



Behold The Lamb

Publications

Simply Christ

Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

Volume IV

*Twelve Gospel Messages from our
Weekly SIMPLY CHRIST Newsletter!*

A Simple Gospel

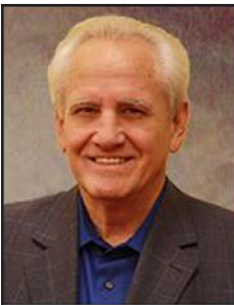
When God reveals something to you it never makes you feel as though you are the smartest person around. Usually you are left wondering why you had never seen this before. You may say to yourself: “A child could have understood this. Why have I been blind to it for so long?” True revelation from God is as though you just discovered that $2 + 2 = 4$. The thing God reveals becomes so simple that you feel as though every one else should understand it also.

“...thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” Matthew 11:25

At times the gospel is presented in a fashion that resembles a person attempting to prove that $2 + 2 = 5$. A person may spend their entire life seeking to understand what is being presented to them, but never seem to be able to grasp it. Some may come to the conclusion of themselves that they are just not “smart” enough to understand it. “Why does it make sense to everyone else besides me?” We need to consider that sometimes things do not because make sense because they simply **DO NOT MAKE SENSE!**

The purpose of Simply Christ and other Behold the Lamb

Publications is to share the gospel of Christ according to what the scriptures actually say. We dare not attempt to “put a square peg in a round hole” or make the scripture say something other than what God has said.



Leroy Surface



Keith Surface

As a young man I was told by an elder minister that I should just accept what the leaders of “our movement” told us was true rather than believe what I saw the scriptures to be saying. I chose to believe that the word of God is true. Anyone that will do the same will find the gospel of Christ to be a simple message with the power to make everyone who believes it ...free indeed!

Simply Christ

Gospel Newsletter

Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

Volume IV

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HEARING GOD'S VOICE

"God wanted to write his law in the hearts of the people, but their hearts were so hard he had to find a softer material. So he found two tablets of stone." God would later say, *"But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone..."* Zechariah 7:12. An adamant stone is a diamond. Their hearts were so hard, not even God could write upon them.

The great promise of the New Covenant is that God puts his law in our *"inward parts"* and *writes it in our hearts*. Jeremiah 31:33 Hebrews 8:8-11. This speaks of the divine nature and new heart we receive when we are born of God. Sin is no longer a part of who we are because righteousness is written in every part of our being. Those who believe the gospel and trust in Christ obtain the righteousness that no one can obtain through the keeping of a commandment. Romans 9:30-32.

Before God could write his New Covenant in us, he had to do something about the hardened heart of humanity. He spoke through the prophet, saying, *"I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."* Ezekiel 36:26. A *"heart of flesh"* is simply the human heart as God originally made it to be. It is not hard, but tender, so he can speak to it and write upon it whatsoever he desires. It is a heart that can be moved by God's Spirit and will listen to God's voice.

The promise Israel never received because of the hardness of their hearts is offered to the children of God today. God said, *"...if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation."* Exodus 19:5-6. This promise has a two-fold contingency. We will be a *"peculiar treasure," "a holy nation,"* and *"a kingdom of priest"* IF we obey his voice AND keep his Covenant. The Covenant is kept by faith. We believe the gospel and trust in Christ and the result is God's Covenant is written in our heart and nature. If we abide in Christ we will keep the covenant and the Covenant will

keep us. But if we are *“moved away from the hope of the gospel”* Colossians 1:23, we will find that righteousness ceases to be our heart and nature.

Obeying God’s voice is the other contingency of God’s great promise. It is a corrupt and damnable thing for anyone to believe that because they are “saved” they can ignore the voice of God. Anyone who takes such a course does so to their own destruction. God speaks in many different ways. He often simply moves upon the hearts of his people. To obey, you simply follow what God puts in your heart. At times God will speak through the scripture. Things you have read many times suddenly become alive to you and it seems to reach out and take hold of you. Walk in the light of his word.

The apostle writes of another way God speaks to his people. He said *“...the Spirit speaketh expressly...”* I Timothy 4:1. In this Paul speaks of how God speaks distinctly by the Holy Ghost. This is not a feeling or an enlightenment. It is the clear voice of the Spirit of God. If he speaks to you, obey his voice! We live in a day where seemingly countless multitudes go about saying “God told me.” I am convinced that relatively few of these have ever actually heard or know the voice of the Spirit of God.

I cannot conclude this message without a warning concerning those who want to be the voice of God to you. Personal prophecy has become one of the deadliest snares the people of God are being led into in our generation. Under its guise, people all around the world are brought into bondage to unclean spirits and so called prophets and prophetesses who seek authority and dominion over the lives of God’s people. There are true gifts of prophecy, but it never comes to control or order the lives of God’s people. When Israel rejected God’s voice and asked Moses for a law, they did it to their own destruction. In the same way, if you ignore the voice of God within, you may find someone who is willing to be the voice of God to you through personal prophecy. If that happens, it will destroy you also.

Nothing in the New Covenant will work for you if you refuse to hear the voice of God. The apostle Paul reminds us *“To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as (Israel did) in the provocation...”* Hebrews 3:7-8. Do not let yourself get to the place that it is easier for God to write on stone than to move upon your heart.

THEY DIED IN FAITH

There are two most important things every believer should know about Abraham. First, *“Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”* Romans 4:3. Second, Abraham died in faith without receiving the promised redemption that he saw afar off. Hebrews 11:13.

