



Behold The Lamb
Publications

Simply Christ

Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

Volume VII

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

A Simple Gospel

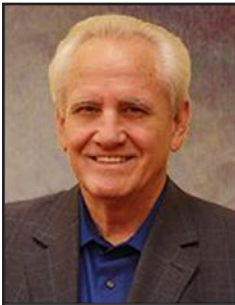
A minister should never try to preach something they believe is “a deep revelation.” If what you bring is not simple and clear to you, it will bring confusion to those you minister to. I am not saying that others may not perceive what God has given you to be “deep,” but it must be simple to the one who proclaims it. The power of the gospel of Christ is in its simplicity.

Paul said *“the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God.”* These “*deep things*” become simple things to the one to whom they are “*revealed.*” Revelation from God never makes you feel as though you are the smartest person around. Usually you are left wondering why you never saw this before. You may say to

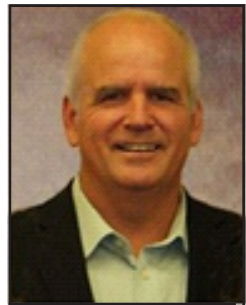
“...thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” Matthew 11:25

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 to you that you feel every one else should easily understand it also.

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 VII

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TEMPTED OR TESTED?

Recently my brother and sister-in-law were in a bible study class at church when the teacher began to talk about “Jesus also struggling with sin like we all do. After all, the Bible says Jesus *‘was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin’.*” Hebrews 4:15. My sister-in-law spoke up and pointed out that the Greek word translated “*tempted*” simply meant “*tested.*” Jesus was tested with sin, but not tempted. She went on to explain: “If I like chocolate cake and someone offers me some, I will be tempted. But if I do not like chocolate cake and someone offers me some, I am not tempted, I am only tested. Jesus was tested, but there was never a desire for sinful things in his heart.”

Immediately those in the bible study class began to strongly object. My brother said he felt like they had stirred up some bumble bees. “Jesus struggled with sin just like all of us!” one man said. “Jesus was a man and I am sure he was tempted by the women around him!” a lady exclaimed. The objections were so intense that my brother had to interrupt and try to calm things down, and defend his wife.

What my sister-in-law said was absolutely correct. The Greek word translated “*tempted*” means “*to test.*” Two people can be tested with the same thing, yet one of them may desire it and the other abhor it. Jesus Christ walked through the same world we live in and faced the hardships, attacks, and enticements that are common to humanity. He was tested in every manner as we are, yet the testing only discovered and proved that he was “*WITHOUT SIN*” Hebrews 4:15, because there was no sin in Him. | John 3:5. Shortly before going to the cross, Jesus told his disciples, “*...the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.*” John 14:30. Satan attacked Jesus in every way he could, but never discovered or produced any sin IN HIM.

How is it we so easily ignore the words of Jesus? He said “*...whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*” Matthew 5:28. SIN IN THE HEART

IS SIN! If Jesus desired sinful things in his heart would he not have been the greatest hypocrite of all? The reason there was no sin in Jesus's life is there was no sin in his heart or nature. This is the same reason the children of God are not sinners. Our heart and nature has been washed from sin by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Revelation 1:5.

Many years ago I realized that the great consolation of the modern church was not that they believed Jesus to be a mighty Savior who died to save them from sin, but they were consoled in the belief that everyone else was a sinner just as they were. They would not believe that Jesus died to make them righteous Romans 5:19, instead they comforted themselves with an erroneous understanding of the words "...*there is none righteous, no, not one.*" Romans 3:10. Many mistakenly believed that everyone is unrighteousness, so unrighteousness must be acceptable to God. They ignored the fact that these words were not written about the redeemed, but Paul said they spoke "...*to them who are under the Law.*" Romans 3:19.

Our generation has taken this false consolation one step farther. It is no longer enough to make every Christian a sinner. Now we must impute sin to Jesus Christ also. I know that very few will actually say "Jesus sinned," but many (if not most) people in churches profess that he was tempted to sin in his heart. To them this seems to be an even greater consolation than believing every other Christian is a sinner. "If Jesus was tempted to do what I am tempted to do, then my sinful desires must be normal for a child of God."

