

# **School of the Bible**

## **Part Two**

**2023**

**Jim Hoffman**

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## About the Book

This is volume two of three. These pages, including volumes one and three, are a compilation of my detailed lecture notes for ninety (90) college level Bible classes. It provides an overall perspective on the Bible.

- 1) Old and New Testament Surveys
- 2) Over fifty major doctrines explained.
- 3) Over forty Bible topical studies.
- 4) Twenty hours dedicated to the Creation events of Genesis.
- 5) Twenty hours dedicated to the End Time events.

You can expect to receive a well-rounded Bible education that will allow you to teach better, think better, and evangelize better. It represents 46 years of personal study and exploration of the Scriptures.

Jim is a conservative evangelical and self-described Biblicist. He is also fond of saying his approach to the Scriptures is LISWIS (let it say what it says). The author confesses to being mildly obsessed with the glory of God.

I owe a great debt to the teachings of many others. I've been writing for years and honestly do not know everyone to credit for what I've learned. The following sources I do remember, and I would like to publicly credit them by name.

- John MacArthur
- John Piper
- R.C. Sproul
- Randy Alcorn
- The "Got Questions" Website

**"It is impossible to learn anything about God that does not contribute to making him more glorious."**

*Jim Hoffman*

## About the Author

James (Jim) Hoffman received his Bible education from two sources. The first was a semi-formal well rounded one from The Harrisburg School of the Bible. The second source was the one available to all of us, the Holy Spirit.

Jim spent (6) years in the Harrisburg School of the Bible attending in the evenings while working a regular job to support his young family (Wife Jackie and sons Micah, and Seth). Jim studied at night and on the weekends while Jackie helped immensely by taking many chores from his schedule while also doing her own.

In his own words, *"I never graduated from Bible School because I couldn't afford to take the classes for credit, so I settled for auditing the courses."* After his time at the Harrisburg School of the Bible his education was self-taught. He paid attention in church, pulled together the money to buy a Strong's Concordance, a Matthew Henry Commentary, and a Vine's New Testament Dictionary of Greek Words.

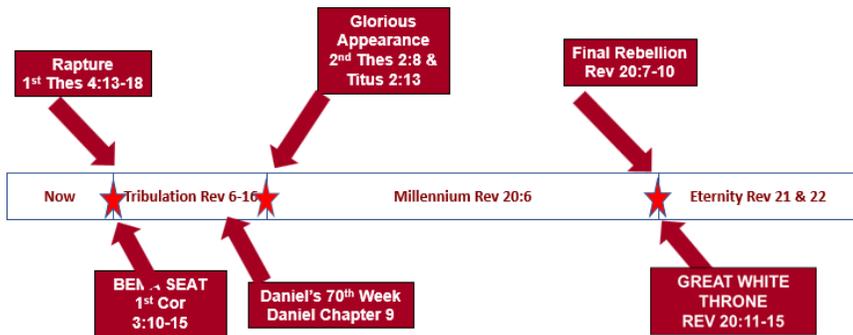
The Holy Spirit is the absolute best teacher anyone can have as we use the commentaries of others, sermons, Sunday School lessons, and of course the very words of God Himself, the Holy Bible.

This curriculum was forged together by Jim when he started his own Bible School in 2018 for his church, Christian Life Assembly in Camp Hill, PA. What follows in the pages of this book is taught in two-hour lectures over ninety classes held over a three-year period.

It is the author's desire that what he shares in these pages will be used with many other sources the Lord will provide in your lifetime, to help you see that he is **bigger than you think, and better than you know!**

# Eschatology Part One

## Our Broad Eschatological Outline



By the time this section is over you will have an overview of the end time events. You will also have some weight and depth to what you know about the future things the Bible addresses. The temptation for Christians when studying the end times is to look forward to Christ's return perhaps a little too much.

We, those who have been saved, have a glorious 'out' to what is coming on the earth. If Jesus returns in our lifetimes, let us be mindful that many of the people we know will be left behind to suffer perhaps like no other generation has ever suffered. May God grant us tender hearts towards others who do not know Jesus and make every effort to win them to Him.

Eschatology is the study of the teachings in the Bible concerning the end times, or of the period dealing with the return of Christ and the events that follow.

Eschatological subjects include the Resurrections, the Rapture, the Tribulation, the Millennium, the Binding of Satan, the Two Witnesses, the Final Judgment, Armageddon, and the New Heavens and the New Earth.

Frequently referenced eschatological books include Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Joel, Zechariah, Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 17, 1<sup>st</sup>

Thessalonians 4, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians. (and, of course, all The Revelation of Jesus Christ)

**“If something can’t go on forever, it won’t.”**

**Herbert Stein**

**Reason #1 Why eschatology is important.**

- *Titus 2:11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 **looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus**, 14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for his own possession, zealous for good deeds.*
- The return of Jesus, no matter your view of when the rapture occurs, is the “blessed hope” of the church.
- As believers, we see daily the devastation of sin and the effect it has had and continues to have in our lives and in the lives of those we know. Because we see what sin does, we are always in some degree of pain and heartache that causes us to say, “**even so come Lord Jesus.**”

**Reason #2 Why eschatology is important.**

- It helps to form and inform our world view – when we understand that the world as we know it, filled with sinful people committed to sinful actions, and will not go on forever, we are encouraged. We do not see the world as being on some utopian mankind driven trajectory towards perfection, but rather on a course of redemption.
- When we believe that God has plans to send his Son again to consummate his redemption plan, we not only have hope, but we see all of life differently.

- **We do not hope that mankind** will one day make things better.
- **We trust that God** will keep his promise to us that he will one day make things perfect.

**Reason #3 – it provides the basis for a sense of urgency.**

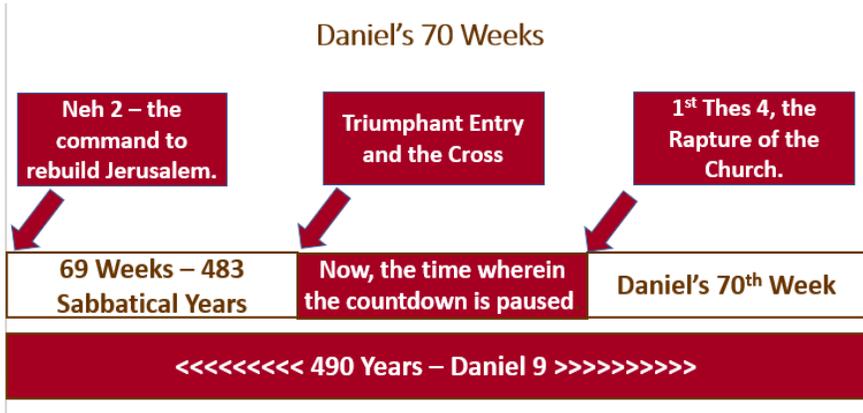
- If I am young and healthy, it ought to give me a sense that my time may be short despite what my age and latest physical check-up may indicate.
- It also ought to serve as a “governor” on my behaviors when I realize that Jesus could come at any moment.
- 1<sup>st</sup> John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when he appears, we will be like Him, because we will see him just as he is. 3 And everyone who has this hope fixed on him purifies himself, just as he is pure.
- When I realize that Jesus could come at any moment, that is to say “imminently”, then I should always be in a mode of rapid repentance when I sin.

**Our Broad Eschatological Outline:**

- Now (according to Daniel chapter 9)
- Rapture of the Church
- Bema Seat
- Daniel’s 70th Week
- Glorious Appearing of Christ
- Millennial Reign
- Final Rebellion
- Great White Throne
- Eternity

## Daniel's Seventy Weeks

To begin our study of eschatology we will not go to The Revelation of Jesus Christ at the end of the bible – instead, we will go back to the Old Testament book of Daniel.



When the book of Daniel opens, the northern kingdom of Israel was already in captivity and the deportation of the people of Judah had begun. Because of their sin and disobedience both Israel and Judah would be taken captive by their enemies.

The northern kingdom (10 northern tribes of Israel) fell first, and the people were carried away by the Assyrians never to return.

The southern kingdom (Judah, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin) survived a few years longer, but were eventually taken into captivity, this time by the Babylonians. To this day, the ten tribes of the northern kingdom are effectively lost in history.

There are lots of legends around the ten northern tribes that went into Assyrian captivity.

One legend says that the ten tribes migrated to Europe (the Danube River, they say, got its name from the tribe of Dan). Another legend says the tribes migrated all the way to England and that all Anglo-Saxons today are actually Jews—this is a teaching of the heretical **British Israelism**.

What is most likely is that they simply assimilated into the Assyrian culture, inter-married, and chose to never go back.

When Daniel opens, we find the prophet Daniel is a young man in a strange land with some notable friends named, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.”

Daniel is young, but he is holy and seriously dedicated to the Lord God of his forefathers. He is blessed by God in this strange land and rises to be what we might call the Prime Minister of Babylon.

When the Babylonians were conquered by the Persians Daniel remained under the care and blessing of God and retained his lofty political position.

Daniel was aware of Jeremiah’s prophecy that Judah would go into captivity for 70 years. Bear in mind that God did not bring judgment on his people for no reason, and certainly not without warning.

***Jeremiah 25:8 “Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: Because you have not obeyed my words, 9 behold, I will send for all the tribes of the north, declares the Lord, and for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all these surrounding nations. I will devote them to destruction, and make them a horror, a hissing, and an everlasting desolation. 10 Moreover, I will banish from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the grinding of the millstones and the light of the lamp. 11 This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.”***

Why captivity? Why not just punish them where they were – there are certainly many ways to do that. Because Israel became greedy and had ceased leaving the ground “rest” every seventh year as God commanded.

***2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 36:20 He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, 21 to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.***

Israel had violated seventy sabbath rest years for the land so that would form the basis for their exile to Babylon.

***Jeremiah 29:8 For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Do not let your prophets who are in your midst and your diviners deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams which they dream. 9 For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them,' declares the Lord. 10 "For thus says the Lord, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.' 11 For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.***

Since Daniel knew of Jeremiah's prophecy and since he was amongst one of the deportations to Babylon, he could do the math and know that the time left in captivity was short.

So as chapter 9 opens, Daniel is an old man – still prominent in this foreign land, and still notable among his people.

***Daniel 9:1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans— 2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.***

Daniel, knowing that the time left of captivity was short, began to pray.

***Daniel 9:4 I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed and said, “Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant and lovingkindness for those who love him and keep his commandments, 5 we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances. 6 Moreover, we have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, our fathers and all the people of the land.”***

***Daniel 9:15 “And now, O Lord our God, who have brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and have made a name for Yourself, as it is this day—we have sinned, we have been wicked. 16 O Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, let now Your anger and Your wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people have become a reproach to all those around us. 17 So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplications, and for Your sake, O Lord, let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary. 18 O my God, incline Your ear and hear! Open Your eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by Your name; for we are not presenting our supplications before You on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great compassion. 19 O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Your own sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”***

Talk about “the effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous availing much” (James 5:16) – notice the swiftness of God in answering Daniel’s prayer. It is as though from the time Daniel began to ask that the answer was released from heaven.

***Daniel 9:23 At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell you, for you are highly***

***esteemed; so, give heed to the message and gain understanding of the vision.***

In Daniel's prayer he is effectively asking, "**when will you *restore your people to their land, establish your kingdom, and complete your purpose for them?***"

Now Daniel 9:24 is the key to nearly all eschatology as far understanding the timeline of the future. While Daniel is asking about Israel, God is giving a much bigger and more comprehensive answer.

Like many Old Testament prophecies, Daniel's prophecy here has both a near and a far fulfillment.

***Daniel 9:24 "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place."***

The Hebrew word for "decreed" is "khaw-thak" and it means "to cut off" and we should think of that as God "cutting off" or "cutting out" a period of history for his purposes with his people.

He is God, he can do this.

**"to finish the transgression"**

- Transgression refers to presumptuous sin. To transgress is to choose to intentionally disobey; transgression is willful trespassing.
- **"to finish the transgression"** refers to restraining sin in general – perhaps this means he will let it run its course to its natural end under his sovereign management.

**"to make an end of sin"**

- Because this phrase appears right before the **“making atonement”** phrase it is thought to refer to individual sins.
- God is going to judge individuals for their individual sins, as well as bring sin in general under divine control.

**“to make atonement for iniquity”**

- God is going to “cover” sin – he is going to cover it with the blood of Jesus Christ.
- By restraining sin in general, judging individuals for their sins, and by offering a covering for sin, God is going to bring sin thoroughly and finally to an end and do it in a just manner.

**“to bring in everlasting righteousness”**

- Since Eden, mankind has only seen snippets of righteousness, but it is not God’s plan for the ages that we would only see righteousness occasionally and sporadically.
- He is going to bring the thing we call “time” to an end and replace it with an existence that knows no time and most especially, knows no sin.

**“to seal up vision and prophecy”**

- The time will come when visions, revelations, and prophecies will naturally end because there will be no need for more information on the one, we can see.
- *1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:12 “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.”*

**“to anoint the most holy place”**

- Perhaps akin to saying, “the consummation of all things.”
- “Literally, the text says to anoint a holy of holies, and it probably has to do with the eternal state. The eternal

holiness of the eternal new heaven and new earth, with its eternal Jerusalem, in which is an eternal temple, in which is an eternal holy of holies, in which is an eternal throne, on which sits an eternal God.” Unknown

So, in this “carve out” in history, six things are going to be accomplished – three negatives having to do with sin, and three positives having to do with redemption.

In response to Daniel’s prayer (question perhaps) about the future of God’s people, God lays out his timetable for redemption. Not just the redemption of Israel, but the redemption God’s people of all ages.

*Daniel 9:24 "Seventy sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy Place." NLT*

*Daniel 9:24 "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place." ESV*

So why the discrepancy between the NLT and the ESV above?

Because the Hebrew word “shaw-boo’-ah” has no certain meaning except within the context it is used.

We know from history what is meant, but when Daniel was given the prophecy no one could have possibly known what it meant.

***Daniel 9:24 "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place. 25 So you are to know and discern that from the***

*issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. 26 Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. 27 And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”*

***Daniel 9:25 So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.***

We are given a historical marker for when this “carve out” in history will begin. We are not given an “end,” only a beginning.

**“from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem”**

*Nehemiah 2:1 And it came about in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, that wine was before him, and I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. 2 So the king said to me, “Why is your face sad though you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of heart.” Then I was very much afraid. 3 I said to the king, “Let the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the city, the place of my fathers’ tombs, lies desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?” 4 Then the king said to me, “What would you request?” So, I prayed to the God of heaven. 5 I said to the king, “If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it.” 6*

*Then the king said to me, the queen sitting beside him, "How long will your journey be, and when will you return?" So, it pleased the king to send me, and I gave him a definite time.*

In Nehemiah chapter 2 we find the only Biblical decree to go and rebuild the city and the walls around Jerusalem. Scholars believe that this was the year 445 B.C.

The seventy weeks we now understand from history to be (70) weeks of years or exactly 490 years.

**Daniel 9:25-26 tell us also that after 69 weeks (or 483 years) Messiah would be 'cut off'.**

The ancient Biblical writers calculated the year on a 360-day calendar, rather than 365 like the pagans. And so, we have, then, in verse 25, 483 years of 360 days "unto Messiah the Prince." Not Messiah the baby, not Messiah the child, not Messiah the preacher, not Messiah the one who dies, not Messiah who rises, but Messiah who is the Prince. The Anointed One, the Royal One, the Regal One, the Majestic One, the One who is the heir to the throne, the Anointed Prince. So, it will be 483 years of 360 days.

Now, the only way we can figure it out is we have to convert into our kind of years, with our kind of days, so we will just multiply to get how many days it would be.

You multiply it out, and its 173,880 days. You say, "The Bible can't be this specific." Well, you will find out in a moment - 173,880 days. The decree comes on March 14th, 445 BC. Sir Robert Anderson, who particularly did monumental work on this prophecy of the triumphal entry of Jesus Christ, has identified, by looking at the Jewish calendars of Passovers and so forth, that the time in which Passover was held can be determined rather easily, at least through using his method. And he finds the triumphal entry of Jesus must have occurred on April 6, 32 A.D., the month of Nisan. And so, all we need to do is calculate a little bit. If Daniel

is correct, from March 14, 445 B.C., to April 6, 32 A.D., is going to be 173,880 days.

Well, let us think about it. From March 14, 445, to April 6, 32 A.D., is only 477 years and 24 days; so, we are a few years short. We must deduct a year, because 1 B.C. and 1 A.D. is the same year, so we really have 476 years and 24 days. Now, we must convert to our calendar of 365 days, so we multiply that all out, plus 24 days, and we get 173,764: and we're still short. But we have leap year every four years. So, 476 divided by 4, gives us 119 leap years, so we add 119 more days to 173,664, and we get 173,883 days - 3 days too many. You say, "Oh, close is good enough for me." **Close enough is not good enough for God.**

Robert Anderson went to the Royal Observatory in England, and he found out that, according to their solar calculations, a year is 1/128 of a day longer on the calendar than a solar year. So, every 128 years, we must lose a day. And if you are dealing with 483 years, there will be 3 of those, so you drop those out. And you have 173,880 days, just exactly as the Word of God said.

These years are understood to be Jewish 'sabbatical' years each measuring 360 days each.

- 173,880 days divided by 360 = 483 sabbatical years
- March 14<sup>th</sup> of 445 B.C. (The command to rebuild in Nehemiah 2)
- April 6<sup>th</sup> of 32 A.D. (Jesus' triumphant entry)
- The elapsed time in days that we can count, adjusting for leap years, is 173,880

***Daniel 9:26 "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing"***

Why "the" sixty-two weeks? Because we are to understand that "the sixty-two weeks" follows **"there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks"** – we are to add them together.

Given that we know from history these are 7 + 62 weeks of years we can know that period is  $69 * 7$  weeks of years or a total of 483 years until Messiah is “cut-off.” (crucifixion of Jesus)

**“the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.”**

There are (2) princes in Daniel’s account – one of them is Jesus the Messiah who is “cut-off” and the other is “the prince who is to come.” The prince who is to come is Anti-Christ and “the people” of the prince to come are the opponents of God in all ages – first recognized in 70 A.D. when the Roman general Titus leveled the temple.

**“he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week”**

The prince who is to come ultimately turns out to be Anti-Christ who will sign a peace treaty to protect Israel as the Tribulation period begins.

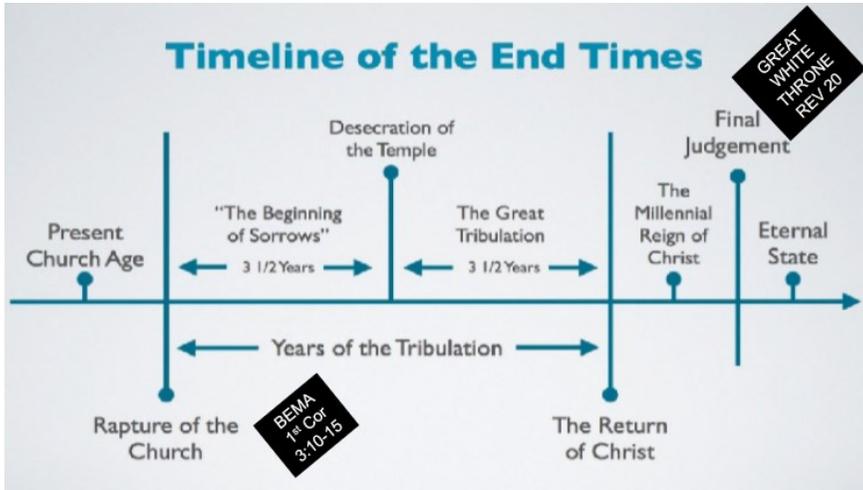
**“but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering”**

Forty-two months into the 7-year Tribulation period Anti-Christ will break the covenant with Israel and demand worship.

We will cover the Tribulation period in verse-by-verse when we study the book, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ.” The scriptures tell us that after 69 weeks Messiah would be cut-off and we are also told that when week #70 begins that the city would be destroyed, and that great trouble would come upon Israel.

However, what was not clear then, was that between weeks #69 and #70 that the countdown would be put on hold. (there would be an indefinite pause) That holding period is the space of time that we live in. It is a parenthesis called the ‘Church Age.’

## Eschatology Part Two



### The Signs of His Coming

**Matthew 24:3** As he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" **4** And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. **5** For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. **6** You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. **7** For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. **8** But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. **9** "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. **10** At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. **11** Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. **12** Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. **13** But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. **14** This gospel of the kingdom shall be

***preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.***

Three questions; 1) When will these things be? 2) What are the signs of his coming?, and 3) When will the world end?

***Matthew 23:39 “For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’.”***

The disciples knew that Jesus was speaking of future things and asked the logical questions that we all want to know.

Jesus provides an answer that goes on for two chapters which is very un-Jesus like in many respects for he was the master of the short, truthful, pithy retort.

His answer needs to be seen as addressing that which the disciples could not have known – that his 2<sup>nd</sup> coming would be in two stages. First in the air, and then seven years later to earth. While all that Jesus says in reply is true, it is frequently misunderstood.



His answer includes things that are true of the rapture, and things that are true of his glorious appearing.

We must understand that, considering further N.T. teaching, we should try to separate what is relevant to the “rapture” from what is relevant to the “glorious appearing.” Once we frame the text considering the entire New Testament it becomes clearer.

**Some of the “signs” or “birth pangs” he discloses are:**

- Deception - many would come claiming to be the Christ
- Wars and rumors of wars
- Famines and earthquakes
- Persecution of Christians
- Lawlessness
- Cold heartedness
- The gospel will be preached worldwide

It is important to see that in Matthew 24 Jesus is giving us things that are generally true of the Church age, but especially true of the Great Tribulation.

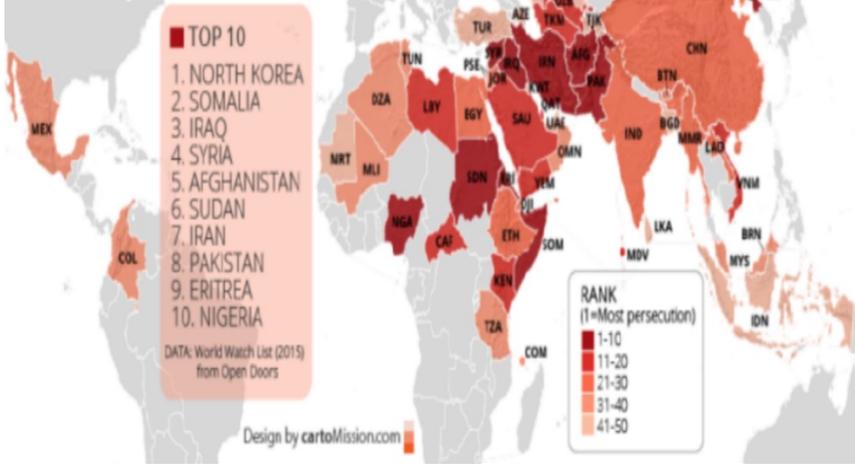
He is going to frame much of what he says relating to “birth pangs” – that is a clue. Generally, “birth pangs” do not occur until just before, and even up to the time a baby is born.

Throughout the church age there have been wars and rumors of wars, and there have been outbreaks of persecution, and there have been earthquakes.

***Matthew 24:9 “Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. 10 At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another.”***

The events of verse #9 have happened throughout the church age, but they will have a more intense and more definite fulfillment in the Great Tribulation.

## WHERE DO CHRISTIANS FACE THE MOST PERSECUTION?



During Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week Anti-Christ (the beast) will aggressively pursue and kill those who to come to Christ in the Great Tribulation period.

Think about some of the horrible genocides that have occurred sponsored by states like Rwanda, and then broaden that scale from national to global. Jesus is saying, "when you see global persecution of Christians you can know that the birth pangs of my return have begun, and I am coming soon."

***Matthew 24:14 This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.***

When you think about this marker, "the worldwide proclamation of the gospel," try not to think of it as a radio frequency thing, or a missionary thing, or even an internet thing.

Think of it in light of Revelation 14:6 ***"And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those***

***who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people;”***

Another example where, when taken in context, the things Jesus is saying in Matthew 24 are solved more easily.

In Revelation 14 we learn that during the Great Tribulation God is going to see to it that the gospel is preached to everyone, everywhere using one of his angels. There will be an angel flying in “midheaven” (the sky as we know it where birds and airplanes fly) preaching the eternal gospel. (another “birth pang” sign that Jesus’ return is near)

The fact that the angel is said to be flying in Mid-Heaven simply means that he is flying in the sky as we know it. (he will be in the highest, most visible part of the sky during a substantial portion of the last seven years of earth’s history)

This angel is a preaching, or evangelizing angel and please notice what he is preaching. He is preaching the “eternal gospel.” There is only one gospel, it is eternal, and appropriate for every age there has ever been, or ever will be. We should also notice the scope of his preaching as well – “to every nation and tribe and tongue and people.” It is worldwide.

***Revelation 14:7 and he said with a loud voice, “Fear God, and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come; worship him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.”***

The preaching angel that God sends to the world has some urgency in his message of salvation that you would think would be an easy “sell” given the conditions of chaos on the Earth.

This is so, so, in keeping with the character and nature of God. The scriptures tell us that God is love. (1<sup>st</sup> John 4:8 *But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*)

So, think about it, why is this angel traversing the sky preaching the gospel to a world of **people who hate God, have largely despised Christians, and are likely to be following Anti-Christ?**

***Ephesians 2:4 But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, 5 that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)***

***Matthew 24:44 For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think he will.***

Here we have some more evidence that Jesus' words, here in the Olivet Discourse, are speaking of both phases of his return – the Rapture of the Church, and his glorious appearing. Just as the Old Testament saint could not imagine two comings of Messiah; it has been a bit of mystery to the New Testament saints that his 2<sup>nd</sup> coming would be in (2) phases.

**Matthew 24:44 is speaking of the Rapture of the Church because it will happen suddenly and without warning.**

For example, if the “abomination of desolation” had to happen before the Rapture then we would know that he is not coming for us today. Since the temple has not been rebuilt or desecrated, and since Jesus says he is coming at unexpected time, then it is safe to assume the “**an hour when you do not think he will**” applies to the Rapture and not the Glorious Appearing.

***Matthew 24:36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. 37 For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. 38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so, will the coming of the Son of Man be. 40 Then there will be two men in the field; one***

***will be taken, and one will be left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left.”***

No one knows just when Jesus will come again, but we do have some insights into the world when he does return. Like the days of Noah where people were going about their lives with no thought of the coming judgment. As soon as someone tells you that they know when Jesus is coming you can mark that person as either a liar, or even more likely, looking to make money by selling a book.

***2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.***

***2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:3 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, 4 and saying, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.”***

The scriptures do not contain the word rapture. The word rapture comes from the Latin ‘rpto’ which literally means “abduct.” So why do we say ‘rapture’ when the scriptures never mention the word?

- I could describe grass, bases, bats, balls, players, umpires, dugouts, etc, or I could just say ‘baseball game’ and you get the picture immediately.
- The same is true of rapture. It gives us a method to communicate numerous details about the hope of the church with just one word.

***1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.***

There were false teachers telling believers that unless you are alive when Jesus returns that you will miss the rapture. Not so. The spirits and souls of those who have died in Christ will return with Jesus when he comes. (they will receive their new bodies at that time)

***1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.***

**The order of events at the Rapture:**

- There will be a shout and a trumpet.
- The 'dead in Christ' will come with Jesus AND their bodies will be raised to be joined with their spirits and souls.
- Those believers alive at the time will have their bodies changed and caught away.

***1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will***

***sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.***

What is being disclosed was new information .... 'behold I show you a mystery'. There will be a generation of believers who will go to heaven without ever having a physical death. It is a rapid translation indicated by the phrase 'in the twinkling of an eye'. Once the church is removed, the world is ready for the seven-year period known as the Great Tribulation.

### **The Great Tribulation Chronology**

- Formation of the world religion - Revelation 17
- The appearance of Anti-Christ - Revelation 13
- The revival of the Roman Empire - Revelation 13
- Anti-Christ's covenant with Israel - Daniel 9
- The 'seal' judgments - Revelation 6
- Mass return of Jews to Palestine - Ezek 37
- Conversion and call of the 144,000 Jews - Revelation 7
- Rebuilding of the Jewish temple - Daniel 9
- The ministry of the two witnesses - Revelation 11
- Russia invades Palestine - Ezek 38-39
- The slaying of the two witnesses - Revelation 11
- The slaying of the 144,000 - Revelation 14
- Satan cast out of heaven - Revelation 12 (parenthetic)
- Antichrist destroys the world religion - Revelation 17
- Antichrist demands worship - Math 24
- Worldwide persecution of Israel by Anti-Christ - Math 24
- The trumpet judgments - Revelation 8 - 11
- Three special angelic messages - Revelation 14
- The bowl judgments - Revelation 16
- The destruction of Babylon - Revelation 18
- Armageddon - Revelation 16

## The Great Judgments of the Tribulation

### 7 Seals

1. Religious deception (Revelation 6:1-2; Matthew 24:4-5)
2. War (Revelation 6:3-4; Matthew 24:6-7)
3. Famine (Revelation 6:5-6; Matthew 24:7)
4. Disease epidemics (Revelation 6:7-8; Matthew 24:7)
5. Tribulation (Revelation 6:9-11; Matthew 24:8-12, 21-22)
6. Heavenly signs (Revelation 6:12-17; Matthew 24:29)
7. Seven trumpets (the "Day of the Lord")

### 7 Trumpets (the "Day of the Lord")

1. Destruction of vegetation (Revelation 8:7)
2. Devastation of oceans, sea life (8:8-9)
3. Devastation of rivers, fresh water (8:10-11)
4. Sun, moon and stars darkened (8:12)
5. Torturous human afflictions (9:1-12)
6. Enormous military destruction (9:13-19)
7. Seven last plagues (15:1; 16:1-21)

### 7 Last Plagues (the 7th Trumpet)

1. Sores on beast worshipers (Revelation 16:2)
2. Oceans become blood (16:3)
3. Rivers and fresh water become blood (16:4)
4. The sun scorches the earth (16:8)
5. Thick darkness in the beast kingdom (16:10)
6. Euphrates River dried up (16:12)
7. Massive final destruction (16:17-21)

## Eschatology Part Three

### The Bema Seat

*2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:10 **For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ**, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

*Romans 14:10b **For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God**. 11 For it is written, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.” 12 So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.*

*1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3:10 According to the grace of God, which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. 11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now **if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw**, 13 each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. 14 **If any man’s work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward**. 15 **If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire**.*

The Bema judgment occurs in Heaven after the Rapture – it is not some sort of test to see if you get into Heaven, it happens at the throne of God in Heaven.

While this is aptly called a “judgment” it is not an assessment of sins, but of how having the righteousness of Christ affected our lives. Our sins will be “in play” only so far as sin kept us from faithfully serving Christ.

**Did we obey the Great Commission?** *Matthew 28:19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in*

*the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

Sobering, isn't it? To think of standing before Jesus and having him assess our faithfulness to his great commission?

**How victorious were we over sin?** *Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.*

Again, I find this to be a sobering thought that is not just some remote possibility, but a certainty for every believer.

**Did we control our tongue?** *James 3:8 But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; 10 from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.*

We all know that sins of the tongue are rarely seen in the same light as murder and adultery, but that is not God's perspective and will be quite evident at the Bema Seat.

**How well in general did we keep on keeping on?** *James 1:12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, **he will receive the crown of life** which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

Some comfort perhaps – the “blessed person” is the one who perseveres under trial, and not just the ones who triumph over trials in this life. (see the end of Hebrews 11)

James spoke of “the crown of life” and it is not the only crown that may be ours at the Bema Seat.

**The Imperishable Crown** – awarded to the one who competes by the rules, is disciplined, and endures.

*1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. 25 Everyone who competes in the game’s exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one.*

Just as athletes train and prepare for their events so we ought to train and prepare spiritually for the events of our lives – there will be many!

**The Crown of Rejoicing** – awarded to those who rejoice in the things that cause God to rejoice.

Things like salvation, repentance, sanctification, and all the things that our “new man” longs for because he is renewed by the Spirit of God and hungers for the same things God hungers for.

*1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 2:19 For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at his coming? 20 **For you are our glory and joy.***

**The Crown of Righteousness** – This one is awarded to those who “have loved his appearing.” This is not limited to those who eagerly look forward to his return, but to those who love Him, his first coming, and his promised second coming.

*2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing.*

**The Crown of Glory** – this crown is awarded to those who value what Paul wrote in Romans 8:18 “for I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

This one is for the one who confidently knows that this life is not all there is – *one who knows that what we see, and taste now is not to be compared to the glorious state that awaits the believer.*

***1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.***

**The Crown of Life** - This crown is for all believers and is especially dear to those who endure sufferings.

***Revelation 2:10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.***

We are not necessarily called to be successful, popular, or well known – we are called to be faithful and to trust God with the results of our faithfulness.

**What did you do with what you were given?**

**The Great White Throne**

***Revelation 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life;***

***and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.***

Now this is a strange scene and one that almost no one talks about – the heaven and earth (probably all the universe) is nowhere to be found. We might call this the “un-creation,” if there were such a word.

***Revelation 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.***

Do you see the picture? At this moment in history, it is as though there is a great white throne and nothing else. John told us in his gospel who is on the throne – *John 5:22 For not even the Father judges anyone, but he has given all judgment to the Son.*

***John 5:26 For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so he gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; 27 and he gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.***

***Revelation 20:12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.***

***Daniel 12: “Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone***

***who is found written in the book, will be rescued. 2 Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.”***

The prophecy of Daniel chapter 12 is a broad one that covers several times and events that can only be understood against the whole of scripture. Daniel’s prophecy points to the tribulation period, and to two resurrections.

***The first resurrection*** started in 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians and was completed in Revelation 20:4, ***the 2<sup>nd</sup> resurrection*** happens to be what Revelation 20:12 is about.

What John sees at the Great White Throne Judgment is the resurrection of the unsaved dead of all time and they are there for judgment.

The fact that they have been resurrected is important because it speaks to us of having a body – yes, the unsaved will also receive a new and eternal body.

But while the new body of the saint is suitable for eternal life on the new earth, the new body of the unsaved is suitable for sustaining eternal punishment and torment.

The text below is the proof text for my assertion that the unsaved dead also get a new body.

***Matthew 10:28 Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.***

Those who die now in their sins in the created world of time and space, will die a second death in a world where there is no time and there is no space, and will be given a body to accommodate their unique environment to feel pain, regret, and agony.

At the Great White Throne, a trial of sorts is conducted for the unsaved dead – evidence is presented from the infallible records of God written in his books.

As it turns out, this intuitive sense that all people seem to believe their deeds are recorded somewhere, and will play a role in their eternity, is true after all.

While this is a trial of sorts, it is really more of a sentencing because there are no innocent people at this judgment. (Rom 3:23)

In fact, everyone at this judgment could have, and should have pleaded guilty while they were living to secure a pardon from the Judge.

When we come to Christ we effectively say, “God be merciful to me a guilty sinner,” and the Judge will say, “of course, that is why I died in your place.” Think of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector in Luke 18.

Let’s examine “according to their deeds” – what does this imply?

***Matthew 10:14* Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet. 15 Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.**

***Matthew 11:22* Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.**

***Mark 12:38* In his teaching he was saying: “Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and like respectful greetings in the marketplaces, 39 and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, 40 who devour widows’ houses, and for appearance’s sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation.”**

***Luke 12:47 And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes, 48 but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few.***

I could go on, but the clear teaching is that just as there are degrees of rewards for believers at the Bema Seat, there are degrees of punishment for the lost.

Without degrees of punishment for sinners, how could we claim that God is just?

***Romans 2:5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6 who will render to each person according to his deeds:***

The unsaved dead of all time are judged and sentenced based upon the content in the “books” of their deeds.

So, if all the people here are lost, why even have the book of life at the throne?

I think it is because Jesus is showing the lost what really sealed their eternal fate – their works earned them punishment, but their rejection of him is what matters far more than their sinful deeds.

*Revelation 20:14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

“Death and Hades” – I see these as synonyms for the same thing, the place of the unsaved dead. Jesus gave us a great description of “Death and Hades” in his account of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

There will not be a long line of billions of lost people waiting their turn at the Great White Throne – just as God can listen to and interact with billions of people now, so to will he be able to do when judging them.

### The Rich Man and Lazarus

*Luke 16:19 “There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. 20 And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, 21 who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, 23 and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. 24 And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’ 25 But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. 26 And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’ 27 And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house— 28 for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ 29 But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ 30 And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ 31 He said to him, ‘If they do not*

***hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.”***

**Biblical terminology on Hell:**

- Hell (general all-inclusive term)
- Hades (the place of torment for now)
- Lake of Fire (the next and permanent place of judgment)

All are proper terms and uses for the eternal state that is without God, but not without punishment.

***Luke 16:22 Finally, the poor man died and was carried by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, 23 and his soul went to the place of the dead. There, in torment, he saw Abraham in the far distance with Lazarus at his side.***

Where was Abraham? He was in Paradise. (Romans 4:3 For the Scriptures tell us, "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.")

Where was the rich man? In, Hades, a place of conscious torment.

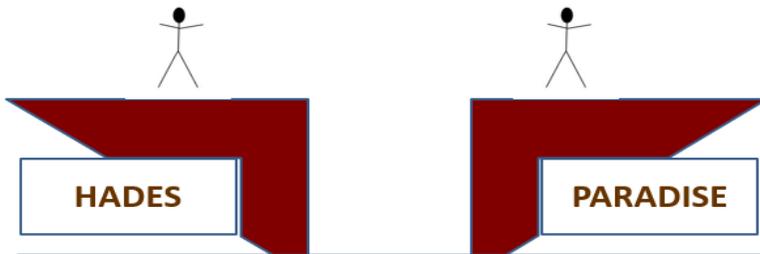
The rich man did not go to Hell because he was rich, and the poor man did not go to Heaven because he was poor.

There is no particular virtue in either state.

What is not disclosed until their individual deaths was their spiritual condition before death.

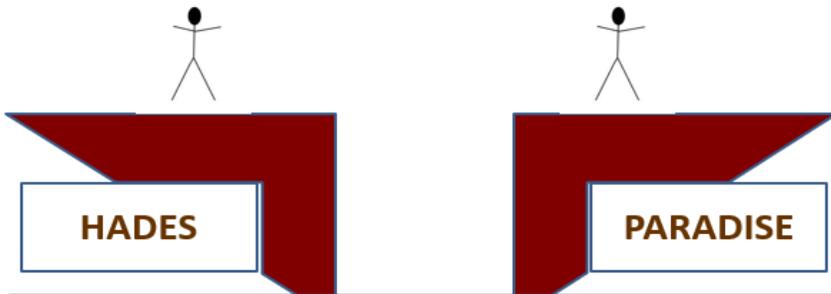
However, while their spiritual conditions are not obvious in the text while they were living, after death we see a "night and day" difference.

## *The Rich Man and Lazarus*



One side is a place of torment, and the other a place of bliss.

## *The Rich Man and Lazarus*



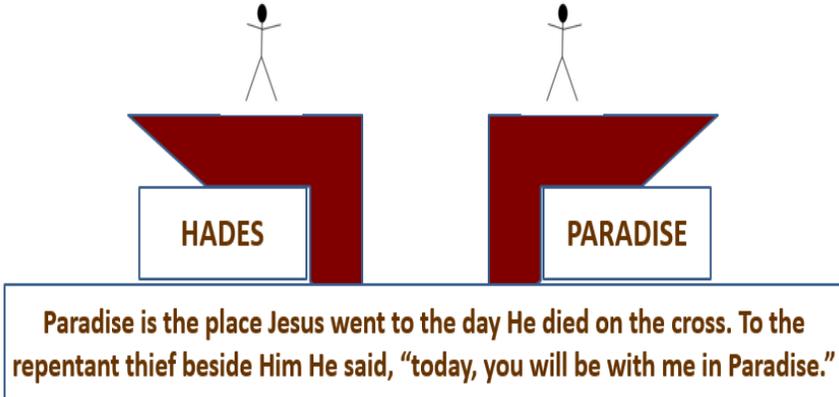
No one can pass between the two places.

## *The Rich Man and Lazarus*

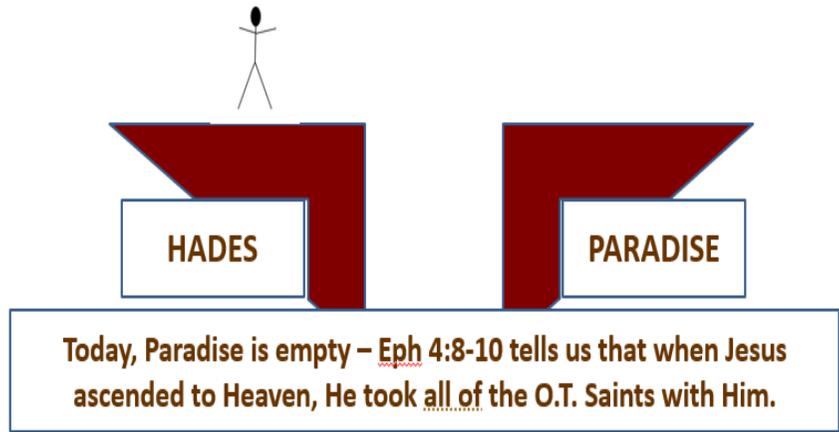


The people in Hades (Hell) do not want their loved ones to join them.

## *The Rich Man and Lazarus*



## *The Rich Man and Lazarus*



### The Future of the Lost

***John 8:24*** *"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."*

***John 5:28*** *Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice, 29 and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life,*

**those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.**

***Daniel 12:1 “Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. 2 Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.”***

The Bible speaks of a time of judgment for those who die without Christ.

***2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 1:7 “when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power,”***

***Revelation 20:15 And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.***

***Matthew 25:41 “Then he will also say to those on his left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;’”***

### **The Judgment Fire**

Is the fire prepared for the Devil and his angels a literal fire?

***Matthew 7:19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.***

***John 15:6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them and cast them into the fire and they are burned.***

The Bible speaks of a judgment of fire for the unsaved, is it a literal fire?

**Answer:** I do not know, but it sure seems to be. There are no hints about it being just figurative.

However, even if the fire is figurative, you can conclude the punishment is still of the most severe kind imaginable.

***Matthew 13:30 Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest, I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn."***

***Matthew 13:37 And he said, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, 38 and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; 39 and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels.***

When this parable is explained all the players are explained, but the fire is not – the fire is not said to be a figure of something else.

### **Eternal Judgment or Annihilation**

If punishment is 'death' how can the punishment last forever?

***1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 5:6 But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives.***

***Ephesians 2:1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins.***

Scripture tells us it is possible be dead, yet still have a form of existence.

***Revelation 21:8 "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."***

***Revelation 20:10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.***

***Revelation 20:15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.***

**What about those who have never heard?**

***John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."***

The above is a rock-solid position to hold and one that we ought never to move from.

There is great clarity in saying, as John did in 1<sup>st</sup> John 5:12, **He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.**

The position held by most evangelical theologians is that while it might make us uncomfortable, the answer seems to be that those who have never heard are lost.

There are exceptions for age and intellectual comprehension –

***2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 12:22 He said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who knows, the Lord may be gracious to me, that the child may live.' 23 But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me."***

So how can we ever get comfortable with this? Well, first of all who says we have to be comfortable with what God does?

In the end, it is a matter of trust - ***Genesis 18:25 Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?***

Some things to consider that I would not teach as doctrine but would recommend that we ponder the possibilities.

**“We do know that no person can be saved except through Christ. We do not know that only those who know him can be saved by Him.”**

**C.S. Lewis**

What C.S. Lewis says on its face sounds like heresy of the highest order, but I would submit to you that we all believe a version of what he said.

Here is my proof that we all believe some version of the Lewis quote when it comes to the mentally impaired and aborted babies.

The mentally impaired may never be able to understand the gospel, and the aborted will never hear it, yet we believe both groups are covered by the blood of Christ and saved.

So, is it such an awful stretch to imagine God extending grace to those who have never heard?

I am not asserting that He does, I am merely pointing out the obvious that the Judge of all the earth always does what is just and right.

**The mentally  
impaired.  
YES!**

**Aborted babies!  
Those who die in  
infancy.  
YES!**

**Those who  
have never  
heard?  
???**

**“Is it not frightfully unfair that this new life should be confined to people who have heard of Christ and been able to believe in Him? But the truth is God has not told us what his arrangements about the other people are. We do know that no man can be**

**saved except through Christ; we do not know that only those  
who know him can be saved through Him.”**

**C.S. Lewis**

## Eschatology Part Four

### The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

*Revelation 19:7 Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready.” 8 It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. 9 Then he said to me, “Write, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’”*

The betrothal, the wedding, and the celebration.

- The “**betrothal**” was when we trusted Jesus as our Savior.
- The “**wedding**” happens at the Rapture – “I will come again and receive you unto myself.”
- The “**celebration**” is like we do after weddings – we eat, drink, and make merry.

### **This world is not our home; or is it?**

We have been given many clues about what the new Earth will be like from this Earth. Plants, animals, streams, and people of every imaginable shape, size, and color.

**“While many of the world’s religions portray Heaven as a mystical place, Christianity does not give up on humanity or Earth”**

**Randy Alcorn**

It is as if God has planted a longing to return to Eden in our hearts  
..... **We’ve never been there, but it sounds like home.**

Many of the ‘movements’ of our time are rooted in this sense God places within us. Save the planet, animal rights, and human rights all originate with what God has placed within us.

While our ancestors (Adam and Eve) came from the homeland we are forced to live in a place that does not feel like home.

It is the same Earth Adam and Eve lived on, but it has been seriously marred by sin.

**We would love an Earth that is peaceful, stable, and inhabitable ..... Not coincidentally, that is just what God has promised.**

**“God has not promised a ‘non-Earth,’ he promises a ‘new Earth’.”**

**Randy Alcorn**

In Revelation 21 and 22 we read of a city, buildings, streets, streams, a mountain, and plenty of people. Does that not sound very much like the Earth we know?

***Revelation 21:5 And he who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”***

***Revelation 22:3 There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his bondservants will serve Him.***

There will be work in Heaven. (his servants will serve him) Work is good for us, it allows us to do something measurable, and can be used to glorify God. (work will continue in Heaven)

**Heaven is a real place.**

***Hebrews 11:10 For he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11 By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants as the stars of Heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. 13 All these died in faith, without receiving the***

*promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the Earth. 14 For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. 15 And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he has prepared a city for them.*

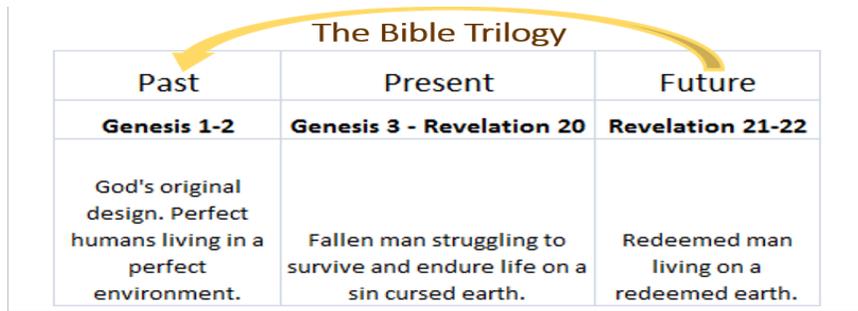
Other religions, other people and many books tell us that Heaven is more of a state of existence than a place, but there is ample evidence to the contrary. The intermediate state, perhaps, but not our final home.

**We need to stop trying to spiritualize everything we cannot understand and start believing what we read in the bible.**

**“Stop closing your eyes trying to imagine the unimaginable. Open your eyes and imagine this Earth without the effects of sin.”**

**Randy Alcorn**

We are living on the same Earth as Adam and Eve. Look at the beauty that is still ours to enjoy and look at the best intentions of men that are still seen. It is no accident that most of the people we meet are relatively nice people .... That was God’s original design!



## **Return to Eden.**

In **Genesis** God plants the garden on Earth; in **Revelation** he brings down the new Earth with a garden at the center.

In **Eden** there was no sin or death; in the new **Earth** there is no more sin or death.

In **Genesis**, the Redeemer is promised, in **Revelation** the Redeemer returns.

## **God's Intentions**

*Isaiah 65:17 "For behold, I create new heavens and a new Earth; and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind."*

*Isaiah 66:22 "For just as the new heavens and the new Earth which I make will endure before Me," declares the Lord, "So your offspring and your name will endure."*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:13 But according to his promise we are looking for new heavens and a new Earth, in which righteousness dwells.*

*Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new Heaven and a new Earth; for the first Heaven and the first Earth passed away.*

**"If God's plan were just to take us to the present Heaven (the intermediate state) or a place of just spirit beings, there would be no need for a new Heaven or new Earth."**

## **Randy Alcorn**

Jesus did not die to make the most of a dire situation, he died to redeem us and to restore all things.

The Devil threw mud on God's creative canvas, but God will do more than just wipe it clean. He will completely restore it.

**Reconcile, redeem, restore, return, renew, regenerate, and resurrect** all point to a **restoration** and not an alternative plan.

This explains to a great extent why God is always viewing us as what we can be more so than what we are.

We are fallen people living in a fallen world; we will be redeemed people living in a redeemed world and that is what both parties long for.

If God wanted to start over after the fall, he could have sent Adam and Eve to hell and made Bill and Barb.

That might be what we would think of doing, but one who has the power to redeem and restore to an original state, does not have to start over.

Satan struck a blow at God's handiwork, but he did not destroy his work to a place beyond redemption.

### **Restoration**

**"If God were to end history and reign forever in a distant Heaven, Earth would be remembered as a graveyard of sin and failure. Instead, Earth will be redeemed and restored."**

### **Randy Alcorn**

When one has unlimited power to restore and repair there is no reason to start from scratch. Satan will not have the victory; God will restore Earth and mankind to his original design.

It excites me to know that what I sense in my bones should be .... Will be.

