silence.” If silence means not to utter a sound, how could they keep the more silent? In 2 Thessalonians 3:12, the Thessalonian Christians were told: “with quietness...work, and eat their own bread.” If quietness means not to utter a sound, then the only jobs a Christian could hold would be ones that would not require any talking. He could not be a radio announcer. But is this conclusion warranted? Does silence here mean not to utter a sound?

Actually, the word means quietness, indicating tranquility arising from within, causing no disturbance to others. And so the Christian on the job can talk, but he is not to be officious, disturbing others. The woman is to learn in her submissive relationship to man. She just must not be a disturbance or occupy a role other than that of subjection. Certainly she cannot preach, despite the protestations of women’s

lib, but she can ask questions and otherwise participate in an orderly manner.

Yes, words have intrinsic meaning, and to have the understanding of anything we must have an understanding of the words employed. To set aside the legitimate meaning and substitute a meaning of one's own liking is to wrest the Scriptures.

*Think on this.*

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## Substitution

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In consideration of Peter's statement in 2 Peter 3:14-16, that the unlearned and unstable wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction, I am concerned about specifics. The warning becomes practical only as we become aware of how one may wrest scriptures.

For example, one may wrest the scriptures by misapplying the language, or by substituting persons other than those addressed. It is absurd to demand of one that he build an ark, when obviously this was commanded of Noah and is of no significance to us today.

Another way in which the scriptures may be wrested is by misapplying the text with respect to things specified. To substitute something else than that which is specified is to torture the language.

For example, when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, he told the disciples to take bread and fruit of the vine to represent His body and blood. The Bible says, "he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." (Luke 22:17-20)

Jesus took the cup and identified it as the fruit of the vine, that which they could divide, and drink (Matthew 26:27), and which represented His blood. To transfer the significance of these elements — specifically the fruit of the vine — to a literal drinking vessel (cup) is to torture the language. And yet some are guilty of this very thing. They insist upon a literal drinking vessel, demanding that all communicants

drink from one and the same vessel.

In the same way, when the Lord commanded baptism, He commanded that men be buried with Him in baptism. Paul so explains in Romans 6:3-7. Baptism is a burial. Centuries after the Lord commanded, and Paul wrote of its action, men began to substitute another action. They began sprinkling water upon the subject instead of burying him. In 1311, at a council in Ravenna, men decided that sprinkling should be accepted on a parity with baptism, which is immersion or a burial. To substitute another action for what God commanded is to wrest the scriptures. One who has been sprinkled has not been baptized!

*Think on this.*

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### Adding to the Word of God

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God has always cautioned man about the handling of His word. To Moses He said, “Ye shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess.” (Deuteronomy 5:32-33)

God told Joshua: “Be strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.” (Joshua 1:7)

The Bible closes with this warning concerning the book of Revelation, the principle of which pertains to all that God has said: “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” (Revelation 22:18-19)

From beginning to end, God has warned that we are not to add to, nor take away from, His word. Peter says, “If any man speaketh, let

him speak as the oracles of God.” (1 Peter 4:11)

One way in which men wrest the scriptures is by adding to and taking away from what God says.

For example, the apostle Paul writes, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1) Men often add the word “only” and say, “Therefore being justified by faith only...” This is a perversion. While man is justified by faith, it is not by faith alone, but by an obedient faith. James so affirms in James 2:24. “Ye see then how that by works”—and here he is talking about obedience—“one is justified, and not by faith only.” Faith alone is dead. (James 2:17)

By adding only one word, the truth is turned into error, just as when God told Adam and Eve that the day they ate of the forbidden fruit, “ye shall surely die.” The devil added one word: “Ye shall *not* surely die!”

By adding the word “only” to faith, one also qualifies the devils for salvation for they also believe. (James 2:19) But faith *only* is the devil’s lie.

*Think on this.*

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## Grammatical Construction

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God revealed His will in words which we can understand. (Ephesians 3:4 and 5:17) Of course there are rules governing the use of words. This is true of the original languages through which His will was revealed, as well as of the English language. One area in which a failure to properly understand the Scriptures may result is that of grammatical construction. To ignore the grammar so as to place a wrong construction upon a statement is to wrest it.

For example, we read in I Corinthians 11:29 of the Lord’s Supper: “For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.” I have known of some Christians who have refused to partake of the Lord’s Supper because they said they were not worthy. The question is, who is? If it were a question of being worthy of the Lord, none of us would partake of it. Yet we know the Lord commanded it (I Corinthians 11:23-26),

and that the early disciples observed it on the first day of the week. (Acts 20:7) How do we reconcile the problem?