If we believe the testimony of the scripture, we know that although Abraham was justified by faith, this justification was not the same as the salvation that comes to the believer through Jesus Christ. Paul includes Abraham when he says, *“AND THESE ALL, having obtained a good report through faith, RECEIVED NOT THE PROMISE: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”* Hebrews 11:39-40. Although justified by faith, Abraham went to the grave without that precious thing we know as *“salvation.”* He, and the other patriarchs of old, would not know or receive this great salvation until it was provided for us through the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Those who promote the idea that those who lived before Jesus came and suffered received this salvation in their lifetime by looking forward to the cross have closed their eyes to simple and plain statements of the Word of God. Paul said, *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them...”* Hebrews 11:13.

Why is this important to know and understand? Because your salvation is greater than what Abraham, David, or even Moses could ever know. Jesus said, *“Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist:*

notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” Matthew 11:11. There were many, such as Abraham, who were chosen by God because they believed God, but the redeemed are not only chosen by God, they are actually born of God. Redemption has changed the very essence of who they are. God may have walked with Abraham, but Christ lives within the children of God, and by the Holy Ghost, God himself abides in his people.

Abraham’s faith was a great thing. Out of his faith issued his obedience to God Genesis 22:18, and his righteous manner of life. Genesis 18:19. Believing God is the one thing that an unregenerate person can do that God calls righteousness. Paul said of those who *“...worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”* Romans 4:5. It was based upon this *“righteousness of faith”* that God was able to give such great promises to Abraham. Abraham found that those who believe God receive great promises which those who do not believe God can never receive.

When a lost person repents and believes the gospel of Christ they become one such as Abraham who is *“justified by faith.”* Romans 5:1-2. But this *“justification by faith”* brings them into a promise that is much more than anything Abraham ever received in his lifetime. Paul identifies this as *“Being JUSTIFIED FREELY BY HIS GRACE through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”* Romans 3:24 and as *“being now JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD...”* Romans 5:9. *“Justification by grace”* describes the work of the blood of Christ that delivers us from sin and makes us to be new creations. This is much more than what Abraham knew.

Perhaps the best description of this *“justification by grace”* is found in the sixth chapter of Romans. Paul says, *“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.”* Romans 6:6-7. The word translated as *“freed”* is the Greek word *dikaioō* which means *“to render just or innocent.”*

This word is almost always translated as *“justified.”* Properly translated, this verse says, ***“He that is dead is justified from sin.”*** This is justification by grace. God’s grace nailed our old man of sin to the cross of Christ so that our (entire) body of sin would be destroyed and we would no longer be servants to sin. This is the truth of the gospel. It is a justification that changes everything you are. This justification by grace makes you free from sin Romans 6:18 and it make you righteous. Romans 5:19.

Redemption is more than just YOU BELIEVING GOD. Redemption is the fulfillment of the promised salvation that comes to you through faith in Christ Jesus. The teaching that when we believe upon Jesus, God automatically sees us as innocent, righteous, perfect and holy is simply religious philosophy without a true scriptural foundation. When a person believes God, God sees them as ...a person who believes God. They have offered God *“the righteousness of faith”* and God responds by giving them this full salvation which was purchased by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. This salvation changes everything. In it our old man is crucified, our sin destroyed and washed away by the blood of Christ, we are born of God, and walk upon earth as the children of God. Abraham saw these things afar off, but we receive them through Christ Jesus. It was not until Christ raised from the dead that Abraham received it also. Hebrews 12:23.

THE SURE FOUNDATION

“Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”

Luke 6:46. What is your answer to this question asked by Jesus? Some may say “I try to do the things Jesus said to do, but they are too difficult to do.” Another may answer “I really want to do what Jesus said, but sin just seems to rise up and overcome me.”

It is important to see that Jesus did not ask “Why do you not want to do the things which I say?” Many people want to live for God, but find it too difficult when the storms of life come against them.

They are like Paul who recounts his attempt to serve God under the Law before he came to Christ. He said, *"For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do."* Romans 7:19. A person in such a struggle to keep the sayings of Christ, usually does not have an answer as to why they do not keep his sayings. They just know that despite all their good intentions and efforts, when they are put to the test ...they fail.

Jesus actually answered this question for us all. He said, *"But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great."* Luke 6:49. The reason someone falls when the storms and floods of life come against their experience is not because they do not attempt to keep his words, rather they are unable to keep his words because their spiritual house does not have a foundation.

It may shock some to hear that someone can receive Christ, be baptized in the Spirit of God, and even be called into the ministry, yet never have the foundation which Jesus spoke of. This is the reason so many sincere Christian people fall by the wayside, end up in sin, and ultimately lose their own soul. They never found anything to build their spiritual house upon that would stand the storms of time. This happens so often that it seems to give credence to the fallacy which says "though saved, we are still all sinners."

Jesus tells us there is a reason one person does his sayings while another does not. He said, *"Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock."* Luke 6:47-48. The difference between the one who "does his sayings" and the one who "does not his sayings" is not how much effort or determination they put into it. When the storm arises it could be said that both houses are "determined" to stand, but the house that is not built upon the rock will ultimately fall.

The gospel foundation the church is built upon, and the gospel foundation each individual in the church must be built upon is revealed in the words of Peter to Jesus: *"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."* Matthew 16:16. Jesus said of this revelation *"...UPON THIS ROCK I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* Matthew 16:18. Paul confirms this as the only foundation saying, *"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus (The) Christ."* I Corinthians 3:11. The revelation of what it means, that Jesus is *"...the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world"* John 11:27 IS the foundation, that if built upon, will stand against and overcome every storm, flood, or test that may arise. This revelation is the truth which Jesus said *"shall make you free."* John 8:32.

What is it about the knowledge of the truth that Jesus is *"...the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world"* that causes it to be such a sure foundation for the children of God? To answer this question let's take a brief look at the prophecies concerning The Christ whom God foretold would come into the world and how the scriptures relate these prophecies to Jesus.