We have a deep longing for and a distant sense that things are not as he intended and that something on Earth is desperately wrong.

***Hebrews 11:16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he has prepared a city for them.***

## The Old Testament Hope for a New Earth

*Isaiah 26:19 **Your dead will live; their corpses will rise.** You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, for your dew is as the dew of the dawn, and **the Earth will give birth to the departed spirits.***

The Old Testament saints were not looking to go to a distant Heaven .... They were expecting to live on a restored Earth. Most of the language of Isaiah 60 is about a restored and sin free Earth. (See Isaiah 60)

Some have reduced Christ's reign on Earth to the Millennial kingdom, but that is an error – the new Earth will be eternal.

*Isaiah 9:7 There will be no end to the increase of his government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, **to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore.** The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.*

*Isaiah 65:17 “For behold, **I create new heavens and a new Earth;** and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind. 18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy for rejoicing and her people for gladness.”*

It seems clear the Old Testament saints expected to live forever on the Earth. It is somewhat irrelevant whether they believed in a restored Earth or a new Earth; the facts are that God promised a ‘forever’ existence on Earth.

We do not long for something we have never seen or have any reference to; we long for things to be set right on Earth much like they were in our lives when we came to Christ.

*Isaiah 66:22 “For just as the **new heavens and the new Earth** which I make will endure before Me,” declares the Lord, “So your offspring and your name will endure.”*

The fact of a new Earth is written in many places in the Old Testament. **The Old Testament saints were not looking for a new Earth because it was all they could relate to. They were looking for a new Earth because that is what God promised.**

### **Will Earth be Destroyed or Restored?**

*Luke 21:33 **Heaven and Earth will pass away**, but My words will not pass away.*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in **which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the Earth and its works will be burned up**.*

Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new Heaven and a new Earth; **for the first Heaven and the first Earth passed away**.

Think of this – the Apostle Paul ‘passed away’ two thousand years ago and his body cannot be found today because it has completely changed into another form of matter; dust.

However, at the rapture of the church the Apostle Paul will be resurrected, and his body will be restored into a recognizable Apostle Paul.

If passing away was not the complete extinction of Paul, how can we be so sure the Earth that passes away cannot be resurrected and restored as well?

Forest fires often destroy and seemingly wipe out hundreds of acres of green and living trees, but there is always a resurrection of those forests.

Fire cleanses the forests of diseased plants and trees. Forest fires also remove the underbrush that sometimes suffocates new growth in the forest.

When the forest ‘passes away’ it is not uncommon at all for a healthier forest to replace it.

*Acts 3:19 Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; 20 and that he may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, 21 whom Heaven must receive **until the period of restoration of all things** about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from ancient time.*

The prophets promised a restoration of the Earth and the Old Testament saints believed God.

***2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:6 through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. 7 But by his word the present heavens and Earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. 8 But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. 9 The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the Earth and its works will be burned up.***

An analogy is set-up for us by Peter – the first destruction of the Earth by the flood and the next destruction of the Earth by fire.

The flood of Noah’s day was devastating and served to cleanse the entire Earth, but the Earth did not cease to exist. Much like the forest fire cleanses the forest it seems plausible that God’s fire will serve to cleanse the Earth in the same fashion.

**“The destruction of the Earth will be no more final than our own.”**

**Randy Alcorn**

<p>What we assume about Heaven</p>	<p>What the Bible teaches about Heaven</p>
<p>Non-earth</p>	<p>New Earth</p>
<p>Unfamiliar Setting</p>	<p>Familiar Setting</p>
<p>Disembodied</p>	<p>Resurrected Bodies</p>
<p>Leaving Favorite Things Behind</p>	<p>Retaining the Best Things</p>
<p>No Time and Space</p>	<p>Time and Space</p>
<p>Static</p>	<p>Dynamic</p>
<p>Nothing to do, boring.</p>	<p>Unlimited opportunities to worship and serve with meaningful work.</p>
<p>No learning, instant and complete knowledge.</p>	<p>An eternity of learning and discovery.</p>
<p>Absence of evil, but little we desire.</p>	<p>Presence of the wonderful and everything we were designed to desire.</p>

An accurate accounting of what God has promised us will make us hungry for, even excited about going to Heaven.

When Jesus said he was going to prepare a place for us he had more in mind than we usually picture. The bride waits for the bridegroom to come to pick her up and take her to his father's house where there are many rooms.

***John 14:1 "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also."***

The message for us is clear – we are to trust the bridegroom to come and get us when the time is right.

He said he was preparing a place for us – why not take him at his word?

## Angels & Demons

“The Reverend John G. Paton, a missionary in the New Hebrides Islands, tells a thrilling story involving the protective care of angels. Hostile natives surrounded his mission headquarters one night, intent on burning the Patons out and killing them. John Paton and his wife prayed all during that terror filled night that God would deliver them. When daylight came, they were amazed to see the attackers unaccountably leave. They thanked God for delivering them. A year later, the chief of the tribe was converted to Jesus Christ, and Mr. Paton, remembering what had happened, asked the chief what had kept him and his men from burning down the house and killing them. The chief replied in surprise, “Who were all those men you had with you there?” The missionary answered, “There were no men there, just my wife and I.” The chief argued that they had seen many men standing guard—hundreds of big men in shining garments with drawn swords in their hands. They seemed to circle the mission station so that the natives were afraid to attack. Only then did Mr. Paton realize that God had sent his angels to protect them. The chief agreed that there was no other explanation. Could it be that God had sent a legion of angels to protect his servants, whose lives were being endangered?”

### Billy Graham

As the John Paton story suggests, angels and demons seem to exist in another dimension where they can be seen, AND not be seen.

*2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 6:15 Now when the attendant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was circling the city. And his servant said to him, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?” 16 So he answered, “Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” 17 Then Elisha prayed and said, “O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that*

**he may see.” And the Lord opened the servant’s eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.**

Personal “guardian” angels are assigned to us – at least one each and possibly more. In the text below, look at the possessive pronoun “their” and then look at “angels” in the plural.

***Matthew 18:10 “See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven.”***

When they are assigned is not clear, but probably at the birth of a saint (God has foreknowledge) – Hebrews tells us angels are “sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation.”

***Colossians 1:16 For by him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through him and for Him.***

We should take God at his word when he says, “all things.” The problem with the creation of angels is that we are not told when God created them.

We are not told the exact time of the creation of angels, but we know from the Colossians 1:16 that they were created because everything that exists outside of God was created.

Most presume angels were created sometime prior to the universe on day #1 because of what God said to Job.

***Job 38:4 “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding, 5 Who set its measurements? Since you know. Or who stretched the line on it? 6 “On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, 7***

**When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?**

Angels have two primary functions – 1) to worship God, and 2) to minister to those humans who already do, or will, belong to God.

*Revelation 5:11 Then I looked, **and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.”***

*Hebrews 1:14 Are they (angels) not all **ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?***

Because of those (2) primary functions; worshipping God and serving saints, other arguments are made for “when they were created.” As worshippers of God, they could have been created at any time in the past – in fact outside of time as we know it.

The “sons of God” reference in Job 38:7 calls for them to be in existence before the “foundations of the earth” which would be no later than day #3 of creation.

*Matthew 22:30 For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but **are like angels in heaven.***

This verse has caused errors because it is not seen in its context where Jesus is making the point there will be no marriage in heaven because there will be no need for procreation. (the seven brothers, one common wife story)

Being like an angel in some fashion, is distinctly different from being an angel.

*Hebrews 12:22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and **to myriads of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn***

who are enrolled in heaven, **and to God**, the Judge of all, **and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect**.

Again, we see that angels are separate and distinct entities from humans. The fact that angels are listed along with the “church” and the “righteous made perfect” tells us they are separate from men.

**Angels are commonly referred to as “spirit” beings.**

*Hebrews 1:14 Are they (angels) not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?*

Fallen angels are also spirits - Ephesians 1:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the **rulers**, against the **powers**, against the world **forces of this darkness**, against the **spiritual forces** of wickedness in the heavenly places.

**Angels are a “company” and not a race** – we read of sons of men and sons of God in the scriptures, but never do we see “sons of angels.” (only in a Christmas carol)

Just as Jesus pointed out in the Matthew 22 text – angels are sexless, neither male nor female and therefore cannot procreate as a “race” does.

Because they are not a race, the fallen angels all fell individually by individual choice to sin, as opposed to mankind who was assigned a federal head in Adam.

**Angels have wisdom and knowledge mankind does not possess at this time.**

***Matthew 24:36 But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. (notice the use of “not even the angels”)***

Even fallen angels have knowledge beyond the natural – Luke 4:34b **“I know who You are**—the Holy One of God”

**Angels are more powerful than humans** – Speaking of foolish men, 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 2:11 **“whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord.”**

They are seen freeing the apostles from prison two times in Acts 5 and Acts 12 as well as rolling the stone from Jesus’ tomb in Matthew 28. They are not all-powerful as God is and have needed assistance from other angels as shown in the scriptures.

*Daniel 10:12 Then he **(an angel)** said to me, “Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. 13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.*

No angel has unlimited power – not Michael (Jude 9), and not even Satan himself as seen in Job chapters 1 and 2 when he must get God’s permission to touch Job.

**Angels, including Satan, cannot be in more than one place at a time.**

*Job 1:7 The Lord said to Satan, “From where do you come?” Then Satan answered the Lord and said, “From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.”*

*1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

The same limitation of not being able to be in more than one place at a time applies to demons as well. The problem of demons and the believer has to do with their numbers. While they are not omnipresent individually they are nearly so collectively.

**There is no right or wrong answer to this question.**

**Given that all angels, including Satan, are limited to just one place at a time in the universe, do you think you have ever encountered him?**

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 **All things came into being through Him, and apart from him nothing came into being that has come into being.**

Angels were created good and holy – Gen 1:31 **God saw all that he had made, and behold, it was very good.**

From these two texts it would seem to prove that angels, along with all created things, were created “good.”

So, if all angels were created “good” then why is it so evident that at least some of them are evil?

*Matthew 25:41* “Then he will also say to those on his left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, **into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;**”

It would be illogical and unjust for God to prepare a place of torment for “good” entities.

*Revelation 12:7* And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, 8 and they were not strong enough, **and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven.**

This text, near the end of the Bible, tells of an event that happened sometime in eternity past, and definitely before the fall of man in Genesis 3.

There was a day when the Devil and his angels rebelled and were cast out of heaven.

***2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 2:4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;***

***Jude 6 And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, he has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day.***

Additional information about the fallen angels – some of them are locked up in a pit. And some are roaming free as what we commonly call demons.

We do not know the time of the fall of Satan and his followers, but we do know the cause – pride in Lucifer.

Many believe that Lucifer, now named Satan, was the worship leader in Heaven and as such received so much attention that he became prideful.

***Ezekiel 28:13c “The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created.”***

***Ezekiel 28:15 “You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you. 16 “By the abundance of your trade you were internally filled with violence, And you sinned; Therefore, I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the stones of fire. 17 “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, That they may see you.***

***Isaiah 14:12 “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! 13 For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ 15 Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit.”***

Perhaps the most mysterious question around the fall of the angels is “how did this happen?.”

Perfect entities, in a perfect environment, face to face with God, and yet when Lucifer rebelled, they chose to follow him.

Not much different from the conditions and choices of Adam and Eve – and so the mystery remains. All we can say for certain is that they could and did chose evil.

**“Angels, like Adam and Eve, were put in a position to sin or not to sin without being constrained to do either.”**

**Harry Thiessen**

Said another way, they had wills that were autonomous – they could freely choose, and they chose to sin with their eyes wide open.

In fact, one-third of the angels chose to rebel with Lucifer, *Revelation 12:4 “And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. 4 his tail drew **a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth.**”*

As a result of the angelic fall, they lost their position and holiness with which they were created **without the possibility of redemption.**

Some of them are locked in pits and some are free to engage with humanity .... For now.

Given that there are no doubt billions of them, it is more than likely that we encounter demons, and the opposition they raise against us, on a regular basis.

In the gospels we see Jesus confronting demons, who are the roaming fallen angels, on a regular basis.

*Mark 9:28 When he came into the house, his disciples began questioning him privately, "Why could we not drive it out?" 29 And he said to them, "**This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer.**"*

We also see here that there are "kinds" of demons, and no doubt, kinds of angels.

The word "angel" means messenger – and there are lots of them.

*Revelation 5:11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of **many angels around the throne** and the living creatures and the elders; **and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands,***

If, in history thus far there have been billions of believers, then for personal guardian angels to be assigned, it follows there are billions of angels.

**The Cherubim** – this word is generally thought to mean "to cover," or "to guard."

*Genesis 3:24 So he drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden he **stationed the cherubim** and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.*

*Exodus 25:19 **Make one cherub at one end and one cherub at the other end;** you shall make the cherubim of one piece with the*

*mercy seat at its two ends. (remember the earthly tabernacle was but a copy of the real)*

**The Seraphim** - are mentioned by name only in Isaiah 6:2, & 6:6. They seem to be distinct from the cherubim, for God is said to be seated above the cherubim (1 Sam 4:4; Ps. 80:1; 99:1), but the seraphim stand above him (Isaiah 6:2). (Thiessen)

Isaiah 6:3 would suggest they have a role in Heavenly worship “And one called out to another and said, “**Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory.**” (sounds close to Revelation 4:8)

**The Living Creatures** - Some identify the living creatures of Revelation 4:6-9 with the cherubim. There are striking differences between them, so it is probably best to identify them as a different type of angel than either the seraphim or the cherubim. They worship God, direct the judgments of God, and witness the worship of the one hundred and forty-four thousand. They are active around the throne of God as are the Cherubim and Seraphim. (Thiessen)

*Revelation 4:6 and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, **four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. 7 The first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle.** 8 And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.”*

**The Archangels** - The term “archangel” occurs but twice in Scripture (1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:16; Jude 9), but there are other references to at least one archangel, Michael. He is the only angel called an archangel. He is represented as having his own angels

(Revelation 12:7) and is said to be the prince of the nation of Israel (Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1). (Thiessen)

The archangels appear to have the specific responsibility of protecting and prospering Israel (Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1), of announcing the birth of the Savior (Luke 1:26-38), of defeating Satan and his angels in their attempt to kill the man-child and the woman (Revelation 12:7-12), and of heralding the return of Christ for his own (1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:16-18). (Thiessen)

**The Watchers** - In Daniel 4:13 a holy watcher is mentioned and that in the singular; Daniel 4:17 uses the plural “watchers.” These are probably angels who are sent by God to observe. The name suggests vigilance. They are also involved in bringing a message from God to man. Whether these are a special class of angels or not, is unknown. (Thiessen)

Be careful, there are lots of “opinions” about watcher angels and most of them are based on little more than conjecture.

**Sons of God** - Another phrase that is used of angels is “sons of God.” This phrase is used in Job 1:6; 2:1; and 38:7 to refer to angels, including Satan. They are sons of God in the sense of being created by God. In fact, “gods” (Elohim) is used of angels (Psalms 8:5; and Hebrews 2:7). Some hold that the sons of God mentioned in Genesis 6:2 are angels who cohabited with women. It may, however, have reference to the godly line of Seth. (Thiessen)

It is my opinion the Genesis 6:2 reference to “sons of God” is not a reference to angels who could procreate, but to a corrupted line of descendants from Seth.

Seth’s descendants, the godly line of humanity through whom the Messiah would come, had become corrupted by demons, and were heading up entire households of demon possessed people.

Thus, God’s disgust at the state of the world. (to the point of saying “The Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth”)

There is an order amongst the angelic beings – Paul points two times to this order of authority.

*Colossians 1:16 “whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities.”*

*Ephesians 6:12 “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*

*Ephesians 1:19b “These are in accordance with the working of the strength of his might 20 which he brought about in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.”*

*Romans 8:38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

### Some guesses at the structure of the angelic hierarchy:

- Seraphim
- Cherubim
- Thrones
- Dominions
- Strongholds
- Powers (Authorities)
- Principalities (Rulers)
- Archangels
- Angels



An inexact  
science at  
best.

## Fallen Angels (Demons)

As we look more closely at demons, do not lose sight of our protected status when it comes to who they can, and cannot possess.

They can bother a believer, but they can never possess one.

Speaking of fowls spirits, John said, **“You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world.”** 1<sup>st</sup> John 4:4

**Who are the fallen angels (demons) that are free?**

*Revelation 12:7 And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The **dragon and his angels** waged war.*

*Matthew 8:28 When he came to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, **two men who were demon-possessed met him** as they were coming out of the tombs.*

**The free roaming demons are all the ones we read about in the bible after Genesis chapter six. The demons prior to that time were roaming free as well, until they decided to attack the human race by attacking the human family. By possessing the men of that time, they ensured households led by demonic thinking.**

“Satan holds sway over the fallen spirits, who concurred in his primal rebellion. His authority is without doubt what he has been permitted to retain from his creation. These spirits, having made an irrevocable choice to follow Satan, instead of remaining loyal to their Creator, have become irretrievably confirmed in wickedness, and irreparably abandoned to delusion. Hence, they are in full sympathy with their prince, and render him willing service in their varied ranks and positions of service in his highly organized kingdom of evil.” (Thiessen)

Let's see if I can convince you that the bible tells us why some demons are free, and why some are chained up in darkness.

**Who are the “chained” fallen angels (demons)?**

*1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:18 Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit. 19 So he went and preached to the spirits in prison— 20 those who disobeyed God long ago when God waited patiently while Noah was building his boat. Only eight people were saved from drowning in that terrible flood.*

So, who are the “chained” fallen angels (demons)? The demons in chains are **“those who disobeyed God long ago when God waited patiently while Noah was building his boat.”**

What time period are they associated with? We are told in the text.

1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:20 **“those who disobeyed God long ago when God waited patiently while Noah was building his boat.”**

So, who are the spirits? They are not lost people shut up in Hades – they are the foul demonic spirits that overstepped their bounds by corrupting the human race in the days of Noah.

Their sin was so heinous and so destructive they had to be stopped at once. They will one day be released from the pit in the time of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (The Great Tribulation), but until then they remain in chains.

The demons in chains are associated with the time period of Noah.

“while Noah was building his boat”

What Jude has to say about the imprisoned spirits –

*Jude 1:5 So I want to remind you, though you already know these things, that Jesus first rescued the nation of Israel from Egypt, but later he destroyed those who did not remain faithful. 6 **And I remind you of the angels who did not stay within the limits of authority God gave them but left the place where they belonged. God has kept them securely chained in prisons of darkness, waiting for the great day of judgment.***

The demons in chains are said to have overstepped their boundaries.

This has to be more than their original rebellion, or all demons would be chained in darkness.

We have established that some of the 1/3 of the angels who rebelled with Lucifer are chained up, and some are loose and roaming the earth.

Well now we know why – the ones that attacked the human race by marrying into it, have been chained up in the pit ever since the flood came and took away the bodies they were using.

And others, though still evil and foul, have been let free to roam the earth ..... For now.

When Jesus goes and “preaches to the spirits in prison” he is not going to lost people – he is going to address the demons from Noah’s day.

No doubt that when news reached the pit that Jesus had died on the cross there was a huge celebration in the pit – they may have said, “the One who put them there got his.”

Instead, they see a living Jesus coming to claim victory over sin, death, and the grave.

**Many details about Satan were specifically excluded because we will be doing one entire class on the Prince of Darkness in Year #2, Trimester #3.**

## Discipleship

The word 'discipleship' does not appear in the Bible because "sanctification" does – it would seem to be a foreign concept to the New Testament writers that one could be a Christian without being a disciple.

**Discipleship is a combination of conversion and sanctification.**

Sanctification is a real transformation, not just the appearance of one. (from the Westminster catechism)

**Matt 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**  
(a lifetime of effort)

Matthew records Jesus' great commission to make disciples, not "just" converts.

There is a credible debate as to whether one can be a convert without being a disciple. I believe this to be true – in the bible, there is no meaningful difference between being saved, and being a disciple.

**"If conversion is the moment of awakening to the reality of God, discipleship is the effort we make to stay awake. The real labor is to remember, to attend to the presence of God. In fact, to come awake. Still more, to remain awake."**

C.S. Lewis

## The 10 “Essentials” of Discipleship?

- Love God and Love Others
- Study the Bible
- Seek to become like Christ
- Obey God
- Pray
- Give
- Worship
- Serve
- Fellowship with other Believers
- Evangelize

### #1 Love God and Love Others

*Mark 12:28 One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that he had answered them well, asked Him, “What commandment is the foremost of all?” 29 Jesus answered, “The foremost is, ‘Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord; 30 and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ 31 The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”*

What Mark records for us is called the “The Great Commandment” and perhaps more accurately stated as “The Great Commandments” (plural).

Jesus links our love for God to our love for others as though they are inseparable. Indeed, is it not more compelling evidence of salvation that we would love others (who have wronged us) than it is to love God (who has never wronged us)?

One “test” of discipleship is found in this question – “how do we love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength?”

The answers are, “we can’t” and “we don’t” – therefore all the commands of God (His law) serve to condemn us and therefore drive us to Christ.

**The real test that should concern us is not “do we obey?” but “do we WANT to obey?”**

If I truly “WANT” to obey the command to love God, then I will love him, at least in some measure.

***John 14:15 “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”***

Jesus tells us that true love for him always involves obedience and contained in that statement is the fact that loving God may be emotional, yes, but is best demonstrated and quantified in how well we obey Him.

When it comes to loving your neighbor, do not set a false standard for yourself – in other words, do not measure your love for your neighbors by what you feel for them.

You may never be close friends with some of them, and you may not even like being around them. But measure your love for your neighbors by how you treat them.

Notice that in these classic verses on love, the emphasis is not on how one “feels,” but upon how one behaves towards others.

*1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

**Love is a verb, not an emotion.**

## #2 Study the Bible

*2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, **accurately handling the word of truth.***

In a day when many care mostly about feelings over facts, and comfort over arduous work, our scriptural knowledge has fallen to what seems to be a dreadful low.

Christianity Today magazine published the following quote in July of 2015 – I doubt the church would fare any better today.

**Christians claim to believe the Bible is God's Word. We claim it's God's divinely inspired, inerrant message to us. Yet despite this, we aren't reading it. A recent Lifeway Research study found only 45 percent of those who regularly attend church read the Bible more than once a week. Over 40 percent of the people attending read their Bible occasionally, maybe once or twice a month. Almost 1 in 5 churchgoers say they never read the Bible—essentially the same number who read it every day.**

*John 8:31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "**If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;** 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."*

The word "continue" is the same Greek word that is translated "abide" in John 15 – stay, abide, remain, tarry – you get the picture.

Continuing in his word is a mark of a disciple of Jesus Christ AND how are we to continue in his word, if we do not know his word?

*John 14:25 “These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, he **will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.**”*

*John 16:12 “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 **But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth;** for he will not speak on his own initiative, but whatever he hears, he will speak; and he will disclose to you what is to come.”*

### **#3 Seek to Become Like Christ**

It is the will of God that we become like Christ – this not a theoretical statement, but a factual one. It would be hard to claim that we are a disciple of Jesus Christ if we have no interest in becoming like Him.

*Romans 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to become **conformed to the image of his Son**, so that he would be the firstborn among many brethren.*

The rabbis of Jesus’ day would call young men to follow them as their disciples – it was what every little Jewish boy dreamed he would be.

**Young Jewish boys who had memorized the entire Old Testament wanted to hear “come, follow me” from a rabbi.**

The idea of following the rabbi was to watch, and then do all the things the rabbi did until the apprentice was ready to spread his own yoke (teaching).

*Acts 4:13 Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men,*

they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.

In theory, being like Jesus is presumed to be a simple and easy thing to do. However, those who have seriously set out to be like him have found that the call is a high one and can only be pursued incrementally.

*Isaiah 28:9 "To whom would he teach knowledge, and to whom would he interpret the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just taken from the breast? 10 "For he says, 'Order on order, order on order, line on line, line on line, a little here, a little there.'"*

Becoming like Jesus is not an event, but a process wherein step by step, line upon line, here a little, and there a little we are conformed into the image of Christ.

Do not try to measure your progress, just abide, and continue.

#### **#4 Obey God**

*1<sup>st</sup> John 2:3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep his commandments. 4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;*

**We know from Paul's writings in Romans 7 that even the best of us obeys imperfectly at best.**

John was not speaking of a perfect obedience – he was speaking of a sincere desire to obey that produces far more times of obedience than disobedience.

*Luke 6:46 "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? 47 Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like:"*

**These words of Jesus seem to teach that "talk is cheap."**

By that I mean that anyone can make a claim to know Jesus as Lord, but it is only those who hear his words, AND put them into practice that do know him.

There is a definite link between loving (knowing) Christ and obeying Him.

*John 14:15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."  
According to Jesus, obedience always follows belief – it as though the two are inseparable.*

**"Only he who believes is obedient and only he who is obedient believes."**

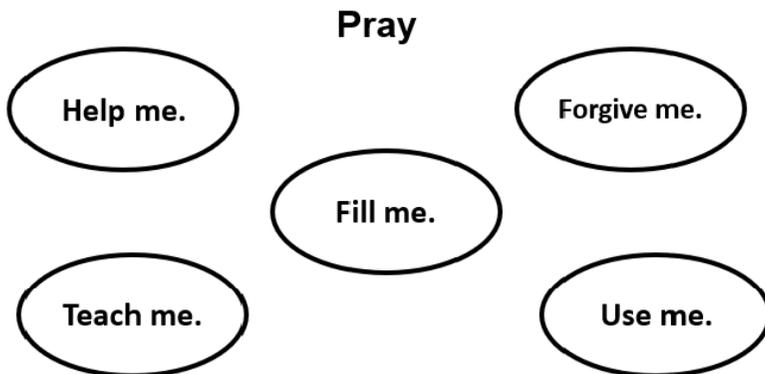
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

### **#5 Pray**

We are asked to pray without ceasing, we are asked to pray believing, we are asked to persist, and more.

What I have learned is that prayer is essential to my well-being and would be even if none of my prayers were answered. (there is healing in pouring out our souls)

It is essential to my connection to God, and the more I grow the simpler my prayers have become. Here are some examples -



## Pray

Protect  
Her.

Heal him.

Lord,  
Magnify  
Yourself

Send  
Peace.

Meet that  
need.

**“Here is a thought – the omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, sovereign God of the universe has chosen, at least to a degree, to run the world in response to the prayers of his very fallible children.”**

### Unknown

So maybe we should take to heart that God hears and answers our prayers and begin to ask for the biggest and the best things we can imagine.

After all, if I can have influence on the affairs of the world and on history itself, why wouldn't I pray accordingly? Sometimes we do not have because we don't ask. (James 4)

### #6 Give

There is a biblical principle that tells us “when one loves, one gives.”

God does not command us to give to his work because he needs the money – he not only owns the cattle on a thousand hills, he owns the hills too!

Think about the example of God in John 3:16 – ***“For God so loved that he gave.”***

It has been said for years that our schedules and our bank statements tell a story of how committed we are to Christ and his work.

The Old Testament taught God's people to tithe, give 10% of their income – that was the requirement of the law.

The N.T. does not teach tithing, but it does teach sacrificial giving.

*2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 9:6 Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, **and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.** 7 Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

An interesting test of our love for God – he wants us to give as much as we can while maintaining a “cheerfulness” in doing so.

This is so wise – God does not need our money and he does not want any more than we can give with gladness!

*Luke 6:38 “Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”*

Do not view this as a “deal” with God whereby you give to get – that is not cheerful giving, and it does not work that way. God is not in the “quid pro quo” business, he is in the blessing business.

#### **My advice on Christian giving –**

- For most new converts, 10% is a sacrifice and puts a gap in their budget.
- Start with a tithe – God will prove Himself faithful.
- Eventually, ask yourself if 10% is really a sacrifice for you.

## #7 Worship

Frequently in the N.T. the Greek word that is used for “worship” is “proskuneo” and the word has a rather vivid and descriptive meaning.

From Strong’s Concordance -NT:4352 proskuneo (pros-koo-neh'-o); from NT:4314 and a probable derivative of NT:2965 (*meaning to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand*); *to fawn or crouch to, i.e. (literally or figuratively) prostrate oneself in homage* (do reverence to, adore):

When we consider all that God has done for us there seems to be no more natural reaction than to begin to worship Him.

**“We should not seek to leave worship feeling good about ourselves but seek to leave worship having God feel good about how we feel about Him.”**

Rev Thomas Smith

The size of your God will determine both the depth and the intensity of your worship. When we worship, we declare openly that God is God; that he is all that he says he is and more.

When we worship, we are to abandon all pretense and all our pride in an act that speaks of who God is to us. At our core, we don’t want a God who is just a little better than we are; we want a God who is beyond description, and one that cannot be fully comprehended through logic and reason.

We are to worship the Lord the same way that we are to do everything else; led by the Holy Spirit.

We need to worry less about what others are doing around us and concern ourselves more with what God is doing in us. I believe that God accepts just about every imaginable form of worship except one; he rejects worship that is insincere.

**“When I worship, I would rather my heart be without words  
than my words be without heart. “**

Lamar Boschman

We are changed when we worship; a transaction takes place between our spirit and the Spirit of God. Grace is imparted to us, and we grow. God is not one who will accept our compromise offers to worship him on our terms.

### **#8 Serve**

There is no way to serve God on earth without serving people. All service to God involves people, but not all service to people involves God.

*Romans 7:6 But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, **so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.***

Before we were saved, we served and hoped .... After coming to Christ, we serve in hope.

***Matthew 6:24 “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”***

Notice that it does not say that ‘you cannot **have** God and money.’ It simply states that you cannot **serve** both. This is about as basic a life question as there is; what priorities drive my life?

In my experience, I have found that a desire to serve God comes with being born again.

In my experience, the struggle of most people is not working up a desire to serve, but of finding their “niche.”

What natural talents do you have? What spiritual gifts do you have? (go try some stuff using whatever you have!)

## #9 Fellowship with other Believers

*Proverbs 27:17 Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.*

*1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:33 Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."*

*Acts 4:13 Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, **they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.***

*1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:9 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;*

*1<sup>st</sup> John 3:14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren.*

It would seem clear that a Christian prefers, and is spiritually healthier, when he spends more time with believers. Fellowship is not what we think it is. Many in the church think of fellowship as a time when we get together, eat, and enjoy each other.

The Greek word used for fellowship in 1<sup>st</sup> John 1:3 is "koinwnia" and its primary meanings are "partnership" and "participation". Fellowship with Christ happens when we are doing things in partnership with him, or when he can participate with us.

## #10 Evangelize

*1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, **always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;** 16 and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.*

**Evangelism is not just one thing** – it is not just preaching, it is not just witnessing, and it is not just a righteous life. It can be all the above and more depending on our relationship to the unsaved people in our lives.

The harvest is a result of sowing and watering – sometimes long periods of both. Ultimately, it is the work of Holy Spirit in the lives of the unsaved around us – we just need to be ready to follow his lead.

How has God equipped you? Who is in your life that needs Jesus?

**Evangelism is hard – there is great resistance to our efforts to reach the lost around us.**

**“Jesus himself did not try to convert the two thieves on the cross; he waited until one of them turned to him.”** Dietrich Bonhoeffer

**“Have you no wish for others to be saved? Then you're not saved yourself, be sure of that!”** Charles Spurgeon

## Church History

**“The history of Christianity is really the history of Western civilization. Christianity has had an all-pervasive influence on society at large—art, language, politics, law, family life, calendar dates, music, and the very way we think have all been colored by Christian influence for nearly two millennia. The story of the church, therefore, is an important one to know.”**

From gotquestions.org

The church was predicted by Jesus - ***Matthew 16:17 And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”***

The “rock” upon which the church would be built would not be Peter, as some suppose, but upon either the confession of faith Peter spoke, or upon Christ Himself. There is evidence for both positions.

*Matthew 16:13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he was asking his disciples, “**Who do people say that the Son of Man is?**” 14 And they said, “Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” 15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” 16 Simon Peter answered, “**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**”*

Peter’s clear testimony of who Jesus was may well have been what Jesus was pointing to when he said, “upon this rock, I will build my church.”

*1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 and all ate the same spiritual food; 4 and all*

*drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; **and the rock was Christ.***

In Matthew 16, it is possible that Christ may have pointed to Himself when he said, “upon this rock I will build my church.” I tend to believe Jesus was pointing to the Peter’s confession of faith, but you would not be crazy to think he meant himself.

So, what is “the church”?

The Greek word for “church” in almost all cases in the N.T. is “ekklesia” and its meaning is clear. The word means, “a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place; an assembly.”

In context for the church – those called out of the world, and to Christ.

The church began at Pentecost (see Acts 2) when the Holy Spirit was given and to this day, he indwells all who are part of the “ekklesia.”

All believers have been baptized (placed) into the body of Christ and the body of Christ is the church. (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:13)

***1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:27 Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.***

The initial converts to Christianity were Jews or proselytes to Judaism, and the church was centered in Jerusalem. Because of this, Christianity was seen at first as a Jewish sect, akin to the Pharisees, the Sadducees, or the Essenes.

However, the message of the Apostles was so radically different from their Jewish counterparts that the two could hardly be seen as being the same.

Their differences were so far apart that a Jewish rabbi by the name of Saul of Tarsus went on a crusade to eradicate what Jewish leaders called “the Way.”

The world at the dawn of church history was sort of set-up for the church to flourish because the following were all but universal due to the influence of the Greeks and Romans:

- Citizenship (Paul, Acts 22:28)
- Law (Roman Empire law)
- Language (Koine Greek for commerce / Latin for all legal transactions)
- Peace (“pace Romana” peace of Rome)
- Transportation (roads from modern day Britain to Northern Africa to Russia to Arabian peninsula) Mile markers throughout the Roman Empire served for navigation as nothing before that time.
- Moral Decline (a product of Roman prosperity and power)

***Galatians 4:4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that he might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.***

The “fullness of time” probably included the time in history when there was a nearly global language (Greek), global citizenship (Roman), and a global transportation system.

The early missionaries (Paul for one) also enjoyed the protection of the universal law, and the peace that came with the Roman rule.

Persecution was a big part of early church history and continues to this day in varying measures depending upon where you are in the world.

**Persecution must surely be a part of God's plan for the redemption of the world because every time it breaks out the gospel is extended outward and proliferated.**

Throughout history we will see persecuted Christians, the suffering that comes with it, and thankfully the results that seem to always accompany it.

### **Reasons for the persecution of the early church.**

- 1. They were considered haters of humanity because they did not follow the pagan customs of Rome.**

There are actual historical records of charges like "hater of humanity."

*1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:3 For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. 4 In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you.*

- 2. They were accused of cannibalism.**

Imagine an unsaved person hearing an early communion service with "**take and eat; this is my body and blood given for you.**"

No one took this seriously except to the extent that they could use it to discredit those who followed Christ.

- 3. They did not follow the customs of Rome.**

They did not participate in the open orgies that were in the Roman public baths. They did not say, "Caesar is Lord" when they entered the marketplace. This kind of "separated" living brought conviction to their neighbors and consequently persecution upon themselves.

- 4. They were exclusive.**

Nonbelievers were not allowed to attend worship services, partake of communion, or be a part of a fellowship.

They made no attempt to make outsiders comfortable in their unbelief – even “professors” of faith in Christ had to prove themselves by the way they lived before they were allowed into the fellowship.

### **Early persecutors of the church:**

- Nero (AD 54-68) Sporadic efforts in Rome to put on a show often making human torches of Christians.
- Trajan (AD 98-117) Efforts to root out Christians, province by province.
- Decius (AD 250) Empire wide – Christianity was made illegal and that led to Christians having to hide out.
- Diocletian (AD 300-310) persecuted and imprisoned every pastor, destroyed home churches, and confiscated bibles.

Diocletian decided to confiscate and destroy all the bibles. There is not a single complete copy of the scriptures that pre-dates Diocletian.

The early Christians divided up the scriptures, passed them around, and hid as many as they could from Diocletian.

This is why we have about 25,000 manuscripts of the bible that are all fragments – when pieced together they complete the bible as we know it.

### **The Early Church**

- The Apostolic Age (30 – 100 AD) John dies on Patmos in the mid 90’s AD.
- The Time of Martyrs (60 – 313 AD) From Nero to Diocletian
- The Christian Rulers (313 – 590 AD) Constantine makes Christianity the state religion. This led to a succession of

Roman rulers who were friendly to Christians. (Byzantine Era)

**100 A.D.** - The Christian Church began to use the term "catholic" which means "universal."

**325 A.D.** - Constantine called for the Nicene Council (to unify Christianity).

**330 A.D.** - Constantine moved the capital of the empire to Byzantium.

**400 A.D.** - Bible translated into Latin.

### **The Medieval Church**

- Missionary Era (590 – 1049 AD) Roman Catholic church begins. Pope Linus, Bishop of Rome, was the first pope. The missionaries were monks who did mass faux baptisms. If they hit you with water you were considered baptized.
- Papal Era (1049 – 1294 AD) Kings and emperors had to be blessed by the Pope to rule a country. The Church of Rome controlled most of what we know as modern-day Europe.
- Pre-reformation Era (1294 – 1517 AD) The more powerful the Roman church became, the more corrupt it became.

Also, in the Medieval Era we had what the Roman church called the "Crusades" where thousands of Jews and Muslims were killed for resisting "conversion."

The crusades, evil as they were, did help to bring Europe out of the dark ages because of the things the crusaders brought back home from the middle east. Spices, books, art, and other things that those in the dark ages had not been exposed to before. (Led to the renaissance)

The corruption of the Roman church in the medieval period gave rise to three powerful men who would challenge the status quo.

**Powerful man #1** was John Wycliffe who translated the bible into English so the common people could read it for themselves.

The church wanted to kill him, but he died of natural causes before they could get to him, so the Roman church had him exhumed and then burned his corpse for his “crime.”

**Powerful men #s 2 and 3** were John Hus, and Girolamo Savonarola who stood up to the Roman church and pointed out things like an unmarried pope having sixty children.

Both men were executed for their crimes of obeying the scriptures over the pope.

Following the likes of Hus and Savonarola another man rose with a list of grievances against the Roman church – that man was Martin Luther.

Perhaps no other person is more associated with Protestantism than Martin Luther.

When he tacked his ninety-five theses to the church door at Wittenberg, he is said to have been the one who awakened the church in the middle of the night.

Some have likened that moment to the beginning of the modern world where the church is the people of God and not an organization that wants to be God.

The change that Luther brought to the church was that no longer would the Pope, a church, or any ecclesiastical body supersede the authority of the scripture.

Luther, more than any other man of the modern era, was responsible for restoring the Bible as the only rule for our faith and practice.

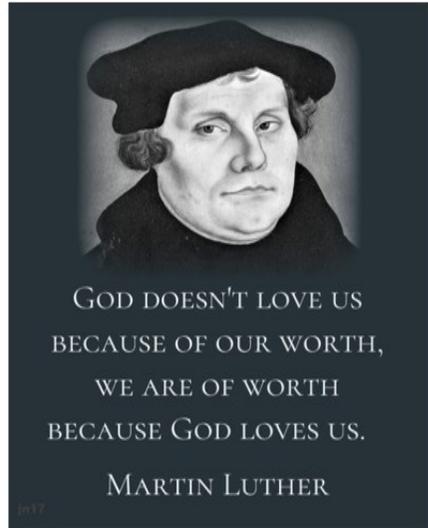
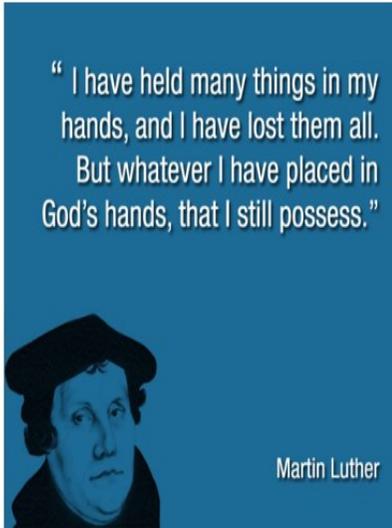
He also restored to prominence the truth that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone.

**“To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.”** Martin Luther

**“Peace, if possible, truth at all costs.”** Martin Luther

**“The fewer the words, the better the prayer.”** Martin Luther

## Martin Luther



The Protestant Reformation was not the first separation from the Roman Catholic Church.

In 1054 came the East - West Schism, which established the independence of the Orthodox wing of the church.

In 1534, King Henry VIII created the Church of England, meaning the Roman Catholic Church no longer had control there.

### The Modern Church

- Reformation Era (1517 – 1648 AD) most if not all religious wars ceased. Most countries had a religious affiliation.
- Denominations Era (1648 – 1790 AD)
- Missions and Liberalism Era (1790 – Present) The launch of modern missions with William Carey to India.

## The Great Awakenings

**1<sup>st</sup> Great Awakening** – mid 1700's (Edwards / Whitefield)

**2<sup>nd</sup> Great Awakening** – 1790 to 1850 (Finney)

**3<sup>rd</sup> Great Awakening** – 1850 to 1910 (Moody & Azusa Street)

**4<sup>th</sup> Great Awakening** – 1970's??

Among the preachers God used for the Great Awakening of the mid 1700's in America are:

• **Jonathon Edwards**

• **George Whitefield**

**Never think for a moment that one (or two) people cannot make a difference!**

“It is a poor sermon that gives no offense; that neither makes the hearer displeased with himself nor with the preacher.” **George Whitefield**

“Thus was the King and the Lord of glory judged by man's judgment, when manifest in flesh: far be it from any of his ministers to expect better treatment” **George Whitefield**

“God's purpose for my life was that I have a passion for God's glory and that I have a passion for my joy in that glory, and that these two are one passion.” **Jonathan Edwards**

“Resolved, never to do anything which I should be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life.” **Jonathan Edwards**

There was a conscious effort amongst the preachers of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Great Awakenings to separate a conversion from an awakening.

Conversion is what we would think – being born again, getting saved, a once in a lifetime event.

In the 1700's in America many, if not most people believed in Jesus as their Savior, but their lives did not look like he was their Lord. (nominal Christians?)

Awakening is what happened to “nominal” Christians when they were filled, consecrated, and made Jesus Lord of their lives.

The problem in the 1700's was that because it was so common to find those who claim Jesus as Savior that it became rather routine. An “awakening” was when these “Christians” started to take their faith as a serious life-changing way of living.

### **Prayer**

- Much and deep prayer preceded perhaps every awakening (revival) in the Christian Church.

### **Preaching**

- The preaching of the awakenings has never been timid, but straightforward with no pulling of punches. (God, God, God, Christ, Christ, Christ)

### **Pentecostal Power**

- Each time God has awakened his people there has been a clear and obvious pouring out of his Spirit upon his people.

### **Great Awakenings Ministry Style:**

- No cultural accommodations – no attempt to look or sound relevant to the culture.
- No targeting of a single demographic – it seemed that they thought one message fits all was what worked.
- No avoidance of hell and judgment – in most churches today you could go years before hearing a sermon on hell,

and you would find very few mentions of damnation and judgment.

**Among the outcomes of America's Great Awakenings:**

- The American Revolution of 1776
- The Constitution of the United States
- Many great Christian universities (most of the Ivy League)

## **Bible Study Methods**

### **(Hermeneutics)**

**Hermeneutics** - Biblical hermeneutics is the study of the principles and methods of interpreting the text of the Bible. Second Timothy 2:15 commands believers to be involved in hermeneutics: **“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.”** The purpose of biblical hermeneutics is to help us to know how to properly interpret, understand, and apply the Bible.

It would be impossible to list all the Bible Study Methods because they are all but unlimited.

The scriptures were written by men while guided by the Holy Spirit, and have a context, and specific words that help us to hear from God.

To quote 1<sup>st</sup> John 4:8 and conclude that God is love is not enough – words have meanings and in this case the love of God is a particular kind of love. (agape)

***1<sup>st</sup> John 4:8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.***

If you really want to hear from God, you must start with the scriptures as your primary source. You must set aside all pre-conceived notions, sermons you’ve heard, lessons you’ve heard, etc ... and seek to understand. You must also set aside all your ‘pet’ doctrines and be open to whatever the Spirit of God reveals.

**Bible Study Rule #1** - When the plain sense makes common sense, seek no other sense.

**Bible Study Rule #2** - There is only ever one correct interpretation of any text. There may be many applications, but only one interpretation.

- A classic example of claiming a promise for us that was given to Israel is (2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 7:14). It might apply to us, but it was given as a promise to the Jew.

**Bible Study Rule #3** - Read the bible like you would read any other book:

- A verb is a verb.
- A noun is a noun.
- There is nothing spiritual about grammar.

**Bible Study Rule #4** - Read it existentially.

- Try to place yourself into the text.
- Enter into what the text meant to the “hearer” of it.
- “Every time I read the Bible, I find it criticizing me instead of me criticizing it” R.C. Sproul
- Where we do not agree with the text, the text does not need to change, we do!

**Bible Study Rule #5** - Understand the differences between proverbs and laws.

- Laws of God are laws that will always be true.
- Proverbs are wise sayings that are generally true.

**Bible Study Rule #6** - The Bible does not contradict itself.

- 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:15 “A woman is saved in childbearing”??
- There are not two ways to be saved – one for women who bear children and then the blood of Christ for everyone else.
- When the bible is clear on one, and only one method of salvation, then seek to understand the obscure one in the light of the clear one.

**Bible Study Rule #7** – Meditate on the Word of God.

- *Psalm 1:1 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! 2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law he meditates day and night. 3 he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.*

***Acts 17:11 And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul's message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth. 12 As a result, many Jews believed, as did many of the prominent Greek women and men.***

The Bible is our primary source, and the Holy Spirit is our primary Teacher. One of the main reasons the Holy Spirit abides in us is to help us to distinguish truth from error. (He will not give you peace with an error, apply Colossians 3:15)

**Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.**

***1<sup>st</sup> John 2:27 As for you, the anointing which you received from him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as his anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.***

John teaches that the Spirit of God, who lives in each believer, is our personal, private tutor. To be sure, God has given us pastors and teachers for our edification, but remember that they are in

addition to, and not a substitute for, the Holy Spirit. And so, the humblest believer in Christ may be taught of God through his Word, even when human teachers are lacking.

**“It is one of the peculiar offices of the Holy Spirit to enlighten His people. He has done so by giving us His inspired Word, but the Book is never spiritually understood by anyone apart from the personal teaching of its great Author. You may read it as much as you will and never discover the inner and vital meaning unless your soul is led into it by the Holy Ghost Himself. You may have done well to learn the letter of truth, but you still need the Spirit of God to make it the light and power of God to your soul.”**

**Charles Spurgeon**

**Topical Bible Study:** According to R. A. Torrey in “How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit,” Bible students should take up various subjects, one by one, and search the Bible for what it has to say on these subjects.

Collect and compare all the verses you can find on a particular topic. Select a biblical subject and trace it through a single book. Compile a list of words, collect Bible references, consider each one, and compare and group the references. Organize your conclusions into an outline that you can share with another person.

It may be important to know what great men and women have to say on important subjects; **but it is far more important to know what God has to say on these subjects. It is important, also, to know all that God has to say.**

“The topical method of Bible study is the simplest, the most fascinating, and yields the greatest **immediate** results.”

R.A. Torrey

**The Chapter Summary Method:** According to many, the student should read a chapter of a Bible book at least five times, and then write down a summary of the central thoughts as well as the major points in the chapter.

Make a list of the most important people. Why are they included?

Choose a verse which summarizes the whole chapter or one which speaks to you personally.

List any difficulties you may have with the chapter (such as statements you do not understand), questions, and key words of the chapter. Look for other verses that help clarify what the chapter is talking about.

Write down the leading facts of the chapter in their proper order. Make note of the persons mentioned in the chapter and of any analysis of their character. Think of what the central truth of the chapter might be, along with the key verses.

**The Book Survey Method:** Survey an entire book of the Bible by reading it through several times to get a general overview of its contents.

Study the background of the book and make notes on its contents—the history, geography, culture, science, people, events, and topics covered. Outline and chart the key events and themes. Use Bible reference books to increase your understanding of the Word.

**The Verse-by-Verse Analysis Method:** Select one passage of Scripture and examine it in detail. Write out a personal paraphrase, list some questions and observations, find cross-references, record any insights, and write down a brief personal application for each verse.

**The Thematic Method:** Select a Bible theme to study. Then think of three to five questions you would like to have answered about

that theme. Next, study all the references you can find on your theme and record the answers to your questions.

Compared to a topical Bible study, you study a narrow theme of the Bible in simple detail asking prepared questions of verses from a chosen list. The Thematic Bible Study Method takes a lesser amount of time than the Topical Bible Study Method.

**Internet access.** [The Bible - Read and Study Free Online \(biblestudytools.com\)](http://biblestudytools.com)

**Several good translations of the scriptures. (KJV, NJKV, NIV, NASB)**

**A good concordance. (Strong's on-line)** [KJV with Strong's Concordance \(godrules.net\)](http://godrules.net)

**Bible dictionary. (Vine's)** [Browse by letter: 'A' - Vine's Expository Dictionary of NT Words - \(studylight.org\)](http://studylight.org)

**Commentaries (Matthew Henry) - only as a checkpoint.**

## Christian Living Part One

The Book of James, written around A.D. 45-50. This was the first book of the New Testament to be written. Some have taken the position that James wrote to combat the writings of Paul. It is obvious that this is an erroneous position since none of Paul's epistles were in existence at the time of this writing.

**The seeming contradiction between James and Paul** can be easily explained when the message of James is considered in context. James takes the position, as does Paul, that we are justified by faith but the faith which justifies also produces good works.

The way to view and understand the Faith Versus Works debate is as follows:

- **Saved by faith alone** - *Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.*
- **Saved to show our faith by our works** – *Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*

James even raises a question around the whole premise of what constitutes “saving” faith.

*James 2:14 What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith, but he has no works? Can **that** faith save him? Can one be saved just by intellectual assent to a set of facts, very much like signing a contract? Is that even faith, let alone saving faith?*

# **WE ARE SAVED BY FAITH ALONE, BUT THE FAITH THAT SAVES IS NEVER ALONE**

MARTIN LUTHER

Amid the “faith versus works” debate another theme is woven in – ***“if you are, you will.”***

If you are saved, there will be certain things that are true of you because they necessarily come with salvation.