The truth of the matter is that Paul doesn't say that one is to be worthy. Rather he said, "he that eateth and drinketh *unworthily*..." This is an adverb and modifies the eating and drinking. It is not an adjective, modifying the person doing the eating and drinking. Instead of the occasion being a memorial supper by the assembled church, they were eating and drinking as a social event or common meal. And so Paul emphasizes the fact that the church is to come together, and as a body to commemorate the Lord's offering of Himself, eating the bread and drinking the cup (the fruit of the vine), representing His body and His blood.

Contextually, some were not discerning the Lord's body, that is, they were not distinguishing the Lord's Supper, as an act of worship involving the church assembled, from a common meal. The apostle's reaction was, "What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not?" (1 Corinthians 11:22) The memorial of Christ was being overlooked. And so Paul warns that those who eat and drink unworthily, i.e. not discerning this congregational memorial service, would eat and drink damnation to themselves.

Those who shift attention away from the manner in which this memorial is observed, to evaluate themselves, to be worthy or unworthy, miss the point and fail to discern between the church communing in worship and individuals apart from the body engaging in what becomes a social activity of eating.

Another illustration, involving grammatical construction, is John 3:36, where the Lord says that "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Some argue that this means the believer has life and cannot lose it. But notice that the word is everlasting and not everlastingly. Everlasting is an adjective, and qualifies the kind of life. It does not designate how long it may be possessed. To qualify the *having*, the word would have to be an adverb. So, you see, it is important that we read what is said and not be guilty of reading into the Bible what we want to believe, what it does not say.

*Think on this.*

Truth is never self-contradictory. Truth in one reference is in complete harmony with truth in every other reference. Anytime there appears to be an apparent contradiction, it is due to a misunderstanding of the text or a forced meaning applied to it. To deliberately force one reference to offset another is a wresting of the Scriptures. (2 Peter 3:14-16)

Have you ever been in a Bible discussion when a particular statement was under consideration, which obviously made one of the parties uncomfortable, and in an apparent effort to justify his position he countered, “Well, I have a scripture that will answer that one!”? I remember discussing baptism with a lady who was of a Calvinistic background. I had demonstrated that baptism is a command of God (Acts 10:48), and is for the purpose of washing away sins (Acts 22:16), or for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), or to put off the old man, the man of sin, so as to walk in a newness of life (Romans 6:3-7), or to put on Christ (Galatians 3:27), or to be saved. (1 Peter 3:21) Her reply was, “I don’t know how to answer that, but my pastor can get around it!”

You see, the attitude of many people is that the Bible is a source book for any kind of doctrinal arrangement one chooses. Any point of doctrine you don’t like may be set aside by another scripture that seems to contradict it. This attitude only gives lip service to the Bible—it does not really respect it. It cannot accept the Bible as being the depository of truth.

But of course the error is in the attitude, not in the Bible. Jesus prayed to the Father, “Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.” (John 17:17) Jesus told His disciples to continue in His word, and that they would know the truth, and the truth would make them free. (John 8:31-32)

Yes, God’s word is true. We are to let God be true, and every man a liar. (Romans 3:4) When we accept God’s word as true, we will not allow any man to try to “get around it,” to manipulate the word in an attempt to force a contradiction. If we love the truth, we will not want it offset, but will be willing to do all that it directs us to do.

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## The Kingdom Now

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At the end of time, Jesus Christ shall deliver the kingdom of God to the Father. (1 Corinthians 15:24) This is the hope of mankind. If any man is to be saved eternally, he will be in the kingdom of Christ.

This is generally acknowledged by most, if not all, religious people. The point of difference lies in the fact of who constitutes this kingdom and, in particular, may we today be a part of it. Many people view the kingdom as something yet to come.

In Matthew 3:2, we are told, "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." By "at hand" is meant *near, nigh unto*. In Luke 10:9, Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." In Luke 12:32, Jesus told his disciples, "it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." In Mark 9:1, He said, "Verily I say unto you, that there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power."

None of these statements sound as if Jesus had in mind a kingdom to be established hundreds of years distant. The kingdom is *at hand*, He said; is *nigh* unto you, the Father gives *you* the kingdom, it will come *within the lifetime* of some standing before me.