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Genesis 3:15.

This is the first great prophecy of *"the Christ"* who would come to *"bruise the head of the serpent."* That is how you kill a snake! John shows the fulfillment of this saying, *"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that **he might destroy the works of the devil.**"* I John 3:8. Paul also confirms this as Jesus saying, *"...that **through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;** And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."* Hebrews 2:14-15. The foremost work of Christ would be to destroy the devil and his work; ...sin!

"And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen."

Genesis 22:14

This great prophecy that *"God will provide himself a lamb..."* Genesis 22:8 was taken up by John the Baptist as he cried *"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."* John 1:29. John did not say Christ takes the guilt, pays a debt, or even just takes our sin upon himself. He TAKES AWAY the sin of the world!"

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Isaiah 7:14.

The name Emmanuel means GOD WITH US. Matthew 1:23. John confirms this as Christ saying *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" ...and the Word was made flesh."* John 1:1-14. Jesus Christ is the Word made flesh who was with God and was God!

"...to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince..." Daniel 9:24-25.

We all believe Jesus made *"reconciliation for iniquity"* on the cross, but *"...the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world"* did much more than that. He was anointed *"the most Holy"* by the Holy Ghost at the Jordan River. Jesus himself confirmed this saying, *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, **because he hath anointed me** ...This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."* Luke 4:18-21. John confirms that Jesus made *"an end of sins"* saying *"And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not..."* I John 3:5-6. Paul shows that Jesus brought in *"everlasting righteousness"* saying *"...so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."* Romans 5:19.

These are just a few of the many prophecies of Christ and what he accomplished on the cross. The solid rock, the sure foundation, is that Jesus is the Christ and that he accomplished everything God foretold the Christ would do when he came into the world.

Anyone's house built upon that rock will stand when everything else falls.

HOW THE GOSPEL WORKS

Perhaps the simplest and clearest verse in the Bible to explain how the gospel works is this: *"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."* II Corinthians 3:18. Through *"beholding"* the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image. There is nothing else that can bring such a transformation. No religious work, discipleship program, indoctrination, or life principle can change you into the image of Christ. The apostle Paul said *"it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."* I Corinthians 1:21. This is why we continually declare the gospel of Christ and what he accomplished upon the cross. It is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes it. Yet only those who *"see it"* can believe it.

In God's commission to Isaiah he gave insight as to how the gospel of Christ works. God was preparing Israel for judgement so he instructed Isaiah to shut the eyes of the people *"lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed."* Isaiah 6:10. The *"eyes"* and *"ears"* spoken of here are the eyes and ears of our understanding. If our heart through *"seeing and hearing"* the gospel begins to understand the truth of Christ, our heart will convert (turn around) and God will heal us.

The voice of the Law is always the same. Every week it speaks in church houses around the world. It continually offers *"the knowledge of good and evil"* as the answer for the sin problem. If you will discern, you can hear its darkened cry. It says *"the man which doeth those things shall live by them."* Romans 10:5. This is the great *"carrot on a stick."* It is a promise that cannot be fulfilled. It offers something it can never give. Paul used Israel as its sad example, saying, *"But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness."*

Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone."

Romans 9: 31-32. They thought that by "doing" they would become righteous, but they never attained unto righteousness. They could never accept that *"...with the heart man believes unto righteousness..."* Romans 10:10.

Do not be deceived into thinking that the righteousness of faith is somehow less than the righteousness the Law promised. It is in fact the "greater righteousness" Jesus spoke of. He said *"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."* Matthew 5:20. The righteousness of the Law said *"love thy neighbor,"* but the righteousness of faith causes you to love your enemy also. Matthew 5:43-44. The "doing" of the Law may cause you to not commit adultery, but the righteousness of faith takes the sinful lust out of your heart. Matthew 5:27-28. It is the glory of this "greater righteousness" that caused Paul to count the fact that he was *"blameless...touching the righteousness which is in the Law"* to be *"but dung"* in order to *"win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:"* Philippians 3:6-9. Paul chose a righteousness that did not change only what he did; it changed everything he was!

The gospel of Christ does not give you something to do, it gives you something to see, to hear, and to believe. The blood speaks Hebrews 12:24 and we hear it say that Jesus suffered *"that he might sanctify the people with his own blood."* Hebrews 13:12. The gospel shines into our heart and we *"know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin."* I John 3:5. We believe that *"our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin"* Romans 6:6 and we know that it is so. The things the gospel of Christ declares are absolutely impossible for anyone to do or live up to, but if we "see" and "believe" it, we are changed into the same image of that which we see in the glory of Christ. It is the work of the gospel! It is the power of God unto salvation. Can you believe it? Romans 1:16.

FINDING ETERNAL LIFE

I was reading the scripture last night when I saw something that stunned me. While speaking to those who were offended because he had healed on the Sabbath and said God was his Father, Jesus told them *“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.”* John 5:38-39. Jesus’ message to these jumped out at me: YOU THINK YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE IN THE WORLD TO COME EVEN WHEN YOU DO NOT HAVE LIFE IN THIS WORLD! Immediately I thought of how many people there must be who believe they will live eternally with God, but do not possess the reality of Christ today.

Jesus spoke this to people who believed their efforts to conform their lives to the commands of the scripture gave them eternal life. They trusted that they had found wisdom in the Proverbs, righteousness in the Law, and Holiness in its rituals, yet these same people hated Jesus and sought to kill him. They had a religious form, but they had never found or received the life of God.