Let's consider something for a moment. One man in a certain church has a struggle with anger. Another struggles with pornography. A third church member is continually troubled by envy and jealousy within. A fourth member has a gambling addiction. A fifth member is struggling with homosexuality. A sixth church member lives with hatred in their heart. And a seventh member finds himself lusting after women of the church. Each of these are consoled by the pastor who says Jesus was tempted to do the same thing they are dealing with, but he was able to overcome. No one considers that if this is true, then in Jesus' heart he was "an angry pornographer, fighting envy and jealousy, seeking

to abstain from gambling, and to control homosexual passions, warring with inner hatred, and working to subdue the lust for the women around him.”

If Jesus was “*tempted*” with the same sins that fill church members in this generation he would have been drawn to every corrupt and unclean thing imaginable. If such a teaching is true, then he was the most depraved creature that ever walked upon this earth. THIS IS ABSOLUTELY NOT TRUE!!! Jesus never desired to commit a single sin. He is the “*lamb without blemish and without spot!*” | Peter 1:19. He is “*the holy one of God!*” Luke 4:34. He is “*the Lord from Heaven!*” | Corinthians 15:47.

WAR IN HEAVEN

There was war in Heaven! I know that is difficult to imagine, but it is true. The Bible says, “*Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels.*” Revelation 12:7. This war must have begun with the rebellion of Lucifer Isaiah 14:12-15, who had been God’s anointed covering cherub. Ezekiel 28:14. Lucifer’s ambition was to exalt himself and become like God. Isaiah 14:12-15. Perhaps no one knows for certain when his rebellion began, but there is strong scriptural evidence that the deception of Eve in the garden and the occasion that iniquity was discovered in Lucifer are the same event. Through the prophet Ezekiel, God tells Lucifer “*Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering,*” and then he says, “*...Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.*” Ezekiel 28:12-16. Since the garden of Eden was not planted until God created man Genesis 2:8, it seems evident that Lucifer could not have fallen into iniquity until after Adam and Eve were placed in the garden. Still, it is not as important as to when Lucifer fell and this war began as it is to understand how and when the war was brought to an end.

The first promise of redemption tells of the “*seed of the woman*” who would bruise the head of the serpent. Genesis 3:15. Satan had exalted himself and his power through Adam’s transgression and humanity became his captives because of the presence of Sin in our heart and nature. Christ came into the world as “*the seed of the woman*” to destroy the devil Hebrews 2:14 and deliver us from Sin.

Matthew 1:21. The blood he shed on the cross was not like the blood of any other man. It was the holy blood of Christ, the one by whom all things were created. There is something about his blood that has the power to destroy the work of Satan and purge iniquity wherever it is found.

It was the Heavens themselves, which were the first things purged by the blood of Jesus Christ. The Bible says Moses, when instituting the Law, *“sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.”* Hebrews 9:21. Only after this was accomplished, was blood sprinkled for the sins of the people. The apostle explains this, saying, *“It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these (the blood of goats and lambs); but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices (the blood of Christ) than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:”* Hebrews 9:23-24. Heaven itself had to be purified from the scourge of Satan’s iniquity.

Shortly before going to the cross, Jesus told his disciples, *“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.”* John 12:31. Jesus knew that if he shed his blood, the Heavens would be purged and Satan would be cast out. He had seen it of his Father Luke 10:18 and it was part of the joy set before him. Hebrews 12:2.

When Christ shed his holy blood *“...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.”* Revelation 12:9. We know this happened when Christ died because the next verse says, *“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...”* Revelation 12:10-11. The angels of Heaven were the first ones who *“overcame”* Satan *“by the blood of the Lamb.”* In the same hour that our salvation came, the Heavens were purged, Satan was cast out, and the Holy Place was sanctified. All things were now ready

for our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ, to enter his eternal ministry as mediator of the New Covenant.

The angels of Heaven had no need of redemption for themselves, but the Apostle John saw them join with the elders and the innumerable multitude around the throne saying *“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”* Revelation 5:12. Jesus Christ had purified the Heavens with his own blood and brought the war in Heaven to an end. Those who inhabited Heaven rejoiced Revelation 12:12 along with the redeemed who are lifted up to dwell in Heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:6.

Finally, my friend, know this. If the blood of Jesus Christ was sufficient to purge the Heavens from the power and presence of Satan and his angels, it is equally sufficient to purge your heart and nature from the power and presence of Sin if you will believe the gospel and trust in Christ!