A believer will have at least some measure of good works, and Spirit born fruit, as well as other realities that only come with a regenerated life.

## **Trials are Joys?**

*James 1:2 **Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,** 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

These verses have often seemed paradoxical in that we should find some “joy” in the trials of life – well, yes, we should, and we will if we can but see the big picture.

***Hebrews 12:11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.***

A truism for the believer is that since we are out of step with the world, we will certainly suffer trials – they are unavoidable.

Equally true is that the believer will also benefit from life’s pain and trouble by persevering.

To be uncomfortable in the world is not really a bad thing for it is then we know that we are on foreign soil.

*Matthew 5:11 "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me."*

Part of being a Christian on foreign soil is a sort of confidence that only comes from not fitting in, and in knowing that God is at work "proving" your faith.

**There is great confidence that comes with the perspective that the bumps and bruises of life have a God given, and God directed purpose.**

He is at work, "so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

It is both comforting and scary to know that God is going to see to it that we get from where he found us to where he wants us to be .... This often only happens through trials.

So, what is the Big Picture? The Big Picture is that if we belong to God, he will see to it that we get the necessary training to prepare us for his ultimate goal that we become like Jesus. **"For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son"**. We will not be fully conformed in this world, but we will be well prepared for him to complete our transformation.

## Temptation

*James 1:13 Let no one say when he is **tempted**, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be **tempted** by evil, and he Himself does not tempt anyone. 14 But each one is **tempted** when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.*

Trials come to us as a part of living on foreign soil, and may even be sent by God, but temptation to sin is a different story.

**“for God cannot be tempted by evil, and he Himself does not tempt anyone”** – temptation to sin is a part of this life, and will be until we die, or are raptured.

The Greek word behind “tempted” is “pi-rad’-zo” and it has several meanings that are meaningfully different from one another. (same Greek word translated as “trial” in verse #2)

In context, in verses #13 and #14 James is speaking of temptation to sin as opposed to our being tested.

Temptation to sin is not the problem, yielding to temptation is – there is no problem you have now, or will ever have that is not rooted in sin.

The question each Christian must examine is “how will I resist temptation?” – we had better have a plan, or sin will have us! The scriptures give us directives and principles to follow.

To know how to stand against temptation we need look no further than Jesus in the wilderness.

When he was tempted, he did not try to outwit the devil (though he could have), he answered with the Word of God – he went to the book to help him resist temptation.

So how is it that answering with the Word enabled him to resist?  
What was really at work in Him?

When we are tempted to sin, no matter how fleshly the situation may seem, we are in the midst of something spiritual.

**Psalm 119:11 “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.”**

Since we are in a spiritual battle, we need spiritual strength to have a chance to succeed. Our “spiritual” strength comes from the Spirit of God and the Word of God.

The Bible helps us to know that temptation is not something unique to us – in other words, we are all in the same battle.

***1<sup>st</sup> John 1:4 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.*** (we could substitute “temptation” for “sin” and the verse would still be true)

As you grow in Christ, please help all those around you by being honest about your own struggles with sin.

***1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.***

According to Paul, it is a common thing to be tempted to sin – and what you are being tempted by are the same things that all others are tempted by as well. Temptations turn out to be empty offers that promise pleasure but yield pain.

It helps to understand why we are tempted – why is it that when we are honest with ourselves, we find that we have exceedingly sinful tendencies in our inner man?

***James 1:14 “But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.”***

Just like Lucifer wanted to be his own God and please himself, so we too want to indulge our own flesh. The 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10 passage promises us that God will always provide a means of escaping temptations. He also promises that he will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear. An appropriate question then is – “if he can control the limits, then why not keep us from ever being tempted?”

**If God can control the limits of our temptation, then why allow us to be tempted at all?**

Could it be that he wants us to know that we can say “no” and therefore be free of sin’s incumbrances? Maybe it shows us that when we seek to resist in our own strength we fail, but when we lean on Him, we succeed? Maybe it shows us the mercy of God when we fail and thus bring glory to him when he restores us?

What about what some would call “nagging” or “habitual” sins – what do we do about them? Treat them as you would any other sin and fight against them with the Word of God asking the Spirit of God to help you.

**Stay in the fight no matter how many times you’ve failed, and no matter how “nagging” it may be.**

**Churchill was not talking about resisting sin, but his words apply well to our fight against it.**

“Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never—in nothing, great or small, large or petty—never give in, except to convictions of honor and good sense. Never yield to force. Never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.”

Winston Churchill

## Avoid Favoritism

*James 2:5 Listen, my beloved brethren: **did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he promised to those who love Him?***

The basic premise is this – if God has accepted someone of low worldly standard, then who are we to reject them?

It is not okay for people the world rejects to be rejected at church – the church ought never to operate in a “high school” sort of environment.

How embarrassing would it be to find that God opens and shares his kingdom with people that we think too lowly for our company!

And in James 2 the situation is worse – the people who were getting the partiality shown to them were the very same rich people that were oppressing those who favored them in church.

**Genuine Christian faith never looks down on others! When the glory of God overwhelms us, the grandeur of people will not.**

Don't be partial because God is not partial. **Romans 2:11 “For there is no partiality with God.”** To show partiality to others is just as sinful as any other sin and we need to see it as such.

*James 2:9 **But if you show partiality, you are committing sin** and are convicted by the law as transgressors.*

Understand our lowly position of guilt and then extend the same mercy you crave to others.

## The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

*Matthew 18:23 “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. 24 When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. 25 But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along*

*with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. 26 So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.' 27 And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. 28 But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.' 29 So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.' 30 But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed.*

If we all sin, who are we to show partiality? If we fail in one point of the law, we've broken them all so who do we think we are?

**Partiality and clicks have no place in the church** – shame on us forever thinking that we (of all people) would ever think of ourselves as better than others.

### **Taming the Tongue**

*James 3:6 And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. 7 For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. 8 But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; 10 from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.*

The primary spiritual issue with our tongues is that of having “pure speech.” In fact, it is our words that often reveal what is in our hearts.

Matthew 15:11 "It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, **but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.**"

Matthew 12:33 ""Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. 34 You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. 35 The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. 36 **But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. 37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.**"

**"Every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment."**

### **Jesus of Nazareth**

Given the gravity that is evident here, we need to know what a "careless" word is. The Greek phrase translated "every careless word" is "rema argos", meaning "careless, inactive, or unprofitable words."

**"There is no better judge of a person's heart than the words he allows to come forth from his mouth. Just like good trees produce good fruit and bad trees produce bad fruit, so does the mouth reveal the heart's condition. But it's not just evil words for which people must give account. Jesus said every "careless" or "idle" word can also be used as a judgment against the speaker. Even the slightest sin, the smallest deviation from God's perfection, will condemn a person in God's eyes. Even seemingly insignificant words, sometimes excused as "slips of the tongue," are considered sinful if they do not bring glory to God."**

**gotquestions.org**

“For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” Jesus is not teaching some alternate means of salvation by words – he is teaching that our words reveal our souls.

**James 1:26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless.**

***Matthew 12:36 “I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, 37 for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”***

There is no better indication of a bad tree than the bad fruit of speech – “for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” Just like apples are the normal thing that comes from within the apple tree even so what is inside us always comes to the surface.

Think about the number of times that our tongues serve to disclose who we really are. Where is it that you go, who is that you interact with, that you could say, “words are not used, and my words would not matter”? Even “on-line” we type words that communicate our thoughts.

- I am convinced that 50% or more of the Christians I know do not know what a “euphemism” is.
- I believe this because of what I hear us say.



**“And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity”**

The tongue is more powerful than we may think for James describes it as a “system of sin.” (world of iniquity) The “system of sin” from the tongue is complex, it is sophisticated, and it can be deadly both to the one with the uncontrolled tongue and to its targets.

James tells us that no man can tame the tongue, but that is not to say the tongue cannot be tamed.

**“But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.”**

The tongue, at least as much as any other part of our body, must come under the control of the Holy Spirit.

What we might find odd is that we rarely speak of a Spirit-controlled tongue, even though it seems to be one of the more spiritually minded disciplines we can have.

If our words are like a deadly poison, and if they are truly, as the Word of God says, an entire system of sin, then why do we treat sins like slander, gossip, and the like so lightly?

Could it be it is because subjecting the tongue to the Spirit is so practical that it doesn't look spiritual enough for us to submit to?

***James 3:10 “from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. 11 Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? 12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can saltwater produce fresh.”***

Here James points out the absurdity of thinking that our words do not matter. He does it by juxtaposing things that cannot co-exist.

Just as a fountain cannot produce sweet and bitter water at the same time, neither can our hearts produce righteousness and evil at the same time.

A fountain is either “bitter” or “sweet” and our hearts are either sanctified, or they are not.

Our speech does not **determine** our righteousness or sinfulness, it **reveals** our righteousness, or lack thereof.

We must allow for time to grow as a believer, and we must allow time for the Spirit of God to do his sanctifying work in us.

If you are not making progress towards pure speech, then may God help you to wake up and evaluate your relationship with Him.

**“For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”**

**Jesus of Nazareth**

## Christian Living Part Two

### Do not Judge

***James 4:11 Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it. 12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?***

The Greek word behind “judge” is “kree-no”, and it means to “condemn”, to “damn” – it is a severely negative word.

James comes down hard on those who would claim to be followers of Jesus who still use unnecessarily condemning words for their brethren.

The way of the world is to condemn, to put down, to slander others for the purposes of self-elevation. The teaching is not that Christians never have anything negative to say about others – it is that condemning words had better be just and rare.

**It is our motive that is of utmost importance when it comes to “judging” others.**

Are we concerned about the heart of the other person? Are we concerned about purity in the body of Christ? What kind of relationship do I have with that person? Is my motive self-ascension or self-elevation? No matter the behavior of others, for us to be just judges, our hearts must be right.

If you are condemning others with delight, then you probably have a heart problem that speaks to your own spiritual condition. Both Paul and James would agree that true believers always have an agape love for the brethren.

*1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:9 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, **for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.***

In the Body of Christ, we owe the benefit of the doubt to each other. Unless and until there is reason to believe otherwise, always assume the best of others in the church.

**If your brother forgets** to acknowledge you in the sanctuary, do not assume they intended to “snub” you.

**If you see your sister** exiting a bar, do not assume she is drunk – assume she had a good reason for being there.

***Romans 14:4 Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.***

Paul asks the same question James asked, “who are you who judge your neighbor?”

Believers who are unnecessarily “judgmental” are really nothing more than sanctified “busy bodies” at best, and perhaps they are not believers at all.

A very practical reason for not judging others is that until we have “arrived” we cannot afford the time away from our own training to judge others.

I will be kept busy the rest of my life trying to keep myself on the straight and narrow – therefore I really do not have the time to correct you. Your training, your correction, is the “job” of the Holy Spirit and perhaps your pastor.

### **Avoid Presumption**

***James 4:13 Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” 14 Yet you do not know what your***

**life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. 15 Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that." 16 But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. 17 Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.**

One of the reasons people put off a decision for Christ is because they think they have plenty of time.

This is presumptuous – despite all the cemeteries, despite all the funeral homes, and despite all the obituaries, no one seems to think their time is short.

Given the myriads of things that can and do take lives every day, we should all be thinking “today could be the last day of my life.” (roughly 114K deaths each day worldwide)

## **Data Below is as of 12/07/21**

7,911,847,842 Current World Population

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130,761,722 Births this year

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270,592 Births today

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54,896,903 Deaths this year

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113,601 Deaths today

---

75,864,818 Net population growth this year

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156,991 Net population growth today

***James 4:14 “You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.”***

We, of course, are not just vapors – but vapor here is a metaphor for the brevity of our lives. On the timeline of eternity, we could

not see the tiny little dot that is our life – so spend the few moments of time we have here wisely.

If we really had a sense of how brief our lives are, and if we really had a sense of the importance of our decisions, what would change in our lives?

***Job 14:1 “Man, who is born of woman, is short-lived and full of turmoil. 2 “Like a flower he comes forth and withers. He also flees like a shadow and does not remain.”***

*Psalm 39:4 “LORD, make me to know my end and what is the extent of my days; let me know how transient I am.”*

I am not sure I would want to motivate you fully by just the brevity of your life. I would far prefer the motivation that comes from an obedient life based upon a love for God and a love for others.

Fear of death may motivate some to decide for Christ, but it is an insufficient motivator for the things that come after salvation.

We are also warned by James against making plans without consulting with God.

*James 4:15 Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.”*

How many plans do we make without fully consulting God on his will for us?

This is perhaps the most abused part of our lives as believers – that our plans are tested with “is this sin?”, but not with “is this God’s will?”

**We can do things that are not sinful at all but are still not God’s will for us.**

How far do I take this? What cereal to eat? What color shirt do I wear? Do I fill my tank when it is ½ full or ¼ full?

Think “what” and “how” – I suspect there are some things we do that God is ambivalent about.

However, he is not neutral at all about how we do whatever it is that we do. (I should be Christ-like as I choose my cereal)

***Colossians 3:17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.***

I will allow that it is possible that God cares about my choice of cereal, but I would contend that my choice of cereal is rarely a big decision.

So, if we start with “I will involve God in all of my big decisions” then perhaps one day I will find myself on autopilot asking him to guide me in the cereal aisle.

Can you think of guidelines for new believers regarding when to seek God on a decision?

**Good questions to ask about the decisions we make as Christians.**

- Does this decision impact me or others spiritually?
- Does this decision play a role in my future beyond today?
- Does this decision reflect positively or negatively on my claim to be a child of God?

### **Warnings to the Rich**

***James 5:1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. 2 Your riches have rotted, and your garments have become moth-eaten. 3 Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure! 4 Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting***

*has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. 5 You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned and put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you.*

**It is not a sin to be rich** – that is good news to all of us because on one continuum or another we are all rich. (rich is a relative term)

**It is sin though to misuse whatever wealth you have** and to be a stingy person.

Therefore, James wrote, ***“Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted, and your garments have become moth-eaten.”***

Garments that are worn, are not infested with moths, and eaten by them – only the extra ones you have hanging in your closet unused for so long that moths move in. Are we so selfish that we would let moths eat our extras rather than give them away to someone who would use them?

“Your gold and your silver have rusted” – again, money that is in circulation does not rust. The money that rusts is the money that is stored away unused.

**Is it wrong to save for the future?** – No, in fact that may make you a good steward who will not have to consume the charity of others later in life.

What is wrong though is to have all that you need and not be open to sharing what you have to meet the needs of others.

James was addressing those who trusted in their wealth and used it to expand their power and influence even if it meant cheating others.

*James 5:4 “Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you.”*

**“A steward manages assets for the owner’s benefit. The steward carries no sense of entitlement to the assets he manages. It’s his job to find out what the owner wants done with his assets, then carry out his will.”**

Randy Alcorn

**“Whatever is given to Christ is immediately touched with immortality.”**

Randy Alcorn

**“We are halfhearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at sea. We are far too easily pleased. Even many Christians have settled for a life of unsatisfying material acquisitions, like making mud pies in a slum.”**

C.S. Lewis

**“My heart always goes where I put God’s money.”**

Randy Alcorn

**“Giving is a joyful surrender to a greater person and a greater agenda. It dethrones me and exalts Him.”**

Randy Alcorn

**“God prospers me not to raise my standard of living, but to raise my standard of giving.”**

Randy Alcorn

**“God gives us more money than we need so we can give—generously.”**

Randy Alcorn

**“I have been poor, and I have been rich in my lifetime, and I have never found a relationship between my joy in Christ and my money.”**

Unknown

**Money may make life a little more pleasant, but it does not make a life – only Jesus can do that.**

Unknown

**“I have never seen a hearse pulling a U-Haul.”**

Unknown

*Ecclesiastes 5:10 **He who loves money will not be satisfied with money,** nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity.*

*Matthew 6:24 No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other **You cannot serve God and wealth.***

*Proverbs 11:28 **He who trusts in his riches will fall,** But the righteous will flourish like the green leaf.*

### **The Power of Prayer**

*James 5:13 Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. 14 **Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; 15 and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.** 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three*

*years and six months. 18 Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.*

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:9 “and to another gifts of healing” – in my view, the New Testament does not teach that some are “healers” like we would think of some as “teachers.”

In James 5 we are not told to send for the “healer”, we are told to call for the elders of the church to pray. Indeed, the apostles did great healings in their ministries to confirm this new and radical message they were preaching – that Jesus is Christ.

What are we to do with the whole idea of praying for the sick? James would have us believe that God still heals – why else would he tell us to call for the elders of the church?

James begins by asking, “Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray.” Then he moves to this, “Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him.” Then he says, “pray for one another so that you may be healed.”

So is his teaching, “pray for yourself”, is it “call for the elders”, or is it, “pray for each other.” Perhaps the conclusion we are to draw from the text relates back to something James said in chapter 4 –

***James 4:2 “You do not have because you do not ask.”***

I believe a fair conclusion is that when we are sick, we should not think our healing rests in our formulas or in our methods, but in the sovereign power of God.

Given that Paul tells us in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12 that the Holy Spirit has given “gifts of healing” to the body, and given that in Christ we have access to God, **can you think of a reason NOT to ask for healing of the sick?**

If it is okay to pray for myself (verse #13), if it's okay to call for the elders (verse #14), and if it's okay to pray for each other to be healed (verse #16) – maybe God is telling us to just ask.

**James 5:17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.**

Why invoke Elijah at this point? Because James is emphasizing the commonness of Elijah (a man with a nature like ours) to teach us that God can and does hear the prayers of the common person.

Only one of the three pronouncements to pray seems to carry a promise of results.

*James 5:14 Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; 15 **and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up.***

The text does not teach that everyone the elders pray for will be healed. It teaches that if the elders pray "the prayer of faith," the sick person will be healed.

**So now we have a new question – what is “the prayer of faith”?**

Is James telling us that if we, or the one praying over us, has enough faith that we are guaranteed to be healed?

That is what some teach despite the overwhelming evidence that Christians are prayed for all the time who are not “healed” as we want them to be.

**The “prayer of faith” is not defined in the bible – so we are left with what we might call a wonderful mystery.**

We know that some we pray for are healed – and, if we are honest, we also know that some we pray for will not be healed. (in this life)

The “wonderful mystery” is that God is sovereign and what he chooses for his people is never a disappointment to his people.

**I have determined that if I, or someone I love is not healed of some malady it will not be because I did not ask. I will ask, and ask, and ask – and then when the results are in, I will rest in whatever path the Lord determines.**

**And here I will stand, I can do no other!**

## Faith

Many cry to the Lord that they may win riches, that they may avoid losses; they cry that their family may be established, they ask for temporal happiness, for worldly dignities; and, lastly, they cry for bodily health, which is the patrimony of the poor. For these and suchlike things many cry to the Lord; hardly one cries for the Lord Himself! How easy it is for a man to desire all manner of things from the Lord and yet not desire the Lord Himself! As though the gift could be sweeter than the Giver!

St. Thomas Aquinas

**Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.**

### Saving Faith

*James 2:14 What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? **Can that faith save him?** 15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17 **Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.***

To paraphrase verse #14, "can **THAT** kind of faith save?"

This gets right to point – what is saving faith? And is there a faith that does not save?

The Greek word for faith that we see in James 2:14 is the word, “pistis” and its primary meanings are “persuasion” and “credence” concerning religious truth and the truthfulness of God.

From the Oxford Dictionary we have this definition of faith – **“trust in somebody’s ability or knowledge; trust that somebody/something will do what has been promised.”**

2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 1:12 For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; **for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him** until that day.

The faith that saves is one that has persuaded us to believe the truthfulness of God regarding salvation.

***1<sup>st</sup> John 5:1 “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God”.***

The word “believes” comes from the same Greek word as the word “faith” – instead of “pistis”, it is “pisteuw”.

***James 2:18 But someone may well say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”***

The challenge of James to “show me your faith without the works” is not an empty one, but one that is really where the “rubber meets the road”. Without the works that accompany saving faith all you have to offer is intellectual adherence to a statement or doctrine.

***James 2:19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. 20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?***

Here James answers our question about a faith that does not save – it is what the demons give evidence to.

**A foolish and “useless” faith is one that has no works.**

If we believe that “saving faith” is tantamount to a new birth (and it is) then is it even logical that one can go from being dead to being alive and experience no change?

We celebrate birthdays to mark the time when a person was brought into the light and experienced great change.

As we look at our lives and the things we’ve done, we provide proof that we lived and accomplished things – that is what our “good works” as a new creation in Christ speak of.

I want us to understand that raising my hand, saying a prayer, walking an aisle, and the like only mean something if they lead to something. Too many have placed their hope for heaven on some sort of intellectual ascent, or on some transaction they think they did that fixed them up for eternity.

You are only fixed up for eternity if you can point to some evidence that you’ve been fixed. 😊

I am not speaking of some heretical “salvation by works”, but I am speaking of a salvation that is filled with good works that prove we’ve been saved by grace through faith. There is a definite link in scripture between faith and works that cannot be denied.

***James 2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? 22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;***

***Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.***

The classic text on salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, immediately attaches the necessity of good works.

So, to answer the question of “what is saving faith?” perhaps we should say - Saving faith is a faith that rests in Jesus’ death for my sins AND is accompanied by a striving to serve him through good works.

**If you are saved, you will have good works, or perhaps we could say, “if you are saved, you MUST have good works”.**

*Hebrews 11:1 Now **faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.** 2 For by it the men of old gained approval.*

Faith is not some bland, blind, wishful thinking kind of hope – it becomes a certainty for the one who believes.

God has a track record that is undeniable – he has proven himself to be completely reliable and trustworthy and what he says ALWAYS comes to pass.

There were roughly 300 Old Testament prophecies about the coming and work of Messiah. All of them that have reached their time to be fulfilled, have been fulfilled without even the hint of a miss.

If all his prophecies have come to pass, why would I ever doubt his promises – he has given his word on both.

The word for “assurance” is used in ancient Greek literature to refer to legal documents deposited in the archives that formed the evidence of ownership of certain land. It would be like a title deed.

Our faith forms the basis for any claims we may have on the promises of God. We are assured of receiving the promises of God because we believe what he has said in his word.

**Saving faith is not wishful thinking** – simple intellectual ascent to some list of promises, or to religious dogma does not save.

We do not “hope” that God will do what he has promised, we are certain of his **future performance** based on his **past performance**.

**Saving faith doesn't make something happen – saving faith rests in what God says has happened or will happen.**

### **The Results of Faith**

**Faith is not a power you have to create a future of your own making**, or to acquire things that you want.

**Faith is a gift from God that allows us to trust the future he has for us.**

An honest question is this – between you and God, who is more likely to create the future that would bring you joy?

For example, if we were to look at the “**heroes of the faith**” in Hebrews 11, we would find the very ones God has memorialized in the chapter would probably not have chosen the script for their lives that God did.

Just look at the first “by faith” commendation that is handed out in Hebrews 11 – it was to Abel.

Would Abel have chosen the path to his commendation that God did? His own brother murdered him!

If you look at the “heroes” of Hebrews 11 you will find that, with perhaps the lone exception of Enoch, all of them had rather hard lives. (we do not know how hard Enoch's life may have been)

If having great faith, as all of these “heroes” did, could be used to acquire an easy life then how come these saints didn't use it to better serve themselves?

Answer – **the purpose of faith is not to serve ourselves, but it is to be used to trust God and his promises wherever they lead.**

Faith is God's gift to us to believe what he has revealed in his word whether we have any evidence for what he says or not. If everything God has revealed came with proof, then it would not be faith.

Faith is not something we use like "cash" – it is that which allows us to believe what God says even when we do not see what he has promised or haven't yet received what he has promised.

You cannot believe something into existence – biblical faith places its hope in what God has promised and not in that which we wish for.

Consider what many would call the irrationality of our faith – almost by definition faith is not logical. Is it rationale to believe in **something** we have never seen that was given to us from **someone** we have never seen?

We believe the promises of God by faith because God has supernaturally given us faith to believe.

***1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2:14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.***

The very fact that we believe the promises of God as given in the bible is strong evidence that God is at work in us.

Look at what we read about Moses in *Hebrews 11:27* "***By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing him who is unseen.***"

Moses had lots to lose if he was wrong about the promises of God. In a worldly sense Moses had it all, fame, fortune, and power. But he turned his back on all that could be seen to embrace the unseen treasures of eternal life.

In the first part of Hebrews 11, while the lives of the “heroes” were hard at times, they mostly landed on their feet and experienced a measure of triumph. But as we read on in the chapter, we come across a different group of saints who experienced a different temporal outcome.

They were full of faith, they endured, but their temporal outcomes were much different.

***Hebrews 11:35b “and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; 36 and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated 38 (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.”***

The “world” would not call these saints “successful”.

Tortured, mocked, whipped, chained, imprisoned, stoned, sawn in two, tempted, put to death with the sword, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated, and homeless.

Does that look like the health and wealth gospel that we often hear about? And yet God says this of them, “**They were too good for this world**”.

**Sometimes our faith is rewarded as we live this life, and sometimes our faith is rewarded as we exit this life!**

Peter was addressing the persecuted early church when he wrote these words –

*1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:8 and **though you have not seen Him**, you love Him, and **though you do not see him now**, but believe in Him, you*

*greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 **obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.***

### **Faith in Action**

**So how does faith work in real life and what does a life of faith look like?**

In this class we will not give time to the “name it and claim it” teachings that have been present in our lifetimes. We will, however, take an honest look at the benefits of trusting God by faith.

What about our faith and the salvation of family and friends – is there a connection between our faith and their salvation?

There can be, but I have never found a set formula that guarantees that if I do “X”, I will get “Y”. However, I also believe what James said – “you don’t have because you do not ask”.

***James 4:2b “You do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.”***

I don’t want to be a “downer” on this, but the inverse of the above, (“you have because you ask”) is not necessarily true.

So, what are we to believe about faith and answered prayer?

If you tell me, you are sick, or are going for surgery, or are having financial problems, I am going to ask God for his help.

I also pray for my unsaved family members, for spiritual growth for myself, and for lots of other incidentals too numerous (and embarrassing) to mention.

**Trust me, when I have a need I do not run it through some sophisticated rubric to see if it fits – I just ask my Father.**

I know there is a relationship between the outcomes of life and the prayers of life – seeing clearly what they are can be a problem.

If I ask God to heal, and he heals that one is easy to see. If I ask God to heal and he doesn't, that one is much, much, harder to see. Would the sick one have been healed if I just had more faith?

***John 14:14 "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it."***

Some Christians may believe that this means if I just tack on, "in Jesus' name" to end of my prayer that I will have what I asked for. But experience tells all of us that this is just not so – which tells me there must be more here than just supposed magic words.

***Luke 22:42 "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."***

One of the most intense prayers of Jesus' time on earth was the one above – he was under great duress and obviously wanted relief, but not more than he wanted God's will to be done (on earth as it is in heaven).

**Could Jesus' prayer above be the secret to asking in his name?**

If wanting God's will over my will is the key to praying in Jesus' name, then I have great freedom as I pray. How so? Because when I recognize the superiority of God's will over my will then I can ask for anything with confidence that God will always provide as he wills. (which is always best)

Knowing the above has led me to this conclusion – if people are not healed, if loved ones are not saved, and if financial needs are not met, ***it will never be because I didn't ask.***

*Hebrews 4:14 Therefore, since we have **a great high priest** who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been*

*tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. 16 **Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.***

What God does not get us past, he will get us through!

I contend that the only way we get to the point where we trust and want God's will over ours is by faith. Faith that he is good, that he knows best, and that when his will is done, we always benefit.

Remember, faith is evidence of things not seen – by faith we accept that God always knows and gives what is best.

I was once challenged not say, “**Lord if it is your will**” when I pray because that supposedly would show a lack of faith. But when I want his will more than mine, doesn't that show that I trust and want God's will more than mine?

So, I ask – “**under what conditions would I ever NOT want his will**”?

### **What if I have Doubts?**

*James 1:5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 **But he must ask in faith without any doubting,** for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, 8 being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

What James tells us is that doubt can be a real factor in whether my prayers are answered or not.

In the case that James sites, the thing asked for (wisdom) will only be withheld if the one praying has doubt. The posture of God in what James sites is that it is a certainty that he is willing and eager to give wisdom.

So, doubt is big factor here because to doubt that one will receive wisdom when we ask for it, is to doubt what God has said.

Kenneth Hagin was a word of faith preacher – compare his words to the Apostle John’s words below. One promotes faith in our faith and the other faith in the goodness of God.

## Word of Faith or Faith in His Word?

**“In order to receive answers to your prayers, you must eradicate every image, suggestion, vision, dream, impression, feeling, and all thoughts that do not contribute to your faith and do not affirm you have what you asked for.”**

Kenneth Hagin

**“And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.”** John, the Apostle

To doubt when we pray would be appropriate if the question is “will God move on behalf of my need?” and not about “can God move on behalf of my need.”

Unknown

At its core, faith is a matter of trust in God, but not a blind trust. We are to trust what God has said and not doubt, for to doubt the Word of God is to doubt God.

God has not promised to supply all my wants, he has promised to supply all my “needs”. (Philippians 4:19)

***Mark 9:24 Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, "I do believe; help my unbelief."***

This happens to all of us – we want desperately to trust God, but there is a part of us that is still unconvinced until we see the answer to our prayer.

Take heart, Jesus still healed the man's son because while there was some doubt, there was also enough faith to come and ask.

When you are praying and you sense you have some doubt, do not exasperate yourself because there is some doubt, encourage yourself because you are asking.

If you have enough faith to ask, then you probably have enough faith. (think mustard seed) God does not seek to taunt us with "faith" games, he wants us to trust him and what he says.

### **What Matters Most**

Trust his will – when we are ready to accept his will in a matter, we are demonstrating faith and then we are ready to pray.

If you have doubt, confess it, and ask God to help you with your unbelief! Never, never, never, be guilty of not asking!

# Fear



The bible has lots to say about fear and it falls into three major categories.

- The fear of God.
- The fear of man.
- The fear of what might happen to me and my loved ones now and in the future.

## Fear of God

*Judges 2:19 But it came about when the judge died, that they would turn back and act more corruptly than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them and bow down to them; they did not abandon their practices or their stubborn ways. 20 **So the anger of the Lord burned against Israel**, and he said, “Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers and has not listened to My voice, 21 I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died, 22 in order to test Israel by them, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk in it as their fathers did, or not.” 23 So the Lord allowed those nations to remain, not driving them out quickly; and he did not give them into the hand of Joshua.*

*Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

*Proverbs 9:10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

*Psalms 111:10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do his commandments;*

The link between the fear of God and wisdom means we cannot possess wisdom if we recreate God in our own image. Too many people want to “tame” God into a non-threatening nobody. But, if we redefine the Lord as a god that makes us feel comfortable, a permissive “buddy” who exists simply to bless us and give us what we want, we will not fear him in the way he deserves to be feared. The Lord God Almighty is far greater than that, and the fear of the Lord begins when we see him in his majesty and power. The Lord shows Job (and us) a glimpse of his power in Job 38—41 when he describes his absolute sovereignty over everything. (from gotquestion.org)

***Leviticus 10:1 Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. 2 And fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. 3 Then Moses said to Aaron, “It is what the Lord spoke, saying, ‘By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be honored.’” So Aaron, therefore, kept silent.***

“The instructions had been clear. The altar of incense was declared by God to be “most holy.” When Nadab and Abihu offered strange or unauthorized fire on it, they were acting in clear defiance of God. Theirs was an act of blatant rebellion, an inexcusable profaning of the Holy Place. They committed a sin of arrogance, an act of treason against God: They profaned a most

holy place. God's judgment was swift. His explanation to Moses was clear: "**I will show myself holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored.**"

R.C. Sproul from *The Holiness of God*

Many look at what happened to Nadab and Abihu and think that God was violent and vindictive. Some have argued that Aaron's sons were just young people trying to find a new way to honor God.

But, when precise instructions are given by God, he is telling us what he wants, what he honors, and what he will allow. (obedience is better than sacrifice)

Perhaps we should look at the incident and see that God is not to be trifled with, and that he **can be violent, and ought to be feared.**

If anyone wants to cry "injustice" for Aaron or his sons, they should look at Calvary to see One who could have much more legitimately complained of injustice, but "*opened not his mouth*".

Aaron's response to God consuming his sons with fire was silence – what could he say? Was he going to accuse God?

*Leviticus 10:4* Moses called also to Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Aaron's uncle Uzziel, and said to them, "Come forward, **carry your relatives away from the front of the sanctuary to the outside of the camp.**"

So, will we see Nadab and Abihu in heaven – because of how they died we might expect that we won't, but I don't see their absence from Heaven as a certainty.

Never lose track of the truth that we are saved by grace through faith. While our works may reveal if our faith is genuine or not, they still play no role at all in acquiring salvation.

*2<sup>nd</sup> Sam 6:6 But when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, **Uzzah reached out toward the ark of God and took hold of it**, for the oxen nearly upset it. 7 And **the anger of the Lord burned against Uzzah**, and **God struck him down there for his irreverence; and he died there by the ark of God.***

In our flesh we might think God's response would be something like, "thank you Uzzah for keeping the ark from falling". Instead, Uzzah, for the "sin" of trying to keep the Ark from falling into the mud and muck, was struck down on the spot by God.

But wait, didn't Uzzah have good intentions – he and David were bringing the Ark back to Jerusalem and a big celebration was planned to honor God.

Uzzah did the unthinkable, and the forbidden, when he touched the ark. (Numbers 4:15) He presumed (wrongly) that his hands were holier than the mud and muck he saved the ark from.

*Acts 5:1 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, 2 and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? 4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? **You have not lied to men but to God.**" 5 And as he heard these **words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last**; and great fear came over all who heard of it. 6 The young men got up and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him.*

Ananias and, his wife Sapphira, committed what might seem to us to be a trivial sin. (exaggeration) There was nothing wrong with not giving all their proceeds from the sale of their property to the Lord.

Ananias and Sapphira were not the only Christians in their community that sinned, so without looking at the big picture it's hard to understand why they were struck down.

Aaron's sons, Uzzah, Ananias and Sapphira's sins were not greater than the sins of others but seemed to have been singled out as object lessons.

What do you suppose was the effect on the communities of Aaron's sons, Uzzah, and the early church when it was illustrated that we dare not dishonor God, and ignore his clear instructions?

*Romans 1:18 **For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven** against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.*

Sometimes the wrath of God is heralded, and sometimes it is illustrated. Far more times though it is withheld - giving time and space for the offenders to repent.

**With reference to Romans 1:18, at the outset it is important to observe the correlation between righteousness and wrath. Both are represented as being revealed from God. Just as full salvation awaits the future but also belongs to the present and is appropriated by faith, similarly wrath, while an eschatological concept, is viewed here as belonging to the present age. It is "being revealed". This means that the unfolding of history involves a disclosure of God's wrath against sin, seen in the terrible corruption and perversion of human life.**

### **The Expositor's Commentary**

We should also bear in mind that every sin is a capital offense.

*Ezekiel 18:20 **"The soul that sinneth, it shall die"**.*

Since God has occasionally broken into history to show his wrath we should not cry "unfair" or "harsh" but should rest in the fact that he is good and has a good purpose for everything he does.

What God did with Aaron's sons, Uzzah, and Ananias and Sapphira was to show us his wrath. With those (3) examples **God was demonstrating that he does not, and will not, tolerate sin.**

Question – will fewer people receive his wrath at the Great White Throne because God showed how severe his wrath can be? (Yes)

God is glorified (revealed) when his wrath is displayed.

*Romans 9:22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? 23 **And he did so to make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he prepared beforehand for glory.***

*Ezekiel 33:29 **Then they will know that I am the Lord, when I make the land a desolation and a waste** because of all their abominations which they have committed.”*

I do not believe that God delights to show his wrath on the disobedient, but when he does, it will be evident that even his wrath is a glorious wrath. And his glorious wrath leads some to fear Him, and then to know Him.

**Romans 1:18 “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men”.**

The Greek word for “wrath” is “orgay”, the same word that we also get the concept of a “sexual orgy”. The common denominator between “wrath” and “orgy” is this – both point to unbridled passion.

Evidently, God will be anything but mechanical as he delivers his wrath from the Great White Throne.

Yes, he acted in grace to provide a way of escape, but when his offers have been declined and sin has run its course, there will be only the unbridled passion of his wrath! Exactly what Jesus experienced on the cross.

Indeed, the wrath of God was satisfied on the cross thus clearing the way for him to forgive us. It is not possible for God to be who he is and not execute his justice in wrath.

On Calvary, Jesus received the full fury of his Father's unbridled, passionate, wrath to ensure that God's wrath would be satisfied – it is a big, big, deal!

### Fear of Man

***Proverbs 29:25 The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the Lord will be exalted.***

**When we fear what people will think**, or fear what they might do, we set ourselves up to be inconsistent.

**When we fear God**, we set ourselves up to do the right thing no matter what people think.

*Matthew 10:24 "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. 25 It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. **If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!** 26 "Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. 27 What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops. 28 **Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.***

Jesus is warning us that if we identify with Him, we should not expect any better treatment than he received. If they said that he was the devil incarnate, then we will be thought of in like fashion.

This is precisely why there is a certain amount of fear in all of us when we want to witness for Christ – there is a real risk of ridicule and rejection.

What will help us when we sense fear is to remember that we are called to evangelize and frame our actions in that moment appropriately.

When we know that men can do far less to us than God can, our choice ought to become much clearer.

Because you are a “saved” person, I am certain that God will not strike you down on the spot and send you to hell, but there may well be consequences.

*John 12:42 Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, **for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.***

Again, we see an example of misunderstanding the order of magnitude between suffering temporal consequences and suffering eternal consequences.

So, what are the consequences?

- For the pharisees who would not confess him I think what Jesus said about “if you deny me, I will deny you” applies.
- For the Christian, I think consequences occur at the Bema Seat where there will be loss of reward, and along with that, some diminished status in eternity.

**“diminished status in eternity”** – what is that?

God is just - if we believe there are degrees of punishment for the lost, then it follows logically, I believe, there will be degrees of rewards for the believers.

And if the punishment of the lost lasts for forever, it would seem logical that rewards, or loss of rewards, also last forever.

## Fear and Anxiety

*1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you at the proper time, 7 **casting all your anxiety on Him, because he cares for you.** 8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. 10 After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.*

Peter was writing to his Jewish brethren who were under severe persecution. They were under the threat of death every day and that must surely be a heavy burden to bear.

Peter says, “After you have suffered for a little while” he is framing their current conditions as temporary and something that they just had to get through.

### **“casting all your anxiety on Him”**

There is nothing mysterious in the meaning of “casting” – it simply means to “throw upon” like you might throw a saddle over a horse.

When we cast our cares and anxieties on Jesus they are now being carried by One who has already proclaimed, **“Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?”**  
Jeremiah 32:27

We should start and rest there – knowing that God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think!

He will never allow us to be burdened with more than we can bear. (regarding temptation 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:13)

**But how do I actually “cast” my care onto Jesus?**

In the world of psychology, there is something called a “projection of hope” where the patient believes their counselor can get them through anything, and that gives them hope.

It also makes them very dependent on their therapist.

When we “cast our care” on Jesus, the burdens we have do not actually leave us, but we have hope because he has promised to never leave us or forsake us AND (remember) “nothing is too hard for Him”.

*1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 1:17 Then Eli answered and said, “Go in peace; and may the God of Israel grant your petition that you have asked of Him.” 18 She said, “Let your maidservant find favor in your sight.”*  
**So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.**

Hannah was no longer sad – not because she became pregnant on the spot (she didn’t), but because she gave her burden to the Lord.

Nothing had actually changed at this point, but (by faith) she was sure that it would.

***Philippians 4:19 And my God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.***

Casting our cares on Jesus is a very strong act of faith – you can’t see your cares leaving you and landing on Jesus, but you do so because he told us to do so. By obeying him we say to the Lord, “I trust You”.

***2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 6:2 Behold, now is “the acceptable time,” behold, now is “the day of salvation”— 3 giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited, 4 but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, 5 in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in***

*sleeplessness, in hunger, 6 in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love, 7 in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left, 8 by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true; 9 as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death, 10 as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.*

There are plenty of things in life that are causes for fear and anxiety, but only if we buy into the “this world is all there is” philosophy.

On the other hand, if we believe that this life is but a but a brief moment in our eternal life then we can confidently say, “it is well with my soul”.

It might not be well with my wallet, my wife, or my way, but if I know Jesus then all will be well in time.

### **The Value of Fear**

The Bible does in fact tell us to “fear not” more than 80 times, and some say as much as 365 times. (depends on the translation you have)

However, along with that superabundance of implorations to “fear not” comes the reality that we need that many directives from God because “fearing not” is a really hard thing to do!

#### **If it were easy, he would probably only mention it once!**

It is my experience that fear always drives me closer to God. In fact, when I am distraught over a family member, a friend, or a circumstance I find myself looking forward to spending time with Jesus more than usual.

And he never disappoints. He may not answer all my prayers the way I want, but like any good therapist, I feel better just for having poured out my soul to Him.

**One of life's ironies – what I am told adamantly to avoid (fear), is the very thing that can be good for me.**

Running to Jesus is the one thing that always makes me more comfortable even if I wasn't uncomfortable to begin with.

The above statement will only make sense to you if you know Him!

**“The antidote for fear is the promise of God’s presence. God is with you. “He has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So, we can confidently say, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me’”? (Hebrews 13:5–6) Let the calm, strong assurance of this precious promise settle into your soul: God is always with you; therefore, you have nothing to fear.”**

James MacDonald

# Forgiveness

## Forgiveness, God towards Mankind

**Psalm 130:1 Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord. 2 Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive To the voice of my supplications. 3 If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? 4 But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.**

***"But there is forgiveness with thee.* Blessed, but free, full, sovereign pardon is in the hand of the great King: it is his prerogative to forgive, and he delights to exercise it. Because his nature is mercy, and because he has provided a sacrifice for sin, therefore forgiveness is with him for all that come to him confessing their sins. The power of pardon is permanently resident with God: he has forgiveness ready to his hand at this instant. ***"That thou mayest be feared.*"** This is the fruitful root of piety. None fear the Lord like those who have experienced his forgiving love. Gratitude for pardon produces far more fear and reverence of God than all the dread which is inspired by punishment. If the Lord were to execute justice upon all, there would be none left to fear him; if all were under apprehension of his deserved wrath, despair would harden them against fearing him: it is grace which leads the way to a holy regard of God, and a fear of grieving him."**

**Unknown**

*Colossians 1:13 For he rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

*Hebrews 9:22 And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.*

When we sin against God, or against another person, often what we want is for our sins to be “sent away” and put out of sight. Not coincidentally, that is the exact meaning of the word as used in many places in the Bible.

**We want our sins to be removed, to be released from us and sent away where they cannot be seen.**

In Leviticus chapter 16 we find instructions for what was to be done on the Day of Atonement.

One goat without blemish would be completely burned up before the Lord as a sin offering. A second unblemished one would be set free as the “scapegoat” that symbolically carried away all the sins and guilt of the people.

***Leviticus 16:21 Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands in readiness. 22 The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.***

**The picture in Leviticus 16 is that of atonement being made for our sins and their removal from the sight of God.**



The scapegoat would also have red cloth tied to its horns clearly identifying this goat as the scapegoat. This was to keep the Israelites from unknowingly allowing it back into the camp for food or water.

**Isaiah referenced the scapegoat – “though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white a snow”.**

***Hebrews 9:22 And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.***

The word “remission” is the same Greek word translated as “forgiveness” in Colossians 1:14.

Remit is what we all do when we pay our bills – we send money away from our account to the account of another. (Our sins were remitted to Jesus)

Forgiveness in the Bible is a “release” or a “dismissal” of our sins from our account. (our record is wiped clean) In the courts of God, we ask for, and receive, a complete dismissal of all charges against us.

**Our plea** is based upon the evidence that we should not have to pay for a debt that has already been paid!

**Our plea**, that our debt is already paid, only works in God’s courtroom if it is true – this Judge knows all.

**Our plea** would be empty if God did not know factually, and experientially that when Jesus died on the cross the believer’s sins were actually “on” Him.

**When my case comes before the judge, the Judge (Jesus) becomes my advocate (my defense attorney).**

**Forgiveness is not** something we are due or deserve. No one deserves to be forgiven.

**Forgiveness** is a loving choice made by the one who was offended, or wronged.

**Forgiveness** is a decision whereby we choose not to hold another's offense against them, but instead we release them from the consequences of their actions.

**Forgiveness** is related to salvation, but it is not the whole of salvation. When our sins are forgiven, they are, in effect, sent away and removed from our records.

**Remember the "books" that are opened at the Great White Throne? God has records of all our works. While not mentioned around the Bema Seat evaluations of the believer, it would seem apparent "the books" are also opened for the believer. They are opened to condemn the unbeliever at the Great White Throne and opened to reward the believer at the Bema Seat.**

When we receive his forgiveness, the permanent records of our sins are expunged.

***Micah 7:18 Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of his possession? he does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in unchanging love. 19 he will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.***

**What does it mean that our sins are cast into "the depths of the sea"?**

- ***Psalm 103:12 As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.***
- **This is to say that our sins are so far from the mind of God that they will never again have any effect on us and our relationship with Him.**

When the bible speaks of God not remembering our sins, we should not take those words in the most literal sense. God does not forget them but treats us as though he has forgotten them.

**One who is omniscient, cannot and does not forget anything.**

If you recall from above I said, **“Forgiveness is related to salvation, but it is not the whole of salvation”**.

Forgiveness is essential because we have been stained by sin. Stain is something that goes much deeper than the surface; it penetrates and vitiates (makes faulty, spoils).

***Jeremiah 2:22 “Although you wash yourself with lye and use much soap, the stain of your iniquity is before Me,” declares the Lord God.***

What is the stain of sin? The stain of sin is that which has attached itself to us and has penetrated our lives to the extent that we are affected by it every day.

Martha was afraid of the stench that would have come from opening the grave of Lazarus, who had been dead four days. It would be ugly, messy, and smelly – it would be the odor of rotting, dead, flesh.

According to Paul’s words in Romans chapter 7, even after we are forgiven and saved, we still must contend with the weight of sin’s affects. The above is evidenced by ***“Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?”***.

The Romans in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, along with crucifixion, had another cruel form of punishment for murderers. In some cases, the body of the victim would be strapped to the back of the murderer. No one was allowed (under penalty of death) to remove the rotting body from the perpetrator’s back thus allowing the poison from the decomposing body to infect and kill the murderer.

**Romans 7:21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. 22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, 23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?**



When we are forgiven, our sins are released, they are sent away, and we are free from their affects. However, even when we were free from our sin, we were still not eligible for Heaven.

Forgiveness alone is still insufficient for entry into his presence.

***Hebrews 12:14 Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.***

A technical point, but one that a good bible student should know is that to be free of sin is not the same as being holy. When I am free of sin, I am morally neutral, but I am not holy – I need more than sinlessness to be accepted by God. I must be righteous, but my own righteousness is faulty – so I need to have the righteousness of Christ added to me.

If I had no sin, but didn't have Christ, I would be innocent, but not holy. I would not go to hell, but neither could I go to heaven because I would still lack the requisite righteousness.

**When we trust Christ, our sins are (forgiven) subtracted AND the righteousness of Christ is added to our account.**

**Our sin was transferred to Jesus, and his righteousness was transferred to us.**

*2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:21 he made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

He declares us, who are guilty, to be innocent when he forgives, and then declares us to be holy, when he imputes his righteousness to us.

***Romans 4:1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." 4 Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. 5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, 6 just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works.***

**The doctrine of "double imputation"** - Christ's righteousness is imputed to us. He not only takes our debit, but we also get his credit.

The word that we get our English "credit", "count", or "reckon" from is really an accounting term. (to impute)

**Both credits and debits can be "imputed" towards one's balance, so to speak, with God.**

### **Forgiveness, Person to Person**

**"We are never more like God than when we forgive."**

**Anonymous**

How so? Because God forgives because he chooses to do so from his love for us. When he forgives it is not done grudgingly, or with hurt feelings, but is done with an eagerness to restore fellowship.

When we forgive in like fashion as God does, we do it in the interest of restoring the relationship that has been damaged.

When it is obvious to the offender that our primary interest is not in making them grovel, but in making them whole with us, we are acting as God does. When we set aside our ego and our rights, ask for nothing in return, and forgive – we are acting Christ-like.

***Ephesians 4:32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.***

***Matthew 18:21 Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."***

***Colossians 3:12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.***

From these scriptures we should see that our God is a forgiving God and, because we are to be like Him, we should be a forgiving people.

***Matthew 6:14 For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.***

Jesus is not telling us that we can earn salvation by forgiving those who have wronged us. Neither is he telling us that we will forfeit our salvation because we do not forgive those who have wronged us.

What he is telling us is that an unforgiving heart is not a sign of spiritual health – but of a spiritual problem. For the believer, you

are neither kept nor lost by how you forgive - we know we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

Our fellowship with the Lord will be severely impacted by an unwillingness to forgive AND your evaluation at the BEMA will not be pleasant.

***Matthew 18:23 “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. 24 When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. 25 But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. 26 So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.’ 27 And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. 28 But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ 29 So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’ 30 But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed.”***

The “forgiven” man above in Matthew 18 is hard to suffer. Here is a man who had been forgiven a massive debt who will not, in turn, forgive a small debt owed to him.

**A principle perhaps is this - if you want forgiveness from God, you be forgiving.**

In the parable, when the King heard of his debtor’s unwillingness to forgive, he rescinds his forgiveness and demands that all that was owed to him be paid.

What Jesus is teaching is that, if necessary, God will deal harshly with his children who, in light of being forgiven of so much, withhold forgiveness from others.