It almost sounds heretical to say, but *“Life is not found in the scriptures.”* Life is found only in Christ Jesus. The scriptures simply point us to where life is found. Jesus said of the scriptures, *“...they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.”* The apostle John told us where life is found, saying, *“... and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”* 1 John 5:11-12. No one has life who does not presently have Christ. Jesus said, *“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”* John 10:10. The truth revealed in this passage is that if Christ had not come, no one would have life at all. The life he gives is different and far above anything men have ever perceived life to be. It is the life of God!

The apostle Paul makes a statement that is staggering in its implications. He says, *“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God*

is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:" I Corinthians 1:30. These four things are found only in and through the person of Christ Jesus.

1. WISDOM: The true wisdom of God is not found in the Proverbs, Psalms, the Law, or the prophets. Israel had these for many hundreds of years, yet Paul spoke of them, saying, *"...their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools..."* Romans 1:21-22. *"Christ (is) the power of God, and the wisdom of God."* I Corinthians 1:24. He is our wisdom. It is not a wisdom learned. It is a wisdom received. In the new birth we received a new mind, which is *"the mind of Christ."* I Corinthians 2:16.

2. RIGHTEOUSNESS: Paul said Israel followed after the Law of righteousness but never attained unto the Law of righteousness. Romans 10:31. Anyone who seeks righteousness through religious law will achieve the same disappointing results. True righteousness comes only from Christ within. He gives a new heart and a righteous spirit Psalms 51:10 Ezekiel 36:36, and his blood cleanses us *"from all unrighteousness."* I John 1:9. His righteousness changes everything that we are. As Paul said, we are *"...made (to be) the righteousness of God in him."* II Corinthians 5:21. You will never attain unto righteousness if you are not *"made righteous"* Romans 5:19 by the work of Christ. Yet the promise of this redemption says *"...Thy people also shall be all righteous..."* Isaiah 60:21.

3. SANCTIFICATION: Jesus said *"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."* Matthew 5:8. A holy life issues out of a pure heart. Israel attempted for fifteen hundred years to become a holy nation through the precepts of the Law and failed. With all their religious grandeur, the "holiest" among them committed the greatest of abominations when they killed the Holy One of God. You will never attain holiness by striving for it. The word of God says *"Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."* Hebrews 13:12. The redeemed are not "being" sanctified neither are they striving for sanctification. *"WE ARE SANCTIFIED THROUGH THE OFFERING OF THE BODY OF JESUS CHRIST ONCE FOR ALL."* Hebrews 10:10. A holy walk is simply the fruit of being made free from sin through the work of Christ. Romans 6:22. A

person may live their life seeking to fulfill every requirement of the scripture they perceive to produce holiness, but if they never see that full sanctification is found only through the shed blood of Christ, holiness will always be something that is just beyond their reach.

4. REDEMPTION: Redemption is the act of recovering that which was lost. That which was lost in the transgression of Adam can never be recovered by human effort. All religion fails in that pursuit. Yet Christ shed his blood to redeem us *“from all iniquity”*

Titus 2:14 and redeem us *“to God.”* Revelation 5:9. Though you search the scriptures seeking redemption, if you are not led to Christ Jesus, your search will be in vain.

We should all search the scriptures daily. It is through the word of God that the unsearchable riches of Christ are revealed. He is God’s full remedy for humanity. Christ is our life! Colossians 3:4.

RUNNING WITH THE CHICKENS

“You will never soar with the eagles as long as you are running with the chickens.” I would sometimes speak this to my sons relating to their choices of friends. Imagine the pitiful life of an eagle shut up in the chicken coop. What may be a place of safety and provision for the chicken would be a place of bondage and death for the eagle. An eagle is not meant for that sort of life. An eagle is supposed to soar in the heavens! What works for the chicken will never work for the eagle.

On many occasions I have heard it said that we need ministry that deals with “where the rubber meets the road.” This is often called practical Christian living. It usually involves religious principles to live by, and endless “how to” methods to gain victory over entrapment after entrapment of this present world. While there are certainly truths to be found in such teaching, I sometimes wonder if the hearer is actually being taught how to “survive in the chicken coop.”

A child of God is a spiritual being who dwells in a spiritual kingdom. As they abide in Christ they abound in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost ^{Romans 14:17}, but if they seek to walk according to *"the weak and beggarly elements"* of this world ^{Galatians 4:9}, they wither and die. The apostle Paul was shocked by the walk of professing believers at Corinth. He asked them, *"...are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"* ^{I Corinthians 3:3}. Sin, contention, strife, along with religious rituals, works, and methods are how carnal men walk. The redeemed simply partake of Christ day by day and thrive in the goodness of the Lord.

I confess that I am a preacher without many answers. If someone comes to me wanting to receive principles or methods of how to overcome a sin or Satan, I tell them that I do not know any such principles or methods. You see when I came to Jesus Christ I was an unclean person, filled with anger and lusts, but I never learned how to deal with such things because Jesus simply took it all away. This is what he came to do. He is *"the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world."* ^{John 1:29}.

I know this sounds too simplistic to many people, but then again the gospel of Christ is a simple message. Paul warned us lest our *"...minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."* ^{II Corinthians 11:3}. Is it too simplistic to say that the blood of Jesus Christ *"...cleanses us from all sin?"* ^{I John 1:7}. The apostle John said it does. If this is true, then why does the church spend so much effort trying to teach people how to get control of, or victory over, the sin that is within them? It must be that they have never found that truth which cleanses their heart from it all. Because of this, an enormous amount of ministry is built around an attempt to teach people how to get the upper hand in a struggle with something that Christ died to simply take away. Something is very wrong with that picture.