“WHEREFORE JESUS ALSO, THAT HE MIGHT SANCTIFY THE PEOPLE WITH HIS OWN BLOOD, SUFFERED WITHOUT THE GATE.” Hebrews 13:12.

THE WORD OF OUR TESTIMONY

The courtroom is silent as the witness takes the stand. He is sworn to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth! What will the witness say? Will he be a useless witness, one who is afraid to speak what he has seen and heard? Will he be a faithful witness? Or will his testimony change to please the expectations of those around? This is important because someone’s life hangs in the balance, and it will be determined based upon word of this man’s testimony!

The apostle John was exiled to *“the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for **the testimony of Jesus Christ.**”* Revelation 1:9. For over sixty years he had been a faithful witness concerning Jesus Christ. He wrote, *“For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;”* 1 John 1:2. The word of John’s testimony was the gospel of Christ that he preached. It was

“the truth” that Jesus said, *“shall make you free.”* John 8:32. If John stood faithful as a witness, then even more people would be delivered from the bondage of sin and Satan. If he gave false testimony, then *“truth would be fallen in the streets”* and *“justice would stand afar off,”* Isaiah 59:14 therefore the people would look for judgment and salvation, but find none. Isaiah 59:11.

The saints of God are his witnesses in this present world. God said, *“Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.”* Isaiah 44:8. Jesus spoke to those gathered the day of his ascension, saying, *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”* Acts 1:8. Jesus empowered and sent these *“witnesses”* to give the word of their testimony before all nations, peoples and tongues.

The *“word of their testimony”* is the gospel of Christ they preached everywhere they went. It is how they overcame the dragon, which is Satan. Revelation 12:11. This *“testimony of Jesus Christ”* Revelation 12:17 was in fact the great *“weapon of their warfare”* II Corinthians 10:4 that God gave to the church. Everywhere this *“testimony”* was given, the chains of sin and oppression were broken because when *“the truth”* is lifted up, justice and equity enter. Isaiah 59:14.

God’s witnesses always hold *“the testimony of Jesus Christ.”* Revelation 19:10. It can be no other way. Many call themselves *“God’s witnesses,”* but they do not and cannot bring you the testimony of *“the Lord from Heaven”* I Corinthians 15:47, Jesus Christ, who was *“made in the likeness of men”* Philippians 2:6 in order to shed blood that could destroy Satan and wash every sin from your heart and nature. Revelation 1:5. If the *“heart, soul, and body”* of their *“testimony”* is not *“Jesus (the) Christ, and him crucified,”* I Corinthians 2:2 they ARE NOT God’s witnesses!

God himself was the first to give *“testimony”* of Jesus Christ. In fact, John says, the person who does not believe the truth, makes God to be a liar *“because he believeth not the record (testimony) that God gave of his Son.”* I John 5:10. God told us Christ is *“the seed of the*

woman who would bruise the head of the Serpent.” Genesis 3:15. He would be born of a virgin, and his name would be called “Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 7:14, 9:6. Christ would be “wounded for our transgressions,” Isaiah 53:5 and he would “make an end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness.” Daniel 9:24. When this “seed of the woman” was conceived in a virgin, God even sent an angel to say “thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21. This is the testimony God gave!

There are two promises of a great working of God shortly before the second coming of Jesus Christ. Both are so “the testimony of Jesus Christ” will be heard in all the earth. The first is found in the words of Jesus concerning the end. He said, “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” Matthew 24:14. I believe this has hardly even begun in our generation. The modern church has been highly successful in convincing multitudes around the world that Jesus came to give you earthly wealth, or, to take you to heaven in your sinfulness. Both of these messages are “false witnesses” of Christ. The “false prophet” has given his testimony. Revelation 13:11. Soon it will be time for God to give his witness; and he will give it in all the world!

God gave another promise. He said, “And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.” Revelation 11:3-4. This promise is very similar to what Jesus told those gathered the day of his ascension. He said, “...ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me...” Acts 1:8. I do not believe these “two witnesses” are literally two men. Let me explain.

The Revelation John saw gives us pictures or “imagery” to express greater truth. Jesus is portrayed as “a lamb ...having seven horns and seven eyes.” Revelation 5:6. Satan is portrayed as a “red dragon” Revelation 12:3, and the “false prophet” is portrayed as a beast that

“had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.” Revelation 13:11. There are seven great kingdoms that either have, or shall, rule upon earth, which are portrayed as heads on a scarlet colored beast? Revelation 17:10. Even the church, *“the bride, the Lamb's wife”* is portrayed as a city built of precious stones. Revelation 21:9.