*Hebrews 12:9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, so that we may share his holiness. 11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.*

### Forgiveness, Keep a Short Account with God

**Keep a short account with God** – this is a saying I heard when I was a young Christian.

Just as we discussed “debits” and “credits” when we spoke of imputation, this refers to that same “ledger”.

***1<sup>st</sup> John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.***

There is a modern dispute regarding 1<sup>st</sup> John 1:9 and the need for Christians to exercise it.

Some say, “all my sins were forgiven on Calvary, so I don’t ever have to ask for forgiveness again”. Technically, as it pertains to our entrance into heaven when we die, they are correct – all their sins, past, present, and future were paid for on the cross.

But there is something else that is important to the Christian life – fellowship with Christ, and our sin interrupts our fellowship with Him.

If you sin as a believer, you will still go to heaven, but you will lack the power and blessing that comes with being in fellowship with Christ.

***Ephesians 4:30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (we grieve him when we sin, and quench him when we disobey)***

There is something in me that compels me to confess and seek forgiveness when I sin – I just do not sense restoration until I do. Perhaps the strongest argument for exercising 1<sup>st</sup> John 1:9 is that John wrote it down for us!

**Why would he advise us to do that which is unnecessary?**

## Grace and Mercy

**Grace is the work of God whereby he gives the repentant sinner that which he has not merited and does not deserve.**

**Mercy is the work of God in refraining from delivering the justice the repentant sinner has rightly merited, and rightly deserves.**

There are at least (2) kinds of grace, **common grace and saving grace**. Both are unmerited, both are beneficial to mankind, and both are gifts of God. All of mankind receives common grace, while only the believer receives saving grace.

Common grace is seen as blessings in the form of rain, beauty, warmth of the sun, companionship, food, laughter, love, etc, etc....

All the things that all people would recognize as the “good” things of life.

***Matthew 5:45 “So that you may be sons of your Father who is in Heaven; for he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”***

God gives common grace to all of mankind perhaps to create a space of relative calm wherein mankind can notice God.

If all were uncomfortable all the time, then all would be consumed with looking for comfort, and how would they have enough space and peace to see him? No one deserves the common grace of God, but he gives it because he is gracious.

In the universe of life, there is a thread that cannot be denied – justice. Real justice requires a just judge who is impartial.

**Romans 2:5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6 who will render to each person according to his deeds:**

It could be said that Romans chapter 1 describes God's common grace to all people. He seeks to reveal himself to all of mankind and holds us accountable for how we respond to the revelation of himself in nature.

Paul, in Romans 1, lays out the case that God can be known well enough through his revelation in nature that all who reject the obvious will be judged accordingly.

***Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.***

In a sense, it is the common grace of God that allows him to be just as he judges those who reject him.

Had he not made himself so evident through nature, through his word, through his Son, and by his Spirit perhaps he would be seen as unjust in some sense. But of all the things his enemies may hurl at him, injustice would be an especially baseless charge.

We have a sense of justice because it is a real "thing" and God emphasizes it in his word. For there to be justice, just decisions must be made against some standard of what is just, and unjust.

An arbitrary standard is really no standard at all, but when the Judge of the universe tells us the "rules" (the standards) then justice can be identified and measured.

We are familiar with the word “merit” – it means “the quality of being particularly good or worthy, especially so as to deserve praise or reward.”

In a just system, I would be considered just when I have sufficient merit to meet the standards of being just.

***Romans 3:19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; 20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in his sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.***

In God’s “law”, he has set the standards for being found to be just, and then immediately God tells us that against his moral law we have no defense.

Our mouths are to be stopped and any protests we may have must come to an end because our works, when measured against the law, prove our guilt.

God has a standard for measuring merit, and we are not capable of meeting that standard. Only one not predisposed to sin, like Jesus for instance, can meet God’s standard.

So how is that God could pronounce you as “just”, as actually having sufficient merit to warrant that label, when in fact you are not just?

***Romans 4:17 (as it is written, “I have made you a father of many nations”) in the presence of him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did;***

God has the power to declare you just before him, even though you are not – or are you?

I only raise the “or are you?” question to unearth the timing of the transaction. The timing is this –

- We are unjust.
- We believe.
- God declares us just.
- Then we are just.

The declaration of God, that we are just, is so real that he can call those who are not just as though we are just because he declares it to be so.

In his grace, God gives us enough merit so that we are now actually, in a real and tangible way, made just (holy) before him.

**An old tried and true definition of grace is “God’s unmerited favor”.**

Perhaps we should express it this way – the grace of God is his unmerited merit in his sight.

Understand this – God does not owe anyone anything. We often speak and behave as though God somehow owes mankind salvation through his grace and mercy.

We should realize that had God chosen to save no one, had he decided not to redeem any, no one would have a just complaint when sent to the lake of fire. We would simply be receiving that which we merited, and we would recognize that as justice.

**The question that never seems to be asked is, “why would God want to save anyone?”.**

When the angels rebelled and sinned, he did not choose to redeem any of them, and that was just. To not save a single angel is not gracious, and is not merciful, but it is just.

**“The point of redemption, the point of missions, the point of evangelism is to purchase a people FOR GOD, a people who will live TO HIS GLORY, a people who will DELIGHT IN HIM ABOVE ALL ELSE and MAGNIFY HIS name.”**

**John Piper**

**“The incarnation is not primarily about you. The cross is not primarily about you. The resurrection is not primarily about you. The incarnation, the cross, and the resurrection are primarily about GOD.”**

**John Piper**

The answer to the question of “why would God save anyone?” is because in doing so he is glorified.

He could have saved angels, and condemned mankind, but in his wisdom, he determined that saving the ones created in his image will bring him the most glory. We do not merit his grace in redemption, but he has extended it to us anyway!

**“For all of life there is not a day that goes by in your Christian experience that you are not the recipient of God's grace. It is grace that upholds your salvation. It is grace that gives you victory in temptation. It is grace that makes the Word alive to you. It is grace that draws you into communion and prayer. It is grace that makes you useful for service. It is grace that enables your gift to function in the Spirit.”**

**Unknown**

***2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12:9 And he has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.”***

When Paul wrote the above, he was hurting over a prayer of his that was going unanswered.

Here is a man who was used to raise the dead, used to heal hundreds (or maybe even thousands) of people, but he was still in daily and seemingly constant pain.

There are lots of theories as to what Paul’s “thorn” was, but God decided not to disclose Paul’s “thorn” to us. What we do know is

that Paul finally concluded that the Lord was going to let him remain in pain, so that he would remain humble, and be more effective for Christ.

We know from **“My grace is sufficient for you”** that the important fact about Paul’s “thorn” was that God’s grace would be all he needed to persevere.

Whatever Paul was going through, the grace of God was going to be sufficient to sustain him, make him an effective minister, and it would carry him all the way home!

So here grace is seen as something more than making sinners meritorious of salvation – here it is seen as being able to sustain a believer through pain and suffering.

**Lesson – grace is not just necessary for salvation; it is also necessary for sanctification.**

Salvation

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch like me...  
I once was lost but now am found,  
Was blind, but now, I see.

T'was Grace that taught...  
my heart to fear.  
And Grace, my fears relieved.  
How precious did that Grace appear...  
the hour I first believed.

Confidence

Safety

Through many dangers, toils and snares...  
we have already come.  
T'was Grace that brought us safe thus far...  
and Grace will lead us home.

The Lord has promised good to me...  
His word my hope secures.  
He will my shield and portion be...  
as long as life endures.

Perseverance

## Mercy

Mercy is the work of God in refraining from delivering the justice the repentant sinner has rightly merited, and rightly deserves.

This gets back to merit, what a person's works have earned him. Apart from Christ, in a just system, no one would be saved, no one would receive grace, and no one would experience mercy.

***Luke 13:1 Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. 2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? 3 I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.***

It is the mercy of God that allows any of us to get as far through life as we do – these Galileans were not the recipients of some special judgment.

**Life is precarious and dangerous every day to everyone!**

***Luke 13:4 Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.***

The Galileans Herod killed, and those on whom a tower fell were not being judged by God. They were merely living in a dangerous and fallen world. God, in his mercy, could have intervened, but he didn't.

In both examples Jesus says, "unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" meaning that if you want eternal judgment withheld, repent.

If you want God to show mercy to you, you must repent.

***James 2:13 For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.***

***Matthew 5:7 Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.***

There is a principle in scripture that if you want to receive mercy, you must extend mercy.

Mercy calls for justice to be set aside. Justice would demand payment (restitution), whereas mercy asks that one be treated as though they were innocent.

***Matthew 9:13 But go and learn what this means: 'I desire compassion, and not sacrifice,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.***

And since all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, then it sounds to me like Jesus came to call all mankind. What becomes obvious as we observe life is that those who do not see their need for mercy will never hear his call.

***Hebrews 4:16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.***

The writer of Hebrews, probably Paul, tells us that we should come to Jesus with absolute confidence that we will receive mercy from him.

Under the old covenant no one would come boldly because not even the priests ever thought the work to acquire mercy was complete.

When we see “therefore” we should seek to understand what the word “therefore” is there for. A better priest, under a better covenant, offered a better sacrifice, on a better altar! (therefore, we have confidence!)

***Hebrews 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.***

***Micah 6:8 he has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?***

These verses deal with God's requirements upon us as we deal with all the people in our lives. We are to extend mercy, even to those who do not deserve it, just as we received mercy from God though we were guilty.

***Titus 3:4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, 5 he saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to his mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.***

As it turns out, God, in his mercy, has always had good intentions for mankind – so much so that he is willing to remove the penalty of our sin if we will trust him.

Mercy presupposes guilt. When we look to God for mercy we are not coming with a defense.

If we want his mercy, we will come and enter a plea of “guilty” acknowledging our need for mercy from the Judge.

***Luke 18:13 But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’***

Justice protects the innocent and condemns the guilty. Generally speaking, no one seeks mercy so long as they think they have a chance of being justified through merit.

***Luke 18:14 "I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."***

Mercy is more than just goodness – mercy calls for God to release us from the penalty of our sins despite our guilt.

We will never trust in mercy if we believe we are somehow deserving of justice – as though we are righteous.

It is when we admit our guilt and cry out for mercy, that we then have a claim to being just, based on the merit of Christ.

***2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:21 he made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.***

Made righteous "in him" means exactly what it says – that apart from Christ we are not righteous, but "in him" we are! Through the mercy of God, we are released from the penalty of our sin, and given the benefit of his righteousness.

According to Charles Finney these are the conditions for trusting in God's mercy:

- Public justice must be achieved. (the cross)
- The sinner must repent. (change of mind about our sin)
- The sinner must confess his sin. (1st John 1:9)
- The sinner must make restitution. (Eph 2:10)
- The sinner must reform his behavior. (Gal 5:22-23)

It would be a mistake to think we will receive mercy from God if we do not fulfill our part in the "conditions" laid out by Finney.

**If we do not repent, confess, make restitution through serving God, and reform our behavior we should not presume upon the mercy of God. We receive his mercy to enter the new life, and if we are not changed by Christ, we do not know Christ.**

*Psalm 89:1 I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; With my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations. 2 For I have said, "Mercy shall be built up forever".*

**The Lord will extend his mercy to us forever and renew them every morning.**

*Lamentations 3:22 Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because his compassions fail not. 23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.*

### **The Mercy Seat**



**Jesus is our mercy seat – he is our Propitiation. It means turning away anger. Jesus absorbed the anger of God thus turning it away from those who trust him.**

A small child misbehaves and disappoints his parents. He is given a timeout, he must admit to his sin, and then apologize to his parents – then the parents shower him with love and turn their anger away in favor or reconciliation.

**This is propitiation - Psalm 85:1 O Lord, You showed favor to Your land; You restored the captivity of Jacob. 2 You forgave the iniquity of Your people; You covered all their sin. Selah. 3 You withdrew all Your fury; You turned away from Your burning anger.**

The Mercy Seat was the lid of the ark of the covenant, it was literally the place of propitiation – the place where the just anger of a righteous God was turned away and paved the way for him to meet with his people. The Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies, within the earthly tabernacle, was the place where innocent blood was sprinkled for the sins of Israel.

Jehovah met with Israel's high priest within the veil one time per year for a moment of time, and the high priest never went inside the veil without blood. God prescribed that he would meet with the representative of his people in that one place, one time per year. Jesus is the true Mercy Seat, the place where God and mankind can meet.

***Hebrews 9:11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, he entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; 12 and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, he entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?***

**Propitiation is the appeasing of the one offended by covering the cause of his anger. Propitiation speaks primarily to the effect of satisfaction upon God as the offended party.**

**Geneva Institute of Christian Thought**

*1<sup>st</sup> John 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; 2 and he himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.*

As new-covenant believers, we know these annual, animal sacrifices were only pictures of the propitiation of God's wrath. We know that the Old Testament animal sacrifices were insufficient to turn the wrath of God away from mankind – they were merely a temporary covering.

***Hebrews 10:3 But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. 4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.***

Just as Jesus alone can cleanse the soul and conscience, he alone can turn away the wrath of God, since he is our propitiation.

***Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in his blood through faith.***

**“The Lord is present in our midst in public worship just as he was in the tabernacle, but is he present to judge or to save? In a more personal way, will he look on our sins or will he look on Jesus Christ in our place? The Lord provided the Israelites a place of propitiation on the ark's lid, and he still provides a place today. That “place” is Jesus Christ. He offers himself to us. He turns away the wrath of God from us. He cleanses us of our sins. He cancels them out. He nullifies their power. He brings us into the presence of God blameless and acceptable. Confess your sins to him and believe that Jesus Christ will propitiate God's wrath against you. In this way, you shall be saved.”**

Daniel Hyde

## **Evangelism**

**“Jesus himself did not try to convert the two thieves on the cross; he waited until one of them turned to him.”**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

**Have you no wish for others to be saved? Then you're not saved yourself, be sure of that!”**

Charles Spurgeon

**“I believe that entertainment and amusements are the work of the Enemy to keep dying men from knowing they're dying; and to keep enemies of God from remembering that they're enemies.”**

A.W. Tozer

**“If you alter or obscure the Biblical portrait of God in order to attract converts, you don't get converts to God, you get converts to an illusion. This is not evangelism, but deception.”**

John Piper

**“It is clear you don't like my way of doing evangelism. You raise some good points. Frankly, I sometimes do not like my way of doing evangelism. But I like my way of doing it better than your way of not doing it.”**

Dwight L. Moody

### **Evangelism Defined**

To evangelize means to literally “offer good news” or a “welcome message.”

*Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of*

*the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*

***Isaiah 52:7 Celebrates those who carry the good news in this way... “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, announcing peace, proclaiming news of happiness, our God reigns.”***

If we are going to measure our evangelization, we should measure our efforts to proclaim the gospel instead of the results.

John the Baptist heralded the good news of Jesus and in Luke 4 Jesus said, **“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because he anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.”**

The Greek word for evangelist is, “someone with a vocational calling from God to announce the good news of the Gospel”. Again, the emphasis is not on the results, but on the effort.

### **Is evangelism a spiritual gift?**

The only hint we have to such a notion is in Ephesians 4:11-12 where Paul lists the gifted people God gives to his church.

*Ephesians 4:11 And he gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.*

Evangelists appear along with “apostles”, “prophets”, and “pastors”. There is not a spiritual gift we call “apostling” or “pastoring”, or “propheting”.

**An evangelist is one who is called specifically to preach the good news – Billy Graham in our day.**

## Principle #1 – Pray for the Unsaved

St. Augustine's mother obsessed over the salvation of her wayward son and enlisted the help of her bishop who told her these words.

**“Go on your way, and God bless you, for it is not possible that the son of these tears should be lost.”**

This is not scripture, but surely scriptural that it will be hard to lose those who are faithfully prayed for.

***Matthew 9:37 Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. 38 Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.”***

Pray for the souls of those you love to be saved – pray that God will surround them with Christians.

Pray that they will be open to the gospel – there is a spiritual war going on, on a spiritual battleground.

***James 4:2 “You do not have because you do not ask.”***

I have determined that if someone I love is not saved, it will not be because I didn't ask.

If we ask in his name and, in his will, he will answer. Is evangelism one case where you can be sure of both?

***2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.***

***John 14:14 “If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.”***

We know it's God will that our friends and loved ones be saved, so one would think that praying for someone to be saved is both “in his will” and surely “in his name”.

***John 15:7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*** (The condition is “remaining” (abiding) in Jesus)

***1<sup>st</sup> John 5:14 And we are confident that he hears us whenever we ask for anything that pleases him. 15 And since we know he hears us when we make our requests, we also know that he will give us what we ask for.*** (the condition is what pleases him)

So, if praying for the unsaved meets both conditions, (in his name, and in his will) then why are there still unsaved people in my life? I have prayed for them, it’s God’s will for them to be saved, and I am praying in Jesus’ name.

It seems obvious that as soon as we introduce the “will” of others in the matter of their salvation a lot changes.

**Three conditions – if I abide in Christ, and if I pray for the unsaved in my life, and if the unsaved in my life want to be saved, then they will be saved.**

### **Principle #2 – Give Out the Word**

***Romans 10:17 “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”***

***John 17:17 “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.”***

From the above texts, we see there is a definite link between salvation for sinners and the Word of God.

Testimonies are good and can be powerful evangelistic tools, but nothing surpasses the invisible power of the gospel as given to us

by God. If you have a choice between using your words or God's, choose his words every time.

***Hebrew 4:12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.***

***Acts 2:42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching .... 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.***

***Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.***

“When we share the gospel with the lost, we might be concerned about whether someone receives it or not, but we must trust the seed of the Word of God because only God gives the increase, adding to the church (Acts 2:47). The only thing we need to do is proclaim it and not be ashamed of it because as the Apostle Paul writes, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16). Did you catch that? The gospel is the power of God for salvation, not us. Trust God and sow his Word; then leave the results up to the Lord of the Harvest.”

Unknown

Principle #3 – Be Sensitive to the Leading of the Holy Spirit

***Acts 16:6 They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; 7 and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; 8 and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. .... 13 And on the***

***Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. 14 A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.***

Paul and Silas were doing their best to determine where to take the gospel next – God intervened, and they followed. They were not permitted by the Holy Spirit to follow their own course. The Spirit led them to some ones, (Lydia, and the famous “Philippian Jailer”) who had “open hearts” for the gospel.

I have found this to be a help in praying for the unsaved, and now I see I should employ the same theme for asking God to lead me.

“God, lead me to those whose hearts are open and already prepared by you for the gospel. Then fill my mouth with your gospel message so that they might be saved!”

It would seem to put me on very solid ground for success if God already has them prepared.

***John 4:35 Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.***

***John 16 – “when he (the Holy Spirit) is come he will convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment”.***

Jesus said no one can come to me unless he is drawn (and then later said) .... If I am lifted up, I will draw all men unto me.

***John 6:44 “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.”***

***John 12:32 “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.”***

#### **Principle #4 – Don't Look for Results, Plan to be Faithful**

**Sow gospel seeds** – *1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

**Be faithful and consistent** – *1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 4:2 Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.*

**We are just parts of a team** – *1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3:5 What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. 7 So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:1 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. 5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*

No matter what is going on around you, and no matter how receptive your audience may or may not be, just stay with your calling.

**Remember the “Bema Seat” criterion – “what did you do with what you were given?”.**

Whatever your circumstances, whatever your opportunities, whatever the conditions – stay on course!

## Principle #5 – Fruit First

***Proverbs 11:30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who is wise wins souls.***

The only biblical reference to “soul winner” is frontloaded with fruit.

***John 15:4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.***

***John 15:16 You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name he may give to you.***

***Luke 1:15 For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother’s womb. 16 And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God.***

We cannot bear fruit apart from the Holy Spirit and the one who was appointed to “turn many” was filled before he was fruitful.

There is a definite link between power for effective ministry and staying close to the Lord.

**“He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” Jesus**

## Principle #6 – Seek the Unity of the Brethren

***John 17:21 That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: 23 I***

***in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.***

Two times in this text Jesus sites our unity as evidence that he is the One sent by God into the world to save it. One of the most evangelistic things that we can do is to preserve the unity of the local body.

When we proclaim with our lips our love for the Lord, but do not love our brothers and sisters in Christ we discredit our own testimony.

***1<sup>st</sup> John 4:20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.***

Discipline in the Body of Christ serves to maintain unity.

***Matthew 18:15 "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."***

#### **Principle #7 – Be Different**

**John 4 – The woman at the well was first attracted to Jesus because he was so different from others who would not give her the "time of day".**

In Jesus' dealings with the woman at the well she will find that the closer you look at him, the better he looks! He slowly revealed

things about her and him that provided enough clues to lead her to himself.

**First, he is a man** - *John 4:9 "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?"*

**Then he is a prophet** - *John 4:19 "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet."*

**And then he is God** - *John 4:29 "Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?"*

**Lazarus** – I am not sure that this side of heaven one can be more different than a man who was dead, and then came to life! What a testimony he had – so much so that he became marked for death along with Jesus.

***John 12:9b they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. 10 So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, 11 because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.***

***1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:15 "but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;"***

Be different enough to create questions.

Love, joy, peace, and the like, when radiated will make you stand out almost anywhere you go.

### **Principle #8 – Use What You Have**

What gifts do you have? God has equipped you with both natural and spiritual gifts – they will be some of your best tools for reaching the lost.

If you do the things you want to do anyway, based upon how God has wired you, you can find a way to reveal God to others in a very natural way.

If you go to the same places on a regular basis, get to know the people there and look for connections.

There is a principle that seems to work – that the closer we become with others the more of us they see. At some point, our relationship with Jesus must appear, or we are working too hard to conceal it.

**What if you are shy?** God wired you that way so find a way to reveal him in your shyness.

**What if you are an extravert?** God wired you that way so find a way to reveal him as you “work a room”.

Remember, God made you as you are – you don’t have to change who you are to be effective for him.

All your time, talent, and treasure can be used to reach others and we are responsible for what we do with what we have.

### **Evangelism Extras**

Every generation is responsible to communicate the good news so that it is heard and received.

Should we continue to repeat the tactics of previous generations? What worked for Billy Graham in the 1950’s, the Televangelists of the 70’s and 80’s, or the megachurch preachers in the 90’s, and into the 21st century?

Is the pluralistic society we live in today reshaping the perception of an entire generation of believers and unbelievers about the good news?

**The church that once was at the center of the culture and could presume a privileged position within it has increasingly found**

**that position has been marginalized and no longer is in the privileged position that it once was.**

Harvey Cox, The Future of Faith

**The church can no longer assume the culture will assist in the task of producing Christians—as if it ever should have considered it a possibility in the first place. Perhaps, our thoughts go as far back as prayer in the school or no stores open on Sunday or a noncompete with school activities on church nights and the like. The Ten Commandments on courtroom walls.**

Harvey Cox, The Future of Faith

**“The early church was deeply committed to faith (trust) in Jesus. Jesus is Lord was the confession that made one a believer. Evangelism was about this. Confessing Jesus is Lord! This was the only requirement. Faith in Jesus was about deep seated confidence in him.”**

Harvey Cox, The Future of Faith

**“Despite dire forecasts regarding the decline of Christianity in the last 50 years (less than 17% of the population attends church today in a public building in America as opposed to 20 years ago when nearly 40% attended), Christianity is growing faster than it ever has before, but mainly outside the west and in movements that accent spiritual experience, discipleship, and hope. These pay scant attention to creeds and dogma; and flourish without hierarchies.”**

Harvey Cox, The Future of Faith

**The question for our generation in the west is this – what will history record that we valued? And what did we do with what we claimed to have valued?**

## Hell



The safest road to Hell is the gradual one — the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.

(C. S. Lewis)

izquotes.com

### Saved from What?

As a rule, unsaved people, and even many Christians do not want to hear about Hell.

**It is eternal death without dying, pain without mitigation, and burning without ever burning up.**

*2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 1:7 The Lord Jesus will be revealed from Heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 **These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.***

Many believe in an eternal Heaven, but not in an eternal Hell – both are taught in the Bible.

When we talk about being “saved” we should seek clarity on what we mean. To the average person on the streets of America the word “saved” could mean many things. As Christians, we want to be clear in our use of the word and seek to inform our listeners of the same.

For the most part, even though every lost person we encounter is but one heartbeat from eternity, people just do not focus on eternal things. When we ask, “are you saved?”, others may legitimately retort, “saved from what?”.

In fact, that is THE QUESTION we should hope to have asked of us as the answer to it leads right to Jesus.

*Romans 5:6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by his blood, **we shall be saved from the wrath of God** through him.*

Do you see it? “we shall be **saved from the wrath of God** through him”.

*Numbers 11:1 Now the people became like those who complain of adversity in the hearing of the Lord; and when the Lord heard it, **his anger was kindled, and the fire of the Lord burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp.***

We saw illustrations of God’s wrath in a previous class when we spoke of Uzza, and Ananias and Sapphira – here in Numbers 11 we see God’s wrath break out against complainers.

**Only three days into their march, the people reverted to the disloyal complaining they had expressed a year earlier, three days after their deliverance from the waters of the Red Sea. The people again expressed the ingratitude that marked their early experience. The response of the Lord to this outbreak of murmuring was one of wrath. The purging fire was limited to the outskirts of the camp, an evidence of the Lord's mercy.**

The Expositor’s Commentary

It seems that God allowed his wrath to break out and be in full view several times in history and we should ask “why?”. (narrative is not necessarily normative)

It wasn't because he lost control, and it wasn't because he had no other options – he is God, he is always in control, and always has options.

Displaying his wrath is all part of his Divine revelation of himself to mankind – he is love, he is merciful, he is kind, and so on including he is full of wrath towards sin.

So, when we answer the question “saved from what?” we need to be specific – **saved from the wrath of God!**

Okay, so let's get more specific on the wrath of God and what it would mean to “not be saved from it”. To “not be saved from God's wrath” leads us right to doctrine of Hell.

**“According to recent polls, some 81 percent of adult Americans believe in Heaven, and fully 80 percent expect to go there when they die. By comparison, about 61 percent believe in Hell, but less than 1 percent think it's likely they will go there. In other words, a slight majority of Americans still believe Hell exists, but genuine fear of Hell is almost nonexistent.”**

**Ligonier Ministries**

**Martin Marty, religious historian, professor at the University of Chicago Divinity School, and critic of all things evangelical, delivered the Ingersoll Lecture on Immortality at Harvard Divinity School. The title of his message was “Hell Disappeared. No One Noticed.” Marty suggested that if evangelicals really took seriously what Scripture says about eternal punishment, someone with a voice should notice.**

In our day, even in the Christian world, there are many who have turned away from the doctrine of Hell and in any belief in it.

This sort of begs this question then, “if there is no Hell and punishment for sin, then why was Jesus punished so viciously to save his followers from something that does not exist?”.

And yet, the bible is clear – Hell does exist, and it will be populated with people who are justly deserving of all its fury.

When we answer, “saved from what?” we must start with God, who is holy, and is wholly offended by our sin.

*John 16:7 But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 8 And he, **when he comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment**; 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; 11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.*

It is hard to accept any teaching on Hell until we understand the sinfulness of our own sin. There is a sense in which we need to be sickened by our own sinfulness to fully grasp the reason for Hell.

**When we see our sin as God does, we will begin to understand why he is so angry with the sinner and his sin.**

*Matthew 5:29 “If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into Hell. 30 If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into Hell.”*

Jesus used the shock power of cutting off irreplaceable parts of your body if that would help you avoid Hell. He always presented Hell as a horrific place of intolerable suffering.

Daniel spoke of Hell like this – ***“Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.”*** (Daniel 12:2)

Disgrace and contempt – the Hebrew for contempt is a word that conveys the idea of being repulsive. The New Testament describes Hell as a place of unimaginable torment.

In Jesus’ teachings he used the city dump as a metaphor for Hell. The word for the dump was “Gehenna”. It (Gehenna) aptly describes a place of waste, a place of desolation, and a place where the refuse of life was taken never to be reclaimed.

When one is sent to Hell he is to be sentenced to an eternity of fire, stench, and every other unpleasantness.

***Matthew 8:12 “but the sons (Jews) of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”***

The lost will be cast into outer darkness – *1<sup>st</sup> John 1:5 This is the message we have heard from him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in him there is no darkness at all.*

To be in outer darkness is to be away from God, away from the light, and from any hope of ever improving your lot.

***Matthew 13:49 So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, 50 and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.***

Weeping because of the pain and suffering that will never end, and gnashing of their teeth, perhaps in anger.

Here Jesus adds fire and the horrible penetrating pain of what it would be like to be burned.

***Luke 16:24 And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.’***

Hell is dark, Hell is a place of torment by continual burning, and a place of separation from God. The rich man begged for relief and is still begging for relief to this day – but none is coming.

*Luke 16:25 But Abraham said, ‘**Child, remember** that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.*

**It is also a place of memory and regret** – the rich man in Hell was conscious and had memories of his life. There is no doubt that he also remembered his sin, and his squandered opportunities to turn from it.

### **Saved from what?**

- Torment
- Loneliness
- Darkness
- Hopelessness
- Eternal Regret
- Endless Anger
- The Knowledge of Failure for Eternity
- Ultimately, saved from God

### **Degrees of Punishment**

*Revelation 20:13 “And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, **every one of them according to their deeds.**”*

*Matthew 10:14 Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet. 15 Truly I say to you, **it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.***

*Matthew 11:22 Nevertheless I say to you, **it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.***

*Mark 12:38 In his teaching he was saying: “Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and like respectful greetings in the market places, 39 and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, 40 who devour widows’ houses, and for appearance’s sake offer long prayers; **these will receive greater condemnation.**”*

*Luke 12:47 And that slave who knew his master’s will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, **will receive many lashes,** 48 but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, **will receive but few.***

I could go on, but the clear teaching is that just as there are degrees of rewards for believers at the Bema Seat, there are degrees of punishment for the lost.

**Without degrees of punishment for sinners, how could we claim that God is just?**

*Romans 2:5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are **storing up wrath** for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6 **who will render to each person according to his deeds:***

### **False Views of Hell**

**Annihilationism** – this view holds that there is no Hell, when you die you cease to exist.

*Matthew 10:28 "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather **fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.**"*

The Greek word for "destroy" is "apollumi" - it used some 80 times in the New Testament and has a variety of meanings.

The proponents of Annihilationism use Matthew 10:28 as their proof text but look at the possible meanings from Strong's Concordance for "apollumi".

The word can mean - to destroy , to put out of the way entirely, abolish, put an end to ruin, render useless, to kill, to declare that one must be put to death, to devote or give over to eternal misery in Hell, to perish, to be lost, ruined, destroyed, to destroy, to lose.

*Revelation 14:9 "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of his anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 **And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night,**"*

*Luke 16:24 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, **for I am in agony in this flame.**'*

If those in Revelation 14 have smoke ascending from them and they are without rest day and night, what makes one believe that they will just be burned up and done away with?

The rich man in Luke 16 was in (present tense) agony, so it seems that he did not just burn up and blow away either.

***Matthew 25:46 "These will go away into eternal punishment" – and here, the meaning of "eternal" is not unclear.***

**Universalism** – there is a Hell, but Hell is only for the devil and his angels. (*Revelation 20:14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*)

Yes, Hell was created for the devil and his angels, but that does not mean it cannot contain others as well.

**Matthew 25:41** “Then he will also say to those on his left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;’”

Lucifer and his minions rebelled – then a place of judgment was prepared for them.

Then man rebelled and God will use the same place he prepared for the first sinners, for all sinners.

**Inclusivism** – some people will go to Hell, but only those who heard and rejected the gospel.

We are sure that “those who have heard and rejected the gospel” will go to Hell. But we would be on very shaky ground to say that all who have never heard go to Heaven by default.

Some food for thought that I would not teach as doctrine but would recommend that we ponder the possibilities.

**“We do know that no person can be saved except through Christ. We do not know that only those who know him can be saved by him.”**

**C.S. Lewis**

What C.S. Lewis says on its face sounds like heresy of the highest order, but I would submit to you that we all believe a version of what he said. Here is my proof that we all believe some version of

the Lewis quote when it comes to the mentally impaired and aborted babies.

The mentally impaired may never be able to understand the gospel, and the aborted will never hear it, yet we believe both groups are covered by the blood of Christ and saved.

**So, is it such an awful stretch to imagine God extending grace to those who have never heard?**

I am not asserting that he does, I am merely pointing out the obvious that the Judge of all the earth always does what is just and right.

**The mentally  
impaired.  
YES!**

**Aborted babies!  
Those who die in  
infancy.  
YES!**

**Those who  
have never  
heard?  
???**

### **Questions About Hell From an Atheist**

**Question - Why do the last 30 seconds of life matter so much?**

If an Adolph Hitler repented on his deathbed for his role in the Holocaust and accepted Jesus, some say he would go to Heaven. I think it would be more reasonable for a person to be judged on his or her lifetime actions rather than on an end-of-life belief.

**The answer is** not that it's just the last 30 seconds that matter – **the point of salvation by grace is that the last 30 seconds can matter!**

If we are not saved by grace, but by our works then, “yes, we should be judged on the sum total of our lives”.

Our problem is that the sum total of any person's life, no matter how good by our standards, is still insufficient.

**Question - What moral purpose does eternal torture serve?**

We should want to rehabilitate evildoers with the hope that they will learn from past mistakes. Even in capital punishment cases we try to execute as painlessly as possible. Why would a purportedly all good and compassionate God burn people for eternity?

**Answer - The question is understandably asked in ignorance of reality.**

The reality is that God is so far above and beyond anything that we conceive that to resist his will, to neglect his voice, and reject his calling **IS** worthy of eternal punishment.

We may not grasp it now, but God will be found to be even more glorious in punishing the sinner than he would ever be in ignoring their sin.

**Question - What happens to people who died before Jesus was born — or didn't hear of Jesus?**

If they can still go to Heaven, how does Jesus matter? If they are all condemned to Hell, how is God merciful?

**The answer here** is to say that because Revelation 13:8 tells us that Jesus was counted as “slain before the foundations of the earth”; therefore, his sacrifice can be counted **as history** before it happened **in history**.

Romans 4:3 For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

Belief in the Old Testament promises of God of a coming Messiah are counted as believing in Jesus even though they did not know his name.

**Question - If we want people to go to Heaven, shouldn't we be committing infanticide?**

Wouldn't it be a blessing to the newborn babies to kill them? Or perhaps encourage abortions, since presumably all fetuses go to Heaven?

**Answer - God does not violate his moral laws and he does not ask us to do so either – thou shalt not murder.**

To execute babies may well send them directly to Heaven, but it also eliminates the potential for that little one to grow up and glorify God in thousands of other ways.

God creates all souls with the ability to reveal him and serve mankind – killing infants aborts that potential.

**Question - Wouldn't a loving God who wants us all to go to Heaven make it unambiguously clear how to get there?**

Christians, let alone those of other faiths, disagree about what to believe or do. Faith? Good works? Some believe we were predestined for Heaven or Hell before birth, and there's absolutely nothing we can do to change it. Others say we are all given the gift of faith to accept Jesus as Savior and thus go to Heaven, but that some people refuse the gift. I didn't refuse a gift I was never given. A gift is different from a belief in a gift.

**Answer -** The way to Heaven is not ambiguous – God has spoken through creation, through his word, and through his Son.

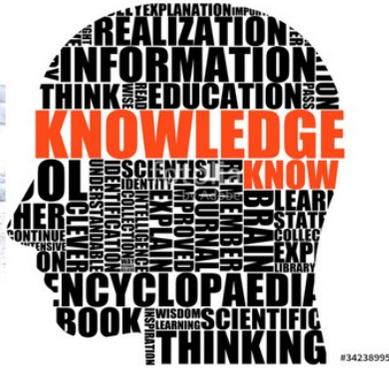
Hebrews 1:1 God, after he spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in his Son. (in person)

And he kept on speaking as the New Testament was written – the problem is not that God has not spoken, the problem is that mankind has not listened.

# Apologetics



Defend Truth



The need for Christian apologists is not new.

• Jude 1:3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. 4 For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. NKJV

## Modern Christian Apologists



Lennox



Strobel



Craig

The English word “apology” comes from a Greek word which basically means “to give a defense.” Christian apologetics, then, is the science of giving a defense of the Christian faith. There are many skeptics who doubt the existence of God and/or attack belief in the God of the Bible. There are many critics who attack the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible. There are many false teachers who promote false doctrines and deny the key truths of the Christian faith. The mission of Christian apologetics is to combat these movements and instead promote the Christian God and Christian truth.

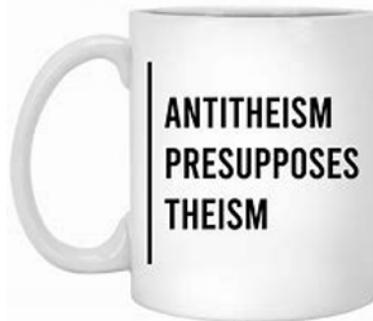
**“Apologetics is knowing what we believe, why we believe it, and being able to communicate that to others effectively.”**

**Voddie Baucham**

Literally, a reasoned response to the big questions of life that is rooted in scripture. Know what, know why, and then care enough to be able to tell others in a kind and winsome fashion.

**“Christian apologetics is the vindication of Christian truth claims and philosophy of life against the various forms of non-Christian philosophies of life.”**

**Cornelius Van Til**



*1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:13 Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;*

We are not responsible to know all the world's religions and false assumptions – we just have to know what gives hope to us.

We tend to address the need for “better behavior” through evangelism as opposed to “better belief”. Apologetics serves to address unbelief and when unbelief is turned to belief, better behaviors are realized.

**It is hard to know who God is and not turn to him for he is altogether lovely. Song of Solomon 5:16**

What has anyone ever learned of God that did not serve to elevate him in their thinking? (nothing) It would seem impossible to ever have more of God revealed, and then have him look less appealing.

So, I believe we could say that disclosing the truth about God is a very evangelistic thing to do.

We need to know what we believe and why we believe what we believe – that and no more.

It's okay if you do know more and want to know more, but the starting point for defending our faith is knowing what we believe and knowing it cold.

There are so many errors out there that no one can prepare for them all, so just prepare for what you believe. Jesus said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free”.

Remember, we are trying to give the reasons for the hope that we have.

**Getting people to ask us why we have such hope is going to be far harder than knowing what you believe.**

We sometimes get the idea that we must sneak up on people with “The Four Spiritual Laws”, or maybe something like the “The Romans Road”.

Bear in mind that Jesus did not try to maneuver the thief on the cross – he didn't even initiate a conversation with him until the thief approached Him.

The thief was ready, he asked Jesus for help and Jesus saved him – no trickery, no games, just truth.

We live in a world that is filled with knowledge, but woefully ignorant of truth. Few would admit to wanting to indoctrinate their friends, family, and acquaintances – but maybe we should.

Indoctrinate means to teach (a person or group) to accept a set of beliefs uncritically. **It would be a good thing to attempt to indoctrinate your children.**

Some of the least appreciated writings in history are the Christian creeds. By definition, a Christian creed is “a formal statement of Christian beliefs”.

The creeds were written to address heresies that had arisen in the early church around issues like the deity of Christ, the Trinity, and the virgin birth.

Today, in a sense, systematic theology has replaced the earlier creeds because there are so many more heresies around.

So again, instead of trying to understand and address all the errors in the realm of “spiritual” issues, we should just seek to know our Bibles. If I know the truth, I can identify error and point it out.

The creeds can help, systematic theology helps, but just knowing our bibles is all that we really need in terms of information.

Putting the truth to work for us and for the unbelieving, is where wisdom and reliance on the Holy Spirit come in.

**If we do our part to fill our head, the Spirit of God will fill our mouth when the time is right.**

## The Apostles Creed 140 A.D.

The Apostles Creed should give us confidence that what the early church believed is still intact.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He arose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

## The Nicene Creed 325 A.D.

The Nicene Creed, written 185 years after the Apostles Creed, tells us that what the early church believed was still intact with only an expansion of terms.

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

### What key arguments are there for God's existence?

- The bible makes no arguments for the existence of God other than to presuppose that he is – “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”.
- Everything must have a cause, and the design of the universe calls for a designer.
- Anything that is, must have a creator and Christians call the creator God, who also happens to be the only one claiming the role.
- The moral argument for God is based upon an assumption that all people are born knowing right from wrong. (Romans 2:14-16)

- Since all people “know intuitively” that murder is wrong, that knowledge had to have come from one source.
- The most logical argument for that one source is that it came from a god, who is acknowledged by roughly 85% of the world’s population. (Washington Post poll in 2012)

### **Why would a good God allow evil to exist?**

- Do not make God out to be the “bad guy” – he did not create evil, and neither did Satan.
- Evil came about as a corruption of a “good thing” (choice) - Satan set evil in motion, but he did not create it; he does not have that power.
- God has evidently chosen to allow a corruption of a good thing, rather than to rescind the good thing we call choice.
- We should also point out that because evil exists now, that is not evidence that it will always exist.
- *Hebrews 9:26b “But now, once at the end of the ages, he has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”*
- In the end there will not even be a reminder of sin’s tragic consequences. (*Isaiah 65:17 “See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.”*)

### **Why would God command the death of so many people in the Bible (e.g., the Canaanites)?**

- *Romans 2:5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6 who will render to each person according to his deeds:*
- When a person, or a people reach the point of never coming to repentance, the most merciful thing God can do is to prevent them from “stacking up judgment” upon themselves.

- God knew that point and he acted in mercy to terminate them.
- Of course, this only makes sense if there are degrees of punishment for sin.
- God could not retain his justness without varying the degrees of punishment for sinners.
- Not all sinners are equal – they are all lost, but they are not equal.

### **How can a loving God send good people to hell?**

- This one reveals a fundamental ignorance of who God is and what he did to keep people from hell.
- When One is holy, and that One gives life, suffers disobedience, and then chooses to suffer and die for the disobedient, that One can demand any terms of redemption he wants.
- Repent and live or remain in your sin and die already goes way beyond anything mankind could have ever hoped for.
- Heaven is not the default, deserved, destination of mankind.
- We are not good; we are evil in every imaginable way, and we prove it every day. (Romans 3:10 There is none righteous, no, not one.)
- So, how could a loving God send “good” people to hell? he doesn’t, all that are sent to hell are evil people.

### **Why would God need people to worship him; isn’t that egotistical and arrogant?**

- God does not “need” anyone to worship him– on the contrary, it is mankind who “needs” to worship.
- God made mankind with an innate desire to worship, and we see it manifested towards God, and towards idols when men do not know God.

- When we worship God, we, not God, benefit by being in his presence where there is light, and peace, and benefits of every sort.
- There are so many reasons to worship God that only a fool would ask “why would we bother to worship Him?”.
- *Psalm 146:5 Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God, 6 Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; Who keeps truth forever, 7 Who executes justice for the oppressed, Who gives food to the hungry. The Lord gives freedom to the prisoners. 8 The Lord opens the eyes of the blind; The Lord raises those who are bowed down; The Lord loves the righteous. 9 The Lord watches over the strangers; he relieves the fatherless and widow; But the way of the wicked he turns upside down.*

#### **Do all religions ultimately point to the same God?**

- All religions point to a God or gods, but not all point to the same God.
- There can only be one God and Christians believe in the God of the Bible because all the evidence points to Him.
- There are no other “gods” with the track record of Jehovah.
- Professors of religion love the 4 blind men and elephant analogy.
- They all have different impressions of the same entity, but all found the same entity.
- What if a 5<sup>th</sup> man, who was sighted showed up and cleared up the limited impressions of the 4 blind men?
- We call that 5<sup>th</sup> man “Special Revelation” (the Bible) because God has given us a big and accurate picture of Himself.
- And part of that accurate picture is – Isaiah 45:5 “I am the Lord there is no other”.

## What are the key passages in the Bible that show Jesus claimed to be God?

- *John 14:9 "He who has seen Me has seen the Father".*
- *John 8:58 Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." 59 Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.*
- *John 10:29 "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one."*
- *Mark 14:61 Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" 62 Jesus said, "I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."*
- *Math 26:63 But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!" 64 Jesus said to him, "It is as you said."*

## What does the Bible say about the exclusivity of Jesus regarding salvation?

- *John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."*
- *Acts 4:12 "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."*
- *John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."*
- *Acts 4:12 "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."*

### **Why did Jesus have to die on the cross for our sins to be forgiven; couldn't God have just pardoned them?**

- Evidently God could not just pardon our sins without a penalty being paid and still retain his holiness.
- It says something about the sinfulness of sin that God could not solve the problem by decree.
- He could only satisfy the just demands of his holiness and his own law by the death of an innocent one for a guilty one.
- What judge would allow someone to commit a crime and then let them go unpunished?
- Could that judge retain his standing as one who is just?
- God pardons whom he wills to pardon, but he pardons only those who have trusted in his Son, Jesus Christ who suffered sufficiently to satisfy the demands of the law.
- What if the police didn't enforce the law because they just kept forgiving everyone? Would it be safe anymore to walk the streets or sleep at night?
- No one would be safe if there were not repercussions for committing crimes (sins).
- God could not just decree the sin problem to be solved, but he would also not be loving if he overlooked sin.

### **What happens to people who have never heard the Gospel?**

- Perhaps the real question here is - How can God maintain his just status if he holds people accountable for that which they never knew?
- We need to begin with the notion that men are not owed forgiveness but are literally owed punishment for their sins.
- It is inaccurate to presuppose that men are born good, or even morally neutral.

- *Ezekiel 18:20 The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself. 21 "But if the wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed and observes all My statutes and practices justice and righteousness, he shall surely live; he shall not die. 22 All his transgressions which he has committed will not be remembered against him; because of his righteousness which he has practiced, he will live. 23 Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked," declares the Lord God, "rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?"*
- We cannot say for certain how God treats those who have never heard in a just manner.
- The safest position is to say that if they have not heard of and believed in Jesus that they are lost.
- However, being safe is not a standard for measuring truth.
- Knowing that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked and knowing that he is just may open the door for us to other considerations.
- We believe God chooses to save the pre-born, the infant, and the mentally challenged because they cannot understand.
- We should allow for the possibility that he may also save those who have never heard. We can count on the "Judge of all the earth doing the right thing". (Genesis 18:25)

**We know that no one can be saved but through Christ. We do not know that only those who know him can be saved by him.**

**C.S. Lewis**

## Justification

### What does it mean to be Justified?



**Justification by faith is a declaration by God that the believing sinner is righteous.**

**"Christ became that which he was not (sin), so that we could become that which we are not (righteous)."**

***2<sup>nd</sup> Cor 5:21 he made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.***

The believing sinner is justified when God pronounces him to be righteous. The New Testament definition from the Greek word, "dikaiow" is to declare, to pronounce one to be just, righteous.

**From Bible Gateway** - "It is the act of a judge and not of a sovereign. The law is not relaxed or set aside but is declared to be

fulfilled in the strictest sense; and so, the person justified is declared to be entitled to all the advantages and rewards arising from perfect obedience to the law.”

***Romans 3:21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in his blood through faith. This was to demonstrate his righteousness, because in the forbearance of God he passed over the sins previously committed; 26 for the demonstration, I say, of his righteousness at the present time, so that he would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.***

We are made alive spiritually when we believe in Jesus, and we are judged to be righteous in the strictest sense before the law when God pronounces us as such.

When we believe, the righteousness of Christ is added to our account. **Justification is a declarative act by God whereby he clothes us with the righteousness of Christ.**

You may have heard that to be justified is to be treated “just as if I’d never sinned”. That statement is mostly true, but justification is even better than that.

To have never sinned would make one morally neutral, but in justification we are declared to be righteous.

Romans 3:10 as it is written, “There is none righteous, not even one.

**In terms of merit, we were bankrupt spiritually before God – *Isaiah 64:6 “all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment.”***

God does what he seems to always do – what he requires of us, he supplies for us.

**“Conversion is followed by justification. While the Scriptures lay great stress on the doctrine of justification, in the course of history it became greatly perverted and practically discarded. It is the glory of the Protestant Reformation that it restored this doctrine to its rightful place. We are more or less disappointed when we search for the doctrines of regeneration and sanctification in the Reformers; these doctrines did not receive sufficient emphasis until the days of the Wesleyan Revival. But we may rejoice that the Reformation did give back to the church the fundamental doctrine of justification.”**

### **Ligonier Ministries**

The problem we face is that God is the guardian of Heaven, and he has a standard (perfection) – and then add that he is unbending in his standard.

He will accept no behaviors, no attitudes, and no intentions that are less than perfect – not one, no exceptions, under any circumstances, not ever.

The above define the problem and God’s criterion is a standard that we cannot meet, perfection.

Justification by faith is not just a New Testament doctrine, but one that was evident in the Old Testament as well. This doctrine is expanded upon and clarified in the New Testament, but it is rooted in history from the beginning.

**As for the new and old testaments, the NEW is in the OLD concealed, while the OLD is in the NEW revealed.**

***Genesis 15:6 Abram said, “O Lord God, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” 3 And Abram said, “Since You have given no***

*offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.” 4 Then behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, “This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.” 5 And he took him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And he said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” 6 Then he believed in the Lord; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness.*

Reckoned – also translated as “counted” means, “to write down in a record or ledger, and signifies crediting to one’s account, or reckoning something to someone.”

When Moses writes, “reckoned it to him as righteousness” he means that Abraham had something added to his account and that something was “righteousness”. This of course ties in with what every person who has ever lived knows intuitively – that God keeps records!

**What is amazingly profound is this – at the great white throne the unbelievers of all time will be judged by the things written in the books.**

For the Christian, at the BEMA seat judgment, there is a sense in which that same judgment takes place when we believe. The books are opened and lo and behold there is a huge reservoir of the righteousness of Christ right there in our account!

We should also focus on how Abraham acquired this righteous standing with God – the scriptures simply tell us.

***Galatians 3:6 “Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness”.***

Abraham pre-dated the Law, so he was not justified by keeping the law, he was justified by faith alone! Whether we say “reckoned”, or “counted” what we are talking about in a theological sense is imputation.

Imputed righteousness is a concept in Christian theology that proposes that the "righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers through faith; that is, treated as if it were theirs."

By attributing the righteousness of Christ to the believer's account, God declares the believer to now be what he was not, and could not be, righteous!