Your spiritual warfare is NOT for your own victory over sin and Satan. That battle was won at the cross. We wrestle against principalities and powers ^{Ephesians 6:10-17} as we seek to bring Christ to those who still sit in darkness. The gospel of Christ does not teach anyone how to defeat sin or Satan so they can serve God. Rather it tells of a Savior who destroyed both the devil and sin upon his

CROSS. Hebrews 2:14, Romans 6:6. Neither does the gospel tell us how to overcome the power of darkness so we can have a victorious walk. It says God *"...hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."* Colossians 1:13. We, as children of God, do not dwell in Satan's domain. We are lifted up by God's Spirit to sit in *"...heavenly places in Christ Jesus."* Ephesians 2:6. Abiding in these heavenly places we *"...reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."* Romans 5:17. Do not seek someone to teach you how to survive in the "chicken coop" of struggling with sin, Satan, and the powers of darkness. Instead seek God for the truth of Christ that will cause you to *"mount up with wings as an eagle."* Isaiah 40:31.

THE POWER AND PRESENCE OF SIN

The apostle Paul tells us, *"...by one man (Adam) sin entered into the world..."* Romans 5:12. When sin entered, where did it reside? Did it hide in a cave? Or is sin only present in Satan himself? The apostle goes on to say, *"...by one man's disobedience many were made sinners..."* Romans 5:19. Sin entered as a great pollutant that contaminated the heart and nature of fallen mankind. No one escaped its venom. From the first child of Adam who murdered his own brother, to the most "innocent" of persons in our day, all have sinned, Jesus Christ being the only exception to that absolute truth.

What gives sin such power? Even Jesus described it as a master that dominates people like a slave master. I believe sin to be the seed of rebellion (the lie) that Adam and Eve received into their heart and nature from the Serpent (Satan). It is as a single cell of cancer that never stops spreading. There is no cure until the whole is taken away. The power of sin is in its presence. Only where sin has no presence does it have no power.

Consider these two examples: One man has wrestled with lusts for years. He has prayed, fasted, and taken every step possible to keep it subdued. There are many places he will not go, not because they are sinful places, but because the lusts within him so easily revives and begins to war in his thoughts and imaginations. So far

this man has kept himself from fulfilling the unclean desires that are within. He has never committed an act of adultery or fornication, and does not partake of pornography. This man has power over the unclean lusts that lie within him, but it is a constant battle that never ceases. In the best of times the uncleanness seems to be dormant, but it is always ready to revive and roar.

Another man does not struggle with such things. He faces the same tests of living in this world with all the opportunities for sinful acts that are common to men. He also does not commit adultery, fornication, or partake of pornography. In fact he never even desires or contemplates such things. It is just not in his heart to want or to do anything of that nature.

I cannot help but have respect for the first man. He lives every day in a battle with lusts, but he keeps himself from fulfilling the act of the sinful thing. His determination and fortitude is to be admired. Yet with all the power he exercises over the sin, he is not free from it. If at any time he lets down his guard he will fall into its darkness and shame.

You cannot rightfully claim that this second man has power over unclean lusts. In fact no one knows what course he would take if these things were actually in his heart. Would he be weak or would he be strong? He might fail on the first encounter. But this second man does not need strength to overcome uncleanness because it has no place in his heart. The truth is that no one needs power over sin if sin has no presence within them. Yes, as we are sent by the Holy Ghost we are given *“...power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy...”* Luke 10:19, but this is power over things that withstand the work of God, not things that are within our own heart and nature.

Christ did not come to give us power over sin. He came to *“take away the sin of the world.”* I John 3:5. His blood washes the contamination of sin out of his people. I John 1:7. When Jesus said *“you shall find rest unto your souls”* Matthew 11:29, he was promising the end of a warfare and not the beginning of a lifelong struggle. As long as you seek power over something that is in your heart or

nature, you are setting yourself up for a battle that will never end. Jesus never said he would give you power over it. He said *"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."* John 8:36. When Cornelius and those with him were filled with the Holy Ghost, God had already, in a moment of time, purified their hearts by faith. Acts 15:9. Sin had lost its presence in them!

"Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." John 14:30

CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST

"I am crucified with Christ!" What a bold statement made by the apostle Paul! Did he not know that multitudes of Christians over the next two thousand years would fail in their efforts to obtain to such a place? Some would go to unbelievably extreme measures such as self-flagellation or literal self-crucifixion. Others would shut themselves up in monasteries or give themselves to a life of extreme poverty which they believed would bring them identification with Christ. Even today there are many who act as though they believe God is only pleased if they are undergoing great suffering. Yet no one through such things as these ever obtained the glorious liberty of being crucified with Christ.

Crucifixion with Christ is the great "key" to Christian liberty. Through Christ's work on the cross we are dead to sin Romans 6:11, dead to the world Galatians 6:14, and dead to the Law. Romans 7:4. In being dead to sin, sin has no hold or presence in the children of God. In being dead to the world, the world has no appeal or claim to those who live in Christ. In being dead to the Law, we do not serve God by religious ordinance or ritual.

Perhaps the clearest explanation in the scripture of the work of the cross is this following passage: *"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."* Romans 6:6. Let us consider the power of this statement.

“Knowing this...” This is not an assumption. It is a foundational truth of the gospel that every child of God must KNOW!

“...our old man...” The Adamic man. The person you once were. The sinner.

“...is crucified...” Our old man is not being crucified. He (She) IS crucified!

“...with him (Christ)...” The death of our *“old man”* was accomplished on the cross. It is not something we accomplish after coming to Christ. It happened **“WITH”** (in union with) Christ.

“...that the body of sin...” This speaks of not just a part or portion, but the whole. Not a hand or foot, but the entire body of SIN...” We are not saved a piece at a time.

“...might be destroyed...” The purpose of our crucifixion with Christ is that the entire *“body of sin might be destroyed!”* “Destroyed” comes from the same Greek word the apostles used when they spoke of Christ destroying death | Corinthians 15:26 and Satan Hebrews 2:14. It is a complete victory over and destruction of sin’s presence and power in the believer.