And it did. Jesus was crowned King at His ascension. He received the kingdom. (Acts 2:29-34) Paul wrote to the Colossian Christians, and thanked God for delivering them from the power of darkness and translating them into the kingdom of His Son. (Colossians 1:13) John said he was in the kingdom. (Revelation 1:9)

Yes, when Christ comes, it will not be to establish a kingdom, but to deliver the kingdom to the Father. Every true child of God today is in the kingdom of Christ. When Christ comes, Paul says, "Then cometh the end"—not the beginning—"when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." (1 Corinthians 15:23-26)

You can be in that kingdom by obeying the gospel of Christ.

*Think about it.*

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## Conscience and Baptism

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The apostle Paul, in 1 Timothy 1:19, charged Timothy to war a good warfare. Paul adds: “holding faith, and a good conscience.”

Often we hear people say, “let your conscience be your guide.” But this is hardly reliable when we consider the fact that Paul, before his conversion, persecuted the early Christians, giving consent to their death or imprisonment, and yet was able to say, “I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” (Acts 23:1) Whereas his conscience was good, his conduct was evil.

This should cause us to pause and reflect on what the conscience is. By definition, it is the mind passing judgment upon one’s own conduct according to some rule. You see, the conscience is not the guide. The rule of conduct which one adopts is the guide. The conscience is simply the testimony of one’s self as to whether or not he is living by this rule. If he does what he thinks is right, he will have a good conscience. This is why Paul had a good conscience when killing Christians ... he thought he was doing right. (Acts 26:9) The problem was his knowledge of right and wrong. His rule of conduct was wrong.

What we need is the knowledge of what is right, and then to live with a good conscience, i.e. in harmony with the right rule. Thus we may note, the gospel is the guide. And when we do as it directs, we will have a good conscience.

Peter makes this point with reference to baptism in 1 Peter 3:20-21. Jesus commanded baptism in obedience to His gospel. (Mark 16:16, Acts 10:48) When one knows this truth, he will either accept it and be baptized, or he will reject it. In which case, he will have either a good conscience (because he obeyed), or an evil conscience (because he did not).

Take note: “God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure where-unto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience before God) ...” (1 Peter 3:20-21)

The efficacy of baptism is not in the cleansing of the physical body, but in the obtaining of a good conscience before God. It is here that

one demonstrates his faith in God. And only as he obeys God can he have the good conscience. As long as one refuses to be baptized, knowing that Jesus commands it, he will feel guilty... he will have an evil conscience.

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## God and Materialism

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Remember the Russian cosmonaut some years ago who commented, after orbiting the earth, that there is no God—he did not see one. This, no doubt, was intended to strengthen the atheistic, materialistic concept. But it was the height of absurdity ... for who, in the first place, ever conceived of God as being a physical creature floating around the earth? Even from a materialistic viewpoint, it was absurd. Imagine a man viewing only the merest area of the universe and declaring what filled the universe! It is the equivalent of an immigrant setting foot on Ellis Island and declaring there are no Rocky Mountains in the United States, because he did not see them!

Of course, this is the weakness of materialism. With a minimum of facts they make the broadest of statements.

The Bible has something to say about such matters. In Romans, chapter 1, Paul writes of those who suppress the truth, who refuse to recognize the evidence contained in the creation. This was because they do not want to retain the knowledge of God. And so, “professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.” (Romans 1:22) The Psalmist had said earlier, “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.” (Psalm 14:1) Or we might turn the expression around to say, “one who says there is no God is a fool.” That is, he is one who does not properly use the faculties of his mind. He deliberately overlooks, or ignores, certain evidence that would compel one to admit the existence of God.

In contrast, notice Psalm 111:10: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.”

A man may possess all manner of scholastic degrees, but if he does not respect and serve God, he is unwise and lacks understanding. On the other hand, you may not possess much worldly knowledge, yet if you know God, you are among the blessed of the earth.

Of course, there is more involved than in just knowing that God is. (Hebrews 11:6) One does not really know God without doing His will. John says in 1 John 2:3-4: “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

Do you really know God?

*Think on this.*

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## Patience

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It is not easy to keep on “keeping on” when the way gets rough. It is all too easy to become discouraged. And yet we must not give up in running the good race before us. We must develop patience. (2 Peter 1:5-6)

The words of the Hebrew writer are encouraging. “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” (Hebrews 10:35-39)

Herein is the secret of perseverance, that is, to realize the brevity of life and the certainty of judgment. Perhaps we become discouraged by looking at life as longer than it is. We face our problems as though there is no end to them.