To be justified by the Judge of the universe is better than being found not guilty, and better than being acquitted on some technicality.

It is better than never being indicted and put on trial for your "crimes" against God – meaning that you would be free, but guilty.

**To be justified is to have the Judge pronounce you not just innocent, but righteous!**

Justification is a just act by God - Jesus fulfilled the law for us. Jesus lived in our place just as certainly as he died for us. It is as though we obeyed the law perfectly. It is a legal act secured for us by Christ.

God did not just create righteousness ex-nihilo (out of nothing) for us; the righteous acts were accomplished and then given to us.

***Romans 3:25 This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.***

For the benefit of man God is said to have "passed over" sins in the Old Testament waiting for the time of Messiah, and now that Messiah has come there is no need to use "passed over" for our sins have "passed away".

The truth is that he never actually “passed over” sins, but he merely appeared to as he waited for history to catch up with his plan.

God is just; therefore, all sins must be punished, every one of them with no exceptions. Since Jesus suffered for all the sins of all time, God can now retain his just status as he justifies the sinner.

Martin Luther said, “Thus, salvation must come from outside of us, or, to use the Latin, salvation must come extra nos. Any hope of standing before God must come from somewhere else to us.”

As a general principle, nothing good comes from within us.

***Mark 7:20 And he was saying, “That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, 22 deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. 23 All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.”***

**Clothed in the righteousness of Christ** – Galatians 3:27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

**Banking metaphor** - we were completely devoid of anything that would commend us to God. But Christ made a deposit in our account (joint heirs).

**Courtroom** – The Revelation 20:12 phrase, “*the books were opened*” does not terrify us because if it were to happen to us, we know our sins are gone and the righteousness of Christ is present.

**Salvation through faith alone** - is the only method ever used to save mankind, and from the beginning, justification by faith alone was connected to salvation.

Just as no one was saved other than by believing in Messiah, even though the OT saint did not know his name, no one was ever justified by any means other than faith in Messiah either.

So how do we distinguish between salvation and justification?

Salvation is the whole of all that God does for the believing sinner. (soteriology)

What appears below is not an exhaustive list of all that God does for the believer, but it has at least the major activities of grace.

**In Christ, we have been predestined, called, justified, and glorified AND all the while we are also being more and more sanctified.**

God's redemption plan provided for the salvation of our souls and for all the other things that come with it.

***Romans 8:29-30 is referred to by some theologians as "the golden chain" of redemption. Justification is a part of the chain.***

***Romans 8:29 For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to become conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30 and these whom he predestined, he also called; and these whom he called, he also justified; and these whom he justified, he also glorified.***

So how do we distinguish between salvation and justification?

The only distinction necessary is to say that justification is one of several major spiritual benefits that are given to us in our salvation.

One cannot be saved without being justified, and one cannot be justified without being saved.

When Paul wrote his epistle to the church in Galatia, he was addressing a dangerous breach in the teaching in their church. This is the one epistle that Paul wrote with his own hand because

he wanted desperately to make his message and warning crystal clear. (giant letters) The church at Galatia had been infected by a false gospel and throughout the history of the church we see they were not the last.

To this day there are attacks on the doctrine of justification by faith on organized, and on not so organized fronts. The measure is this - any teaching that proclaims a way to salvation by any means other than by faith in Christ alone is heresy.

The attacks come in many forms - from the Catholic church to the unchurched, we see the proclamation of the doctrine of justification by works.

Why do I cite the Catholic church? Because the Catholic church still believes that salvation is through Jesus AND the sacraments, and baptism, and by confessing your sins to a priest.

There was a similar problem in the church at Galatia – the Jews sought to ADD to Jesus by saying that one should believe in Jesus AND keep the law.

Anytime you hear anything added to faith in Christ for salvation, you are listening to a damnable heresy.

*Galatians 1:6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; 7 which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!*

The reason for so many attacks on this doctrine is because it is the cornerstone of Christian doctrine.

We have nothing of value to say to the world if we are wrong on justification by faith because everything else we believe rests on this most profound truth. The protestant reformation was born by the impact of this doctrine on Martin Luther.

***Galatians 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. 24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.***

What the Catholic church has codified appears in many forms in the protestant church and even in our evangelical churches. We often see things added to Christ for one to claim to be saved or be in good standing with Him.

- Christ AND refraining from a list of worldly behaviors.
- Christ AND only reading a certain translation of the Bible.
- Christ AND keeping the Jewish feasts.
- Christ AND keeping the Old Testament law.
- Christ AND speaking in tongues by some fringe groups.

**If you add anything to Jesus for salvation you are no longer being true to Jesus and his scriptures.**

Justification is always accompanied by sanctification, but they are separate works of God done in the believing sinner.

**Justification is immediate** – when God declares one to be righteous (just), that one will never be more righteous than they are the day they come to Christ.

**Sanctification is both immediate and progressive.**

**Sanctification happens at salvation** – *1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 6:11 Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.*

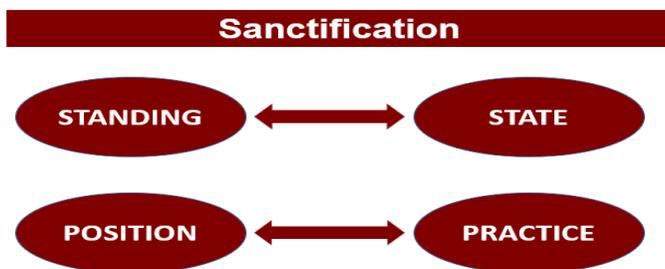
**Sanctification is progressive** – *Philippians 3:12 Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

In our **standing and position**, we are immovable in that our acquired righteousness in Christ is complete from the start and never changes.

However, in our **state and practice**, we vary far more than we want to admit – our walk progresses, or regresses based upon our obedience. Paul confessed as much in the Philippians passage above.

When we are saved, we are made holy in the sight of God through Justification. At the same time, we are sanctified (set apart for God’s purposes) and we become as holy as we will ever be in our **position** before God. Our **practice**, on the other hand, will waiver from day to day based upon our cooperation with the Holy Spirit as he leads us to obedience to Christ. This is also illustrated with the words “**standing**” and “**state**’.

Whether you choose position and practice OR standing and state to describe your condition before God is irrelevant. What is not just relevant, but critical, is that we understand our position and standing NEVER change, but practice and state do.



In Galatians 3, a chapter that focuses on justification by faith alone, the word faith appears 21 times in 29 verses.

Often when saints have doubts about their salvation, meaning they lack assurance, it is because we forget that our security does not rest in our performance.

Our security in Christ rests solely in the performance of Christ and not at all in my works whether prior to believing, or after believing.

We would all agree that it would be terrible theology to say that we were saved by grace, but then kept by works. And yet, that is how many Christians spend their lives.

***Galatians 3:1 You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? 2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?***

For all who have doubts about your salvation, or for those who struggle with the assurance of your salvation.

To have doubts is not at all unusual – the very fact that you are concerned is at least some evidence that your faith is real.

The unregenerate person does not fret over the validity of their faith in Christ – not for a moment.

Ask yourself a couple of questions – questions that will be easy to answer if you've been born again. Questions about the things that you will want to be true of you.

**Do you love Him? Do you want him to love you? Do you have a desire to know him? Do you want to obey Him?**

**If you answer “yes” to those questions I would have great confidence that you are saved.**

Of course, answering YES to those questions does not save you, but only a believer could honestly answer yes to them.

We often make the mistake of looking at our sins and conclude that God couldn't possibly want fellowship with a wretch like me.

Take heart, the apostle Paul confessed that he wasn't what he ought to be, yet he was the greatest expositor of justification by faith the world has ever known.

When Paul confesses in Romans 7 that he doesn't do the things that he should, and does do the things that he shouldn't, he is not telling us that he wasn't saved.

He is telling us that his salvation, in a saving sense, had nothing to do with his works or his sin! We should take God at his word when he says that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone!

**John 21 – in the exchange between Jesus and Peter where Jesus asked three times, “do you love me?”.**

He didn't ask Peter how he was performing – he was really asking, “Peter, how do you want to perform?”, for that is the big question that reveals what is in our hearts.

**Measure the genuineness of your faith by your desires, and not by your performance.**

*1<sup>st</sup> John 2:3 By this we know that **we have come to know Him, if we keep his commandments**. 4 The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but **whoever keeps his word**, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:*

The above verses, if the English were taken at face value, would crush all our hopes that we are saved.

**The English word “keep” in the passage is the Greek word “tereo” (tay-ray-oh) and to say that it means the same as the English word “keep” is to stretch it too far. The word “keep” in these verses should be understood as something like, “to guard with your eye”.**

What John is telling us is this – if you are living your life with an eye to what God says about how you ought to live, then you are “keeping” the commandments because you have your eye on them. If you are making honest, sincere, continuous efforts to align your life with the word of God, then you are meeting the criteria for knowing him that John writes about.

***Galatians 3:6 “Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness”. (justified by faith)***

## Money

***Luke 21:1 Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, 2 and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. 3 And he said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. 4 For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."***

The above is among the most abused texts on giving that we have – it is not saying what many think it says.

Jesus is in the last week of his life, he has made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and he has just cleansed the temple for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time.

He is being quizzed by the Pharisees and the Sadducees in an effort by them to trip him up – he answers all their questions and rebukes them with his answers.

Right after the “widows’ mites” text he is going to speak of the coming judgment on Israel and the destruction of the very temple where the widow was giving her offering.

So, one must ask – why amid these very somber prophecies, his cleansing of the temple, and the mentions of coming judgment, why Luke includes the account of the widows’ mites?

It seems like giving would not be on his mind and it wasn’t, at least not in the sense that many think.

When Jesus sees the widow casting into the treasury her last two coins he is angered and will use the scene to rebuke those who had corrupted Judaism.

***Luke 20:46 “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, 47***

***who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."***

Those who were benefitting from the temple treasury offerings were shaming the poor into giving more so their temple masters might prosper.

In Jesus' remarks about the widow, he makes none of the usual points made when this text is preached. He doesn't say we should give everything we have – that would be foolish and irresponsible. He doesn't even approve of her throwing in her last two coins – he mentions it but does not in any way approve of it.

The story of the "widow's mites" was a commentary on the deceitful, wicked, corrupt system of Judaism.

He is in the midst of pronouncing judgment on Israel and the poor widow was exhibit A in his case against his own countrymen.

***Proverbs 21:13 Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered.***

**When the billionaire John D. Rockefeller died someone asked, "how much did he leave to his heirs?"**

**– and the answer was "all of it".**

**We must, by necessity, begin any study of handling our money in a Godly way by recognizing that all that I have has been loaned to me by God and ultimately, He owns it all.**

**(what did I do with what I was given?)**

**96% of Americans  
have charitable giving  
of less than 10%.**

**The evangelical church  
is not much better.**

## **Why do we tend to avoid teaching on giving?**

*1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 29:12 Wealth and honor come from you alone, for you rule over everything. Power and might are in your hand, and at your discretion people are made great and given strength. 13 “O our God, we thank you and praise your glorious name! 14 But who am I, and who are my people, that we could give anything to you? Everything we have has come from you, and we give you only what you first gave us! 15 We are here for only a moment, visitors and strangers in the land as our ancestors were before us. Our days on earth are like a passing shadow, gone so soon without a trace. 16 “O Lord our God, even this material we have gathered to build a Temple to honor your holy name comes from you! It all belongs to you!”*

American believers hold 70% of the world’s wealth that is in the hands of Christians. There are many more Christians in Asia, Africa, and South America than in the United States, but few of those hold the wealth that we do.

When the scriptures speak of the “rich” – we should note that by global standards we are all the “rich”.

### **Tithing**

A tithe simply means a tenth – a tithe is not the same as free will offerings. The Old Testament Israelite had three tithes (paid over 3 years) that netted out to about 23% annually.

An annual tithe to fund their theocracy, an annual tithe to fund the feasts, the priests and the Levites, and then every third year a tithe to take care of the poor.

The Old Testament Jew was encouraged to give free will offerings – ***Proverbs 3:9 Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops.***

Free will offerings are mentioned in Leviticus 23:38 where we read, "and all the freewill offerings you give to the Lord."

The Old Testament Jew was required to pay his tithe(s) and to give freely beyond that as they were able or as they were led. In the New Testament both Jesus and Paul say that we are to pay our taxes – that corresponds to one of the Jewish tithes where they were required to fund their government, their theocracy.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> tithe the Old Testament Jew was to pay went to fund their spiritual leaders – this corresponds to our pastors, missionaries, etc....

The 3<sup>rd</sup> tithe the Old Testament Jew was to pay went to help the poor – what was prescribed for them is also taught for us the book of James in chapter 2.

**Are we, as believers in the New Testament era required to tithe?**

No, but we are commanded to give. If God required 23.3% from the poorest Israelite, how much does he require from his people living in the most affluent culture in history?

**Do we really want to stand before Christ and explain our stinginess?**

The New Testament does not forbid tithing – in fact it affirms it, but not as a requirement.

***Matthew 23:23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the***

***weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.***

Tithing should be the “floor” for our giving and says something about our priorities.

If the Old Testament Jew was required to fund those who were dedicated to full time spiritual service, then surely, we can do the same voluntarily.

***1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:11 If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? 12 If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more.***

We are not required to tithe, but what we give to the Lord's work says something about the condition of our heart.

Remember the widow and her mite – we ought not to measure our giving by how much we give, but by how much we keep.

***Luke 21:1 And he looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. 2 And he saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins. 3 And he said, “Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; 4 for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on.”***

Today's average professing Christian gives 2.6% of their income to their local church. The younger the American church goer, the less they give. (not just in real numbers, but in percentage as well)

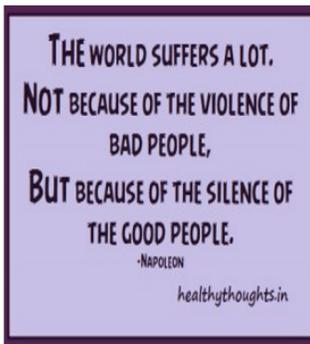
In the next 50 years, roughly 100 trillion dollars will pass from today's generation to the next generation who gives even less than 2.6%. (do you see where this goes?)

25,000 children die every day from malnutrition and preventable diseases that money could solve.

*Proverbs 19:17 he who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and he will pay back what he has given.*

*James 2:15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?*

*1<sup>st</sup> John 3:17 But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?*



**The BIG question is this – am I doing anything at all to alleviate suffering in the world?**

## **Money, Possessions and Eternity**

**By Randy Alcorn**

**What follows is a series of quotes and bits of wisdom from Randy Alcorn's book "Money, Possessions and Eternity".**

*"Abundance isn't God's provision for me to live in luxury. It's his provision for me to help others live. God entrusts me with his money not to build my kingdom on earth, but to build his kingdom in heaven."*

**Randy Alcorn**

In fact, abundance is very much like a thermometer in that it reveals our perspective on money. If my wealth is used to serve only me, I will have a long time to regret mismanaging that which God supplied.

***“God comes right out and tells us why he gives us more money than we need. It's not so we can find more ways to spend it. It's not so we can indulge ourselves and spoil our children. It's not so we can insulate ourselves from needing God's provision. It's so we can give and give generously”***

**Randy Alcorn**

*2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8:14 Right now you have plenty and can help those who are in need. Later, they will have plenty and can share with you when you need it.*

***“Too often we assume that God has increased our income to increase our standard of living, when his stated purpose is to increase our standard of giving.”***

**Randy Alcorn**

And here is where many Christians struggle – how do I know when helping others is not helpful? (am I just enabling someone to stay where they are?)

And some Christians struggle with the temptation to be stingy and rationalize it by saying “I worked for it, and they didn’t”.

***“Are we truly obeying the command to love our neighbor as ourselves if we're storing up money for potential future needs when our neighbor is laboring today under actual present needs?”***

**Randy Alcorn**

If we really love our neighbors as ourselves, would we not seek to help them meet their needs with the resources God has supplied?

*James 2:15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?*

***"When I save, I lay something aside for future need. If I sense God's leading, I will give it away to meet greater needs. When I hoard, I'm unwilling to part with what I've saved to meet others' needs, because my possible future needs outweigh their actual present needs. I fail to love my neighbor as myself."***

**Randy Alcorn**

There is a difference between saving for my own future needs and hoarding for the sake of seeing how much I can accumulate.

Or even worse, hoarding as my means of seeking financial security instead of trusting God.

***"..tithing isn't something I do to clear my conscience so I can do whatever I want with the 90 percent--it also belongs to God! I must seek his direction and permission for whatever I do with the full amount. I may discover that God has different ideas than I do."***

**Randy Alcorn**

Being constantly open to giving to others is a discipline for us to develop. Verify the need, assess your capacity to meet it, and ask for God's direction. It will be hard to go wrong being generous.

***"...if I try to make only enough money for my family' immediate needs, it may violate Scripture. ...Even though earning just enough to meet the needs of my family may seem nonmaterialistic, it's actually selfish when I could earn enough to care for others as well."***

**Randy Alcorn**

Some are blessed to be rich, and others are cursed to be so – which category we fall into is up to us. There is accountability for what we did with what he had. 😊

***“If we were to gain God's perspective, even for a moment, and were to look at the way we go through life accumulating and hoarding and displaying our things, we would have the same feelings of horror and pity that any sane person has when he views people in an asylum endlessly beating their heads against the wall.”***

**Randy Alcorn**

Think about the truth of the above – what the onlooker sees instantly as incredibly stupid and short sighted, those in the fray are obviously repeating as though their actions are normal.

***“What you do with your resources in this life is your autobiography.”***

**Randy Alcorn**

**At your funeral what do you want those who attend to say?**

- “She was rich and had it all”, or
- “She was generous and gave it all”?

While both statements above are extremes, which one would you want to own in eternity?

***“A disciple does not ask, ‘How much can I keep?’ but, ‘How much more can I give?’ Whenever we start to get comfortable with our level of giving, it's time to raise it again.”***

**Randy Alcorn**

The trap of the “trappings of this world” is always baited and set for us to fall into. The problem with the “trappings” trap is that it is so comfortable that we do not feel immediate pain – that will come later.

***“Someday this upside-down world will be turned right side up. Nothing in all eternity will turn it back again. If we are wise, we will use our brief lives on earth positioning ourselves for the turn.”***

**Randy Alcorn**

We are disciples of one who did not have a place to lay his head, never owned the best of anything, and rejected the “things” of the “good life”.

Surely Jesus was perfect at this because he could see life through an eternal lens. We desperately need that lens!

***“If economic catastrophe does come, will it be a time that draws Christians together to share every resource we have, or will it drive us apart to hide in our own basements or mountain retreats, guarding at gunpoint our private stores from others?”***

**Randy Alcorn**

There are those preparing to survive doomsday in our midst and some of them are Christians.

Would you really eat your C Rations and drink your bottled water while your neighbors starve?

***“Christians are God's delivery people, through whom he does his giving to a needy world. We are conduits of God's grace to others. Our eternal investment portfolio should be full of the most strategic kingdom-building projects to which we can disburse God's funds.”***

**Randy Alcorn**

When we have extra, however you define extra, we should be open to giving it away to someone or some cause that builds the kingdom. No hearse was ever seen pulling a U-Haul. 😊

**A new thought perhaps – that of looking at our giving as our investments.**

- How often have you looked at your 401K or some other financial investment just to see how it is doing?
- How often have we considered the dividends that our kingdom investments are accumulating?

*Matthew 6:19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; 21 for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

**There are two commands in Jesus’ words above as to what to “store up”, and where to do our “storing up”.**

As it turns out, there is no mysterious meaning to the Greek words translated as “store up” – it means what you think it means.

The Greek word is “thay-sow-rid’-zo” and it means - to amass or reserve (literally or figuratively), lay up (treasure), (keep) in store, (heap) treasure.

So apparently, it is not only okay with Jesus that we amass some stuff, but it is commanded by Him.

The key difference between the two commands is in where (and why) we store up our stuff.

If earthly treasures rust, become moth eaten, and may well be stolen then the earth is not the best place to store the things we acquire.

On the other hand, treasures stored up in heaven are protected from all the risks that come with investments that are stored here.

There actually is a “doctrine of eternal rewards” and God wants to reward us. We should want treasures in heaven for they are the rewards of faithful service and faithful giving.

God would be disappointed if we were not looking forward to our rewards and our time with Him. Eternal rewards are God’s idea, and it gives him great pleasure to reward and fellowship with his children.

**“A life well lived will see aging as movement towards his real treasures in heaven, as opposed to seeing aging as moving away from our treasures.”**

**Randy Alcorn**

Many older Americans fear running out of money and become less generous when they should be adding to their eternal rewards which are closer than ever before.

**The attitude should not be that I am running out of money, but one of “I am running to my eternal reward”.**

The real challenge that Jesus cites is that we cannot see, at this time, any treasures that we lay up in heaven.

In his book on money, Randy Alcorn says this, ***“Don’t lay up treasures here because things have mass, and mass has gravity, and gravity holds us to the earth.”***

Remember the man that Jesus spoke of who had so many possessions that he had to tear down his existing barns and build bigger ones?

***Luke 12:15 Then he said to them, “Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.” 16 And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man was very productive. 17 And he began reasoning to himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?’ 18 Then he***

***said, ‘This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.”’ 20 But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’ 21 So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”***

The problem with the man with so much that he had to build bigger barns is found in his own words, ““Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.”

**“Many years” is far, far different from eternity – in fact “many years” is but a blip on eternity’s radar screen.**

Apparently, he never looked far enough ahead to see what is so obvious to most – that death looms over us.

***2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8:1 Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, 2 that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.***

The New Living Translation renders that last phrase as ***“which has overflowed in rich generosity.”***

The Corinthian church, amid all their problems and contentions, though they were poor they were very generous in their giving to the furtherance of the gospel.

***2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8:3 For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will. 4 They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem.***

These believers gave “far more” than they could afford which begs the question, “how much can I afford to give away?”. I think the answer may be that we can’t afford to give less than what God prompts us to give.

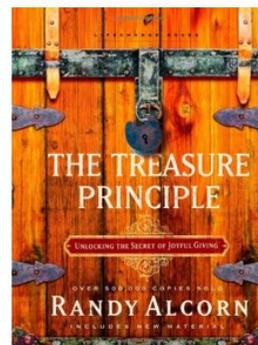
***2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 9:13 For your generosity to them and to all believers will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ. 14 And they will pray for you with deep affection because of the overflowing grace God has given to you.***

There is a connection between how much grace we recognize we have received, and how generous we are. If we are grateful for the grace of God extended to us, we will give generously.

***Matthew 6:1 Watch out! Don’t do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. 2 When you give to someone in need, don’t do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. 3 But when you give to someone in need, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. 4 Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.***

Make all your giving about God, and not us, so that any glory derived from the giving goes to God.

**In his book, *The Treasure Principle*, Randy Alcorn lays out 6 keys for how Christians ought to relate to money.**



## The 6 Treasure Principles:

- **God owns everything; I'm his money manager.**
  - We are the managers of the assets God has entrusted, not given, to us.
- **My heart always goes where I put God's money.**
  - Watch what happens when you reallocate your money from temporal things to eternal things.
- **Heaven—the New Earth, not the present one—is my home.**
  - We are citizens of "a better country—a heavenly one". Hebrews 11:16
- **I should live today not for the dot, but for the line.**
  - From the dot, our present life on earth, extends a line that goes on forever, which is eternity in Heaven.
- **Giving is the only antidote to Materialism.**
  - Giving is a joyful surrender to a greater person and a greater agenda. It dethrones me and exalts Him.
- **God prospers me not to raise my standard of living, but to raise my standard of giving.**
  - God gives us more money than we need so we can give—generously.

***1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:10 For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.***

One of the most misquoted scriptures is the above when it is claimed “money is the root of all evil” – no, it is “the love” of money that is the root of all “kinds” of evil.

Notice too, that the love of money is not even the root of all evil, but of various “kinds” (types) of evil. The original sin had nothing to do with money and David’s sin with Bathsheba had nothing to do with money.

What Paul was telling Timothy was that out of the quest to be wealthy springs various types (kinds) of evil. Theft, murder, greed, lust, betrayal, and, and, and.....

## Pain and Suffering

*2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer person is decaying, yet our inner person is being renewed day by day. 17 For our momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

**Has it ever occurred to you that  
God seems to have little or no  
interest in your temporal  
comforts?**

**“When souls become wicked, they will certainly use this possibility to hurt one another; and this, perhaps, accounts for four-fifths of the sufferings of men. It is men, not God, who have produced racks, whips, prisons, slavery, guns, bayonets, and bombs; it is by human avarice or human stupidity, not by the churlishness of nature, that we have poverty and overwork. But there remains, none the less, much suffering which cannot thus be traced to ourselves. Even if all suffering were man-made, we should like to know the reason for the enormous permission to torture their fellows which God gives to the worst of men.”**

**C.S. Lewis**

“Or think of Rwanda in the last decade of the past century, where 800,000 people were hacked to death in one hundred days! How did God react to the carnage? By doting on the perpetrators in a

grandfatherly fashion? By refusing to condemn the bloodbath but instead affirming the perpetrators' basic goodness? Wasn't God fiercely angry with them? Though I used to complain about the indecency of the idea of God's wrath, I came to think that I would have to rebel against a God who wasn't wrathful at the sight of the world's evil. God isn't wrathful in spite of being love. God is wrathful because God is love."

Miroslav Volf

**1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:12 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. 14 If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.**

Suffering is common to all of mankind and suffering as a Christian is both common and uncommon.

It is common because it visits all people for no other reason than the fact that we live in a world that is cursed by sin, and at odds with God.

And it is uncommon because of all the paths our lives could be on, when our association with Christ brings us pain, we prove we are in an uncommon place.

Indeed, we ought to gain assurance that we belong to him if we are called to suffer with him because "the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you".

### **Why does God allow pain and suffering?**

God knows all things that will happen before they happen, and he has the power to stop them. You could say that to the extent that he could stop evil, but doesn't, he ordains our suffering.

***Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.***

Indeed, if suffering and pain were random and out of God's control, how scary would that be!

That is not to say that God causes all pain and suffering – it is to say that he is always God and does not allow random things in the Christian's life. No matter how horrible, painful, or devastating, nothing happens to the believer that God does not permit.

**Pain and suffering exist because mankind corrupted a good creation of God – moral choice.**

While God could stop all pain and suffering in an instant, he doesn't because it is evidently necessary for us to experience the weight of the consequences of sin.

If all pain and suffering were to cease, only the righteous would seek God and there are none of those.

And it gets worse, if there were no consequences for sin then mankind would live forever in a fallen and exceedingly miserable state. (almost a definition of hell)

This was the concern of God in Genesis 3:22 *"Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"*.

It is not actually pain and suffering that makes a life miserable, it is sin that is the real misery maker. So had God not intervened and barred the way to the tree of life, mankind would be worse off than we are now! Even though mankind could live forever in a fallen state, we would be in a constant state of perfecting our sin and with that, increasing our misery.

How often have we looked at our world and wondered how people can mistreat others in the ways that they do?

Below is but one example of how bad things would be for humans if left to live forever on the earth in our sin.

***1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 16:14 Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord terrorized him.***

Demons are more powerful than humans and since they too are evil, they would perfect their evil on the weaker species.

God allowed sin to enter the universe and he allows it to persist so that he is glorified. His glory is at the top of the totem pole of things in the universe that matter!

We would not know forgiveness, redemption, grace, mercy, adoption, and many other aspects of God were it not for the fall and the sin that resulted.

### **What About Personal Pain and Suffering?**

**“Now God, who has made us, knows what we are and that our happiness lies in Him. Yet we will not seek it in Him as long as He leaves us any other resort where it can even plausibly be looked for. While what we call ‘our own life’ remains agreeable we will not surrender it to Him. What then can God do in our interests but make ‘our own life’ less agreeable to us, and take away the plausible source of false happiness?”**

**C.S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain**

Thank God we have the book of Job to let us know with no equivocation that God’s people, even the godliest among us, suffer in this world.

***John 16:33 “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”***

Job was never told the reason for his suffering – surely, he knows now, but he didn’t ever know in the flesh.

Imagine being Job after his testing was over – he looks back, he remembers the pain, but he never knew why. Yet, there is no mention of Job doing anything that would give us reason to believe he was bitter.

***Job 42:1 Then Job answered the Lord and said: 2 “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. 3 ‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 4 ‘Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to me.’ 5 I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; 6 therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”***

***2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12:7 Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! 8 Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. 9 And he has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.***

Notice this phrase, “to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me”.

Paul is clear that his “thorn” was a gift, albeit a painful one, whose purpose was to humble and “torment” him. The messenger was from Satan, but the gift was from God. Satan would have no interest in humbling Paul.

**God uses suffering to show us our faith** – when we go through pain and suffering do we blame God, or worship Him?

Do we effectively say to God, “my comfort is more important than your glory” and sulk?

Do we get angry at God for not using his power to relieve our pain, or do we look to draw near to him?

**God uses suffering to Humble us** – this is exactly what Paul said.

*2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12:7 “there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!”*

Pain doesn’t just show up in our lives for no reason. It’s often a sign that something needs to change.

**God uses suffering to show his power** – too often it is only when we come to the end of ourselves that we fully trust Him.

*2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12:10 “Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong”.*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12:9 And he has said to me, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.”*

**This is God's universal purpose for all Christian suffering: more contentment in God and less satisfaction in the world.**

- John Piper

***Isaiah 43:2 "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you."***

It's not that the pains of this life will not afflict us, but that they will not overcome us. The One who has promised to "never leave us or forsake us" is as good as his word.

Count it as a profound honor if God allows you to suffer for him because it's proof he is at work in your life. A test perhaps of our love for him and our resolve to serve him can be seen in our pain.

**When in pain, do we cease serving, or do we press on?**

Don't see the tragedy - see the sovereignty and love of God in what he allows in your life.

**God is often amid our pain to teach us to lean on Him.**

***2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. 17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.***

***Matthew 16:24 "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"***

The cross was an instrument of torture and death, yet Jesus says if we want to follow him, we should expect a cross. Not health, wealth, and comfort ..... a cross!

It has been argued by philosophers that since evil exists in the world God cannot be both "good and great". (Remember the child's prayer of God is great, God is good, let us thank him....)

They would say that a good God who is also great could and would eradicate evil. And since evil exists, either God is not good, or he is not great, or perhaps he is not at all.

### **Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?**

They don't because there are no "good people". Relatively good, yes. Good by God's standards, no.

Perhaps the real question is why do bad things happen to Christians? Could it be because God is seeing to it that we grow?

Bad things do happen to Christians – in fact, everyday lots of bad things happen to believers in Jesus. It is simply a part of the human condition as we live in a fallen world among fallen people.

***2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our affliction ....***

An underlying assumption is that God is morally obligated to give only blessings to his rebellious creation.

If God only blessed sinful mankind (saved and lost) then we might argue that he is not good. Would it not be sound, logically and in every other way, that if God is good, he cannot keep his own from the consequences of their sin?

What if Jesus promised you personally that he would not allow anything bad to happen to you from this day forward? And what if he promised every unsaved person that only bad things will happen to them the rest of their lives?

**In a sense God has already made the promises above!**

Everything that happens to the believer will be good, and everything that happens to the unbeliever will be bad. (it's just a matter of timing)

The proximate and ultimate – the proximate is that which is near and temporal, the ultimate is that which is lasting and eternal. In this world we deal with sinful and tainted proximate things every day.

For the unsaved, everything serves to ultimately condemn them because their guilt is increased.

There are lots of things in the proximate realm that are bad, but for the saved person God causes such things to redound to their benefit.

***Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.***

As we look at our world and the problems of pain, suffering, and evil we can see how God will remedy the problem in an Old Testament scripture.

In Sodom & Gomorrah we can see God's pattern – it was said of these cities that "their sin is exceedingly grave". Much like Noah's day and our day, any fair-minded person would conclude that judgment should fall.

And we know that in Noah's day and in Genesis 18 (Sodom), God's judgment did fall. But in each case, God's judgment did not fall until the righteous were "saved" out and from the judgment.

If you recall the conversation between Abraham and God, it became evident that God would not judge the righteous with the wicked.

Abraham, "Will you destroy the righteous with the wicked?"

Under most conditions, we would all say, "no it would be unjust of God to do so". There was never really a possibility that God would destroy the righteous with the guilty.

After Abraham assessed his question he comes to this conclusion – “shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” The offer of God – if Abraham could find just 10 righteous people, he would not destroy the city.

So, while God will not destroy the righteous with the wicked, he will have mercy on the wicked for the sake of the righteous. (this is where we live now!)

God is redeeming all things in the proximate realm to work for us in the ultimate realm.

On the other hand, for the unsaved, pain is just as painful and more because those painful experiences are not working for their ultimate good.

**When it comes to the “problem” of evil, God has it all worked out, and in the end, justice will prevail.**

God is interested in our ultimate good and he will see to it that our proximate circumstances shape our ultimate good.

For the believer cancer is always cured, MS is always taken away, and loneliness ceases to exist. (not necessarily now, but in his time) God will redeem all suffering and any suffering for him will not be for nothing. (count it all joy!)

### **Why am I in Pain?**

#### **The law of sowing and reaping.**

- *Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.*
- Spend your life smoking, drinking, using drugs, overeating, or consuming too much sugar, and you should not think it an odd thing to reap what you’ve sown.

### **God's discipline.**

- *Hebrews 12:5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 6 For whom the Lord loves he chastens, And scourges every son whom he receives."*
- Yes, if we backslide into sin, we should expect corrective action from our Father.

### **For God's glory. (Job and Paul)**

- *John 9:3 Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him."*
- When you hurt, and cannot find a reason, chances are that you are suffering so that God can be seen.

### **Harm from others. There is so much evil because there are so many evil people.**

- Person on person violence is the cause for some 80% of the suffering in the world today.
- 9/11/2001, Rwanda, the Holocaust, Stalin's gulags, the Killing Fields in Cambodia, the Crusades, the streets of Chicago, and so on ....

### **Sometimes, perhaps many times, the case will be such that you find no reason for your pain.**

- It's not unconfessed sin, it's not something you are reaping from a sinful seed, it's just there for no apparent reason.
- At some point, when all hope of relief is gone, we just need to have a mindset that says, "I will press on".

At some point we must embrace our role as one who is called to serve Christ "in" our suffering. We need to believe and embrace "*My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in*

*weakness.*” To honor Christ, we must press on – we can do no other.

**Annie Johnson Flint has a tremendous life story that is filled with suffering, sadness, and enough humiliation to last several lifetimes, yet she pressed on to write many, many hymns and poems to show her love for Christ.**

**Perhaps her most famous hymn reflects on her own pain and struggles as bit by bit her mobility decreased and strength waned.**

### **He Giveth More Grace**

- 1. He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,  
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase;  
To added afflictions he addeth his mercy,  
To multiplied trials, his multiplied peace.**
- 2. When we have exhausted our store of endurance,  
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,  
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources  
Our Father’s full giving is only begun.**
- 3. Fear not that thy need shall exceed his provision,  
Our God ever yearns his resources to share;  
Lean hard on the arm everlasting, availing;  
The Father both thee and thy load will upbear.**
- 4. His love has no limits, his grace has no measure,  
His power no boundary known unto men;  
For out of his infinite riches in Jesus  
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.**

## He Giveth More Grace – Annie Flint

**Annie Johnson Flint**

**Orphaned twice in life, first by her birth parents, and then by her adopted parents.**

**She spent most of her adult life confined to a wheel chair with arthritis so bad that she could not walk or care for herself.**



# Prayer Part 1

## First Things on Prayer

**2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 1:8** For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; 9 indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; 10 who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us, 11 you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many. NASB

**At this point in my life my prayers have been simplified to phrases like .....**

- **God help me.**
- **God teach me.**
- **God change me.**
- **God forgive me.**
- **God cleanse me.**
- **Fill me, use me!**



I have never met a Christian who thinks they pray enough, read their bible enough, worship enough, and so on .....

If that is your perspective on yourself, do not spend more time beating yourself up over your deficiencies than you do praying, reading, and worshipping.

***Ecclesiastes 5:2*** ***Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; therefore let your words be few.***

We need to be fully aware of who God is, and who we are - he is God, and we are not. There should be no misunderstanding in our thinking or attitude as to the great gap between us and the one to whom we are praying.

The God to whom we pray is the sovereign of the universe – there is no one and no thing that is higher, wiser, or more powerful than him.

He is the creator and sustainer of life – he alone is the one who hears and answers prayer.

We are sinful in nature and practice and, apart from Christ, we have no legitimate claim to even approach him.

We dare not come to God with our formulas, with our assumptions that he is obligated to answer our prayers, or with anything that we think is leverage. (I've heard health and wealth types say, "just place your order".)

One of the bravest and most faith filled prayers we can offer is the prayer that comes with the attitude that whatever God wants for me is what I want for me.

**Maybe even pray, "Help me to want what You want"!**

**Psalm 37:4 Delight yourself in the Lord; and  
He will give you the desires of your heart.  
NASB**

We would be wise to pray prayers that focus on the things Jesus said are important.

- Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done.
- Prayers that focus on his name, his kingdom, and his will carry weight far beyond God finding a parking space for us so that our schedule is not taxed.

The bigger our prayers the more the focus is on his name, his kingdom, and his will. This is not to say that our needs for food, protection, and the like are not important to us, or to God.

It is to say that by comparison, our temporal needs are very small. (The eternal should always trump the temporal.)

### What is Prayer?

**The most basic definition of what it is to pray is to say it is communication with God.**

What I find most interesting is that while we may ask for a definition of prayer, we already know what it is. On one level it is no more complicated than what a baby does intuitively upon birth; they cry out.

We ought not to measure our prayers by the quality and eloquence of our words, but by how sincere are the cries of our hearts.

If God is who we think he is, then the words we use in our prayers are almost irrelevant. He even tells us that the Holy Spirit is the best interpreter of our heartfelt cries, and he always gets it right.

**Roman 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27 Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.**

## What is praying in Jesus' name?

***John 14:14 "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it."***

Some Christians believe this means if I just tack on, "in Jesus' name" to end of my prayer that I will have what I asked for.

But experience tells all of us that this is just not so – which also tells us there must be more here than just supposedly magic words.

***Luke 22:42 "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."***

One of the most intense prayers of Jesus' time on earth was the one above – he was under great duress and obviously wanted relief, but not more than he wanted God's will to be done (on earth as it is in heaven).

Could Jesus' prayer above be the secret to asking in his name?

If wanting God's will over my will is the key to praying in Jesus' name, then I have great freedom as I pray.

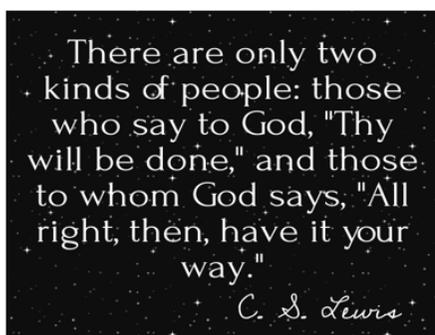
How so? Because when I recognize the superiority of God's will over my will then I can ask for anything with confidence that God will always provide as he wills. (which is always best)

Knowing the above has led me to this conclusion – if people are not healed, if loved ones are not saved, and if financial needs are not met, it will never be because I didn't ask!

I contend that the only way we get to the point where we trust and want God's will over ours is by increasing our faith through knowing him better.

Faith that he is good, that he knows best, and that when his will is done, we benefit, and he is glorified.

Remember, faith is evidence of things not seen – by faith we accept that God always knows and gives what is best.



**Generally speaking, the bigger our view of God the more willing we are to say, "thy will be done".**

I was once challenged not say, "Lord if it is your will" when I pray because that supposedly would show a lack of faith.

But if I omit "if it is your will", doesn't that show that I don't trust God and his will?

**So, I ask – "under what conditions would I ever NOT want his will"?**

Such notions, like omitting the exact words Jesus gave to us to pray, "thy will be done" are immature at best. Only a child wants what he wants over the will of its parents who know infinitely more than the child.

No believer will ever regret having the will of God for him or her realized in his life.

### **The Disciple's Prayer**

Let's start with what "not" to say or do when we pray.

***Matthew 6:5 "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 6 But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father***

***who sees in secret will reward you openly. 7 And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 “Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.***

A hypocrite is someone who presents themselves as someone other than who they really are – an actor.

Jesus says, “Don’t pray standing on the street corners just to be seen by men”. They wanted to make a show of their “piety”. (if that is all they wanted, they got it)

The hypocrites he had in mind were the Scribes and Pharisees and he identified them as such in Matthew chapter 15.

Another warning in this section goes to the Gentiles who pray like pagans – “And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do”.

“For they think that they will be heard for their many words.” – it is not the volume of words we use, but the sincerity of our hearts. (think of Baal’s prophets on Mt. Carmel - lots of words, but no power)

This is also a prohibition on chants, hail Mary’s, prayer beads, and all such ritualistic prescriptions.

A word about “vain repetitions” – Jesus is not saying that we cannot repeat a prayer, but he is saying that we should avoid meaningless repetitions.

***Luke 11:5 And he said to them, “Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; 6 for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; 7 and he will answer from within and say, ‘Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you’? 8 I***

**say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.”**

In Jesus' account of the man who would not get out of bed because his friend was asking for bread, but did get out of bed because of his friend's persistence, we find it is okay to keep asking.

We need little to no instruction as to which of our prayers should be persisted in – we know the things that really matter and the things that matter less.

***Matthew 7:7 “Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.”***

***Luke 18:6 Then the Lord said, “Hear what the unjust judge said. 7 And shall God not avenge his own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though he bears long with them?”***

Never think for a moment there are some magical words or phrases that matter with God when we pray.

Prayer should be conversational, but respectful – we are communicating with the God of the universe, and not one of our friends.

We need not use “thee” and “thou” as the King James Bible does, but we can if we want to. The heart of the matter is worshipful respect for God.

***Matthew 6:9 In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our***

***debtors. 13 And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.***

Think about this – the disciples who watched Jesus daily, had to ask him, “teach us to pray?”.

Jesus did not send them to a class, and he didn’t spend a lot of time elaborating on how to pray as though it were something over their heads requiring a degree.

**In a mere 75 words he gave them, and us, a model for prayer that would be all we will ever need.**

**“Our Father in Heaven”** - We dare not come to God with even a hint of equalness – it should grieve us to hear people pray in a way that smacks of familiarity.

God is not our buddy – Abraham was called a “friend” of God, but not in the sense you might think. It cost God the life of his son for Abraham to be put on “friendly” terms with Him.

May our prayer be that we would find ways in the routines of our lives to acknowledge God as our Father.

With the diminishment of fatherhood in our culture, having God be seen as a father can be very appealing to those whose father was and is absent.

Perhaps that fact alone would be so appealing to some that they would draw near to Him.

**“Hallowed be Your name”** - The Greek word for hallowed is “hag-ee-ad’-zo”, to make holy, consecrate, venerate, be holy, sanctify.

To be holy is to be completely other than that which we are – God is utterly holy, and we are not.

If only we could find ways to hallow his name each day, we would be very fruitful and productive Christians.

**In fact, this is a good way to pray – “God help me to so revere your name today that those around me notice You.”**

We tend to venerate the names of celebrities and athletes, why not seek to honor the one who actually deserves such lofty accolades?

**“Your kingdom come”** – when we look around at our world it is more than obvious that something is terribly wrong. We see injustice, hatred, poverty, war, and disease everywhere we look because the world we live in is ruled by Satan.

When the kingdom of God comes everything will be set right and righteousness will prevail. So why not pray, “God help me to bring at least a part of your kingdom to those around me today”.

**“God, may righteousness reign at least in pockets of our world today as you help me to love my neighbors. I look forward to your return, but until that day help me to be your ambassador everywhere I go.”**

**“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”** – perhaps we should pray, “Help me to want your will”.

What would our world look like if the will of God was done on earth as it is heaven?

One day it will be, but until then we can at least seek and do his will for us wherever we are.

I think from those examples you can see how to pray the “Lord’s Prayer” in very practical ways.

**Another way to pray prayers that honor God is pray through the Ten Commandments.**

I believe we could say with certainty that praying the Lord’s Prayer and the Ten Commandments over our lives is a way to know we are asking according to his will.

The parts of the Lord's Prayer below need to be placed in context of all of scripture.

***"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." - Matthew 6:14 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."***

Jesus is not teaching us that we are only forgiven as we forgive others – that would not be salvation by grace through faith, but salvation by forgiveness.

He is teaching us that unforgiveness towards others is a sin that hinders, not our salvation, but our fellowship with Him. So, if a believer does not forgive others, he will not lose his salvation, but he is going to forfeit the blessings and favor of God.

***"And do not lead us into temptation"*** - (the positive statement from this is, "Lead me away from temptation")

Some have wondered why this is worded as though God would actually lead us into temptation unless we ask him not to.

***James 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he Himself tempt anyone.***

The prayer Jesus taught his disciples is called the Lord's Prayer, but it is not one that he would ever pray.

***"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" could hardly be said by him so we should perhaps view it as the "Disciples Prayer".***

Fortunately, what we call it is of far less importance than what it teaches us. No ceremony, no elaborate approaches, no special words - just brief, direct, sincerity. Think about the Disciples

Prayer – food, protection, and forgiveness. (simple, but necessary things)

**The Disciples Prayer shows us as dependent on God.**

### **Examples of Prayer**

***Psalm 3:1 Lord, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against me. 2 Many are they who say of me, "There is no help for him in God." Selah 3 But You, O Lord, are a shield for me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head. 4 I cried to the Lord with my voice, and he heard me from his holy hill.***

Sounds a little bit like David is telling God things he already knows while naming God as his hero and rescuer. (and he is!)

It is the kind of prayer that centers our thinking on God and gives us great confidence no matter what or how many surround us.

***Philippians 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, 10 that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, 11 being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.***

Do we see any requests for cars, houses, or money? Paul is in prison, the church is being persecuted so he is totally focused on the eternal things, and things that matter.

***Psalm 51:7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8 Make me hear joy and gladness, That the bones You have broken may rejoice. 9 Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.***

David's sin had been "outed" by Nathan, he is crushed, and we can see and hear it in his prayer of repentance.

## Prayer Part 2

### Thoughts on Prayer

**It has been said that “prayer is the highest form of worship.”**

**It has also been said that “worship is the highest form of prayer.”**

Could it be that these two are so closely linked that they can hardly be separated? I know there is a relationship between the outcomes of life and the prayers of life – seeing clearly what they are can be a problem.

If I ask God to heal, and he does, that one is easy to see. If I ask God to heal and he doesn't, that one is much, much, harder to see. Would the sick one have been healed if I just had more faith?

It is my hope that what has happened to my prayer life over the years is pleasing to God because my prayers have changed.

What was once a time to “air” my laundry list of things that I need has become much, much, simpler.

In the past I would pray mostly from a standpoint that would shout “Myself, my family, and my friends should be the primary beneficiary of my prayers”.

***1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:17 “pray without ceasing”.***

If we are to assume that praying without ceasing is meant in a literal sense, then prayer must be viewed as a running conversation with God.

To pray without ceasing is to live every waking moment with an awareness of God being in every place and in everything.

**Prayer is not a personal force that allows one to acquire whatever we want.**

Prayer is the divinely ordained means through which the supernatural connects with the natural. Prayer is God's only authorized means of contact.

You cannot name things and claim things – that is a frame of reference that seeks to transform God into our servant. Not even pagan religions view their deity as one whose purpose is to serve them.

***James 4:2 Yet you do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.***

Mark it down, when you pray for things for the sole purpose of consuming them yourself, you will not hear from God.

We are poor judges of what we need – far better to ask for what he wants you to have. Maybe a good prayer for all of us would be, "God, help me to want what you want!"

#### **Prayers in the bible are almost always brief.**

- *Luke 18:13 "God, be merciful to me a sinner!"* (tax collector in the temple)
- *Luke 23:42 "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."* (thief on the cross)
- *Matt 14:30 "Lord, save me!"* (Peter)

At times we read of Jesus praying alone – but we are not told what he said in those prayers. Perhaps short bursts of communication that only he and his Father would understand. (what language did he use?)

What does it say about prayer that the "Disciples Prayer" given by Jesus in response to "teach us to pray" is brief?

***1<sup>st</sup> John 5:14 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And***

***if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.***

We are fools to want things that God does not want for us.

In Jonah chapter 2 we see how Jonah prayed from the belly of the whale – he was in the dark, stench is in the air, he is in danger of being digested, and yet he spends the entire chapter praising God and extoling his wisdom.

***Jonah 2:8 Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own mercy. 9 But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.***

Then the last verse of Jonah 2 reads, “So the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.”

**When Daniel knew the 70 years of captivity were nearly over, he prays for deliverance with words like these:**

- Dan 9:8 “We have sinned against You”
- Dan 9:10 “We have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.”
- Dan 9:11 “All Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice”.

*Daniel 9:16 “O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people are a reproach to all those around us. 17 Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord’s sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate. 18 O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. 19 O Lord, hear! O Lord,*

*forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name."*

**For your sake – for that great purpose, answer and deliver your people!**

*Philippians 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

**Worry about nothing, pray about everything. Once you've asked God for his help and cast yourself into his care, you can do no more.**

**What if I pray and nothing happens?**

Maybe I should phrase this section as "What if I pray and it seems like nothing is happening?". Experience tells me that God's work is often being done when it looks the most like nothing is happening.

**Never judge what God is doing in a person by what you see on the surface.**

*Exodus 2:23 Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. 24 So God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. 25 And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them.*

Forty years had passed since Moses' first failed attempt at being Israel's deliver. While a lot was happening on the back side of the desert, the Israelites in Egyptian slavery did not see any of the things God was doing in Moses' life to prepare him.

As far the Israelites knew, their prayers and cries for help were going unnoticed .... But they weren't!

**God heard**  
**God remembered**  
**God looked**  
**God acknowledged**

If you've been praying for many years, and nothing seems to be happening, read Exodus 2 again!