“...that henceforth...” From this point forward! No Longer! Everything has changed!

“...we should not serve sin.” The great purpose and result of our crucifixion with Christ is that we would be delivered from sin. For those crucified with Christ, the entire *“body of sin”* is destroyed and they serve it no longer. They are made free!

Crucifixion with Christ is a finished work for the children of God. We are not dying to sin. We are *“dead to sin.”* The apostles always speak of our crucifixion as a present condition based upon Christ’s finished work. If it is not already accomplished, it is not WITH CHRIST.

I grew up hearing and believing that a Christian had to die every day to self, flesh, and sin because the apostle Paul said *“I die daily.”* When I finally read the passage for myself, I saw that it had nothing to do with such things. Paul was defending the resurrection of the dead and making the point that he would be a fool to give himself

to suffer the things he endured if there was no resurrection of the dead. Speaking of the great persecutions he faced everywhere he went, he wrote the following words:

“And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die.” I Corinthians 15:30-32.

Although a child of God needs to be *“renewed day by day”* in the Holy Ghost II Corinthians 4:16 Titus 3:5, the scripture is clear that we died unto sin once. Paul says, *“For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* Romans 6:10-11. *“Likewise,”* just as it was with Christ it is with the believer. We died unto sin once, but ever live unto God.

I am crucified with Christ! It is accomplished! It is finished! I did not do it. In fact no one can do it. You can only believe it and in believing receive the glorious freedom from the Law, sin, and the world that it brings to the children of God.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR BODY?

A police officer pulled a man over for driving 20mph over the speed limit. “I was not speeding,” the man said. “It was my car.” What are you talking about?” the officer asked. “I try to stay under the legal speed, but my car keeps going too fast,” the man answered. The officer looked at the man in disbelief and asked, “Are you telling me the only reason you exceed the speed limit is because this particular vehicle makes you drive too fast?” “No sir,” the man answered, “All my vehicles make me speed.”

The story above is both fictional and absurd. Yet it illustrates the foolishness of blaming sin upon the body. How many times have you heard it said that you will continue to sin as long as you are in this earthy body? What does that have to do with anything? Isn't

that like blaming the car for speeding? Our body is both a house and a vehicle. What goes on in a house is not the house's fault. Neither is the manner in which a vehicle is driven the vehicle's fault. If a car is used as a getaway vehicle in a bank robbery, you do not blame the car. If a house is used for prostitution, you do not blame the house. So then why is it that so often the body is blamed for the sins of the person who lives within it?

The apostle Paul confronted this issue head-on when he wrote *"...every sin that a man doeth is without (aside from) the body..."* ¹ I Corinthians 6:18. The body is never the source of sin. The body is just the vehicle the sinner drives. Jesus told us where sin comes from. He said *"those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man..."* Matthew 15:18-20. Sin always issues from within and reveals the content of a person's heart.

In the same verse we mentioned above, Paul makes another astounding statement, saying, *"but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body."* ¹ I Corinthians 6:18. When one party sins against another, there is an offender and an offended. Even so when a person commits fornication their body is not the offender. The offender is the lust-filled person who lives within. The body is the offended party because it has been abused to fulfill the sinful heart's unclean desires.

In the 7th chapter of Romans, the apostle Paul describes his struggles when he was in the flesh and under the Law of Moses. Romans 7:5. Sin worked in his members because it had residence in his fallen human nature. He found no deliverance from this struggle until he surrendered to Jesus Christ ^{Romans 7:25} who died to purge the conscience of those who come to him. ^{Hebrews 9:14.}

I knew of a man decades ago who castrated himself seeking to control the sinful lusts that raged within. The mutilation of his body did nothing to subdue the uncleanness of his heart. In fact those things only increased. This man tried in vain to do with a knife that

which the blood of Christ was freely shed to do for all. Only the blood of Christ can wash sin from the heart of fallen mankind.

There are things your body can do and things your body cannot do. It can carry you many places for many years. It can also get tired, sick, or even die. But your body of itself can neither commit sin nor do righteousness. Those things issue from whoever lives within.

There are also many things that can be done to and through your body. You can abuse or neglect your body. You can also sin against your body. You can work sinfulness through your body or Christ can work righteousness through your body. You can present your body to the world to waste away its time upon earth or you can present your body to God Romans 12:1 so that he may quicken it by the Holy Ghost Romans 8:11 and use it for his glory. I Corinthians 6:20.

The body of a child of God is *"the temple of the Holy Ghost"* I Corinthians 6:19 and Paul said, *"...the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."* I Corinthians 3:17. Our body is the house Christ prepared for the Spirit of God to dwell in. He did not say it should be holy. He said it IS holy. How can this be? The answer is quite simple. It has been washed by Christ Jesus our Lord. The Bible says we are invited to draw near into the holiest *"with full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."* Hebrews 10:19-22. Our full assurance of faith is that Christ has sanctified us both within (*"having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience"*) and without (*"and our bodies washed with pure water"*). The water and the blood that flowed from the side of Christ is fully sufficient to wash the cause of sin from our hearts and the stain of sin from our bodies. THE BODY OF A CHILD OF GOD IS HOLY! Christ has prepared it. He simply asks you to present it back to God for his glory.

FALSE CLAIMS

I have heard many people make great spiritual claims about themselves. Usually such claims turn out to be false. Jesus, himself,

acknowledged *“If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.”*
John 5:31. Jesus had no need to bear witness of himself because, as he said, *“the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me.”* John 5:36-37. Anyone can make a claim about themselves, but it is not the witness of man that matters, we must have the witness of God.