The *“two witnesses”* is also imagery portraying those who carry the gospel of Christ. God has always required *“two or three witnesses”* for any testimony to be established as truth. II Corinthians 13:1. God's *“two witnesses”* are those who in any generation give the *“testimony of Jesus Christ”* in truth. On the day of Pentecost, the one hundred and twenty were his *“two witnesses,”* as was also the church at Antioch. Paul and Barnabas were certainly God's *“two witnesses,”* but when they left a city it was often filled with many of God's *“two witnesses.”* I believe the promise to *“give power unto my two witnesses”* is a promise of a great outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon those who carry *“the testimony of Jesus Christ.”* This great outpouring of God's Spirit will come so that *“the testimony of Jesus Christ”* will be given in all the earth. This testimony will be accompanied by a great harvest of souls. Satan will not be able to do anything unto these faithful witnesses until *“they shall have finished their testimony!”* Revelation 11:7.

GODLY SORROW

I was speaking to a man who was seeking to find his way back to God. He professed to once have known the reality of Christ, but turned away and found himself back in sin and darkness. Broken-hearted over the hurt and shame his course had brought to himself and others, he asked me, “How can I ever forgive myself?” My response was, “Why would you want to do that?”

I asked the man, “What if I had taken the life of your child and when we encountered one another sometime later, I said to you, ‘I know the terrible loss you have suffered, but I want you to know I have forgiven myself for killing your child.’”? The man looked at me and said, “That would make me upset.” “Yes it would,” I responded. Such is the fallacy and arrogance of forgiving ourselves.

I continued, "But what if we encountered each other and you said to me, 'You took my child's life and my heart breaks for my child every day that I live, but I want you to know I have forgiven you?' If I was sorrowful for what I had done I would be overwhelmed by the love and grace of your words and actions." Such it is to receive God's forgiveness.

The Apostle Paul spoke of two kinds of sorrow; "*Godly sorrow*" and "*the sorrow of the world.*" He had written a scathing letter of rebuke to the Corinthians, insomuch that he questioned in his own heart if they would be able to bear his words. Paul said, "*For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season.*" I Corinthians 7:8. He knew that "*godly sorrow*" would be absolutely necessary if this church was to be rescued from the darkness it was plunging into. There was fornication, divisions, and strife in their midst. Their services had become social events, while at the same time they seemed to be competing to show themselves to be spiritually superior to others. The biggest shock of all was that they believed their acceptance of sinful things in their members proved their spiritual maturity. Paul said of this, "*And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.*" I Corinthians 5:2. In this condition they could easily excuse and forgive themselves of almost anything. The question Paul waited to see answered was: "Would they sorrow over their spiritual condition" or "would they sorrow only because they had been rebuked?"

"*Godly sorrow*" did grip the Corinthians. Paul said, "*Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner...*" II Corinthians 7:9. Their heart was broken at the realization of how far they had fallen. This "*godly sorrow*" was not an "O God forgive me, now let's move on." God could do nothing for them in their haughtiness, but "*godly sorrow*" tore them down to the place that God could once again move upon their heart. It brought true repentance to the Corinthians. Paul tells us, "*For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of...*" II Corinthians 7:10.

The result of “*godly sorrow*” was evident in the Corinthians for all to see. Paul said, “*For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.*” ॥

Corinthians 7:11.

When “*godly sorrow*” over sin has done its work in a person, they will never again return to the works of darkness. The very remembrance of that darkened path will break their heart. God gave witness of this when he promised a redemption that would cleanse us from our iniquities and give us a new heart and a new spirit. Ezekiel 36:25-27. He said, “*Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.*” Ezekiel 36:31. This is not condemnation, neither is it self-flagellation. It is a penitent heart that is ever present in the person who has now been “*redeemed from all iniquity.*” Titus 2:14.

The Apostle Paul understood “*godly sorrow*” very personally. He never forgave himself for his persecution of the church. This is revealed over and over again in his writings, as he said things like, “*...I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*” I Corinthians 15:9. His “*godly sorrow*” over persecuting the church was the reason he described himself as the “*chief*” of all sinners. I Timothy 1:15.