Rather than looking at life as interminable, look at it as a day to day proposition. None of us may be able to live faithfully to God for years to come, but all of us can live doing right today. Can we not live just this one day for the Lord, overcoming temptation and doing what is right? Then let us do this — live right for today!

The Hebrew writer says that the just shall live by faith. This simply means that the just will live according to the gospel of Christ, which is the source of one’s faith. (Romans 10:17; see also Philippians 1:27.)

But to *live* by faith, one must begin the life of faith. This is accomplished by obedience to the gospel initially, as one by faith

repents of sins and is baptized for a remission of sins. (Acts 2:38) He is thus raised from baptism to walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:3-7)

It is the one who so believes, whose faith does not leave him—one who does not leave the faith—that will receive the reward.

Start that new life and live it each day. Don't be discouraged, but persevere!

*Think on this.*

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## Counterfeit Churches

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We are living in the age of ecumenicalism, that is, in a time when religious people generally deplore religious divisions and seek unity. And it is right that they should. God hates division—it is contrary to the will of Christ. (John 17:20-21) God is not the author of such confusion as we witness in the religious world today. (1 Corinthians 14:33)

Jesus established but one church. (Matthew 16:18) The saved are all added to the one church. (Acts 2:47) They are united in one body. (Ephesians 4:3-6) He is the head of but one church. (Eph. 1:22-23) Reconciliation is in the one church. (Eph. 2:13-16) All others are counterfeit.

Suppose I—and I have as much right to do so as any other man—but suppose I should start a church, and I model it after the Lord's? It would be like the Lord's church in some ways, but not in others. It would be counterfeit.

If we were talking about money, all could readily see what would be wrong. If I printed ten-dollar bills, modeled after United States currency, it would be like it in some ways, that is, it would appear the same in some ways, but it would also differ. The difference would not be apparent at first glance. What would be wrong?

We all would recognize the fact that such "money" (so-called) would be *valueless*—the authority of the government would not be behind it. It would contain a *false promise*—that is, the possessor would think it has purchasing power, when in reality it does not. It would be *deceitful*—it would look genuine and many would be misled. It would cause *wasted effort*—in that one would work as hard to gain it

as he would for the genuine, and yet he would receive that which was worthless.

So it is with counterfeit churches. They are *valueless*—they are without the authority of Christ. He has authorized no one to build a church in counterfeit of His. They offer *vain promises*—people hope to please God in them. God does not accept this. (Read Matthew 15:9, Colossians 2:18-23) They are deceitful—many are misled by them. (Read 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, 2 Peter 2:1-3) They cause *wasted effort*—men will work as hard in a human church as they would in the true, but to no profit. (Read Matthew 7:21-23)

For these reasons it would behoove every person to study his Bible. Then he will be able to detect the genuine from the counterfeit. Unity pleasing to God can only be achieved in His church.

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### Harmful Things

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Several years ago, I was asked an interesting question: “Why did God create harmful things?”

First of all, let us observe the fact that everything is inherently good, and has a good use, and only when abused is it harmful. In Genesis 1:31, we read, “And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.” Everything had its proper use, and fitted perfectly in the created scheme of things.

Only the misuse of things brings about evil. For example, God created water. And this is good. It is necessary to sustain life. Rain waters the trees and plants. Man must drink water to sustain life. It is the habitation for fish. Now when water is used for its created purpose, it is good. But a misuse is harmful. If man tries to live naturally under water, he will drown.

Wheat and corn are good—they are provided for food. Yet to make them into a mash, allow it to sour, and draw off the alcohol for human consumption, resulting in drunkenness, is evil. God has created good things for man’s benefit. Evil is brought upon man when he misuses and abuses these things.

Did God create hell? Yes, but not to harm man. Hell was *not* prepared for man. Nor did God create some men foreordained to suffer

that fate, not because of any misconduct upon their part, but solely for God's pleasure to do so, as some vainly teach. Hell was prepared for the devil and his angels. Matthew 25:41 says "Depart from me, ye cursed, into ever-lasting fire, *prepared for the devil* and his angels" (italics added). Oh, yes, some persons will go to hell, not because it is God's will, or good pleasure. In fact, God is not willing that any should perish, but that all come unto repentance and be saved. (2 Peter 3:9) God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. 2:4) In fact, Christ "is the propitiation ... for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:2) If any man is lost, it will be because he chose the evil and its consequential judgment.

es, our God is benevolent. God made us in His image. He created all things for our good. God seeks for our well-being. Every command is designed for our happiness and well-being, in this life as well as in eternity. Rather than seeking to do us harm, He wants to deliver us from our self-inflicted harm. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

All the misery we experience is the consequence of man's violation of God's will. And as deserving as we are of these consequences, I am thankful to God that, even so, He is willing to lift me up and give me eternal happiness through Christ.