In his first epistle, the apostle John addresses the religious claims of those who walk in darkness. Darkness is anything that is outside of the glorious truth and reality of Christ. John recognized the darkness by two unmistakable witnesses; first was what was professed, and second was what manifested in the life. If either the profession or the life denied that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, I John 2:22 who came into the world to destroy the works of the devil I John 3:8 and take away our sin I John 3:5, John knew it was a walk in darkness. John spent much of his first epistle refuting the claims of those who professed to know and have fellowship with God, but their walk was in darkness. Over and over John found their witness to be false. Look at some of these claims and John’s response to them:

False claim: *“We have fellowship with him,”* but they *“walk in darkness.”*

John’s response: If you, I, or anyone else, walk in darkness, and claim fellowship with God, *“we lie, and do not the truth.”* I John 1:6.

False claim: *“I know him,”* but they *“keep not his commandments.”*

John’s response: He *“is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”* I John 2:4.

False claim: I *“am in the light,”* but he *“hateth his brother.”*

John’s response: He *“is in darkness even until now.”* I John 2:9.

False claim: *“I love God,”* but he *“hates his brother.”*

John’s response: *“He is a liar.”* I John 4:20.

There are two other false claims of those who walk in darkness that John deals with in his first epistle. These claims came from some who professed to believe Jesus is the Christ, but walked in darkness and denied their need to be cleansed from sin. Many of these were Jews who had kept the Law perfectly from their youth. They did not believe they had any need for *“the blood Jesus”* to cleanse them, because in their thinking, they *“had no sin.”* John 15:22. This may sound strange until we consider the words of the apostles.

Paul spoke of his life before coming to Christ, saying that he, *“touching the righteousness which is in the law, (was) blameless.”*

Philippians 3:6. Many Jews, like Saul of Tarsus, were blameless under the Law and did not view themselves as sinners. This is brought out in Paul’s conversation with Peter at Antioch. Speaking to Peter, he said, *“We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles...”*

Galatians 2:15. In the Jewish mind, it was the gentiles who were the sinners. The Jews trusted that they were not because they kept the Law. Jesus shattered this delusion, because he taught that SIN IN THE HEART IS SIN. He said, *“...whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”* Matthew 5:28. When they heard his words, their covering of self-righteous religious works was swept away. Jesus gave witness of this, saying, *“If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.”* John 15:22. They hated Jesus because he took their religious covering away.

Those Jesus spoke of who, according to the Law, *“had not had sin,”* and those John spoke of who said *“we have no sin,”* both walked in the darkness of the Law. They trusted they had been perfectly kept from sin by the Law. John addresses this when he says, *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”* I John 1:8. John could relate to them because he had come up under the Law also. In the preceding verse, he told them that if they would walk in the light of Christ, His blood would

cleanse them from all sin. But these who walked in darkness believed they had no sin to be cleansed from.

John urges on, saying, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* I John 1:9. It is as though you can hear John pleading with them: "Sin in the heart IS sin! Stop denying it. You are just deceiving yourselves. Confess it and God will both forgive you and wash it away through the blood of Christ." Yet John knew the darkness and hardness of heart of these who trusted in the Law. He had been surrounded by it all his life.

John closes out this passage by addressing those who saw no need to be cleansed from sin because they believed they had kept themselves from sinning by obedience to the Law. He writes, *"If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."* I John 1:10. They, like Saul of Tarsus, may have kept themselves from committing the act of sin, but Jesus taught that if it is in your heart, you have already done it. They were making Jesus a liar by rejecting the truth. Their self-righteous claims were false. The only person who is free from sin is the one who walks in the light and has been washed from their sin in the blood of Jesus Christ. Revelation 1:5.

DESTROYING THE SERPENT

The first great prophecy of Christ was spoken by God on the same day Adam and Eve obeyed the voice of the Serpent and ate the forbidden fruit. This great act of rebellion cast heaven and earth into turmoil. I personally believe that the deception of Eve by the Serpent Genesis 3:1-5 and iniquity being found in *"...the anointed cherub that covereth"* Ezekiel 28:15 are describing the same event. God spoke to the *"anointed cherub,"* saying, *"Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God" and "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the*

day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.” Ezekiel 28:13-16.

God’s judgment towards the Serpent began with these words: *“Because thou hast done this...”* Genesis 3:14. These words seem to express God’s feeling of betrayal toward the covering cherub who had been given access to the garden of God. The Serpent had cast aside his sacred calling and in his rebellion brought iniquity into both heaven and earth. This betrayal was the first great step in fulfilling Lucifer’s ambition to *“be like the most High.”* Isaiah 14:12-14. In one successful ploy he stole the one creation that was made in God’s own image and imparted into it the nature of the Serpent, which is SIN. Satan was now the god of this world and the lord of fallen humanity.

Because of what he had done, God pronounced his judgement upon the Serpent, saying, *“I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”* Genesis 3:15. This first great prophecy of redemption tells us so much concerning the Christ who was to come.

1. Christ would be born of a woman. *“...her seed.”*
2. Christ would suffer at the hands of the Serpent. *“...thou shalt bruise his heel.”*
3. Christ would destroy the Serpent. *“...it shall bruise thy head.”*

The apostle John wrote something that was common knowledge to every believer in his day. He said, *“He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might DESTROY THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL.”* 1 John 3:8. Satan’s work brought sin into the world, therefore those who committed sin were *“of the devil.”* Yet Christ came to *“destroy the works of the devil!”* John knew by the scripture that the work of Christ was to bruise the head of the

Serpent, and thereby destroy the works of the devil and deliver the people from sin.