**“The greatest tragedy of life is not unanswered prayer, but unoffered prayer.”**

**F.B. Meyer**

*Romans 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!*

### **Our Prayers and God's Providence**

Do our prayers move the hand of God?

- *James 5:16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*
- *John 14:13 And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.*

While it's true that God “causes all things to work for the good of those who love Him”, the circumstances he works through are somewhat up to us.

While he works all things after the counsel of his own will, our prayers are often a part of his will.

**Here is a thought – the omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, sovereign God of the universe has chosen, at least to a degree, to run the world in response to the prayers of His very fallible children.**

**You could choose to say**, “whatever God wants for me will be done anyway so I am not going to ask for anything”.

**Or you could say**, “God has invited me to come boldly and ask for his help so I will ask knowing that my prayers are a part of his providence”.

***James 4:2 “Yet you do not have because you do not ask”.***

An Old Testament example of how the prayer of Moses changed the mind of God.

***Exodus 32:9 And the Lord said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people! 10 Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. 11 Then Moses pleaded with the Lord his God, and said: ..... 14 So the Lord relented from the harm which he said he would do to his people.***

**Praying for the Sick** - Why do we pray for the sick? Is it to give them some vague hope that they might get well, or because we believe God can and does heal?

A biblical stance would be that God said we should pray for each other that we may be healed, and he did not say that a time would come when we shouldn't.

***James 5:16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.***

James was one of the first New Testament books written. So, very early on in church history the responsibility to pray for the sick was given over to all Christians, and especially the church elders.

***1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:9 “and to another gifts of healing” – in my view, the New Testament does not teach that some are “healers” like we would think of some as “teachers”.***

In James 5 we are not told to send for the “healer”, we are told to call for the elders of the church to pray.

Indeed, the apostles did great healings in their ministries to confirm this new and radical message they were preaching – **that Jesus is the Christ.**

What are we to do with the whole idea of praying for the sick? James would have us to believe that God still heals – why else would he tell us to call for the elders of the church?

**James begins by asking, “Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray”.**

**Then he moves to this, “Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him”.**

**Then he says, “pray for one another so that you may be healed.”.**

**So is his teaching, “pray for yourself”, is it “call for the elders”, or is it, “pray for each other”?**

Perhaps the conclusion we are to draw from the text relates back to something James said in chapter 4 – *James 4:2 “You do not have because you do not ask.”*

**I believe a fair conclusion is that when we are sick, we should not think our healing rests in our formulas or in our methods, but in the sovereign power of God.**

Given that Paul tells us in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12 that the Holy Spirit has given “gifts of healing” to the body, and given that in Christ we have access to God, can you think of a reason NOT to ask for healing of the sick?

**If it is okay to pray for myself (verse #13), if it’s okay to call for the elders (verse #14), and if it’s okay to pray for each other to be healed (verse #16) – maybe God is telling us to just ask.**

Only one of the three pronouncements to pray seems to carry a promise of results.

***James 5:14 Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; 15 and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up.***

The text does not teach that everyone the elders pray for will be healed. It teaches that if the elders pray “the prayer of faith,” the sick person will be healed.

**So now we have a new question – what is “the prayer of faith”?**

Is James telling us that if we, or the one praying over us, has enough faith that we are guaranteed to be healed?

That is what some teach despite the overwhelming evidence that Christians are prayed for all the time who are not “healed” as we want them to be.

The “prayer of faith” is not defined in the bible – so we are left with what we might call a wonderful mystery.

We know that some we pray for are healed – and, if we are honest, we also know that some we pray for will not be healed. (in this life)

**The “wonderful mystery” is that God is sovereign and what he chooses for his people is ultimately never a disappointment to his people.**

### **The Real Lord’s Prayer**

John 17 is longest recorded prayer of Jesus, and it takes roughly 7-8 minutes to read. It is known as his high priestly prayer – it is prayer for Himself, for the glory of God, for his disciples at the time, and ultimately for us today.

He is about to die, he is resolute in his desire to go to the cross, and he speaks like one who is centered on the things that really matter.

***John 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.***

When we believe on Jesus, we come to know God by the miracle of regeneration. Regeneration is a radical change – we were spiritually dead before the Holy Spirit made us spiritually alive.

***John 17:11 Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.***

Here Jesus is interceding for his disciples asking that God would “keep” them. The Greek word here for “keep” is one that means “to guard”, “to watch over”.

***John 17:16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.***

Jesus says they will be misfits in the world because they are set apart for God's purposes, sanctified. How will they be sanctified? (by the Word of God)

***John 17:20 "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me."***

In text above the scope broadens to include all believers of all time, even us!

**If you are ever uneasy about your salvation – think about these things:**

- Where is Jesus today? (at the right hand of the Father)
- What is he doing? (praying for us)
- Can you imagine God the Father, not answering the prayers of the God the Son?

***Hebrews 7:25 Therefore he is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.***

***Romans 8:34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.***

**What is Praying in the Spirit?**

***1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:13 Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. 14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.***

Here Paul affirms praying in tongues and tells us that it is his spirit that is praying with the aid of the gift of tongues. We know this by

the lower case “s” in “spirit”. This seems to me to be like the difference between “walking after the flesh” versus “walking in the spirit”.

***Galatians 5:16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.***

Just as we can live a fleshly life or a spiritual life, so too we can pray fleshly self-centered prayers, or spiritual prayers.

***Ephesians 6:18 “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints”***

In the above text the word Spirit is capitalized, meaning the Holy Spirit. So here we are called to “pray in the Spirit” meaning we are to use his power, his presence, and his gifting.

***Jude 1:20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit.***

Jude is telling us the same thing – to pray in the Spirit is to pray assisted by the Holy Spirit.

## Heaven Part 1

I must begin with crediting what I learned from Randy Alcorn's book, "Heaven" for my writing on heaven is heavily influenced by his work. I quote Randy extensively throughout this chapter and am grateful for what the Lord taught me through him.

*Job 19:25 But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and he will stand upon the earth at last. 26 And after my body has decayed, yet in my body I will see God! 27 I will see him for myself. Yes, I will see him with my own eyes. I am overwhelmed at the thought!*

*Isaiah 60:21 All your people will be righteous. They will possess their land forever, for I will plant them there with my own hands in order to bring myself glory.*

God has never given up on the Earth. What He created, though marred by the enemy, will be completely restored. What we see in the past in the Garden of Eden, perfect people in a perfect world, also happens to be the future.

There are days when I just want to hear – no one was killed today, no one was raped today, and no one was abandoned today. And wouldn't it be nice to have a day when no injustices were done, and no one was hungry.

After listening to news cast after news cast, we can become numb to bad news – but it doesn't change the reality of the world in which we live.

*2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:1 "You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. 2 For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. 3 They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They*

*will be cruel and hate what is good. 4 They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. 5 They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly.”*

This chapter on Heaven is about the hope that is ahead for every Christian.

It is also about making a distinction between the fate of rejecting Christ and the reward for believing on Him.

There is no greater juxtaposition in the universe!

*Revelation 20:11 And I saw a great white throne and the one sitting on it. The earth and sky fled from his presence, but they found no place to hide. 12 I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God’s throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books. 13 The sea gave up its dead, and death and the grave gave up their dead. And all were judged according to their deeds. 14 Then death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire. This lake of fire is the second death. 15 And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.*

J.C. Ryle said “I pity the man who never thinks about heaven”.

Randy Alcorn said, “I pity the man who never thinks accurately about Heaven for it is our inaccurate thinking about Heaven that causes us to choose to think so little about Heaven.”

I think it is fair to say that the average Christian knows far less about Heaven than we think we do.

Perhaps the primary reason for this is that devil wants to overcomplicate and confuse our view of Heaven.

“Satan need not convince us that Heaven does not exist. He just needs to convince us that Heaven is a place of a boring, unearthly existence.” Randy Alcorn

And that idea of unearthly boredom, as I will attempt to prove, is about as far from the truth as can be imagined.

“Satan hates the New Heaven and the New Earth as much as a deposed dictator hates the new nation and new government that replaces his. Satan cannot stop Christ’s redemptive work, but he can keep us from seeing the breadth and depth of redemption that extends to the earth and beyond.” Randy Alcorn

The motive for Satan to discredit the truth of Heaven is strong and is rooted in his hatred for God.

Few people prepare for death – few try at all to even consider the subject.

Philip of Macedon commissioned a servant to tell him every day – “you will die” and Louis the 14th decreed that death never be mentioned in his presence.

*Hebrews 2:14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil— 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

Heaven is a place everyone wants to go to, but just not right now.

“I don't believe in an afterlife, so I don't have to spend my whole life fearing hell or fearing heaven even more. For whatever the tortures of hell, I think the boredom of heaven would be even worse.” Isaac Asimov

***John 14:2 – in my Father’s house are many rooms.***

Jesus deliberately chooses words and descriptions that we could relate to, but is that all that is meant? Is he just setting up an

analogy, or is it possible he meant literal rooms in a literal mansion?

Why do you suppose we feel so much at home in this world?

Because our bodies were designed for these exact conditions – the conditions of the earth. God has never given up on His original plan!

### In Heaven There Will Be ...

- A resurrected Savior.
- A resurrected people.
- On a resurrected Earth.

#### Foolish Views of Heaven:

- “How you behave toward cats here below determines your status in Heaven.” Robert A. Heinlein
- “I don't like to commit myself about heaven and hell - you see, I have friends in both places” Mark Twain
- “HEAVEN will be no HEAVEN to me if I do not meet my wife there.” Andrew Jackson

*Matt 4:17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."*

Jesus spoke often of ‘the kingdom of heaven’ and it is obviously difficult to grasp because he used more than a few illustrations of what it is like.

When Jesus spoke of the kingdom of heaven he was speaking of a realm, a culture, and a way of life that is to be lived here, but fully realized there.

**In Matthew 13 Jesus said, “The Kingdom of Heaven is Like” –**

- Like a man who sowed good seed. (separator)
- Like mustard seed. (small, but mighty)
- Like yeast. (unseen, but has huge effects)
- Like treasure. (has life changing value)

**Three things that are good for us to know:**

- Heaven is a real place with real citizens but is not yet our experience.
- We will experience a real earth in a real body.
- The fact that we are not there yet, does not mean that we cannot live by heaven’s rules and try to bring its culture to earth.

*Matthew 6:20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

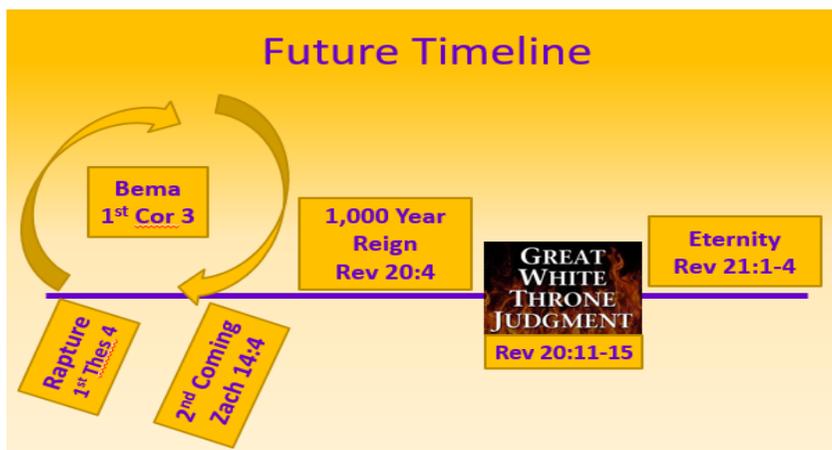
Heaven is a real place, capable of receiving investments – how we view this, reveals something about our faith.

*Matthew 19:21 Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."*

A place of potential rewards. God’s economy is the only economy where giving your wealth away is a strategy.

*Philippians 3:20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.*

We belong to heaven. Even though we have never been there, it’s where our roots are. It is there that we have rights, privileges, and responsibilities.



*Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.*

*Revelation 21:5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

**“The writers of scripture present Heaven in many ways, including as a garden, a city, and a kingdom. Because gardens, cities, and kingdoms are familiar to us, they afford us a bridge to understanding Heaven. However, many people make the mistake of assuming that these are merely analogies with no actual correspondence to the reality of Heaven.”** (which would make them poor analogies) Randy Alcorn

In his preface to the book, Alcorn admits there are errors in the book ..... He just doesn't know what they are, or he would remove them.

*Acts 17:11 Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*

There is an old saying of “you can become so heavenly minded you become of no earthly good”.

It seems that throughout history man has mostly assumed that death is not the end and that something awaits us beyond the grave. However, few spend much time looking for clues to their eternal home.

“It becomes us to spend this life only as a journey towards heaven .... To which we should subordinate all other concerns of life.”

Jonathon Edwards

This is an odd way of thinking to most of us who generally stumble through life day after day happy to endure the struggle.

*Phil 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! 23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far.*

If we would correctly weigh the evidence we would conclude that Christians are in a win – win situation.

### **Two ways to look ahead –**

- “It comes at last – the only unpoisoned gift life ever had for them – they vanish from a world where they were of no consequence; where they achieved nothing; where they were a mistake, and a failure, and a foolishness” .... Mark Twain (unsaved)
- “To come to thee is to come home from exile, to come to land out of a raging storm, to come to rest after long labor, to come to the goal of my desires, and the summit of my wishes” .... Charles Spurgeon (saved)

*Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.*

God has placed a desire in our heart for the very things he wants to give us; a home in a world where peace reigns and love is the only law necessary. Having never been to heaven, it still has the appeal of 'home'.

Fact: most of the Bible College textbooks give little attention to the doctrine of Heaven. Have we become so obsessed with avoiding hell that we have forgotten what God is preparing for us?

**We must ask ourselves “am I as interested in going to heaven as I am in avoiding hell?”**

*Genesis 2:7 the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.*

*1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.*

The first man was a physical being, we are physical beings, and we will have a resurrected body.

*1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:35 But someone may ask, “How will the dead be raised? What kind of bodies will they have?” 36 What a foolish question! When you put a seed into the ground, it doesn’t grow into a plant unless it dies first. 37 And what you put in the ground is not the plant that will grow, but only a bare seed of wheat or whatever you are planting. 38 Then God gives it the new body he wants it to have. A different plant grows from each kind of seed. 39 Similarly there are different kinds of flesh—one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. 40 There are also bodies in the heavens and bodies on the earth. The glory of the heavenly bodies is different from the glory of the earthly bodies. 41 The sun has one kind of glory, while the moon and stars each have another kind. And even the stars differ from each other in their glory. 42 It is the same way with the*

*resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised to live forever. 43 Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength. 44 They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, there are also spiritual bodies. 45 The Scriptures tell us, "The first man, Adam, became a living person." But the last Adam—that is, Christ—is a life-giving Spirit. 46 What comes first is the natural body, then the spiritual body comes later. 47 Adam, the first man, was made from the dust of the earth, while Christ, the second man, came from heaven. 48 Earthly people are like the earthly man, and heavenly people are like the heavenly man. 49 Just as we are now like the earthly man, we will someday be like the heavenly man.*

What if heaven will be just like the world we know, minus sin and its effects? Is it so farfetched to think that heaven is a re-make of the Garden of Eden with many more people? What if it turns out that heaven is a perfect planet Earth?

*1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2:9 However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"— 10 **but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.** The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.*

It sounds nice but it is untrue to say that heaven is beyond our imagination. God has revealed heaven to us in His word. The verse says the opposite of what most people think it does.

*Colossians 3:1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*

*Hebrews 11:16 Instead, they were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

It's not only fun to dream about heaven, but it's encouraged by God himself.

There is a certain sense of peace, stability, and well-being that comes from understanding that another world awaits us after this one. And it looks more appealing when we look around this one and see the devastating effects of sin.

We should strive to improve our world, but rest in the fact that we need only get through it.

### **Is heaven our default destination?**

**“The safest road to hell is the gradual one – the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.”** C.S. Lewis

*Matthew 7:13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.*

**“For every American who thinks they are going to hell there are 120 who think they are going to heaven.”** Randy Alcorn

In Dante's *Inferno*, there is a view of a sign over hell's gate that reads, “Abandon every hope, you who enter”.

Hell is the exact opposite of heaven. For everything we have to look forward to there are equal reasons to dread what awaits the one who dies without Christ.

**“I had rather walk, as I do, in daily terror of eternity than feel that this was only a children's game in which all contestants would get equally worthless prizes in the end.”** T.S. Elliot

**“Hell will be agonizingly dull, small, and insignificant, without company, purpose, or accomplishment. It will not have it’s own stories; it will merely be a footnote on history, a crack in the pavement.”** Randy Alcorn

**“As the new universe moves gloriously onward, Hell and it’s occupants will exist in utter inactivity and insignificance; an eternal non-life of regret – and – perhaps diminishing personhood.”** Randy Alcorn

***Mark 8:36 “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?”*** Jesus of Nazareth

There is danger in every church of thinking that if we fit in here we must surely be a Christian.

The tightrope we walk as a local church is to be inclusive of the unsaved without reinforcing the same dangerous thought above.

How do we conduct ourselves to make people comfortable enough to listen to the message that will make them uncomfortable in their sins?

### **The Intermediate State**

*1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:13* Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.

The intermediate state is the place and condition of the Christian from the time we die until the resurrection of our bodies. Is it still Heaven? Yes, but it’s a place of waiting for the new Heaven and new Earth.

*Daniel 12:1* "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people — everyone whose name is found written in the book — will be delivered. 2 Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the

*Earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.*

What is meant by 'multitudes who sleep'? Does the Bible teach something called soul sleep?

*Luke 16:23 In Hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. 24 So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'*

The rich man was not sleeping. Lazarus certainly looked awake enough to the rich man because he asked him for water. Upon death our physical bodies do give the appearance of sleeping, but there is ample evidence to refute the notion of soul sleep.

### **Does Heaven Really Change?**

*Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth.*

*Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new Heaven and a new Earth, for the first Heaven and the first Earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.*

Heaven was created and therefore had a beginning and can also have an end. God is immutable (unchangeable), everything else is in play.

### **The New Heaven and Earth**

Man lived with God in the garden at the start and God will restore that intimate fellowship once again.

*Genesis 3:8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.*

*John 14:23 Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.*

*Revelation 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.*

“The incarnation was about God inhabiting space and time as a human being – the new Heavens and the new Earth are about God making space and time in his eternal home.” Randy Alcorn

We usually think of us going ‘up’ to Heaven, but the end game is evidently for God to come down and live with us.

*Revelation 21:2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.*

*Ephesians 1:10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment — to bring all things in Heaven and on Earth together under one head, even Christ.*

### **Do we remain conscious after death?**

*Revelation 6:9 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. 10 They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the Earth and avenge our blood?"*

*Matthew 17:2 There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. 3 Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.*

## **Will we be judged when die?**

*Romans 14:11 For the Scriptures say, "As surely as I live," says the Lord, 'every knee will bend to me, and every tongue will confess and give praise to God.'" 12 Yes, each of us will give a personal account to God.*

*Revelation 20:12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.*

Most people believe the Christian is judged (evaluated) after the rapture and before the marriage supper of the Lamb.

When is of less importance than the certainty that we will give an account of what we did with what we were given between conversion and death.

It is obvious the unsaved are judged 1,007 years after the rapture at the great white throne. This judgment is not to determine 'if' punishment is due, but merely how much punishment is due.

It ought not be enough for me that I will go to Heaven when I die; I should give much more thought than I do to what God will say about me when I arrive.

It takes faith to believe that what I do now is, to a great extent, determining what my duties and privileges will be on the new Earth.

*Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

## **Degrees of Punishment**

Luke 12:47 "And a servant who knows what the master wants, but isn't prepared and doesn't carry out those instructions, will be

severely punished. 48 But someone who does not know, and then does something wrong, will be punished only lightly. When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required.

Both types are punished for eternity, but not equally.

### **Is the present Heaven a physical place?**

Jesus had a glorified, but physical body after his resurrection.

*Acts 1:11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into Heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into Heaven."*

The present Heaven may, or may not be a physical place, but the new Heaven and new Earth will be.

Consider this – if the present Heaven is a physical place then it is either light years away in time or it exists as a parallel universe. (or maybe there is some other concept we have never imagined)

Randy Alcorn noted in his Heaven book the leading secular scientists of our day postulate that there are as many as (10) unobservable dimensions.

I find it no stretch at all to believe that Heaven is much closer than we may have ever thought. What if Jesus statement of" the kingdom of God is among you" was not just a figurative statement?

### **Shadows from Heaven.**

*Hebrews 8:5 They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in Heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."*

It seems probable at least that Moses was allowed to peek into Heaven on Mt Sinai to see a copy of what God wanted him to build. A picture is worth a thousand words!

*Hebrews 9:24 For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered Heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.*

If you were going to question which sanctuary was the 'more real' of the two, Earth's sanctuary would have to finish second. Christ, in a real body, entered a real and evidently physical place.

### **Physical bodies for us in the intermediate state?**

We cannot be dogmatic either way. Randy Alcorn suggests that we may have temporary bodies because being physical is part of being human.

I am less sure we will have bodies because Paul went there and was not sure if he had a body or not. (nor did it seem to matter)

*2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12:2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third Heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know — God knows. 3 And I know that this man — whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—*

In Luke's account of the rich man and Lazarus it seems as though Lazarus was visible to the rich man.

*Luke 16:23 In Hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.*

I do not think we are on solid ground to apply all the properties of Paradise in Luke 16 to Heaven. (people in Hell cannot see people in Heaven)

## Redemption

*1<sup>st</sup> John 3:8 He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.*

*Revelation 5:9 And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. 10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."*

**"Redemption is not a matter of an addition, or of a spiritual or supernatural dimension to creaturely life that was lacking before; rather it is a matter of bringing new life and vitality to what was there all along."** Albert Wolters

The only thing added is the remedy for sin. We were made to be eternal beings in the image of God and that is exactly what the redeemed will be.

*Matthew 19:27 Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?" 28 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

Not at the abandonment of all things, or at the destruction of all things, but at the 'renewal' of all things.

Salvation will restore man back to God's original design and purpose; to have dominion under God over the earth. The fall led to death, and the redemption will include the removal of death.

It was never God's intention that we would live forever in a world that is filled with sin, hate, disease, and rebellion. His desire is for

us to serve and glorify Him in a world where there is nothing to distract us from that purpose.

Man fell, but God will pick him up, clean him up, and put him back on course as though nothing ever happened.

### **God's Intentions**

*Isaiah 65:17 "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.*

*Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.*

**"If God's plan were just to take us to the present heaven (the intermediate state) or a place of just spirit beings there would be no need for a new heaven or new earth."** Randy Alcorn

Jesus did not die to make the most of a bad situation, he died to redeem us, and to restore all things.

The Devil threw mud on God's creative canvas, but God will do more than just wipe it clean. He will completely restore it.

**Reconcile, redeem, restore, return, renew, regenerate, and resurrect all point to a restoration and not an alternative plan.**

This explains to a great extent why God is always viewing us as what we can be more so than what we are.

We are fallen people living in a fallen world; we will be redeemed people living in a redeemed world and that is what both parties long for. If God wanted to start over after the fall he could have sent Adam and Eve to hell and made Bill and Barb.

That might be what we would think of doing, but one who has the power to redeem and restore to an original state does not have to start over.

Satan struck a blow at God's handiwork, but he did not destroy his work to a place beyond redemption.

### **This world is not our home; or is it?**

We have been given many clues about what the new earth will be like from this earth. Plants, animals, streams, and people of every imaginable shape, size, and color.

**“While many of the world’s religions portray heaven as a mystical place, Christianity does not give up on humanity or earth”** Randy Alcorn

It is as if God has planted a longing to return to Eden in our hearts ..... We've never been there, but it sounds like home.

Many of the 'movements' of our time are rooted in this sense God places within us. Save the planet, animal rights, and human rights all originate with what God has placed within us.

While our ancestors (Adam and Eve) came from the homeland we are forced to live in a place that does not feel like home. It's the same earth Adam and Eve lived on, but it has been seriously marred by sin.

We would love an earth that is peaceful, stable, and inhabitable. Not coincidentally, that is just what God has promised.

**God has not promised a 'non-earth', he promises a 'new earth'.**

Randy Alcorn

In Revelation chapters 21 and 22 we read of a city, buildings, streets, streams, a mountain, and plenty of people. Does that not sound very much like the earth we know?

*Revelation 21:5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"*

*Revelation 22:3 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.*

There will be work in heaven. (his servants will serve him) Work is good for us, it allows us to do something measurable, and can be used to glorify God. (work will continue in heaven)

### **Heaven is a real place.**

*Hebrews 11:10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11 By faith Abraham, even though he was past age — and Sarah herself was barren — was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. 12 And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore. 13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. 14 People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. 15 If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 Instead, they were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

Other religions, other people and many books tell us that heaven is more of a state of existence than a place, but there is ample evidence to the contrary.

We need to stop trying to spiritualize everything we cannot understand and start believing what we read in the bible.

**“Stop closing your eyes trying to imagine the unimaginable. Open your eyes and imagine this earth without the effects of sin”.**

Randy Alcorn.

We are living on the same earth as Adam and Eve. Look at the beauty that is still ours to enjoy and look at the best intentions of men that are still seen. It is no accident that most of the people we meet are relatively nice people. That was God’s original design!

## Heaven Part 2

### The Bible Outline

Past	Present	Future
<b>Genesis 1-2</b>	<b>Genesis 3 - Revelation 20</b>	<b>Revelation 21-22</b>
God's original design. Perfect humans living in a perfect environment.	Fallen man struggling to survive and endure life on a sin cursed earth.	Redeemed man living on a redeemed earth.

### Restoration

**“If God were to end history and reign forever in a distant Heaven, Earth would be remembered as a graveyard of sin and failure. Instead, Earth will be redeemed and restored.”**

Randy Alcorn

When one has unlimited power to restore and repair there is no reason to start from scratch. Satan will not have the victory; God will restore Earth and mankind to His original design.

**It excites me to know that what I sense in my bones should be  
..... Will be.**

We have a deep longing for, and a distant sense that things are not as He intended and that something on Earth is desperately wrong. My deep longing is not new ....

*Heb 11:16 Instead, they were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

### **Return to Eden**

**In Genesis** God plants the garden on earth; **in Revelation** he brings down the new earth with a garden at the center.

**In Eden** there was no sin or death; in the new earth, sin and death are no more.

**In Genesis** the Redeemer is promised, **in Revelation** the Redeemer returns.

### **Lessons from C.S. Lewis**

In ‘The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe’ -

- Narnia was living under an ‘always winter, never Christmas’ curse.
- Aslan (Jesus) dies to break the curse.
- Man (the kids) are given rule of the earth from the resurrected Aslan.
- Narnia was earth with the curse removed.

### **Redemption**

To some extent we live in an elongated parenthesis where a fallen world has been our home.

*Revelation 22:3 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.*

Redemption is all about being bought back and restored to our original purpose.

## **The importance of the Resurrection**

*1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.*

It is a grave mistake and a heresy to try to spiritualize the resurrection. If Jesus did not rise from the dead then he was merely a faithful martyr.

*Romans 1:4 and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.*

### **Resurrection is Physical**

Resurrection goes beyond implying something physical ..... It cannot be understood apart from the physical resurrection of our bodies.

*Genesis 2:7 the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.*

Adam was not declared to be alive until he also had a body. God designed our bodies for eternity. (cells regenerate)

Views of the afterlife that do not include a resurrection of our physical bodies are not biblical views. Gnosticism is a view that says all spiritual entities are good and all physical entities are bad.

The Gnostic views are in direct contradiction of the bible where we read ... *Genesis 1:31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.*

To some extent our view of heaven has been tainted by the ancient teachings of Gnosticism.

We read that the world, the flesh, and the Devil are our enemies in 1<sup>st</sup> John and jump to the incorrect conclusion that physical things are the problem.

Rather than thinking in terms of physical things being the problem, we should recognize that sin is the problem that affected the world, the flesh, and the Devil.

**“Christianity is not a platonic religion that regards material things as mere shadows of reality which will be sloughed off as soon as possible. Not the mere immortality of the soul, but rather the resurrection of the body and the renewal of all creation is the hope of the Christian faith.”** John Piper

**“It is God who designed us to live on the earth and to desire the earthly life. And it is our bodily resurrection that will allow us to return to an earthly life – this time free from sin and the curse.”**  
Randy Alcorn

*Job 19:26 And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; 27 I myself will see him with my own eyes — I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!*

Job seemed sure that his body would have to go through death and decay for a time, but he seemed just as sure that his body would be resurrected.

Furthermore, by his own words we learn that the resurrection was what he yearned for.

We were created in the image of God with physical bodies and God pronounced us ‘good’.

He did not err; we were designed perfectly and the fact that the Devil has done some serious damage to our design does not alter God’s intentions at all.

He who can do exceedingly abundantly above all we can ask or think finds it not difficult at all to restore us as good as new, or better.

**“The empty tomb is the ultimate proof that Christ’s resurrection body was the same body that died on the cross. If resurrection means the creation of a new body, then the body that died on the cross would have been left in the tomb.”** Randy Alcorn

John 2:19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

The Westminster Confession speaks of the resurrection of these ‘self-same’ bodies.

Word, Excel, PowerPoint .... All Microsoft applications that get regular upgrades. When you upgrade Microsoft Office the programs all look familiar, they do the same things as before and often much more. (new features and corrected glitches)

Our resurrected bodies will have all the old ‘bugs’ fixed and will also have a lot of new features.

The resurrected Jesus looked like the Jesus they all knew, but better.

He still spoke, could be touched, could interact, but he could also do other new things ... walk through walls (John 20:19) and fly (Acts 1:9).

His physical resurrected body is like the resurrected body we will have. (*Philippians 3:21 - He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.*)

*Revelation 1:12 I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around*

*his chest. 14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. 15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. 16 In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. 17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. 18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.*

*Acts 22:11 My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me.*

*Acts 7:55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."*

What's the point? In one case Jesus' presence was so overwhelming that he appeared only as a blinding light. In another his appearance was so familiar that Stephen knew in an instant he was looking at Jesus.

*Luke 24:38 He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 39 Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." 40 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. 41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate it in their presence.*

The disciples would have seen the nail prints in his hands and feet. They also watched him eat and they touched him.

*1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.*

- Sown perishable ----- raised imperishable.
- Sown in dishonor ---- raised in glory.
- Sown in weakness ----- raised in power.
- Sown a natural body ----- raised a spiritual body.

### **The Old Testament hope for a new Earth.**

*Isaiah 26:19 But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead.*

The verse above makes no attempt to separate the resurrections between the saved and lost as two separate events. (most doctrines are not built on a single verse)

The Old Testament saints were not looking to go to a distant Heaven. They were expecting to live on a restored Earth.

Some have reduced Christ's reign on Earth to the Millennial kingdom, but that is inaccurate because he will reign forever and ever. That would include the new and permanent Earth.

- Rapture
- Tribulation
- Second Coming
- 1000-year reign on Earth
- Great white throne judgment
- New Heaven and New Earth

*Isaiah 9:7 Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom,*

*establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.*

*Isaiah 65:17 "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. 18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.*

It seems clear the Old Testament saints expected to live forever on the Earth. I think it is somewhat irrelevant whether they believed in a restored Earth or a new Earth; the facts are that God promised a 'forever' on Earth.

We do not long for something we have never seen or have any reference to; we long for things to be set right on Earth much like they were in our lives when we came to Christ.

*Isaiah 66:22 "As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the Lord, "so will your name and descendants endure."*

The fact of a new Earth is written in many places in the Old Testament.

**The Old Testament saints were not looking for a new Earth because it was all they could relate to. They were looking for a new Earth because that is what God promised.**

**Will we remember the things we see now?**

Common question – how can we have joy in Heaven if we know unsaved loved ones are suffering in hell?

*Isaiah 65:17 "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind."*

I am being careful not to build a doctrine on a single verse, but it would seem we could begin to build a case from Isaiah 65 for us being released from sad memories.

### **Will Earth be destroyed or restored?**

*2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.*

*Luke 21:33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.*

*Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.*

Think of this – the Apostle Paul ‘passed away’ 2,000 years ago and his body cannot be found today because it has completely changed into another form of matter, dust.

However, at the rapture of the church the Apostle Paul will be resurrected, and his body will be restored into a recognizable Apostle Paul.

If passing away was not the complete extinction of Paul, how can we be so sure the Earth that passes away cannot be resurrected and restored as well?

Forest fires often destroy and seemingly wipe out hundreds of acres of green and living trees, but there is always a resurrection of those forests.

Fire cleanses the forests of diseased plants and trees. Forest fires also remove the underbrush that sometimes suffocates new growth in the forest.

When the forest ‘passes away’ it is not uncommon at all for a healthier forest to replace it.

*Acts 3:19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, 20 and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you — even Jesus. 21 He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.*

The prophets promised a restoration of the Earth and the New Testament affirms the same promise.

### **God will live with us.**

If Heaven is where God is, and if God is going to live on the Earth, then to call the New Earth ‘Heaven’ is no stretch at all.

*Revelation 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."*

God will not send some delegate who will be like Him – God is going to come and personally live on the New Earth with us.

**“Fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, and friends are mere shadows. These are but scattered beams, God is the sun. These are but streams, God is the fountain. These are but drops, God is the ocean.”** Jonathon Edwards

*Hebrews 11:16 Instead, they were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

It seems that the work is already done – “he has prepared” indicates a past action.

*John 14:2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.*

If the city is already done, why did Jesus say he was going to prepare a place for us?

When you are expecting house guests for a visit don't you usually prepare a room for them with clean sheets, fresh towels, and other amenities?

Imagine this – if you had the opportunity to spend time with anyone in all of history who would you choose?

We can come up with a list of names, but the list of names make a point for us worth noting – when God was thinking about someone he would like to spend time with He choose us!

*John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.*

### **Worshipping God**

In this life we get occasional times of blessing when we experience in a fresh and real way the presence of God. In Heaven, we will experience his presence all the time and we will not grow accustomed to it.

Our perception of God isn't static, our knowledge of him will be in constant motion learning new things about him.

*Ephesians 2:6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*

We will spend eternity worshipping Him for the things He has done in us, and in those around us.

Everything we see of His redemptive work will move us to worship Him in an unencumbered environment.

The current world, even marred by sin as it is, is full of glimpses of God and reasons to praise Him.

The New Earth will overflow with 'praise prompts' and we will never feel awkward about giving God the worship he is due.

If we were completely honest I believe we would all say that we are somewhat restrained in our worship for fear that someone might judge us to be weird.

**In heaven it will be weird not to worship and serve God.**

### **Ruling On The New Earth**

*Revelation 5:6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7 He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. 8 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. 10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."*

It is God's will that man will rule on the earth.

God intended for man to rule (govern) on the earth.

*Genesis 1:28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*

*Genesis 17:8 The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."*

God is the sovereign ruler of the universe but chooses to delegate some aspects of ruling the earth to his people. Men and women have been uniquely created and equipped for the task of managing the earth.

Kingdoms have been rising and falling throughout the history of man. Most, if not all, fell because of sin. When Jesus sets up his kingdom it will be ruled in righteousness and will never end. We will rule and reign with him as we were intended.

*Romans 8:17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

Ruling the universe will be our 'family business'. Every servant of the King will have a role to play in the kingdom and we will be servant rulers of the universe.

*Luke 14:11 For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.*

Those who humble themselves in this life to believe in, and serve Jesus, will be exalted in eternity.

*Luke 22:29 And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, 30 so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

There is a battle being waged for control of the universe. God will win and hand the keys over to us.

He is grooming us for leadership – will we be faithful in a few things, so that he can make us rulers over many?

## Matthew 25:14-23

14 "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. 15 To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. 16 The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. 17 So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. 18 But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. 19 "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. 20 The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' 21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' 22 "The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' 23 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

### Will the new earth be an Edenic paradise?

**“The New Earth will be a place of sensory delight, breathtaking beauty, satisfying relationships, and personal joy.”** Randy Alcorn

If God made the garden of Eden for man it is reasonable to conclude it is His will for man to live in that kind of environment. We might say that the New Earth is a restoration to the moral state of all things as they were at the beginning.

### What about history?

**“By analogy, salvation in Jesus Christ, conceived in the broad creational sense, means a restoration of culture and society in**

**their present stage of development. That restoration will not necessarily oppose literacy or urbanization or industrialization or the internal combustion engine, although these historical developments have led to their own distortions or evils. Instead, the coming of the kingdom of God demands that these developments be reformed, that they be made answerable to their creational structure, and that they be subjected to the ordinances of the Creator.” Albert Wolters**

The New Earth will not be a restart of history, but a continuation of it.

If a child gets a disease and spends his formative years with it before being healed he does not go back and start life over again healthy.

He simply continues his life with all of his acquired skills, experiences, and relationships.

If that applies to us on the New Earth then we should not be thinking about losing things like technological advances, arts, and music.

*Rev 21:24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.*

### **What is the New Jerusalem?**

*Revelation 21:10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. 11 It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. 12 It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. 13 There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. 14 The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles*

*of the Lamb. 15 The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. 16 The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long.*

The New Jerusalem is the capital city of Heaven, it is a 1,500 mile cube. The picture below shows what a 1,500 square mile space would look like. The new Jerusalem however is a 1,500 cubic mile space. 1,500 miles long, 1,500 miles wide, and 1,500 miles high.



**When you have a 1,500-mile cube the following are possible:**

- Allowing 12' for each story of the structure you could have 600,000 stories.
- This provides 900,000,000 square miles of floor space.
- This could provide a living area of 1 sq mile each for 900 million people.
- And this is just the capital city!

**A second possibility:**

- We are not told that the New Jerusalem will necessarily have floors and be like a giant condominium.
- It may be that the New Jerusalem will more like the cities we know now with structures of various shapes and heights.
- What if the 1500-mile-cube house is God's?

*Revelation 21:12 It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. 13 There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west.*

Gates were used on ancient cities to keep enemies out. They were nearly always closed at night. The gates of the New Jerusalem are never closed. There is an angelic guard at each and there will be no predators.

*Revelation 21:24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. 25 On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. 26 The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.*

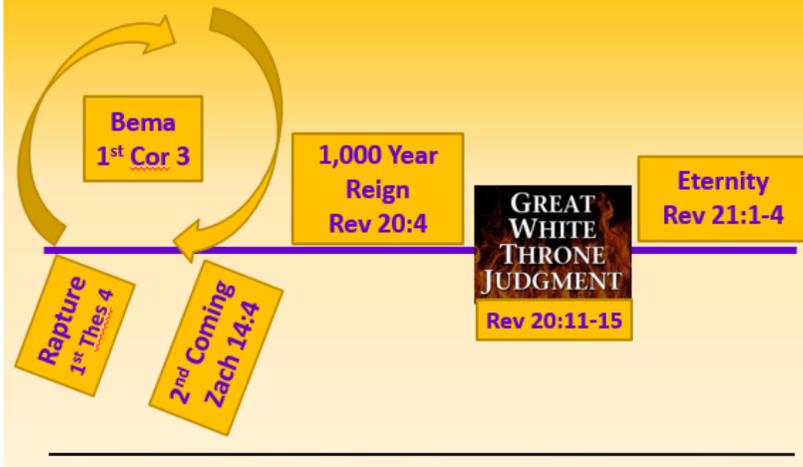
Think about all the advantages and disadvantages of city life today. Lots of opportunity, entertainment, and attractions, but also a greater chance of being a victim of crime.

In the New Jerusalem the city will have all the advantages and none of the disadvantages.

### **Good Perspective**

**If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy-the most probable explanation is - I was made for another world... C.S. Lewis**

## Future Timeline



What we assume about Heaven	What the Bible teaches about Heaven
Non-earth	New Earth
Unfamiliar Setting	Familiar Setting
Disembodied	Resurrected Bodies
Leaving Favorite Things Behind	Retaining the Best Things
No Time and Space	Time and Space
Static	Dynamic
Nothing to do, boring.	Unlimited opportunities to worship and serve with meaningful work.
No learning, instant and complete knowledge.	An eternity of learning and discovery.
Absence of evil, but little we desire.	Presence of the wonderful and everything we were designed to desire.

## Two Quotes

“I must keep alive in myself my desire for my true country, which I shall not find until after death; I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside; I must make it the main object of life to press on to that other country and to help others do the same.”

C.S. Lewis

“Our greatest affliction is not anxiety or even guilt, but rather homesickness – a nostalgia or ineradicable yearning to be at home with God.” Donald Bloesch

## What the World Says

When the world says “you can never go home again” they mean that you can’t roll back history to the good ole days of your youth or some other pleasant time of your life.

For the believer, this saying merely points us to a time when we will truly be home for the first time in a restored earth that we have always wanted but could not completely identify.

## Going to a party?

*Luke 6:21 Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.*

*Luke 15:10 In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”*

We should not associate dullness and boredom with heaven as is often the case – nothing could be further from the truth. What are the chances that behind the typical image of heaven we would find the enemy of our soul?

Angels floating around on clouds playing harps seems to be an innocent enough image, but what does that image convey? It conveys boredom, monotony, and is in fact a lie that is intended to lessen our desire for heaven.

There is an old proverb derived from scripture that says, “eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die”.

*1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:32 If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."*

Paul’s words put context to the proverb, but most don’t think about the context – just the message.

Here is how it needs to be understood – if there is no God and if there is no judgment for sin, then live it up – this is all the enjoyment you will ever have.

Sadly, most of our society subscribes to this point of view. However, the truth about Heaven teaches us that we are not going to a place where there will be no pleasure – we are going to a place of ultimate pleasure.

### **Heaven is our source of optimism.**

*Romans 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

*Luke 6:22 Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. 23 "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven."*

Anticipating Heaven does not make our pain less painful or our sorrow less sorrowful - it provides the context for it.

Sometimes we trudge through what we must endure the week that precedes our vacation. We work feverishly getting ready to go. We are tired, but the week of vacation that lies ahead makes it all much more bearable.

We may be tired from the preparation, but it all seems like a light affliction compared to what we will be doing the next week.

Should going to Heaven be seen much differently?

There are trials and tribulations we endure in this life that are sometimes unexplainable – some seem to make no sense at all.

However, there will come a day when all this life will be seen from a different perspective.

*James 1:2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

### **Through the Doorway**

Five months before he died, C.S. Lewis wrote these words to a woman who feared her own death was imminent.

“Can you not see death as a friend and deliverer? – what is there to be afraid of? – your sins are confessed. Has this world been so kind to you that you should leave with regret? There are better things ahead than any we leave behind. Our Lord says to you, Peace child, peace. Relax, Let go. I will catch you – do you trust me so little? – of course, this may not be the end. Then make it a good rehearsal. Signed – yours, (and like you, a tired traveler, near journey’s end.)”

**“Can you hear the sighing in the wind? Can you feel the heavy silence in the mountains? Can you sense the restless longing in the sea? Can you see it in the woeful eyes of an animal?  
Something’s coming ..... Something better.”**

Joni Erikson Tada

We should not glorify or romanticize about death, Jesus didn’t.  
John 11:35 “*Jesus Wept*”.

That short verse tells a big story – death was an unintended consequence of Adam’s sin. It can be painful and, in a physical sense, horrible.

While it’s true that some leave this life suddenly and quietly in their sleep, there are many who do not. We could all tell stories of those we know who died under horrible circumstances – death is our enemy.

*1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." 55 "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"*

Death is painful for the loved ones left behind even if the person went out quietly. It can bring unbearable sorrow and pain so we ought never to cause it, or even hasten ourselves to it, but neither should we fear it.

Jesus’ work on Calvary took the eternal sting out of death. No longer should we fear death – avoid it as long as possible, yes --- but never fear that which will only free you to a life that will be as much as and more of what you’ve always wanted.

### **God’s Intentions**

*Isaiah 66:22 "As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the Lord, "so will your name and descendants endure.*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.*

*Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.*

**“If God’s plan were just to take us to the present heaven (the intermediate state) or a place of just spirit beings there would be no need for a new heaven or new earth.”** Randy Alcorn

Jesus did not die to make the most of a bad situation, he died to redeem us, and to restore all things. The Devil threw mud on God’s creative canvas, but God will do more than just wipe it clean. He will completely restore it.

Reconcile, redeem, restore, return, renew, regenerate, and resurrect all point to a restoration and not an alternative plan.

**This explains to a great extent why God is always viewing us a what we can be, more so than what we are.**

We are fallen people living in a fallen world; we will be redeemed people living in a redeemed world and that is what both parties long for.

### **Restoration**

**“If God were to end history and reign forever in a distant Heaven, Earth would be remembered as a graveyard of sin and failure. Instead, Earth will be redeemed and restored.”** Randy Alcorn

When one has unlimited power to restore and repair there is no reason to start from scratch.

Satan will not have the victory; God will restore Earth and mankind to His original design.

### **If only they could see ...**

The difference in eternal destinies between the saved and lost is as stark as night and day, east and west, and up and down.

If only the lost could see through the darkness what the gospel offers versus what the world offers, no one would choose hell.

And yet, the world treats the gospel as though it is acid, or poison, or something of great danger to them.

Ever since the fall (actually before the fall) God has been at work to redeem lost people.

He has been more than just; He has been gracious and has operated with unbelievable patience.

Yet, according to Jesus himself, far more will reject God's grace than will receive it.

## Repentance

I am going to try to convince you in this chapter that you would not be satisfied with a salvation that does not include repentance.

There is a false notion that suggests that Christians resent God's requirement for turning from sin. True Christians embrace repentance as something assuring us that what we believe has done its work of making us alive in Christ.

Biblical repentance is expressed in several legitimate forms in the bible and by theologians.

I have included all the ones I know – the underlying concept of turning from sin to God is consistent in them all. All that I include will help us to grasp what it means to repent.

While, at its core repentance is a change of our minds, we tend to measure it by our actions. In other words, if my mind has truly been changed the proof of the change is surely to be found in my behaviors.

If I claim to have repented, and there is no change in my behaviors, how can I have any confidence my mind has really been changed?

**True repentance involves a sense of awareness of one's own guilt, sinfulness, and helplessness (Psalm 51:4–10; 109:21–22).**

**True repentance apprehends or takes hold of God's mercy in Jesus Christ (Psalm 51:1(Have mercy on me, O God); 130:4).**

True repentance means a change of attitude and action regarding sin. Hatred of sin turns the repentant person away from his or her sin to God (Psalm 119:128; Job 42:5–6; 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 7:10).

True repentance results in a radical and persistent pursuit of holy living, walking with God in obedience to his commands (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:19–22; 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:16).

***Isaiah 55:6 Seek the Lord while he may be found, Call upon him while he is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.***

The word repentance does not appear above, but it is clearly a part of what Isaiah had in mind and what it means to be saved.

***Matthew 3:1 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2 and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”***

Isaiah called for repentance in the Old Testament and John the Baptist opens his ministry with the same concept and links entrance into heaven to repentance.

***Matthew 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”***

From the very start of Jesus’ preaching ministry, he preached a salvation that required repentance.

So, what is this “repentance” that Isaiah, John the Baptist, and Jesus all connect to salvation?

The Greek work for repentance is “met-an'-oy-ah” and it’s meaning is not at all complicated or ambiguous.

**It means to “have a change of mind”, literally “to think differently”.**

When we believed on Christ, we suddenly became aware of sin, righteousness, and judgment for sin and our thinking was changed.

***In Job 42 we read, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”***

Here is a man described in Job 1 as, *“There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.”*

What gets a blameless man, who was subjected to a contest between God and Satan, to repent? Repent of what?

Remember that Job was tested seemingly beyond what any reasonable human would be able to withstand as he lost his health, wealth, and ten children.

He operated without answers as each test came upon him and he never turned from God. Yet, at the end of the testing Job “repented” in that his mind was further changed about his sin in the light of the One he now sees more clearly.

***1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2:16 For “who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ.***

***Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.***

***2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 7:10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted.***

We tend to think of repentance as something that we do - what we see as the fruit of repentance comes from a changed mind.

**A change of mind so strong that it produces a change of direction in our lives.**

When we are saved, God grants repentance to us so that we will see everything in a new light.

***Acts 26:19 “And so, King Agrippa, I obeyed that vision from heaven. 20 I preached first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that all must repent of their sins and turn to God—and prove they have changed by the good things they do.”***

***Matthew 3:7 But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to watch him baptize, he denounced them. "You brood of snakes!" he exclaimed. "Who warned you to flee the coming wrath? 8 Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God.***

Repentance changes everything for the believer to the point that we have an entirely new world view. Suddenly we see the effects of sin in us, and in our world – we now understand why sin is so sinful.

**Any notion of a salvation that does not include repentance is a false one that is not biblical.**

A common mistake we make in our evangelistic efforts is that we either do not mention repentance, or we downplay its significance.

We want to make saying yes to Christ as easy as possible for the unbeliever and we tend to oversimplify what he requires. Our intentions are good, but our theology is weak if we believe speaking of repentance is a hinderance to conversions – it isn't!

We know the world charges that Christians are a bunch of narrow minded fuddy duddys who are not allowed to have fun. Somehow, we fall for the lie that repenting of sin excludes us forever from having fun and enjoying life.

Repenting of our sin is the only pathway to a life of enjoyment because until we deal with our sin, we are merely marking time until eternal disaster grabs us.

We need to realize that when the Holy Spirit has someone ready to hear and receive the gospel, one of the appeals of the gospel is turning from sin. When you came to Christ were you not glad to leave your sinful habits behind?

Leaving a life of sin behind is what a true convert to Jesus Christ wants, so in a very real sense, repentance is part of the prize in knowing Christ.

***Luke 13:1 There were present at that season some who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2 And Jesus answered and said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? 3 I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. 4 Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”***

**Repentance is not optional – we must turn from all that is sinful to all that is righteous.**

***2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.***

Peter did not say, “come to salvation”, or even “come to Christ”, but he said the same thing by saying, “**come to repentance**” – there is no daylight between these two ideas for Peter. It seems obvious here, and in other scriptures that salvation and repentance always go together.

***2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 7:10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.***

This is interesting verbiage here as to the timing of what happens when we believe. Paul actually places repentance just prior to salvation – a lot happens all but simultaneously. (repentance, belief, new birth, justification, initial sanctification)

Some have supposed that if you call people to struggle and to agonize in the battle for their souls with God, it is somehow a call to a works salvation and not grace.