Have you been reconciled to God?

*Think on this.*

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### What Must I Do To Be Saved?

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Some theologians say, "Nothing. All were predestined before the creation of the world to be either saved or lost." They say that man is altogether passive in his eternal destiny; nothing that he does can cause his rejection and punishment or to contribute to his salvation and heavenly bliss. God alone determines each soul's fate, without any influence from man himself, by anything he may think, believe, or do.

This doctrine is nowhere taught in Scripture, but to the contrary: John 5:28-29; Rom. 3:23, 6:23.

The same question was asked and answered in the Bible text of Acts 16:30-33. A jailer in Philippi, asked Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what

must I do to be saved?"

In response they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

The jailor apparently knew nothing of faith in the Lord, which was the reason for his question. Therefore, in order for him to believe, he had to be told since "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. 10:17) Therefore "they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house."

Paul did as Jesus had instructed His disciples: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15-16) Faith is absolutely necessary; without it a soul is damned. (Heb. 11:6) Note that Jesus conditioned salvation upon faith coupled with baptism. This obviously was conveyed to the jailor in "the word of the Lord" they taught him and his household because the Scriptures state that he "was baptized, he and all his, straightway."

Baptism is not contrary to faith, but is itself an expression of faith. (James 2:17-24; Rom. 16:24-27; Acts 8:36-36) In every example of obedience to the word of God, the subjects were baptized. (Acts 2:41; 8:12-13; 8: 38; 10:48; 16:15; 16:33; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16.

The penitent believer is baptized for a remission of sins (Acts 2:36-38), to wash away sins (Acts 22:16), to put on Christ (Gal. 3:26-28), to put to death the old man and destroy the body of sin, now to be free from sin and walk in a newness of life (Rom. 6:3-11). Being buried with Christ in baptism, the believer is raised and made alive with Him, being forgiven of all trespasses. (Col. 2:12-13)

In faith the child of God is committed to living a life free of sin, in worship and service to God.

*Don't just think about it, obey the Lord! (Heb. 5:9)*

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## The Book of Life

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The people of God have a wonderful promise and hope, that when this life is over and the Lord comes to receive His own, He will be glorified in His saints and we will enjoy eternal rest. (2 Thess. 1:3-12, Heb. 2:10-11) This hope gives confidence, knowing that He is able to

save us to the uttermost, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for us. (Heb. 7:25) Inspired writers wrote with this confidence:

“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.” (Rom. 8:38-39; cf. Heb. 13:5-6)

God will not forget those who love Him and keep His commandments, whose names are written in heaven. (John 14:15, Luke 10:20, Phil. 4:3) He assures us that there is such a record, a book of Life. Heaven is the home of the righteous, for those who love and obey God.

“And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” (Rev. 21:27)

As faithfulness is necessary for one’s name to be entered into the Lamb’s book of life, it is just as necessary to remain there. Some question: Can one, whose name has been entered into the book of life, have it removed through unbelief, sin, and rebellion? That is, is it necessary for one, once saved from sin, to continue in faithful obedience to God, or can one fall from God’s grace?

God clearly answers these questions.

### **Can one’s name be blotted out of the book of life?**

“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.” (Rev. 3:5; cf. Ex. 32:32-33; Rev. 22:19)

### **Must one remain faithful in obedience to be saved?**

Jesus to church at Smyrna: “be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10)

“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” (Heb. 10:38-39; cf. 2 Thess. 1:7-8)

## Can one fall from grace?

“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled...” (Heb. 12:14-15; cf. Gal. 2:21)

“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.” (Gal. 5:4; cf. Gal. 2:21)

### **Do not be deceived!**

One's name is written in the book of life as he is saved, and added by the Lord to His church, of which He is savior. (Rom. 2:5-11, Acts 2:47, Eph. 5:23) When he sins and falls away, his name is blotted out of the book of life. “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.” (1 John 3:7)

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” (Gal. 6:7-9)

When one is told that he is saved by the grace of God, that this was decreed from the beginning and his name was then recorded in the book of life so that he is eternally secure—that he cannot fall, that his name cannot be blotted out of the book of life, and that he cannot be condemned for disobedience — he is being deceived!

*Think on this.*