Jesus revealed this as his mission a few days before his crucifixion. He said, *"Now is the judgment of this world: NOW SHALL THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD BE CAST OUT."* John 12:31. Since the hour of his rebellion, Satan enjoyed access to wreak turmoil both in Heaven and earth. Michael and the angels of Heaven contended with Satan Jude 1:9, but were not able to overcome him or cast him out. Such was his foothold in the heavens that it seems he was able to come unhindered before God. He was identified as *"...the accuser of our brethren..., which accused them before our God day and night."* Revelation 12:10. Yet Christ was sent *"in the likeness of sinful flesh"* Romans 8:3 to do what no one else was capable of accomplishing. The Bible says, *"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death HE MIGHT DESTROY HIM THAT HAD THE POWER OF DEATH, THAT IS, THE DEVIL;"* Hebrews 2:14. Jesus shared with the disciples what he has seen of his Father concerning what would happen on the cross, saying, *"I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."* Luke 10:18. This was part of *"...the joy that was set before him"* if he would *"endure the cross."* Hebrews 12:2.

We know the very day that Satan was defeated and cast out of Heaven. The scripture says, *And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, NOW IS COME SALVATION, AND STRENGTH, AND THE KINGDOM OF OUR GOD, AND THE POWER OF HIS CHRIST: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."*

Revelation 12:7-11. Look at what was spoken when Satan was cast out:

Now is come ...SALVATION! The Serpent was cast out on the very day that our salvation came!

Now is come ...STRENGTH! Paul wrote, *“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”* Romans 5:6. Satan was cast out of Heaven in the same hour that STRENGTH came to us who trust in Christ!

Now is come ...THE KINGDOM OF OUR GOD! When Jesus was crucified and resurrected, the kingdom of God came into being for whosoever would believe the gospel of Christ. Christ’s blood not only purged sin from the hearts’ of the believers, but it purified the Heaven’s also from the presence of the serpent. Hebrews 9:23.

There are some simple gospel truths about Satan that every child of God needs to know.

1. Satan cannot accuse you before God as he did Job. The accuser of the brethren has been cast out! Paul asked: *“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?”* Romans 8:33.
2. There is no Devil in Christ! Those who abide in Christ do not need to fear Satan at all. He has no “power over” or “place” in them.
3. The work of Satan has been destroyed! Sin has no power or presence in those who simply abide in Christ. John wrote, *“And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not...”* I John 3:5-6.

Our “spiritual warfare” is NOT for our victory over sin or Satan. That victory was won by Christ Jesus alone and freely given to us who believe the gospel of Christ. Our warfare is to preach the truth that tears down the *“gates of Hell”* Matthew 16:18 which are holding those who are still blind to the gospel of Christ. We are commissioned to tell the whole world that Jesus is the Christ, who through giving his life on the cross, destroyed the works of the

devil. Anyone who will believe the report will walk free from Satan and Sin forevermore!

RUNNING OUT THE CLOCK

There is a vast difference between finishing your course and just running out the clock. The only thing necessary for you to do to run out the clock ...is nothing. Just sit down. Just wait. Soon enough your time will expire and your life in this world will be over. Maybe you (as I am) are looking for the second coming of Christ and the rapture. Well don't worry. That day will come. Hopefully sooner than later, but it will certainly come. What do we need to do to see it come? Absolutely nothing! Just wait long enough and it will happen. On the other hand, maybe we need to consider that God's purpose for our life here is greater than just getting it over with.

Paul was given a course to run in the same day he was struck down on the road to Damascus. Jesus told him, *"I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."*

Acts 26:16-18. This is the reason Jesus apprehended Paul. This was his course to run. He later wrote, *"I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."*

Philippians 3:12. He would spend his life pressing *"toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* Philippians 3:14. He was running the course Christ had given him to finish.

"Running the race" is not just living out our lives. Paul expressed this when he said, *"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain."* 1

Corinthians 9:24. The prize to be obtained is the souls of lost humanity. We are running for the souls of men and women of every nation, race, and tribe. Satan has stacked the race with many runners. There are runners from every false religion. Ambition and vanity are in the race. Worldly pleasures, unclean lusts, and cares of this life are all running to claim the souls. There are even runners carrying a perverted gospel. Galatians 1:7. The odds of us claiming the soul for Christ seem overwhelming. Facing such overwhelming odds, many stay on the sidelines, seeking a guaranteed success before they join the race. There is really only one guarantee I can assure you of: If you do not get in the race, you are guaranteed to reach none. *"So run that you may obtain!"*

There is, however, the weapon of our warfare that turns the odds in this race upside down. This weapon is the simple gospel of Christ. It is the truth that the eternal Christ, by whom all things were made, became flesh *"...to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness."* Daniel 9:24. He accomplished this by giving his life to *"sanctify the people with his own blood"* Hebrews 13:12 and *"take away our sin."* 1 John 3:5. Jesus is the Christ! This GOSPEL OF CHRIST is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes it Romans 1:16, but as Paul pointed out, they cannot believe it if they have never heard it. Romans 10:14.

Jesus did not say go into all the world and "do something" or "preach something." He commanded us to go *"preach the gospel to every creature."* Mark 16:15. I am afraid that many construe religious activity to be the fulfillment of the great commission. If the savior we proclaim did not *"save his people from their sins"* Matthew 1:21, we are guilty of just "preaching something" and not proclaiming the gospel of Christ. Remember, Jesus warned of those who *"...compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves."* Matthew 23:15. It matters what message we carry to the world!

Over seven billion souls are waiting for God's people to carry the gospel of Christ to them. It is your course to run. It is mine also. I do not know the manner in which God would use each of us, but none of us will ever know until we present our body to God for his purpose. Romans 12:1. The clock is still ticking. The time for each of us to run the race set before us is quickly passing. If we do not run the race, we will never finish our course. II Timothy 4:7. We will only run out the clock.

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