What they are really saying is that the regenerated soul does not want to come out of their sin and that is simply not true.

**One of the hallmarks of a redeemed soul is our desire to fight against sin and struggle to live righteously.**

The idea of a salvation that calls for no change and seeks to live as we have in the past is a false gospel – indeed this is not at all appealing to those ready to receive Christ.

The redemption that Jesus offers demands a turning from our sin to a life that pursues righteousness.

Anything less than that is not what the sinner wants. He wants what Christ demands and his demands are not burdensome.

***1<sup>st</sup> John 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.***

One of my main arguments for repentance is to acknowledge the desire on the part of the repentant one to please his Savior by turning from sin to righteousness.

To say otherwise is to reveal yourself as one still in need of salvation.

**“Let us not merely call Him Lord, for that will not save us, for He says, 'Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will be saved, but he who does what is right.' Thus, brothers, let us acknowledge Him by our actions. This world and the world to come are two enemies, this one means adultery, corruption, avarice and deceit, while the other gives them up. We cannot then be friends of both. To get the one, you must give up the other.”**

**Clement 150 A.D.**

**“Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ in saying ‘repent’ meant the whole life of the faithful to be an act of repentance. This saying cannot be understood of a sacrament of Penance, i.e., of confession and absolution which is administered by the priesthood, that is to say you can't grant somebody absolution from their sin instead of them repenting.”**

**Martin Luther 1517 A.D.**

**“The Greek word metanoia comes from meta which is ‘after’, and ‘noia’ which is to understand - literally it means an afterthought or a change of mind.”**

**Louis Berkhoff**

So, when we repent, we do so because we are seeing life and thinking about it differently after salvation than we did pre-salvation. Repentance has also been described as an “about face” in that we turn 180 degrees in our thinking.

***1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 1:8 Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. 9 For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.***

The believers at Thessalonica demonstrated their faith by turning to God from idols. That was a radical change in thoughts and deeds.

It is a life change like Paul notes of the Thessalonians that gets the attention of the unbelieving around us.

### **How do you know if someone has repented?**

It cannot be determined by tears, feeling sorry, and being remorseful – those may accompany true repentance, but they are sometimes just tears, just remorse, and no more.

When someone repents it shows up in how they live their lives. Churches are full of people who make professions of faith, but never repent.

To teach that all one needs to do to be saved is raise their hand, walk an aisle, or say a prayer is terrible state to be in.

There must be many in America in that state because polls tell us that 65% of Americans are Christians when the trajectory of our culture shows the opposite is more likely to be true.

**Let us not make coming to Christ harder than he does but let us also not proclaim a gospel that has no repentance.**

A couple who was leading a rapidly growing youth group was confronted by some of their youth with this question, “you are our leaders, and you claim to be Christians, but you are not married and are living together. How can this be?”

The man responded, “we are Christians, but we have never claimed to be disciples”. (this is ludicrous)

Others in similar situations have responded, “we are carnal Christians” – as though there actually is such a thing.

***2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 7:9 Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry***

*in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. **10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.***

Repentance is not just sorrow; it is a sorrow that compels one to change because we see life from a completely different point of view. Our “World View” changes when we are saved.

***2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:24 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, 26 and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.***

Repentance is not something we add to salvation, it's a part of what God does in the heart. He grants repentance not to just produce sorrow for our sin, but to produce real and lasting change.

***Ezekiel 18:30 “Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways,” says the Lord God. “Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. 31 Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? 32 For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,” says the Lord God. “Therefore turn and live!”***

Repentance is a turning away from sin, a casting off of sin, and the acquisition of a new heart. Here the word repentance is not used, but it is clearly what is meant - Joel 2:12 “Now, therefore,” says the Lord, “Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.”

***Psalm 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, You will not despise.***

Repentance is all about a sacrificial spirit wherein the sinner is broken over his sin and seeks fellowship with God.

### Psalm 51 – Case Study of Repentance

**2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 12:1** Then the Lord sent Nathan to David. And he came to him, and said to him: "There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. 2 The rich man had exceedingly many flocks and herds. 3 But the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him. 4 And a traveler came to the rich man, who refused to take from his own flock and from his own herd to prepare one for the wayfaring man who had come to him; but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him." 5 So David's anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this shall surely die! 6 And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity." Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. 8 I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if that had been too little, I also would have given you much more! 9 Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon. 10 Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' 11 Thus says the Lord: 'Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your

***wives in the sight of this sun. 12 For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun.’ ” 13 So David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.”***

We would do well to condemn David for his treachery on multiple fronts, not the least of which was against God.

We would also do well to notice how David responds when his sin is exposed by Nathan. He offers no defense, he has no excuses, he quickly and clearly says, “I have sinned against the Lord.”

In his confession we ought not infer that David was overlooking his sin against Bathsheba, his sin against Uriah, or his sin against his family.

When he says, “I have sinned against the Lord” he is acknowledging that all sin is ultimately first and foremost against God.

**We sin against others to be sure, and that is a terrible thing, but nothing exceeds the offense against God.**

What David is showing us is akin to what Jesus tells us about our love for family members compared to how we are to love God.

***Luke 14:26 “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.”***

We are not to hate our families, but by comparison our love for our families compared to our love for God should look like the difference between love and hate.

Many of the Psalms record for us the inmost feelings of their authors, especially King David.

The backdrop for Psalm 51 is the account of Nathan confronting David with his sin. Psalm 51 could probably be written by all of us as we consider our own sin from God’s point of view.

***Psalm 51:1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. 4 Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight— That You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.***

David is a man whose mind had been changed and considering his sin in the sight of a Holy God, he makes the only plea that he can – for mercy!

Note too that he wants his sins “blotted out” – this seems to be a clear reference to God’s books of deeds that will haunt the unbeliever at the Great White Throne.

David is also fully aware that God keeps records of the believer’s works as well and he wants his sin covered. He wants “washed”, and he wants “cleansed” – from his choice of words we know beyond the shadow of a doubt what he is feeling.

**David feels what we all feel when we sin – dirty.**

This should not surprise us at all for that is a consistent metaphor in the scriptures – the sinner needs to be cleansed from his sin.

***1<sup>st</sup> John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.***

To be sure, the cry of the saved person’s heart is for forgiveness when we sin – it is intuitive.

We feel defiled in the sight of God, we feel dirty, and we do that which we feel compelled to do – we confess and repent seeking to be cleansed.

David goes on to say “*my sin is always before me*” acknowledging that his sin is front and center in his mind, and there is nothing he can do to escape it.

It is as though his sin is in his way in all that he tries to think about and all that he attempts to do – there is just no getting away from it.

He is at the point we all get to when we sin – that point where we must have the relief that comes with forgiveness. Unlike Adam and Eve when they sinned, David does not blame God or others. In fact, he says that God is blameless.

**He is saying – “God I did this, I committed adultery, I had Uriah killed, no one else is to blame.”**

He takes full responsibility because he is fully responsible – that is repentance.

In the case of David, it’s not that he didn’t see his sin clearly before Nathan’s visit, because he did. Nathan’s visit forced David to deal with his sin in a public way that he was not willing to do on his own.

When the one called “a man after God’s own heart” repents and owns his sin for all the world to see, we benefit from his example.

# Satan

## Opening Thoughts

God has ordained there would be a devil and it is a good thing he did. It is good because all that God is and does is good. Having a devil is the best of all possible avenues for history whether we understand it or not.

**“Without a doubt there is lots of information floating around the world on who Satan is and what he is up to. Much of what is considered knowledge about the evil one is false, but that should not surprise us at all as he is identified in scripture as the “Great Deceiver”. His mission is always to secure the worship of man and his strategies are all centered around deception.”**

Unknown

When Daniel was prophesying about the end of the world as we know it, he said of Satan ....

***Daniel 8:23 “At the end of their rule, when their sin is at its height, a fierce king, a master of intrigue, will rise to power. 24 he will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause a shocking amount of destruction and succeed in everything he does. He will destroy powerful leaders and devastate the holy people. 25 he will be a master of deception and will become arrogant; he will destroy many without warning. He will even take on the Prince of princes in battle, but he will be broken, though not by human power.”***

Deception is perhaps the chief strategy of the devil .... It is said that the devil is most dangerous when he is thought to be a myth.

**The reason why there is so much false information around about Satan is because he helps in planting it.**

When he is seen as some harmless fairy tale like creature he is hiding in plain sight and mankind is often blinded, and at times (like Halloween) even accepting, of his presence.

### **The Order of Creation**

- First there was God and nothing else.
- Then there was God and angels.
- Then there was God, angels, and everything else.
- Then we had the fall of Lucifer and 1/3 of the angels.
- Then we had the fall of man.

### **What caused the devil to sin?**

No sin had ever existed before, there was nothing corrupt in him, and there were no corrupting influences outside of him. Lucifer sinned without provocation, without enticement, and with no apparent evil influence.

***Job 1:13 Now on the day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house. 14 a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, 15 and the Sabeans attacked and took them. They also slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you."***

**Satan successfully incited (perhaps even caused) one group of humans to attack and kill another group.**

**The fact that we are privy to the conversation between God and Satan allows us to know that it was Satan's work.**

***Job 1:16 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”***

**Satan is capable, when allowed, of sending what is described as “the fire of God” from heaven.**

**This fire killed Job’s livestock and shepherds.**

***Job 1:17 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “The Chaldeans formed three bands and made a raid on the camels and took them and slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”***

**Again, we see Satan being able to incite robbery and murder as he sends the Chaldeans against Job’s herd of camels and his servants.**

***Job 1:18 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, 19 and behold, a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people and they died, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”***

**Finally, we see that Satan is quite capable of sending what was evidently a tornado that would take aim at and kill Job's sons and daughters.**

From the account of Job, we learn that this being called "Satan" is one of great and supernatural power.

He was able to work in the minds of the Sabeans and Chaldeans to rob and murder Job's herdsman. He was also able to send fire from the sky and cause and steer a tornado.

**Don't be preoccupied with him, but do not be unaware either.**

***Eph 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.***

***James 4:7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.***

Do demons have the same power as Satan himself?

There is no evidence that demons are as powerful as their leader, but they are not to be underestimated.

***Acts 19:14 Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said to them, "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" 16 And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.***

**Ephesians 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.**

God's grace upon us makes us a target of the devil. His attacks upon us are proof of our new birth so understand that while we may not appreciate the enemy's attacks, we would rather have them than not have them.

***Ephesians 6:16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.***

Have you ever wondered where a vile thought comes from when you are praying, or reading your bible, or worshipping?

We think, "What! Where did that come from? I don't want that!" and yet there it is right in the middle of your fellowship with God.

**No wonder – Satan wants what you are giving to God, given to him, worship!**

**John 10:7 So Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. 9 I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. NASB**

One of the Book of Job's greatest contributions to the believer's mindset regarding Satan is that he cannot touch us without the permission of God.

***Job 1:9 Then Satan answered the Lord, "Does Job fear God for nothing? 10 Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side?***

Notice please that Satan sees a barrier around Job that kept him from harming him. It was impenetrable! The barrier, described as a hedge by Satan, was on all sides of Job – in other words, there was no possible avenue of attack.

**Given that it is Satan's desire to "steal, kill, and destroy" mankind, there is reason to believe that the protection of God is upon all mankind, and is not limited to believers.**

We are certain from Job's experience that believers are "hedged in", and this could also extend to the unsaved. A reason for believing God's hedge of protection extends to the unsaved is because all of us were once unsaved.

Think about it – if God did not protect all from Satan what would keep him from killing all newborns as a means of keeping them from Christ.

We cannot be dogmatic here, but it seems plausible.

**I know what you are thinking – you are thinking if Satan were to kill all newborns that would be a good thing because they would be with Jesus. However, there are more reasons for our lives than just being saved and going to heaven – every life has the capability of bringing glory to God and should therefore be preserved and extended as long as possible.**

## More About Satan

***Ezekiel 28:11 The word of the Lord came to me: 12 "Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: "You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. 13 You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: carnelian, chrysolite and emerald, topaz, onyx and jasper, lapis lazuli, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. 14 You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. 15 You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. 16 Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. 17 Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings. 18 By your many sins and dishonest trade you have desecrated your sanctuaries. So I made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching. 19 All the nations who knew you are appalled at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.'"***

The nine verses above from Ezekiel give us an outline of Satan's life from his creation to his judgment and end.

In Ezekiel's prophecy, the King of Tyre is both a real person and a metaphor for Satan. Ezekiel speaks against a known king of his day, but the prophecy is clearly bigger than the king of Tyre.

Satan was created as an angel named, "Lucifer". (light bearer in Isaiah 14:12)

Ezekiel describes him as, **“You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty”**. If Lucifer wasn't the most beautiful of God's angels, he was surely among the most beautiful.

Most commentators agree that the idea of the word “full” is that of being the summation of something – in this case the summation of wisdom and beauty.

**“You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: carnelian, chrysolite and emerald, topaz, onyx and jasper, lapis lazuli, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared.”**

The fact that he is not mentioned until Genesis 3 does not mean he was not around until then. It is possible that Adam and Eve knew Lucifer before he fell but did not recognize him in his disguise.

Satan is also described as the “anointed covering cherub” and “blameless in your ways” before his fall.

Lucifer was an exalted angel, “anointed” – until a specific event occurred, **“till wickedness was found in you”**. Sin started in Lucifer – we are not told how that is possible, and evidently, we do not need to know.

In all probability we could not understand the origin of sin even if we were told.

It remains a theological mystery to this day – the fact Lucifer sinned with no apparent sinful influences might tell us more about the ability to choose than we know.

With the ability to choose came the ability to sin just as it is for us. We have sin natures, but we do not sin reflexively, we must choose to sin.

Many believe that Lucifer oversaw the praise of God before his fall – he seems to be associated with music in one way or another.

Ezekiel 28:13 in the NKJV reads, ***“The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created.”***

Since we must go to a specific translation of the scriptures to make the “music” connection we should be careful to avoid rapid conclusions.

***Isaiah 14:12 “How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations! 13 “But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. 14 ‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’”***

It is from this text in Isaiah that most conclude that Lucifer’s sin was pride, and that is probably correct. However, the Lord never tells us it was pride, so we are free to speculate a bit if we want to.

It is at least plausible that his sin was broader in scope than pride. His sin could have been as basic as rebellion. (pride would have been just a symptom)

What is certain from the Isaiah text is that the objective of Satan’s rebellion is manifest – he wants to be God and he wants to be worshipped.

So, if you ever want to know Satan’s mission statement it is found in Isaiah 14 – **he wants to be God.**

He has lots of perverse and clever strategies and tactics, but his mission is that of being god to someone.

He is called “*the god of this world*” by Paul in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 4:4. But what do we know about this world?

***1<sup>st</sup> John 2:17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.***

Satan also knows this world is passing away and that he is doomed. He knows that because he knows God, and he knows the Word of God.

So why is he fighting so hard to keep people from God? When we consider there are degrees of punishment, doesn't that just make his fate that much worse?

It does, but that is the nature of sin – sin causes a pursuit of evil despite the consequences, and despite God's warnings, Satan remains in full pursuit of his own destruction and the destruction of as many souls as possible.

***Matthew 25:41 “Then he will also say to those on his left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels’”.***

From the “**Sheep and Goats**” judgment in Matthew we see how many conclude that hell was not made for mankind but was originally intended for Satan and his demons.

It is not that God somehow did not know that many people would be put there as well – it is just a matter of timing. The devil sinned, the lake of fire was made, then man sinned.

The scriptures do more than assume the existence of a real and personal devil, they disclose what he is, and who he is.

***1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.***

Peter identifies him as our adversary who stands opposed to the work of God wherever it is - whether it was in the Garden of Eden, in the world of the unsaved, or in our hearts.

When Peter identifies Satan as a roaring lion prowling around looking for someone to devour, we should take notice and be on guard.

The fact that the image used is that of a lion looking for a meal ought to get our attention. This enemy of ours is looking for more than a meal, he is looking to bring great pain to his victims before he completely chews them to pieces.

Satan has made it his purpose to oppose God and to keep people from hearing and receiving the gospel. His power is such that Paul described him as “the god of this world”.

***2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.***

From the above text it appears we can add another power to Satan’s list – that of blinding the minds of the unbelieving.

**Think about how unappealing your product must be if you have to blind the minds of your prospects to keep them as prospects.**

For one to completely miss Christ one must also engage in a bit of willful blindness as well. Satan does not have the power to keep anyone from Christ, he may assist, but he has not that power.

For one to miss Christ that one must be unwilling to see Christ as well. (the testimony of Romans 1)

If Satan had that power, then some might offer that as a defense at the Great White Throne – and if he had that power their defense would be just.

***Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.***

Satan has limitations – he is not omnipresent, omniscient, or omnipotent. (neither are his demons) However, he is the “prince of the power of the air”.

***Ephesians 2:1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.***

It is hard to be dogmatic here, but since Satan is the “prince of the air”, and since he is a spirit being, it is reasonable to conclude that he travels freely and quickly.

***And look from whence our struggles come from - Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.***

***2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12:7 Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!***

This is something that should grab our attention. God used Satan to send torment to Paul. In this case, God used Satan to accomplish a very good purpose in Paul – that he would remain humble.

Take this in – Satan would have had no interest in keeping Paul humble because Paul tells in the text that this made him an even more effective servant of God.

And yet, like a dutiful messenger, Satan carries out the mission – because he had to! As powerful as Satan may be, his power is like that of an ant against an elephant in a contest with God.

**One of the staples of Satan’s strategies is to twist and question the word of God.**

*Genesis 3:1 “And he said to the woman, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden’?”*

*John 8:44 You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him.*

*Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

### **Can Christians Bind Satan?**

There is no scriptural command to bind Satan, nor is there any biblical example of such a practice by Christians.

The reference that is sometimes used to claim that Christians can bind Satan and demons is found in Mark chapter 3.

***Mark 3:27 But no one can enter the strong man’s house and plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house.***

What Mark is telling us is that, in a sense, Jesus bound Satan with the inception of the church.

Jesus is that “stronger man” who entered the “strong man’s” house with the gospel and is plundering his property as each lost soul comes to Christ.

The ultimate plan for Satan includes him being bound and cast into the bottomless pit for 1,000 years before being judged and cast into the lake of fire.

If someone comes along and claims to be able to bind Satan and his demons, please inquire as to how he keeps getting let loose!

We are to resist the devil (James 4) and to “stand” (Ephesians 6) our ground against him.

**There are no scriptures that tells believers to “bind” the devil or his demons.**

As a practical matter, if we can bind Satan why would James have us waste our time resisting him. If we could bind him? (just do it!)

**And why would Paul in Ephesians 6 tell us to “*Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil*”?**

If we could “bind” him why not just do that instead of suiting up for battle?

## Sovereignty and Providence

**Never lose sight of this - the ultimate aim of the sovereign plan of God, is the glory of God.**

When we say that God is sovereign - it means that he is the sole ruler, he is the sole authority, and he answers to no one.

It is impossible to overstate the complete and total independence and rule of God.

He tells us in no uncertain terms that he alone is God and that he has no equal.

***Deuteronomy 4:39 Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.***

***Isaiah 44:6 Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.***

***Isaiah 46:9 Remember the things I have done in the past. For I alone am God! I am God, and there is none like me.***

The scriptures stress the sovereignty of God throughout the bible – it is a big, prominent, important doctrine that seems to be avoided in many places like something detestable.

**We should draw great peace from the truth that God is the Sovereign of the universe and not us.**

When Jesus said, “thy will be done”, he was giving more than good advice – he was us giving a certainty to comfort us.

***Psalm 135:6 Whatever the LORD pleases, he does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.***

***Joshua 2:11 "When we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.***

***1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:15 which he will bring about at the proper time - he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords.***

**If God is all powerful and if nothing happens apart from his purpose, why is there evil?**

- If God planned for a Savior in advance, (Revelation 13) then he must also have planned for sinners to be redeemed.
- And since nothing happens without his permission, then he must also have planned for sinners to fall.
- And if God is good, then sin by necessity, must also be part of his plan to reveal and glorify Himself.

### **So, why is there evil?**

Because it is another means of glorifying God and there is no objective in the universe that supersedes that one!

God has morally sufficient reasons for allowing suffering and evil in the world. Suffering and evil are often used by God to create the best possible conditions to bring the maximum # of souls to Christ!

Said another way - You have to ask the question of why God would allow evil from the perspective of how it affects God?

And if it affects him by further glorifying Him, then to allow evil serves the ultimate good purposes of God.

So, you could say that God is not only just, but he is good to allow evil, because it serves to magnify Him!

There was a group of believers who left a church because they saw an ignorance of God's sovereignty. They were being taught that Satan can harm them, that Satan can even kill them, and that demons were to be feared. And they said this, "We could not live any longer under the sovereignty of Satan."

**Sovereignty** – God is powerful and authoritative to the point that he can override all other powers. Nothing can stop what he wants to do.

**Job 42:2 I know that you can do anything, and no one can stop you.**

**Isaiah 46:9 Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure,'**

**Sovereign over nature** - *Psalm 135:6 Whatever the Lord pleases he does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deep places. 7 he causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; he makes lightning for the rain; he brings the wind out of his treasuries.*

**Sovereign over animals** – *Matt 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will.*

**Sovereign over the nations** – *Acts 17:26 And he has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth*

*and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings.*

**Sovereign over mankind** – *Prov 16:9 A man’s heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps. Prov 21:1 The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; he turns it wherever he wishes. Prov 19:21 There are many plans in a man’s heart, Nevertheless the Lord’s counsel—that will stand.*

**Sovereign over what seems to be random events** – *Prov 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.*



It has been suggested that God controls every throw of the dice. I do not know if that is true, but the glorious truth behind the statement whether right or wrong, is that he could!!

**Romans 11:33 Oh, how great are God’s riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways! 34 For who can know the Lord’s thoughts? Who knows enough to give him advice? 35 And who has given him so much that he needs to pay it back? 36 For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory. All glory to him forever! Amen. NLT**

No one is born loving the sovereignty of God – we are all born presuming and assuming our own sovereignty.

Just as difficult times make us more spiritual; they also tend to make us lovers of his sovereignty - we want someone bigger than us to be in control because we certainly are not.

The question is this – will we believe what the Bible teaches about our God even if it is way over our heads, or will we settle for only those things we easily comprehend?

**Let's deal with some of the issues that make people nervous about God's sovereignty.**

***2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:9 The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.***

***Romans 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.***

These two truths, that God choose those who would be saved, and he is not willing that any should perish are not in conflict.

The truth that God elected those who would receive him in advance, does not change the fact that people must believe to be saved.

**In my view, this is not God's sovereignty versus the free will of man – rather these two truths stand on their own and harmonize in the mind of God.**

***John 1:10 he came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. 11 he came to his own people, and even they rejected him. 12 But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.***

***Revelation 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." Let anyone who hears this say, "Come." Let anyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who desires drink freely from the water of life.***

The Bible is clear that God's offer of salvation is open to all and must be freely responded to with faith.

**The chief argument between Calvin and Arminius on election can be summarized as follows –**

**Do we believe because we were chosen, or were we chosen because we believe?**

*Ephesians 1:4 Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes.*

*Acts 13:48 When the Gentiles heard this, they were very glad and thanked the Lord for his message; and all who were chosen for eternal life became believers.*

**We can also say with certainty that God chose us – this is not in dispute.**

**C. H. Spurgeon was once asked if he could reconcile the two truths of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. "I wouldn't try," he replied, "I never reconcile friends."**

If Spurgeon had difficulties harmonizing divine sovereignty and human responsibility, is it any wonder that we struggle with it.

*John 6:44 "For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up."*

*John 12:32 "And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself."*

**Do you see it? No one can come unless God draws them, and then 6 chapters later Jesus says, "I will draw everyone"**

- *John 6:44 "For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up."*
- *John 12:32 "And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself."*

***John 9:1 As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. 2 "Rabbi," his disciples asked him, "why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents' sins?" 3 "It was not because of his sins or his parents' sins," Jesus answered. "This happened so the power of God could be seen in him."***

The man was an adult, and he was born blind specifically so that God's power could be seen in his healing. Jesus gives this reason as though he were giving the most rationale answer in the universe – and he was!

There is a condition to be met for our suffering to be meaningful and valuable to us – we must first see his glory as more important than our present circumstances.

It is clear from the text that Jesus thought God's glory was a sufficient explanation for a lifetime of blindness. The fact that many of us have trouble with the "God's glory" explanation reveals our weak perspective as to who God is.

Resist the notion that suffering has no meaning. Turn to the purposes and plans of God. There is no suffering outside God's sovereign purposes.

**When we suffer it is not hidden from God, and he is able to bring beauty from some of life's ugliest ashes.**

*"This light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the*

*things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.” 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:17-18.*

We are handicapped by sin in our view of eternity, and therefore in our evaluation of eternal things. We do not always comprehend the true value of our present conditions. What we think is good is often not best.

All that we hold dear is held together and made possible by the sovereignty of our God.

**Sovereignty is having supreme and ultimate rank, power, and authority.**

If God is not sovereign, then he is not God. (if he is not God of all, then he is not God at all)

**None of us would want to spend one minute in a world that has no Sovereign God.**

**And the Lord said, in effect, "I will not simply be analyzed, I will be adored. I will not simply be pondered; I will be proclaimed. My sovereignty is not simply to be scrutinized; it is to be heralded. It is not grist for the mill of controversy, it is gospel for sinners who know that their only hope is the sovereign triumph of God's grace over their rebellious will."**

**John Piper**

### **Divine Providence**

In Genesis 50:20 there is one event, a sin, that was “meant” for two competing purposes.

***“But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.”***

How can it be that God can ordain the use of sin for his purposes without commanding it or approving of it?

***Romans 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.***

Words matter whether they happen to fit into our self-constructed doctrinal boxes or not. God “causes all things” does not mean he causes some things; it means all things.

***Ephesians 1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.***

Here again we see it – God works “all things after the counsel of his own will” (not ours). This means that God uses all of the activities in the universe to achieve his purposes.

Please do not recoil at this doctrine because you cannot understand it. Even Solomon looked around in his day and concluded God is bigger than our minds can know.

***Ecclesiastes 8:16 I tried to understand all that happens on earth. I saw how busy people are, working day and night and hardly ever sleeping. 17 I also saw all that God has done. Nobody can understand what God does here on earth. No matter how hard people try to understand it, they cannot. Even if wise people say they understand, they cannot; no one can really understand it.***

**“Divine providence is the governance of God by which He, with wisdom and love, cares for and directs all things in the universe.”**

**(gotquestions.org)**

**“Divine providence is God's capacity to bring about the purposes and promises of God with 100 percent certainty—for individuals, for humanity, indeed for the cosmos as a whole.”**

**(unknown)**

**All things in Scripture are not alike and plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.**

**(from the Westminster Confession)**

So, while the absolute essentials for salvation are so plain that they cannot be missed, that same standard does not extend to all texts.

***2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:16 Concerning Paul, Peter wrote, “His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.”***

The providence of God is one of those things that will first stretch you, and then perhaps tie you into a knot, before showing itself to be the “soft pillow” God intends it to be.

Nebuchadnezzar seemed to have a deep understanding of who God was after having experienced his discipline.

Nebuchadnezzar had two dreams interpreted by Daniel, and he was an eyewitness to the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

God even warned him in a dream to humble himself, but he refused and as a result God caused him to go insane for seven

years. When Nebuchadnezzar's sanity was restored we read the following words that he said.

***Daniel 4:34 And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored him who lives forever: for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, And his kingdom is from generation to generation. 35 All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; he does according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain his hand or say to Him, "What have You done?"***

After regaining his sanity, this king who had seen the power of God, who had seen the wisdom of God, and had experienced the chastening of God, is now in a profoundly better place.

So much so that he now sees God, not himself, as the Sovereign of the universe and so far above all others that not only can God do whatever he wants, but no one even has the right to question Him.

**Whatever God does is right whether we understand it or not. Moses wrote, "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right".**

*Colossians 1:16 For by him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through him and for Him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

*Revelation 4:11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*

Nature does not run on its own – in the puny minds of men we often think, or at least act as though, we are the center of all things.

If we believe the scriptures are the word of God, then we need to take them at face value when they declare God as supreme, and the center of all things.

God is anything but a watchmaker who constructs a thing, winds it up, and then departs. (Deism)

All things were made by him – there are some who might contest this, but not nearly so many as there are who resist the notion that “all things were made for Him”.

We want to imagine that God made the universe for us when such a thought is nowhere written in the bible.

If we believe that the universe and everything in it are made for God, then it should follow that he ordains things to be as they are, and they are!

The affairs of men and nations are ultimately in the very capable hands of God – it could not be clearer that God is heavily involved in the details of life.

God seems to be on a nearly endless quest to save those who have no interest in him – people who have no meritorious claim upon the gift he has for them. According to Paul, God has setup the world in a way that draws and even causes mankind to seek Him.

***Acts 17:23 Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, him I proclaim to you: 24 God, who made the world and everything in it, since he is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. 25 Nor is he worshiped with men’s hands, as though he needed anything, since he gives to all life, breath, and all things. 26 And he has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for him and find Him,***

***though he is not far from each one of us; 28 for in him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also his offspring.'***

We do not live in a chance universe – God has declared that his creation is both by him and for Him, so he will not leave the arrangements of events and things to chance.

Chance is defined as, “something that happens unpredictably without discernible human intention or observable cause”. From the vastness of the stars to the DNA in our bodies God has left nothing to mathematical probability.

Does God really care about and superintend the small matters of life in the universe?

***Matthew 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. 30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.***

A sparrow does not fall without him noticing and God even keeps track of the hairs on your head – should we take these words literally?

Should we take these words literally? Yes, and not just literally, but seriously!

Sparrows, hairs on our heads? This level of detail employed by God in managing the universe speaks far more about him than it does sparrows and hairs.

What kind of a mind must our God have if he is to keep track of all sparrows, and all hairs, plus, plus, plus .... all other creatures and things that exist?

Do not focus on sparrows and the hairs on your head as they are not the point, but only examples of the point.

**The point of Jesus' teaching is not that he is pre-occupied with sparrows and hairs, but that he can keep track of everything in the universe.**

Be assured there is not a single rogue molecule in the universe – he keeps track of sparrows, people, and nations and nothing escapes his attention.

***Job 34:14 If God were to take back his Spirit and withdraw his breath, 15 all life would cease, and humanity would turn again to dust.***

God is the creator and sustainer of all that exists – “He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

Words matter and as we study the scriptures it becomes increasingly evident that God means every single word that he gave us.

## The Two Great Commandments

No surprise here – the two great commands are to love God and love our neighbors. In fact, Jesus said that “on these two commands hang all of the law and the prophets”.

In other words, if we would just obey these two commands we could (theoretically at least) ignore all the rest.

If you examine the Ten Commandments (also known as the Decalogue) you will see the following:

- The first 4 are all about loving God, and the last 6 are all about loving our neighbors.
- While the Decalogue provides more details, the two great commands really give us the entire law.

**If I take obedience to God seriously, the two great commandments will keep me busy the rest of my life.**

We could probably agree that love is an important issue in the bible and in our lives, so is it any wonder that love is the point of the two great commandments?

We are even told in 1<sup>st</sup> John 4:8 that God is love. In other words, all that God is, and all that God does is loving – if you want to see love, look at God. (Jesus is the objective evidence of this)

When we come to our opening text for this class, we will see that the subject of the two great commandments is love.

We gravitate to love; we all want to be loved, and we have some ideas as to what love is. Today, we will try to expand upon what we know about loving God and loving others.

### The Context

***Matthew 22:34 But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. 35 One of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, testing Him, 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."***

As for the context of Matthew 22, we need to understand the goal of the religious leaders of Jesus' day was to eliminate him.

It is Wednesday of "passion week" and the hatred of Jesus by his enemies has reached its crescendo. The problem his enemies had was that the people were still with Jesus and still had high hopes that he was Messiah.

Jesus' enemies were not focused on whether he was Messiah or not – they should have been, but they were so blinded by the threat he posed they could see nothing else.

**Jesus threatened their status, their position, and their income – they had a great business inside Judaism by offering sacrificial animals for sale in the temple.**

They were highly regarded as "spiritual" men, and well thought of in their communities. Let it sink in that the Jewish religious leaders were nearly all frauds – they had no interest in whether Jesus was the Messiah or not.

Let this also sink in – these men who claimed to speak for God were showing they had no faith, and no interest in the things of God.

**Their interest was just power, prestige, and money.**

Jesus' teaching was contrary to their teaching, he was more popular than they were, and he had power that they did not possess.

He had just entered the city a couple of days prior to this and was given a king's welcome.

The Pharisees and Sadducees decide to try to discredit him in the eyes of Rome and the people.

To discredit him among the people they would try to prove that he is teaching things that contradict Moses.

To discredit him with the Romans they would try to get him to look like a rebel who wants to lead an insurrection and become the King of the Jews.

His enemies, the Jewish religious leaders, meet and come up with a strategy to try to accomplish one or perhaps both above.

They decide quiz Jesus in the public square and try to force him to answer weird questions – the hope was to trip him up.

They are going to ask him about paying taxes to Caesar, and then about some woman who had seven husbands and whose wife she would be in the resurrection.

**They think the questions are so complicated that he will look foolish in his answers.**

***Matthew 22:15 Then the Pharisees went and plotted together how they might trap him in what he said. 16 And they sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth,***

*and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any. 17 Tell us then, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?" 18 But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, "Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites? 19 Show Me the coin used for the poll-tax." And they brought him a denarius. 20 And he said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" 21 They said to Him, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's." 22 And hearing this, they were amazed, and leaving Him, they went away.*

**Question #1 comes from the Pharisees and Herodians about paying taxes to the Roman government.**

The Pharisees were the conservative theologians of the day who believed the entire old testament, believed in the resurrection, and the veracity of the scriptures.

The Herodians were the semi-religious members of Jewish leadership who were more interested in having influence under Roman rule than anything spiritual.

They wrongly assume that he would say "no, don't support the corrupt Roman government", but that was not his answer at all.

**His answer was that we should "render to Caesar what is his and render to God what is His". (Brilliant!)**

Jesus' answer was the coin bears Caesar's image and should be submitted to him, and people bear the image of God and need to submit to Him.

**Question #2 comes from the Sadducees, is theological in nature, and it reads like this ....**

*Matthew 22:23 On that day some Sadducees (who say there is no resurrection) came to Jesus and questioned Him, 24 asking, "Teacher, Moses said, 'If a man dies having no children, his*

*brother as next of kin shall marry his wife, and raise up children for his brother.’ 25 Now there were seven brothers with us; and the first married and died, and having no children left his wife to his brother; 26 so also the second, and the third, down to the seventh. 27 Last of all, the woman died. 28 In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had married her.”*

The Sadducees asked a question about the resurrection of the dead – something they did not even believe in.

And it is a crazy hypothetical that would be unlikely to ever happen and so they probably thought they had dreamed up the perfect trap question.

**Again, Jesus’ answer was brilliant and even one that would divide his enemies – Pharisees versus Sadducees.**

*Matthew 22:29 But Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.”*

His charge against the Sadducees was they were not just wrong, but wrong for a very bad reason – they didn’t “understand the scriptures nor the power of God.”

He is saying, “you who think you know so much, are simply ignorant”.

At this point both the Sadducees and the Pharisees are frustrated and probably embarrassed – because in all their craftiness, they were made to look foolish.

Bear in mind that the Sadducees and Pharisees did not agree on many things.

The Sadducees accepted only the Pentateuch and the Pharisees believed all the Old Testament plus a lot more that they themselves added as requirements of the law.

**Question #3 is another theological question, but this time is not just A QUESTION, but it is perhaps THE QUESTION!**

*“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”* By this time in history the Pharisees had grown the law beyond the decalogue and the Levitical ceremonial law.

Jesus’ answer could not have been more perfect. In fact, there would not have been an honest Jew among his opponents who would have disagreed.

And he said to him, ***“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” 38 This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”***  
(Matthew 22)

So just like the “render to Caesar” answer, and the “you are ignorant of the scriptures” answer, this one is even more compelling.

He has now effectively thwarted this three-pronged attack and left his enemies speechless. (literally, muzzled, and unable to speak)

**Matthew 22:34 “But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees”.**

**Matthew 22:46 “nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask him another question.”**

The “law” as the Pharisees of Jesus’ day knew it had grown to 613 laws – one for every Hebrew letter in the words of the Ten Commandments.

365 negative ones and 248 positive ones – and they had also divided “the law” into heavy laws (important ones) and light laws (less important ones)

The light laws were semi-optional for obedience, but the heavy ones were not.

*Matthew 23:4 They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger.*

Compare that to Matt 11:30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

The Pharisees loved to lay unbearably heavy restrictions on their followers for the express purpose of causing them to fail.

**(failure = sacrifice = money for the Pharisees)**

Suffice it to say at this point that the Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, and scribes all had reasons for wanting Jesus dead. These groups rarely worked together except in cases like this one where, “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”.

***Psalm 2:2 The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, 3 “Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!”***

What these religious leaders did was wrapped in stupidity and evil of the highest order.

They beheld the Messiah, the very one who could save them, and decided temporary power and position trumps eternal consequences.

***Acts 2:22 “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through him in your***

***midst, just as you yourselves know— 23 this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put him to death.”***

**What it means to love God and love our neighbors.**

To love God is an old commandment and one that many Jews of Jesus' day recited two times every day.

***Deuteronomy 6:4 “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”***

This passage was known to the Jews as the “shema” (hear) and this was Jesus’s answer to the “which is the greatest commandment” question.

In Luke’s account Jesus also added “mind” to the equation of how we are to love God.

*Luke 10:27 And he answered, “You shall love the lord your god with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.”*

In some respects, these words are all interrelated and hard to separate so we will include them all.

**The Greek word for “heart” in Luke 10 is “kardia” and from Strong’s Concordance we see these meanings for the word in our text.**

- The center and seat of spiritual life
- The soul or mind, as it is the fountain and seat of the thoughts, passions, desires, appetites, affections, purposes, endeavors
- Of the understanding, the faculty and seat of the intelligence
- Of the will and character

**The Greek word for “soul” in Luke 10 is “yuch” (psoo-khay) and from Strong’s Concordance we see these meanings for the word in our text.**

- The seat of the feelings, desires, affections, aversions (our heart, soul etc.)
- The (human) soul in so far as it is constituted that by the right use of the aids offered it by God it can attain its highest end and secure eternal blessedness, the soul regarded as a moral being designed for everlasting life
- The soul as an essence which differs from the body and is not dissolved by death

**The Greek word for “mind” in Luke 10 is “dianoia” (dee-an’-oy-ah) and from Strong’s Concordance we see these meanings for the word in our text.**

- The mind as a faculty of understanding, feeling, desiring understanding
- Mind, i.e. spirit, way of thinking and feeling
- Thoughts, either good or bad

**The Greek word for “strength” in Luke 10 is “iscuj” (is-khoos) and from Strong’s Concordance we see these meanings for the word in our text.**

- Strong’s #1411 – power, natural ability, general and inherent
- Strong’s #1753 – working, power in exercise, operative power
- Strong’s # 1849 – primarily liberty of action; then authority – either as delegated power, or as unrestrained, arbitrary power

**There is a general theme from the three words for HEART, SOUL, and MIND. The meaning of STRENGTH (MIGHT) does not carry the same theme as the others.**

The general theme that I see is that of the will of man and how what we call our will is tied directly to our heart, soul, and mind. Strength does come to bear in the exercise of our wills.

This ties in neatly and securely with scriptures like the one below.

***1<sup>st</sup> John 2:3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep his commandments. 4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but whoever keeps his word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 6 the one who says he abides in him ought himself to walk in the same manner as he walked.***

We have exegeted these verses in 1<sup>st</sup> John before and found that the English translations can cause confusion as to the test of our faith John cites.

**If we take the English literally, then the only ones who know Christ are the ones who obey him perfectly.**

Since we know that no one keeps his commandments perfectly, then John must have meant something else.

The Greek word that comes over to the English as “keep” is the word “tereo” and it means to guard by keeping an eye upon something.

When John writes, “if we keep his commandments” he is not implying that we can keep them, but he is stating that if we are saved, we will keep our eyes on his commandments with the intent of obeying them.

**So, in the end, our love for Christ is proven by our willingness to obey Him, and not by how perfectly we do so.**

“Let the measure of my Christian life be about the direction of my efforts to obey and not about the perfection of my obedience.”

Unknown

When we think about keeping the two great commandments what do we think about?

Do we think, “I want to be a Christian, but I wish God would allow us to steal, or to covet, or to commit adultery and still be in good standing with Him?”

If that is our mindset, we are not interested in loving him and we are not born again. I am not making a claim that if we are saved, we will not be tempted in those areas – on the contrary, we are.

What I am claiming is that a person with a new nature understands he is frequently tempted to disobey, but would never want God to lower, or to change his standard.

*1<sup>st</sup> John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not burdensome.*

When we are saved, we do not see obedience to God as some obligation we wish we did not have.

In fact, a believing person has a real and genuine desire to obey God in all points – It is how we would prefer to live.

**Believers do not see obedience to God as some odious, wish it weren't so, circumstance of our lives – it is what the believing heart, soul, and mind wants.**

As for loving our neighbors as ourselves – this too becomes what we want to do. It is a spiritual by-product of our new life in Christ.

There are two parts to this equation – loving other Christians and loving all others.

***1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:9 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.***

Clearly, born again people are given a desire to love other born-again people – we have a familial affinity for them.

The unbelieving people are sometimes harder to love because we do not have a God given desire for their company as we do for Christians. This becomes a point of obedience for us that we would will to love the unlovable because we know it pleases God.

***Romans 13:8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.***

We are to love all mankind because all are made in the image of God and are therefore worthy of our love which must be expressed in right and just treatment.

**Remember, love is not some squishy feeling, it is treating others as you would have them treat you.**

This takes us back to my previous point that believers do not wish that God would change his standard or remove his commands.

The command to love our neighbors is no different in that respect – we do not wish it weren't so. If we are wise, we will see the command to love our neighbors as something healthy for us and one that builds our testimony.

It is harder to love others than it is to love God because he is totally deserving and the “others” in our lives are not.

**It becomes a matter of the will, and at this point let us be reminded that LOVE is a VERB.**

My love for God or others should not be measured by my feelings, but by my actions.

**Obedience to the Two Great Commands will require us to engage, not our feelings and emotions, but our wills.**

**Our feelings and emotions may well follow after our will to obey, but they will not precede – love is a verb!**

When it comes to people, even other Christians, we should not expect that we would feel all warm and fuzzy about everyone. Especially not in this life where we are still encumbered by the flesh with lots of rough edges and annoying personalities.

So don't even try to fake that you are all "gushy" over everyone – but do treat them all right. If I give you a hug and wish you well, but do not treat you well, is that love?

**The "Good Samaritan" did not say the beaten man was his buddy. The scriptures tell us he had compassion on him and went out of his way to care for him and he even spent money on this total stranger.**

Our obedience in loving our neighbors goes to how I deal with others and not about how I feel about them.

**We should not ignore the incredibly high standard that Jesus instituted when he said, "love your neighbor as yourself".**

It is one level of treatment when we treat others in a just and equitable fashion. It is a completely different level of obedience to treat others as ourselves.

In fact, to be honest, I am not sure we can reach the standard of loving others as we love ourselves unless the standard is the “golden rule”.

When we say, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”, are we not simply restating the 2<sup>nd</sup> great commandment with different verbiage?

***Mark 12:32 The teacher of religious law replied, “Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth by saying that there is only one God and no other. 33 And I know it is important to love him with all my heart and all my understanding and all my strength, and to love my neighbor as myself. This is more important than to offer all of the burnt offerings and sacrifices required in the law.” 34 Realizing how much the man understood, Jesus said to him, “You are not far from the Kingdom of God.” And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.***

## The Will of God

**“The word of  
God is the will  
of God.”**

**Warren Wiersbe**



**The ten commandments are the will of God.**

**The two great commandments are the will of God.**

**The great commission is the will of God.**

**The entire Word of God is the Will of God.**

**God has a sovereign will that cannot be thwarted, stopped, or changed.**

*Psalm 33:8 Let all the earth fear the Lord; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. 9 For he spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. 10 The Lord nullifies the counsel of the nations; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. 11 The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of his heart from generation to generation.*

***Isaiah 46:9 For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure';***

***Psalm 135:6 Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.***

There is a sense in which God's will is always done because he has the power to bring about his purposes. God also has a will for each person, and that will is often not done – so how are we to reconcile these two facts?

Fortunately, our failures do not have the power to thwart the sovereign will of God – his purposes will be done with or without our cooperation.

**God does what he wills while allowing us to make our choices within his will.**

Then he takes all our choices, melds them into his sovereign will, and brings to pass that which he desires in our lives and in the world.

In many respects it is not complicated, and it is not difficult to find and to know his will – it takes obedience to do his will, but his will is not hidden.

God is not sitting on his throne watching to see how long it will take you find his will as though he has hidden it like parents hide Easter eggs for their children.

God has a will for you, he has made it quite plain, and he wants you to know it and do it. In fact, that is the whole of the Bible – that mankind might know and do God's will.

Do not fall for the idea that God's will is somehow not enjoyable, and not something that you would choose for yourself.

The will of God is anything but that – it is that which when done becomes a great treasure to us, and something that we are glad to embrace.

***Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.***

Some think that God’s will is found only through circumstances like it is something that is hard to see and seldom found.

Do not look for the will of God in your circumstances – like preferring Chinese food and thinking that is your call to the mission field in the Far East.

While circumstances may play a role in your discovery of God’s will, they are not the primary source for finding his will.

Do not try to find the will of God by randomly selecting Bible passages because even from the Bible you could get bad advice!

- “and Judas went out and hanged himself”
- “go and do thou likewise”
- “what thou doest, do quickly”

Finding the will of God ought not be thought of as something that only an elite few find. Finding and doing the will of God is not just something for pastors, missionaries, and a few other “Navy Seal” type Christians.

**Finding and doing his will is for every believer.**

If God has a will for your life, you can be sure that he made no attempt to hide it from you.

Furthermore, we can be sure that if he has a will for our lives, we are accountable for finding it, and he is not interested in keeping

it from us. So where is the most likely place to look for his will – our first and best resource is his Word.

**These Things are the Will of God for all of mankind.**

It is God's will that you be saved – that you repent and come to Christ for salvation.

***1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:3 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.***

***2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.***

In fact, you can have none of his will for you until you are first saved and born from above.

Until we are made alive in Christ, we are incapable of responding to God - until we are saved, we are dead in our sin and dead people cannot look for or find anything.

***Ephesians 2:1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.***

It is God's will that you be filled with the Holy Spirit.

***Ephesians 5:17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.***

It is the will of God that you be filled with the Spirit of God and live under his control.

When Paul tells us to “**be filled with the Spirit**” he used a commonly understood metaphor that all the Ephesians would have understood – drunkenness.

When one consumes enough alcohol, all inhibitions are gone, and the person is often completely different because they are under the control of the alcohol. That metaphor is an apt description of the person who is filled (controlled) with the Holy Spirit.

It becomes rather easy to see why being under the control of the Holy Spirit is what God wills for us. For it is when we are controlled by him that we most emulate the attitudes and actions of Jesus Christ.

We ought not think of the Spirit-filled life as something that is weird or eccentric unless you think that Christ-like living is weird and eccentric.

**Ephesians 5:18 Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, 19 singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves and making music to the Lord in your hearts. 20 And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 21 And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.**

It is God's will that you be sanctified.

*1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:1 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. 2 For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the*

*Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you.*

In a broad sense Paul is telling us that it is God's will that we be sanctified, and he focuses on sexual sins in particular.

**"For this is the will of God, your sanctification;"**

Perhaps he is pointing out that it's God's will that we be sanctified and that sexual sins will be the biggest battle for many of us. (especially men)

Biblical sanctification is when God sets the believing sinner apart for his use and purposes.

***Hebrews 10:10 For God's will was for us to be made holy (sanctified) by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time.***

**Sanctification is instantaneous (positional) and it is also progressive (practical) as we learn little by little to obey God.**

**We can say with scriptural authority that it is God's will that we be saved, filled, and sanctified.**

In fact, it is these three that form the foundation for the will of God to take root in every area of our lives. Furthermore, these three also form the basis for a lifetime (and an eternity) of God's blessing.

### **The Ultimate Will of God**

**The ultimate will of God for all believers is that we be like Jesus!**

***Romans 8:29 For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to become conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brethren.***

The model is Jesus and God has predestined the believer to be pressed into that very same mold.

We should distinguish between terms like his “ultimate will” (that we be like Jesus) and his “specific will” for us.

The “ultimate will” of God for us (that we be like Jesus) is the same for each and every Christian, no exceptions.

The “specific will” of God for each believer is a subset of his “ultimate will”, varies for each Christian, and seems to be organized around our time, talent, and treasure.

**Some perspective at this point – the will of God is far more about who you are than it is about what you do, who you marry, where you live, or what career you choose.**

We can be even more bold – you can marry the wrong person, choose the wrong career, and live in the wrong place and still do the will of God.

You may miss some blessings, but you will not miss his ultimate will if you do whatever you do in a Christ-like fashion.

***Colossians 3:17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.***

***Colossians 2:23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.***

When we work like Jesus and for Jesus we are doing the will of God.

If God has called you to pastor, but you end up being a computer programmer who is Christ-like, you may have missed his specific will for your life, but all is not lost.

Conversely, suppose God has called you to pastor, and you serve as a pastor, but do not pastor in a Christ-like fashion, then much is lost.

Again, finding and doing the will of God is **more about who you are** than it is **about what you do**.

### **The Specific Will of God**

God has a specific will for your life that involves a specific mate, a specific career, and so on, but if you miss his specific will all is not lost if you embrace his ultimate will.

By embracing the call and the challenge to be like Jesus you can have confidence before him at the Bema Seat even if you miss his specific will for your life.

***1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in his steps.***

Here are two examples in scripture of men for whom God had a very specific will that began to be realized even before birth.

***Jeremiah 1:5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."***

***Luke 1:15 For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. 16 And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God.***

To find God's specific will for your life you need to know yourself – while we rarely know how much time we have left we ought to know what our talents and treasures are. God's specific will for your life will always involve the assets he has lent to you. (take inventory of both your spiritual gifts and natural talents)

Doing God's will almost always involves employing the assets he has loaned to you in a fashion that pleases Him.

How can one have assurance that we have found and are doing God's will for our lives?

**Rule #1:** God's will never contradict his word.

**Rule #2:** *Colossians 3:15* "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts" – The Greek word for "rule" is the same one from which we get the English word, "umpire". If you do not have peace with a decision, don't move forward with it.

**"When in doubt, don't!"**

Unknown

**What about a fleece, didn't Gideon hear from God using a fleece?**

*Judges 6:36 Then Gideon said to God, "If You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken, 37 behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I will know that You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken." 38 And it was so. When he arose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece, he drained the dew from the fleece, a bowl full of water. 39 Then Gideon said to God, "Do not let Your anger burn against me that I may speak once more; please let me make a test once more with the fleece, let it now be dry only on the fleece, and let there be dew on all the ground." 40 God did so that night; for it was dry only on the fleece, and dew was on all the ground.*

I would never tell you to shun laying out a fleece because I have seen them answered, but I would tell you that Gideon's fleece was completely unnecessary.

God had already sent an angel to Gideon to assure him that God would help him to conquer the Midianites.

**We should never lay out a “fleece” for things that God has already revealed to us in his word.**

It is clear from scripture that if anyone wants to know the will of God that all we need to do is ask.

*James 1:5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*

James 4:2 (we don't have because we don't ask) essentially says the same thing – just ask!

**I do believe in the “open and closed door” line of thinking for finding the will of God.**

*1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 16:8 But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; 9 for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.*

*Acts 14:27 When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.*

*Matthew 25:14 “For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. 15 To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. 16 Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. 17 In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. 18 But he who received the one talent went away, and*

*dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. 19 Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them."*

We all know how this parable ends – the servants were expected to handle their resources wisely and in accordance with their master's will. They were called to account to the master for the various resources they were each given.

**Their resources were different, but they were all held to the same standard of "what did they do with what they were given".**

**"Wanting your own will over God's will reveals an underlying desire to be your own God!"**

Unknown

### **Doing the Will of God**

*Psalm 143:10 Teach me to do Your will.*

*Psalm 119:10 With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments.*

**David did not ask God to show him his will – he asked him to help him do the will of God. Like us, David did not need help finding the will of God, it seems he needed help in doing the will of God.**

Some additional perspective for us to consider -

*Philippians 2:12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

We are commanded to do the will of God, but not expected to do his will without his help.

We do not fail to do the will of God because we do not know it – we fail to do the will of God because we don't want to! Anytime we are not walking in the Spirit we are walking in the flesh and the flesh is always at odds with God's will.

**Jesus taught his disciples (and us) to pray for the will of God to be done, “thy kingdom come, thy will be done”.**

*Mark 3:35 For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother. (we prove we are saved when we consistently love and do the will of God)*

*1<sup>st</sup> John 2:17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.*

*John 6:38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of him who sent Me. 39 This is the will of him who sent Me, that of all that he has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”*

- **When we obey the ten commandments, we are doing the will of God.**
- **When we obey the two great commandments are doing the will of God.**
- **When we obey the great commission, we are doing the will of God.**
- **When we are walking in the Spirit, we are doing the will of God.**

**The Freedom God's Will Brings**

***Psalm 37:4 Delight yourself in the Lord; and he will give you the desires of your heart.***

The Hebrew for “delight” is “anag” and literally means to make soft, make pliable – the application is that we will be easily molded to the will of God.

*Psalm 37:4 has nothing to do with wishing for sports cars, and everything to do with God creating in us desires for the things that are best for us so that we will want what he wants. 😊*

As a practical matter here is the freedom that comes from obeying the will of God.

**If you are saved, sanctified, and filled** you can marry whoever you want because you will only want the kind of person that God wants for you.

**If you are saved, sanctified, and filled** you can work at whatever career you want because you will only want the kind of career that God wants for you.

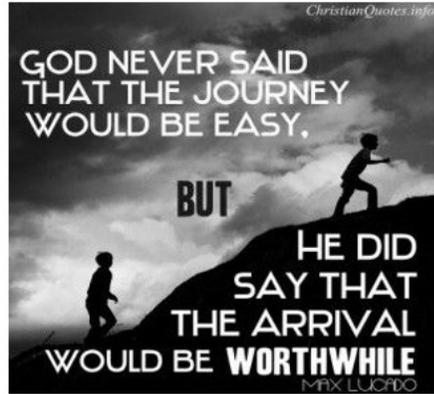
**If you are saved, sanctified, and filled** you can do whatever you want because you will only want to do what the things that please God.

**“Obedience to God’s revealed truth guarantees God’s guidance in the matters that are unrevealed.”**

Greg Laurie

## The Means of Grace

Our lives in Christ are given in an instant and known as the new birth, but they are developed over time as God sanctifies us.



God promised his word would be a “light unto our path” indicating that we are on a journey. *Hebrews 13:14 For this world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come.*

As we pass through this life, we ought to have a sense of moving and being changed into people who are like Jesus – that happens both instantaneously and slowly.

**We are changed in an instant when we receive Christ. We are literally re-born.**

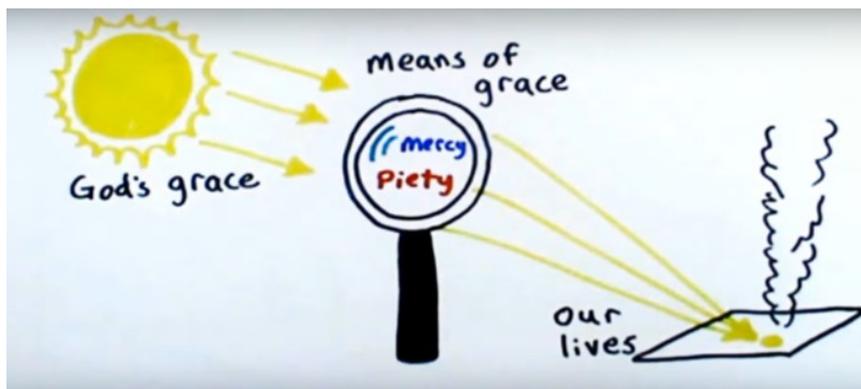
We go from death to life instantly, but we do not go from who we were to who we will be as quickly. That happens as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the process known as sanctification.

What John Wesley called “**the means of grace**” we would readily recognize as the common ways that God injects grace into our lives.

Scripture does not supply us with a list of these means, but they are all rather common to us. What we want to avoid is treating as common, the extraordinarily uncommon effects of his grace operating in our lives.

In the drawing below please notice the increase in the sun's power when it is focused through a lens closer to the object.

This is very much like what happens when the power of the SON is focused through us who are closer to HIS ministry objects.



***John 14:12 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father."***

The analogy is imperfect at best, but it does show that the power of a distant object like the sun, when focused more locally, can be intensified through a more local object.

John Wesley, the so called "inventor" of the term "means of grace" literally meant "the means to an end". What end? The end being that kind of life that experiences and grows in the grace of God.

Both Peter and Paul admonish us to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

If grace is something we are to "grow" in, then there must be more to the grace of God than the saving grace he extends when he saves us.

This is even more evidence that our salvation is not limited to a single transaction that provides us with a ticket to heaven. In fact,

if we think that salvation is merely a ticket to heaven, then we probably do not have a ticket.

And if there is more to his grace than a ticket to heaven, and if we are to grow in it, then there must be a way to do that.

What John Wesley had in mind was those things that God uses, mostly through his Holy Spirit operating in us, to inject his grace into us and our ministries.

**When we speak of “the means of grace” we are speaking of the sometimes ordinary and common things God uses to help us grow in Christ.**

Wesley divided his “means of grace” into two categories –

- **Works of Piety** – things we do to grow in our love for God.
- **Works of Mercy** – things that we do to express God’s love to others.

His two categories “works of piety” and “works of mercy” also just happen to fit nicely with The Two Great Commandments.

*Matthew 22:37 And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”*

**Works of Piety includes things like –**

- Bible Reading
- Prayer
- Worship
- Service
- Fellowship with Believers

## Works of Mercy includes things like –

- Visiting the sick
- Feeding the hungry
- Helping the poor
- Providing clothing to those in need
- All helps to others

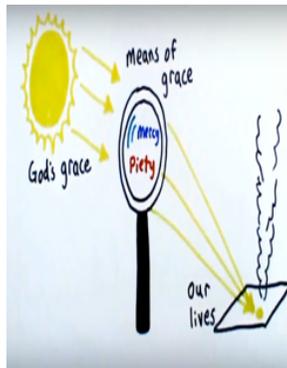
We ought not to think of any of the preceding as means to salvation, but as means of expressing what God has done in us.

When we do the things that express our love for God, he is a part of that and whether we are praying to God or serving others we experience his grace and grow as believers.

If God is not doing something in us, then what confidence could we possibly have that we know Him?

## The Means of Grace

- If we go back to our magnifying glass example, think of the magnifying glass as housing the “means of grace”.
- It is when the love of God is focused on our world through the “means of grace” that His power is manifest.
- God’s power isn’t in the “means”, but it is focused and realized through them.



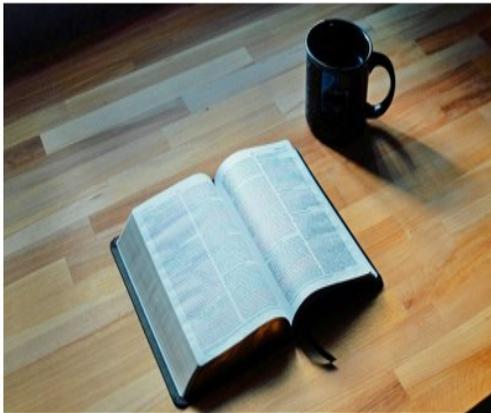
## Works of Piety

(things we do to grow in our love for God)

**Bible Reading** – there is nothing magical about the Bible, but the Bible is a supernatural book with a supernatural author who wants to do supernatural things in us.

***Romans 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.***

I do not know how it works that the Bible changes us, but I know for certain that it does.



• ***Do not do this!***

• Stop reading your Bible for a month and tell me about your thoughts, your desires, and your attitudes. ☹️

• ***Do this!***

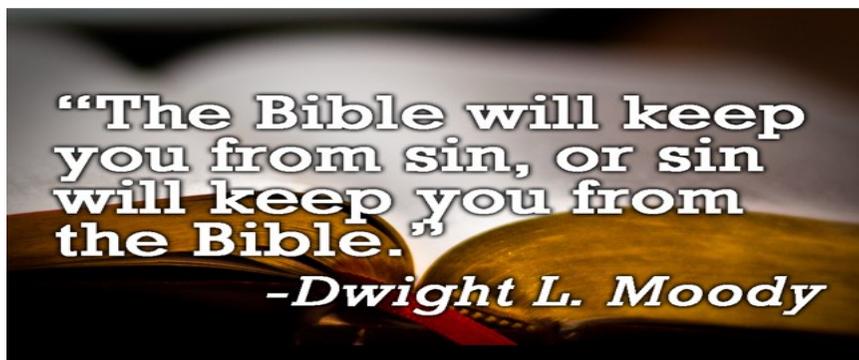
• Read your Bible for a month and tell me about your thoughts, your desires, and your attitudes. 😊



***Matthew 4:4 But he answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"***

If we are to live by every word that comes from God, then we will need to read the Bible to know how to live. Bible reading by the

Christian must be more than a good idea, or wise advice – it must be an imperative.



**Prayer** – at its core, prayer is communication with God.

No relationship ever got stronger by communicating less – even Jesus, the Son of God thought it necessary to pray to his Father. When we pray, we open our very souls to God in ways that allow him to pour in his grace.

Pray the promises of God – not that he needs to be reminded of them, but we do!

***Deuteronomy 29:29 "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."***

Rehearsing the things that God has promised builds our faith and will always exalt Him.

***Hebrews 13:5 For he Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you," 6 so that we confidently say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?"***

***Psalms 37:25 I have been young and now I am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his descendants begging bread.***

***Romans 8:1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.***

When the disciples saw that Jesus was a praying man they said, “teach us to pray”. Jesus’ model prayer was not lengthy, not self-centered, and not so intellectual that the common person would not understand.

The “Lord’s Prayer” (actually the disciple’s prayer) is short, just 75 words, it is to the point, and can be repeated at any time and still be relevant.

Prayer time should not be treated as just “the time when I ask for things”, but equally as the time when I hear from God.

It’s not that we can’t or don’t ask for things, but if we are wise, getting our needs met would always begin with “what does God want to do in me?”.

We all say we want to be mature believers – well praying is a big step to maturity.

**Worship** – in our day many have fallen for the trap that worship is mostly about music, but music is but one way to worship God.

Of all the times you’ve heard the style of music in our church services discussed, how many times was the conversation centered around what God wants?

To our shame, that discussion is almost always centered around what we want, or perhaps what would visitors want.

***Romans 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.***

We should think of worship as all the acts of service and attention we offer up to God. Whether I am speaking or silent, active, or still, leading or following, the potential for worship is in all of those.

***Psalm 116:12 What can I offer the Lord for all he has done for me? 13 I will lift up the cup of salvation and praise the Lord's name for saving me. 14 I will keep my promises to the Lord in the presence of all his people.***

We've considered the self-exaltation of God in other classes and how that benefits the entire universe. If God would not tell us of his utter greatness, how would we know? But now that we know, what will we do with what we know about God?

***Isaiah 46:9 Remember the things I have done in the past. For I alone am God! I am God, and there is none like me.***

If the self-exaltation of God benefits the entire universe the same can then be said for the words of exaltation, we offer. When God is exalted, when God is made known, no matter the vessel of proclamation, all the universe benefits.

When we hear ourselves exalt Him, we benefit by the confidence praising him instills in us.

***John 4:21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be his worshipers. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."***

Worship him according to his word, with the help of his Spirit.

**Doxologies in scripture -**

- *Romans 16:25 Now to him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, 26 but now is manifested,*

*and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; 27 to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.*

- *Ephesians 3:20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, 21 to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.*

**Service** – when we serve others in Jesus’ name God is present and will pour his grace into us.

*Philippians 2:12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

If it is God at work in us, we can be certain of his grace upon us, and upon the work we are doing. Doing service for Christ is expected of us and will always involve other people.

***Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.***

***Mark 9:41 For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as followers of Christ, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward.***

Serving others is great validation for the purpose of spiritual gifts. All spiritual gifts are given for the purpose of serving others.

**1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6 There are varieties of effects, but the same God who**

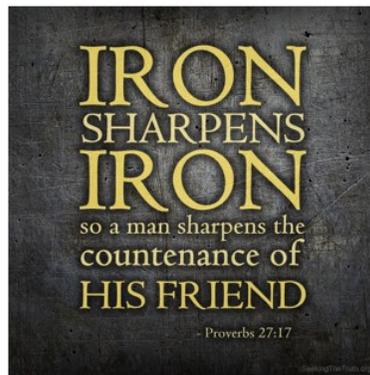
works all things in all persons. **7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.**

**Fellowship with Believers** - In Jesus' high priestly prayer found in John 17 he prays twice that we would be "one"; and that does not happen unless we are together.

Our faith is built up when we come together because we see we are not alone.

How much confidence would you have in your faith if you came to church some Sunday and you were the only one who showed up?

- We can learn from each other and grow as believers when we get outside of the echo chamber of our own minds.



Fellowship is a misunderstood word – many Christians use it almost exclusively to describe the times when we get together for food and fun.

The word is best used to describe how we participate with God and how he participates with us.

It is the Greek word “koy-nohn-ee’-ah” and it literally means “partnership”, “participation”, and “fellowship”. When we are doing things that allow us to participate with God, then he is at work in us.

God cannot participate in works of darkness.

***1<sup>st</sup> John 1:6 If we say that we have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but***

***if we walk in the Light as he Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.***

This is what makes ministry effective – when God is at work in and through us.

***Philippians 2:13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.***

***Isaiah 26:12 Lord, you establish peace for us; all that we have accomplished you have done for us.***

**Works of Mercy  
(things that we do to express God's love to others)**

Unless our “works of mercy” are coupled with our “works of piety” we will be like all the unsaved who volunteer in their communities. We may help alleviate suffering for a moment, but the goal of our works of mercy should be to reveal God to the world.

**Let it be our goal to link our good works with our good Savior.**

*Matthew 25:34 “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; 36 naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ 37 Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? 38 And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 39 When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ 40 The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent*

*that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.”*

There are almost no limits to the things we can do for others that would express God’s love for them.

If you have a talent, a skill, a resource, or whatever – it can probably be turned into a ministry when surrendered to God.

Just look at the variety of Christian ministries that are available – and the sole purpose of these ministries is to show the love of God to others.



There is a local ministry in my area called Perhaps Today Ministries International. It is a Christian Spiritual counseling service where the clients are asked to donate in the amount of their choosing. For this reason, help is always available.

The founder has an ability to see through life situations and offer wise Biblical counsel. This ministry was started because the owner saw a need, had the vision and capacity to meet the need and is using her spiritual gifts given by God.

And then there are people like my friend Joe – Joe is a Christian with lots of natural abilities to fix things. When Joe is driving the

highway, he looks for people who have broken down along the road and need help.

He stops, does what he can to remedy the situation, and then makes sure the stranded motorists associate his stopping to help with the Savior he serves.

**The list of ways Christians can show the love of God to the world around us is limited only by our imaginations.**

Every one of us have both natural and spiritual gifts and talents that are given to us to use.

**At the Bema, our evaluation will be about “what did you do with what you were given?”.**

## The Holiness of God

**“God’s holiness is not simply the best we know infinitely bettered. We know nothing like the divine holiness. It stands apart, unique, unapproachable, incomprehensible and unattainable. The natural man is blind to it. He may fear God’s power and admire His wisdom, but His holiness he cannot even imagine.”**

A.W. Tozer

**If your idea of the “Holiness of God” does not make you tremble over your own spiritual condition, then you have no idea as to how holy he is!**

**If seeing his holiness more clearly does not cause some self-examination, then you are not seeing his holiness.**

In our day we have professing Christians referring to God as “the man upstairs”, “our buddy”, and other frames of reference that show our utter ignorance of Him.

Moses, Job, Paul, and Isaiah all had the sense that God’s very presence could consume them, and they were all changed.

When we come into his presence, we had better show respect, and we would be wise to come with fear and trembling for he is not safe!

Let us state a working definition of what the “holiness” of God is so that we are all on the same page.

You cannot go to a verse and say, “here we have the scriptural definition of God’s holiness”. It is not any one thing that he is or does. It is his total otherness, or separateness.

The holiness of God is the sum total of all that he is and all that he does – he is altogether perfect and therefore all that he is, and all that he does, comprise his holiness.

**When referring to the holiness of God, the holiness definition takes on a much richer meaning. God's holiness is his defining characteristic. The holiness of God is a term used in the Bible to describe both his goodness and his power. It is completely unique, and utterly all-powerful, radiating out from God like an energy. In fact, God's holiness is so overwhelming, that it can actually be dangerous to approach. (from the Bible Project)**

**“We must be holy, because this is the only sound evidence that we have a saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

**J.C. Ryle**

I heard a youth pastor claim to have had an encounter with Jesus in a vision wherein Jesus asked him for forgiveness. The young man was hurt by a former pastor, and he claims that Jesus stepped up and took responsibility for the pastor's sin.

**This sort of nonsense stems from ignorance of a holy God.**

There will be no such foolishness of speech regarding the person of God when we stand before Him. Not at the BEMA and certainly not at the Great White Throne judgment.

***1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.***

Mark 4:39 And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. 40 And He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" 41 They became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" NASB



When Jesus stilled the storm and brought his disciples out of their peril, they did not immediately thank him and high five one another –

**On the contrary they became of afraid – no longer afraid of the storm, but now much more fearful of being in the presence of God.**

To be so close to so much power and authority evokes in them a proper response – they became fearful in the good sense of the word and were no doubt worshipful as well.

This incident on the sea is evidence of the veracity of the gospel accounts of Jesus' life and ministry. People do not tend to invent gods who are more terrifying than the violent storm they sought protection from.

The disciples were not trying to invent a god of their own making – they were merely reacting to being in the presence of such all-encompassing holy power.

***Exodus 15:11 "Who is like thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, majestic in holiness, terrible in glorious deeds, doing wonders?"***

The Hebrew word translated “terrible” in the above verse, is a word that literally means to cause fear, to frighten.

As was said in the classic Lewis tale, “The Lion The Witch and The Wardrobe” – “Aslan is good, but he is not safe!”.

“The greatest test of whether the holiness we profess to seek or to attain in truth and life will be whether it produces an increasing humility in us. In man, humility is the one thing needed to allow God’s holiness to dwell in him and shine through him. The chief mark of counterfeit holiness is lack of humility. The holiest will be the humblest.”

Andrew Murray

It is certain that we cannot know all there is to know about his holiness, but we can certainly know more than we do.

**It is precisely his holiness, his “otherness” that makes him the most compelling figure in all the universe.**

For now, the unsaved often revere Jesus as a teacher or whatever, but they will bow and worship him when he is revealed in glory.  
*(Revelation 1:17 When I saw Him, I fell at his feet like a dead man)*

### **Isaiah’s Vision of God**

Some believe that Isaiah was perhaps the greatest prophet of ancient Israel. Isaiah prophesied during some very turbulent times in which the Northern Kingdom was taken captive and the Southern Kingdom was attacked and nearly conquered. His time also coincided with great spiritual and moral decline in both Israel and Judah. In Isaiah’s day, there was a king in Judah by the name of Uzziah.

Uzziah started out right but got sidetracked with pride and after 52 years of serving as king, Uzziah died. Many in Judah had never known any king but Uzziah and the security and well-being of the people was generally thought to be tied to the king.

But now their beloved king was dead and with the Northern Kingdom already falling into the hands of the Assyrians the people were uneasy. As God's prophet, Isaiah was expected to have a message for the people from God. Isaiah receives exactly such a message that would not only disturb the people of Judah, but Isaiah himself.

***Isaiah 6:1 In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of his robe filling the temple. 2 Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of his glory." 4 And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. 5 Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. 7 he touched my mouth with it and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven."***

"The sudden realization of ruin was linked to Isaiah's mouth. He cried, "I am a man of unclean lips." Strange. We might have expected him to say, "I am a man of unclean habits," or, "I am a man of unclean thoughts." Instead, he called attention immediately to his mouth. In effect he said, "I have a dirty mouth." Why this focus on his mouth? Perhaps a clue to Isaiah's utterance may be found in the words of Jesus when He said that

it's not what goes into people's mouths that defiles them; it's what comes out of their mouths that defiles them."

R.C. Sproul

When we see "Lord" in the old testament as we do in Isaiah 6:1, we are seeing the Hebrew word, "Adonai" and this word has reference to God's sovereignty.

Their king of 52 years is gone, the nation has been attacked, and the people are in distress – so when Isaiah says he has seen the "sovereign" King of the universe how refreshing would that message have been!

Yes, they lost Uzziah (their sovereign king), but they now have a fresh vision of the Sovereign of the Universe!

**"I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of his robe filling the temple."**

Isaiah sees the Sovereign, he is on his throne, his throne is lofty and exalted, and he is of such great power and importance that the train of his robe fills the entire temple of Heaven.

Furthermore, there are angels attending to the Sovereign of the Universe and when the Seraphim shout "holy, holy, holy" the very foundations of the temple quake. (see also Revelation 4:8)

Isaiah's vision of God must be among the most encouraging visions ever, and the most terrifying ever at the same time.

In The Revelation of Jesus Christ, we see some very impressive and holy revelations of God as well, but those visions are mostly visions of Jesus in judgment.

Terrifying yes, but in Isaiah's vision he is completely undone due solely to the holiness of God – God does not even mention judgment, he just is!

Please try to take this in – God says nothing, God does nothing except to allow Himself to be seen and the most righteous man in Israel comes apart.

This is the prophet of God who would have been thought to know God better than perhaps any other Israelite and when he sees God he is changed.

Job had a similar experience, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You; Therefore, I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.”

Notice Isaiah’s response – he has no casual “hi, God, good to see you” moment, but quite the contrary. Isaiah is not at all flippant and hip as we so often see in today’s church – flip and hip would be the last thing on our minds if we really saw God.

Isaiah, sees now for the first time the God he has represented, worshipped, and spoken for – and he is shaken.

And for the first time in his life, he will see God in a completely different light that allows him to know more of God than he ever knew before.

**“For the first time in his life Isaiah really understood who God was. At the same instant, for the first time Isaiah really understood who Isaiah was.”**

**R.C. Sproul**

Isaiah must have thought something like, “I knew you were awesome, but I did not know just how awful you are!” (play on words intended)

Look at what Isaiah says when he is given this vision of God in all his glory on his throne.

**“Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.”**

This is probably the most spiritual man in Israel – he is the premier prophet of God in his day, he has delivered important messages from God, and all he can do is condemn himself!

To pronounce a woe upon himself was to curse himself – he now sees himself not compared to other people but compared to God and in his own words he is “undone”. (in the KJV)

Could this be why there is pride in the church? Because we see ourselves as relatively holy compared to other people, whom we selectively choose to measure ourselves against.

*2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 10:12 “but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, **they are without understanding**”.*

When we see the holiness of God our sins will be illuminated in ways that we never experienced before. That is why the disciples were afraid, that is why Paul was humbled, and that is why Isaiah was undone.

**We have yet to realize the vastness of space between even our redeemed selves and God – it is a great, great, chasm!**

Those who stand before the Great White Throne will not protest their eternal punishment but will agree that God’s sentence for them is just.

The books will be opened as a matter of justice, but they will not be necessary as the glory of God will show the sins of the unsaved as clearly as day.

There will be no protests of their punishment, perhaps even praise for the One who sits on the throne – he is that holy!

**Isaiah is learning the lesson we all need to learn – that God is holy, and we are not!**

And yet we read this in Hebrews, “Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.”

**Do you see THE problem? Do you see OUR problem?**

When we realize that God is holy and that we are not AND then couple that with his requirement that we be holy – we too should rightly be “undone”.

This should shake us to our core and cause us to “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!” 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:5

***2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:21 he made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.***

Habakkuk had a similar experience as Isaiah – he all but demands that God answer his questions.

He even ponders what he will say back to God when he doesn’t get the answer he wants from Him.

***Habakkuk 2:1 I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart; and I will keep watch to see what he will speak to me, and how I may reply when I am reproved.***

Then God answers and Habakkuk is in a much humbler (humiliated) state.

***Habakkuk 3:1 God, I’ve heard what our ancestors say about you, and I’m stopped in my tracks, down on my knees. Do among us what you did among them. Work among us as you worked among them. And as you bring judgment, as you surely must, remember mercy.*** The Message

Now instead of plotting his next move, he is praying for mercy.

**“In the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures God carries forward His self-revelation and gives it personality and moral content. This awful Presence is shown to be not a Thing but a moral Being with all the warm qualities of genuine personality. More than this, He is the absolute quintessence of moral excellence, infinitely perfect in righteousness, purity, rectitude, and incomprehensible holiness. And in all this He is uncreated, self-sufficient and beyond the power of human thought to conceive or human speech to utter.”**

A.W. Tozer

That the world has little respect for God is seen by the way his name is treated. Very little honor, no reverence, and no awe before him – often just casualness at best.

From the texts we’ve already seen it is more than obvious that when God is seen and heard from, things happen in us that overcome our shallow thoughts and shallow worship.

One day the “glass darkly” will become transparent and we will cry out, “holy, holy, holy”.

Never do we read that God is light, light, light; or truth, truth, truth; - the only attribute of God that is extended to the superlative degree is his holiness.

This is because when we speak of his holiness, we are speaking of the sum total of all his attributes and all that he is and does. It would be impossible to overstate the importance and the impact of his holiness in all matters.

In response to the disciples’ request of Jesus to “teach us to pray” Jesus actually begins with the holiness of God. Hallowed means, “to make holy”.

**According to Jesus, when we pray, we should start out by recognizing of the holiness of God.**

Perhaps Jesus is telling us that all prayer ought to begin with an understanding that we are communicating with the God who is utterly other than anyone or thing ever known.

He is in fact the author and creator of all things known and as such he stands so far above his creation that no comparisons can ever do justice to who he is.

Hebrews 7:26 *“who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens”*.

**“A recent survey of people who used to be church members revealed that the main reason they stopped going to church was that they found it boring. It is difficult for many people to find worship a thrilling and moving experience. We note in Isaiah 6, when God appeared in the temple, the doors and the thresholds were moved. The inert matter of doorposts, the inanimate thresholds, the wood and metal that could neither hear nor speak had the good sense to be moved by the presence of God. The literal meaning of the text is that they were shaken. They began to quake where they stood.”**

### **Unknown**

Our world wants to be entertained, but what they need is to see God for who he is and that he is no small entity, and certainly not boring.

When Moses met God, when Job saw God, when the disciples saw the sea calmed, and when Paul saw Jesus, they did not need anything more than him to be changed.

His very presence was all they needed to be moved – God needed nothing more than to be seen.

If the “people” of God are bored at the idea of worshipping him the only sensible, rationale, and logical conclusion to such a notion is that we do not know Him!

No one in the bible, when confronted with God in his holiness was ever bored. God is in fact the ultimate pleasure in the Universe – how could that ever categorize him as boring?

Our shallow understanding of God’s holiness may be the reason for our shallow worship and disregard for God.

We seem to seek him mostly for what he can do for us while assuming he will just accept whatever we offer him and be satisfied. (God does not have to settle)

Without an understanding of God’s holiness, we are doomed to be half-hearted servants of him at best.

**“The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man’s spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God.”**

**A.W. Tozer**

### **We Unconsciously Fear Holiness**

Xenophobia is the fear of strangers – and because we have made God so obscure (and thereby strange) mankind has a xenophobia of God.

The experience we have of the holy is so strange because we are not holy, and we become afraid. Like the disciples on the sea, and Peter at the dock, we are afraid of the Holiness of God because we are unfamiliar with him!

**We are both attracted to, and terrified by, holiness.**

The scariest radio program of the 1940’s and then later the TV program of the 1950’s was a show called “Inner Sanctum”.

“Inner Sanctum” actually means “within the holy” and very few of the listeners and viewers ever knew that they were being drawn in by a spiritual reality.

Mankind knows we need holiness, and we often want to see a glimpse of it, yet at the same time it terrifies us. This also applies to our personal walk with Christ – we are told in James 4:8 to, ***“Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.”***

In our relationship with Christ, it is never he who backs away or recedes, it is always us. When we pull back from Him, it is because while we have an affinity for his holiness, we have a fear of it as well.

You could say that like the TV viewer of Inner Sanctum wanted a glimpse of the “scarey” but not too much, we behave in a similar fashion. We want enough of him to be assured of heaven and have his blessing but getting too close terrifies us.

It’s a good thing to want Him, and a healthy thing to realize that he is good, but he is by no means safe!

Could the state of today’s church be our failure to disclose and make much of God’s holiness?

May God have mercy on us for every time we’ve failed to make much of Him.

# Spiritual Gifts

## Categories of Spiritual Gifts

**There is no consensus on the # of spiritual gifts.**

**These are the 18 that I can identify from scripture.**

<b>Gift</b>	<b>References</b>	<b>Category</b>
Apostle	Ephesians 4	Office
Evangelist / Evangelism	Ephesians 4	Office
Pastor	Ephesians 4	Office
Prophet / Prophecy	Ephesians 4 and 1st Corinthians 12	Preaching/Teaching
Teacher / Teaching	Romans 12; Ephesians 4	Preaching/Teaching
Administration/Leadership	1st Corinthians 12:28	Service/Support
Encouragement/Exhortation	Romans 12	Service/Support
Giving	Romans 12	Service/Support
Mercy	Romans 12	Service/Support
Serving / Helps	Romans 12; 1st Corinthians 12:28	Service/Support
Discerning of spirits	1st Corinthians 12	Supernatural
Faith	1st Corinthians 12	Supernatural
Gifts of Healing	1st Corinthians 12	Supernatural
Working of Miracles	1st Corinthians 12	Supernatural
Tongues	1st Corinthians 12	Utterance
Interpretation of Tongues	1st Corinthians 12	Utterance
Word of Knowledge	1st Corinthians 12	Utterance
Word of Wisdom	1st Corinthians 12	Utterance

From the list of spiritual gifts identified in scripture on the previous slide, there appears to be categories of gifts.

I see 5 categories of spiritual gifts, OFFICE, PREACHING/TEACHING, SERVICE/SUPPORT, SUPERNATURAL, and UTTERANCE gifts. (these categories are not found in scripture they just help me to keep them straight)

One category of gifts is not more important than another – they are just different in their effect and in how they operate.

*1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6 There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. 7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as he wills.*

*Romans 12:4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; 8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

*Ephesians 4:11 And he gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*

The gift of teaching is interesting in that it could be categorized as a SUPPORT gift or as an OFFICE gift.

Some believe that in Ephesians 4, the last two office gifts are really just one, Pastor-Teacher. I categorize teaching as a PREACHING/TEACHING gift because that is how it seems to be known.

### First Principles

**The Bible gives no definition to spiritual gifts - we are not told exactly what each one is except to go to the original language and study.**

No where do we see a means of detecting most of them in a person except to say that we will know them when we see them in operation.

They are real, they are important for ministry, but they also hold a certain mystery for us.

When you were born the first time, physically, you came equipped with certain natural gifts, talents, and abilities.

*Psalm 139:13 You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. 14 Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it. 15 You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. 16 You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.*

If God recorded and laid out every day of our lives before, we were born, then surely his plan included the abilities needed to carry out his plan for our lives.

When he writes about us being made “wonderfully complex” it is quite probable that he was referring to abilities like music, mechanics, mathematics, and so on.

Indeed, the life of every person bears out that we've been given gifts, talents, and abilities that are unique to everyone in their combination.

At our second birth, when we are born again, we are given additional gifts that are spiritual and are for ministry. Every Christian is then equipped with at least one spiritual gift chosen for him by the Holy Spirit.

***1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as he wills.***

Even though none of us get to choose our spiritual gift(s), rare is the one who has a gift they would not have chosen for themselves.

This makes perfect sense – the One who put us together in the dark knows us better than we know ourselves and that is why all of his gifts seem “fit” us perfectly.

The one with the “helps” gift loves to help, and the one with “leadership” loves to lead, and so on ....

Both types of enabling's, natural and spiritual, are given so that we can serve others. (Gifts are for service)

***1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6 There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. 7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.***

A common, but misguided assumption is that our spiritual gifts, the ones given at our 2<sup>nd</sup> birth, are somehow superior to the ones we were given at our natural birth.

They are not superior, but they are evidence of a new creation with new abilities. If we were not born again, we would have no spiritual gifts.

God provided both the natural and the spiritual – when our natural gifts are surrendered to the power of the Holy Spirit, they can be just as effective in ministry as the spiritual gifts.

Also notice this phrase, **“the manifestation of the Spirit”**.

Not only are the gifts for the common good of the body of Christ, but they are the “manifestation” of the Holy Spirit.

When the church is operating using the gifts, we are making known the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. (gifts are for the exaltation of God)

Again, spiritual gifts are not superior to natural ones – neither is of any value to the kingdom unless it is used under the power of the Spirit of God.

God is the source of natural and spiritual gifts, so both types are good and can be effective for ministry.

Whether it’s a natural born mechanic serving a single mother by fixing her car, or a someone who has a “helps” gift watching her kids, ministry is taking place.

As was seen earlier, there are 3 lists of the spiritual gifts given to us – Romans 12, 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4.

There is some overlap of the lists, but not much and since no one list is comprehensive some conclude there is an unlimited number of spiritual gifts.

While this is possible, we should be careful about what we label as a spiritual gift that the Bible does not identify as such.

Some claim that musical ability is a spiritual gift – if someone has musical ability and uses it under the control of the Holy Spirit it can be effective for ministry whether it was given at the person’s natural or spiritual birth.

That said, if the person had musical ability before salvation, then it is a natural gift and not a spiritual gift. It is still from God, and can be used for ministry, but it is not a spiritual gift.

**To make matters even more murky there is not a consensus among evangelical theologians as to the exact number of spiritual gifts.**

Add to that, that some seem to be somewhat transient, like “gifts of healing” where one may have a gift of healing to be used just one time. Likewise, the Word of knowledge, Word of Wisdom, and Working of Miracles all seem to be somewhat transient.

For example, if someone has the gift of helps that person can always help, but the gift of a “Word of Knowledge” does not seem to work that way.

Someone who has the gift of teaching can always teach, while a “Word of Wisdom” cannot be summoned on command.

Someone with a gift of leadership can always step in and lead, but where is the person who can work a miracle at will? We should not feel that we discredit the Bible or what it is to be a Christian when we say that the “gifts” do not all work alike.

It is self-evident that some of the “Supernatural” gifts operate differently than the “Service” and “Office” gifts. To claim otherwise is to ignore the evidence of scripture and experience.

### **Finding Your Gift**

There are no scriptural formulas to help us find our gift(s).

A test or survey may point you to your natural proclivities, but they do not identify spiritual gifts. In my opinion the only way to find your spiritual gift(s) is to go try the things you are drawn to.

I believe it is as simple as this – God constructed you in your first birth and orchestrated your second birth. Who better to know

what you are equipped for naturally, and what spiritual gift(s) would be best suited to you?

***Romans 12:2 Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.***

The will of God for your life will always include your gifting – and Paul tells us his will is “good and pleasing and perfect”.

So, my advice for finding your gift is to go try the things you are drawn to and see how it goes – people will tell you when you are effective.

If you think you might have the give of exhortation and you try to encourage others, what is the worst that can happen if it turns out that exhortation is not your gift?

#### R.B. Chapman on Spiritual Gifts

- They are not to promote personality.
- They are not to show supposed spirituality.
- They are not for excessive emotional enjoyment.
- Gifts are to arrest the attention of the apathetic.
- Gifts are to convince the critical and the cautious.
- Gifts are to manifest the divine dynamic.
- Gifts are to give great glory to God.

#### Office Gifts

**Apostle** - This office (gift) of being an apostle no longer exists. There were only 12 apostles. (Revelation 21:14)

A few churches are “apostolic” in that they teach what the apostles taught. To be an apostle, one must have seen the resurrected Christ and been commissioned directly by Him.

**Evangelist** - One with an affinity for evangelism, and an ability to make the gospel clear and urgent.

Evangelists are given the unique ability by the Holy Spirit to communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ clearly and effectively to others.

They are burdened in their hearts for the lost and will go out of their way to share the truth with them. Evangelists can overcome the normal fear of rejection and engage non-believers in meaningful conversations about Jesus.

**Pastor** - One who is called to and loves to lead and oversee a group of believers. The Greek word for pastor is Poimen and simply means shepherd or overseer.

In the Biblical context, shepherds had several different responsibilities to their sheep and ultimately, to the owner of the sheep. They kept a lookout for predators and protected the sheep from attackers. They cared for wounded and sick sheep, nursing them back to health. They rescued them if they became lost or trapped.

Pastors are called shepherds because their calling and gifting are much like those who care for sheep.

### **Preaching / Teaching Gifts**

**Prophet** - One called to speak forth the Word of God, expose sin, and call for righteousness. (most pastors have this gift or a teaching gift)

The spiritual gift of prophecy is an extraordinary and unique gift. Paul says in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:1 to *“Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.”*

This gift is a blessing to the church and should not be quenched or despised (1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:20). Those who have the gift of prophecy differ from the Old Testament Prophets who spoke the

authoritative Word of God directly. Many of them were give words from God about things to come.

**Teacher** - The one with a teaching gift has a supernatural ability to make the scriptures clear to others. (some pastors have this gift)

The Greek word for those with the spiritual gift of teaching is didaskalos. From the root of this word we get our English word, "didactic." The word didasko means to teach, instruct, instill doctrine, explain, and expound. Those with the spiritual gift of teaching love to study the Word of God for extended periods of time.

Teachers hate when Scripture is abused and used out of context or with ill intent. They love the truth and speak the truth in love. They will never hide or withhold it.

### **Service / Support Gifts**

**Administration (leadership)** - One who can steer and lead through chaos, with special God given insight and foresight.

The Greek word for the spiritual gift of administration is "Kubernesis". This is a unique term that refers to a shipmaster or captain. The literal meaning is "to steer," or "to rule or govern."

It carries the idea of someone who guides and directs a group of people toward a goal or destination.

**Encouragement (Exhortation)** - One who is called to come alongside another to encourage and exhort them. (coach and cheerlead)

The gift of exhortation is often called the "gift of encouragement." The Greek word for this gift is "Parakaleo". It means to beseech, exhort, call upon, to encourage and to strengthen.

The Spirit of God gives this gift to people in the church to strengthen and encourage those who are wavering in their faith.

Those with the gift of exhortation can uplift and motivate others as well as challenge and rebuke them to foster spiritual growth and action.

**Giver** - One who gives generously with no strings attached and is usually a good steward of resources as well.

The Greek word for the spiritual gift of giving is “Metadidomi”. It simply means “to impart” or “to give.” However, this word is accompanied in Romans 12:8 by another descriptive word: “Haplotes”. This word tells us much more about the kind of giving that is associated with this gift. The word “Haplotes” means “sincerely, generously and without pretense or hypocrisy.”

The Holy Spirit imparts this gift to some in the church to meet the various needs of the church and its ministries, missionaries, or of people who do not have the means to provide fully for themselves.

**Showing Mercy** - One who is empowered to be patient and compassionate with the hurting.

The Greek word for the spiritual gift of mercy is “Eleeo”. It means to be patient and compassionate toward those who are suffering or afflicted.

The concern for the physical as well as spiritual needs of those who are hurting is covered by the gift of mercy. Those with this gift have great empathy for others in their trials and sufferings. They can come alongside people over extended periods of time and see them through their healing process.

**Serving (Helps)** - People with this gift eagerly make themselves available for whatever needs to be done.

The spiritual gift of service, or ministering, covers a wide range of activities in its application. There are two Greek words for this gift. The first one, found in Romans 12:7, is “diakonia”. The basic

meaning of this word is “to wait tables,” but it is most often translated in the Bible as “ministry.” It refers to any act of service done in genuine love for the edification of the community.

The word “Antilepsis” is translated “helping” and is found in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:28. It has a similar meaning of “to help or aid in love” within the community. The Holy Spirit endows some believers with this gift to fill the many gaps of ministry and meet the needs of the church as it fulfills the Great Commission.

### **Supernatural Gifts**

**Discerning of Spirits** - The person with this gift can know if a message is from God or the devil.

The spiritual gift of discernment is also known as the gift of “discernment of spirits” or “distinguishing between spirits.” The Greek word for the gift of discernment is “Diakrisis”. The word describes being able to distinguish, discern, judge, or appraise a person, statement, situation, or environment.

In the New Testament it describes the ability to distinguish between spirits as in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:10, and to discern good and evil as in Hebrews 5:14. The Holy Spirit gives the gift of discernment to enable certain Christians to clearly recognize and distinguish between the influence of God, Satan, the world, and the flesh in each situation. See also 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:10, Acts 5:3-6; 16:16-18; 1<sup>st</sup> John 4:1.

**Faith** - The person with this gift is given special faith by God to pray for others believing God will meet the need(s).

The spiritual gift of faith is not to be confused with saving faith. All Christians have been given saving faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), but not all receive this special gift of faith.

The Greek word for faith in the New Testament is “Pistis”. It carries the notion of confidence, certainty, trust, and assurance in

the object of faith. The gift of faith is rooted in one's saving faith in Christ and the trust that comes through a close relationship with the Savior.

Those with this gift have a trust and confidence in God that allows them to live boldly for him and manifest that faith in mighty ways. The Holy Spirit distributes this gift to some in the church to encourage and build up the church in her confidence in God. See also 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:9, Hebrews 11:1-40.

**Gifts of Healing** - The one with this gift prays regularly for the sick and hurting; believing God will heal. Healing never happens at our command, but at God's pleasure.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:9 refers to "gifts" of healing in the plural, which may indicate that there are different gifts of healing. The gifts of healing could mean a very wide range of skills or abilities. This could be from the power to do miraculous or dramatic healing, like making the lame walk, or the use or understanding of medicine. It could even be the ability to empathize and show love to others to the point of healing an emotional wound.

There is no guarantee that a person will always be able to heal anyone he or she desires. It is subject to the sovereign will of God, as are all spiritual gifts. Those who have this gift are compassionate toward the sick and pray over them regularly.

**Working of Miracles** - This gift is given to one for an event, or occasion wherein God exerts his power to do supernatural things. (Peter's shadow healings, raising the dead, etc)

The spiritual gift of miracles is described in Scripture much like the gift of healing. It is found in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:10 and the Greek phrase "energemata dynameon" literally translates "workings of powers." The double plural most likely means that these gifts were diverse and were not permanently available at the will of

the gifted believer, but instead were bestowed at various times and circumstances.

Thus, the gifts are subject to the divine will of God and his purposes which are not decided by the one who performs the miraculous works. Miracles were given by God to the church to reveal the presence and glory of Himself among his people and to create a sense of awe, wonder, and Godly fear.

### **Utterance Gifts**

**Tongues (languages)** - The one with this gift can speak languages he has never learned - the gift is given for events, times, and missions.

The spiritual gift of tongues is more accurately called the gift of languages. The Greek word for tongues is “glossa”, which literally means “tongue.”

When it is used in the New Testament addressing the subject of spiritual gifts it carries the contextual meaning of “languages.” Speaking in tongues can be the utterance of prayer or of a message glorifying God, typically spoken to God (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:2), in a language that is unknown to the one speaking it.

The Holy Spirit gives some believers the spiritual gift of tongues to glorify God and, with the help of an interpreter, to edify the church.

**Interpretation of Tongues** - One with this gift can understand languages one has never learned and is given as needed to the church.

The spiritual gift of interpretation of tongues is found alongside the gift of speaking in tongues in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:10.

The Greek word for interpretation is “hermeneia” and simply means to interpret, explain, or expound some message that is not able to be understood in a natural way. Thus, this spiritual gift is

the supernatural ability to understand and explain messages uttered in an unknown language.

**Word of Knowledge** - to know things you have not previously learned. God given knowledge about spiritual truth.

The spiritual gift of knowledge is also known as the “word of knowledge” or “utterance of knowledge.” The Greek word for this gift is “gnosis” and it simply means knowledge and understanding.

The Scriptural emphasis in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:8 is on the ability to speak this knowledge to others in a given situation.

The gift of knowledge allows a believer to relate the Scriptures, and particularly the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to all aspects of life in this world.

They can see how it connects to every situation and circumstance and how the reality and truth of the Gospel is to inform every decision a Christian makes. See also 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:8; Romans 15:14; 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 2:14.

**Word of Wisdom** - A person with this gift can help others apply the Word of God to their lives and the lives of others in a special situations.

The spiritual gift of wisdom, like the gift of knowledge, is also referred to as the “word of wisdom” or “utterance of wisdom.” The Greek word for wisdom is “sophia” and it refers to the intimate understanding of God’s Word and his commandments which results in holy and upright living.

In the context of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:8, it means to speak to the life of an individual or to a specific situation with great understanding and a righteous perspective, with the goal of guiding others toward a life of holiness and worship.

## More on Spiritual Gifts

I believe that every believer receives at least one gift from the Holy Spirit at salvation that enables that person to do things well that they were not able to do prior to salvation.

Please, please find and use your spiritual gift – remember the parable of the 5, 2, and 1 talents, and the accountability that is seen in that parable. God takes stewardship seriously.

*Matthew 25:24 "And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. 25 And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.'" 26 "But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. 27 Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. 28 Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.'"*

Much of the contention between the Pentecostal wing of the evangelical church and the non-Pentecostal wings is around this one question –

Did the some of the gifts cease to be normative with the Apostles?

Pentecostals are non-cessationists meaning they believe all the gifts continue today just as in the time of the New Testament. They believe the gifts did not cease.

People in the non-Pentecostal wing of the evangelical church almost universally believe in miracles, healings, and even tongues – they just do not see them as normative for today.

We must ask – at what point are our differences so sharp that we must break fellowship?

Your friends in the other camp (Non-Pentecostal or Pentecostal) will have to ask the same question and, just like you, they will have lots of good reasons for believing as they do.

What harm does it bring to us if our brothers and sisters in Christ do not see the gifts as we do?



I suspect that most who will read my Bible School Curriculum are already believers in Jesus Christ, but on the off chance you have never considered the claims of Christ, I will present some evidence here.

- 1) Jesus told us himself he was the Son of God.
- 2) There is lots of evidence for the resurrection.
- 3) It is intuitive to all that we are accountable to someone.
- 4) While some claim to be Atheists, they are not.
- 5) We all know we sin and that God hates sin.
- 6) God is holy and cannot abide the presence of sin.
- 7) God sent his Son to bear our punishment on the cross.
- 8) He bought our redemption with his blood.
- 9) Redemption is available to all by faith in Jesus.
- 10) Whoever believes Jesus is the Christ is born of God.

The jailer in Acts 16 asked Paul, “What must I do to be saved?” and Paul’s answer was not pray this prayer or do this kind of penance. His answer was, “**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.**”

If you want to be saved from the consequences of your sin and live a life that glorifies God and helps others then I urge you to turn from your sin, believe on Jesus, and tell him as much. The Holy Spirit will take up residence in you and teach you what to do next, but here are some of the basics.

- 1) Start reading your Bible every day.
- 2) Find a good church where you can worship God.
- 3) Pray about everything.
- 4) Do good deeds.

No one is saved by good deeds, and we don’t do good deeds to be saved, **we do good deeds because we are saved**, and they prove that we are. **Finally, you might ask, “saved from what?” – the answer is saved from the wrath of God.**