The end result of godly sorrow is “*joy unspeakable and full of glory.*” The person lives their life amazed at the mercy and grace of God to themselves. “*Rejoicing in Christ Jesus*” Philippians 3:3 is ever with them as they think on the one who delivered them from such darkness and shame. They identify with Paul’s words: “*And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*” I Corinthians 6:11. Their heart may break when they think of their former condition, but their sorrow quickly turns to joy in their amazement at the love of Christ and the power of his salvation.

Jesus said these *“love much”* because they know they have been *“forgiven much.”* Luke 7:47

AS HE THINKS IN HIS HEART

Shortly after my eighteenth birthday, I made an arrangement with my dad for an old tractor he owned and went into business for myself. Over the years I worked for a lot of good people, and occasionally for those who were not so good. There was one lesson I learned that proved to be true many times over the years. If you see someone cheat another person, the time would come when they will do the same to you. You might convince yourself that your relationship with them is different, and they would never do such a thing to you, but when circumstances change it always happens. You see, cheating is not something a person does occasionally, but it is what they are in their heart.

Jesus' words, *“whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart,”* Matthew 5:28 was not a change in the way God viewed sin. The proverbs warned of those who speak kind and flattering words to you while in their heart they are plotting against you. The message was, **“Beware! *‘For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.’*”** Proverbs 23:7. Even God's judgment in the days of Noah and the flood was based, not only on their actions, but on the content of their heart. The Bible says, *“And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”* Genesis 6:5. God did not destroy them only because of what they did, but because of what they were at heart.

When people tell me that those who are born of God commit sin, but they simply do not “practice” sin, I ask, “How many times does a man have to “practice” rape before he is a rapist? Or how often must a person “practice” fornication before they are a fornicator? The truth is that before a person commits the first such act they have already become the thing that is working in their heart. The content of their heart has already defiled them. Jesus said *“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts,*

adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man." Mark 7:21-23.

Modern Christianity has fallen for the lie that sin in the heart is natural for a child of God. Nothing could be further from the truth. The very essence of the gospel message is that Christ died to purge sin from the heart and nature of the believer. I always include "nature" in these statements because that which is in your heart IS YOUR NATURE! When your heart is changed, your nature is changed!

The apostle explains the purpose of the blood of Christ by pointing out how it accomplished what the sacrifices under the Law of Moses could never do. Those sacrifices had to be offered repeatedly for the sins of the people because *"it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."* Hebrews 10:4. Paul also explains what it means to have sin taken away. He says, *"...because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins."* Hebrews 10:2.

A *"conscience of sins"* is sin in the heart. When the blood of Christ purges you from a *"conscience of sins,"* sin is no longer present in your heart. It has been washed away by the blood of Christ. Paul reaffirms this, inviting us to draw near into the holiest *"...having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience..."* Hebrews 10:22.

Some have perverted this passage and presented it to mean that you should not feel bad over your sin. Such a perversion of this passage is what Paul called *"having their conscience seared with a hot iron."* 1 Timothy 4:2. Only a person whose conscience has been "seared over" does not feel remorse over sin. One of the greatest "searing irons" in the world today are the words most Christians hear every Sunday morning: "We are all sinners and we sin every day!" The more you listen to that, the more your conscience becomes seared against the convicting power of God's Spirit.

What is it that is in your heart? Is it a good treasure? Or is it an evil treasure? Matthew 12:35. Perhaps you are like King David who came to

understand that sin is always a heart problem. He cried unto the Lord: *“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.”* Psalms 51:10. I knew a backslider who said he repented all the time, but was never free until one day God said to him, “Stop repenting of what you do and repent of what you are.” O sinner, do not merely repent of the certain things you do, but repent of the condition of your heart. Call upon Jesus Christ who shed his blood to give you a new heart and a righteous spirit. For as a man thinks in his heart, so is he!

NEWNESS OF SPIRIT

In the Apostle Paul’s introduction to the Roman believers, he reveals how he served the Lord. He wrote, *“For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son...”* Romans 1:9. In truth, serving God with your spirit and in the Spirit are given throughout the scripture as the source and manner of the Christian walk. Jesus said those who worship the Father *“... must worship him in spirit and in truth.”* John 4:24. We become spiritual beings when we are *“born of the Spirit”* John 3:6. It is in this new birth that we receive the “new heart” and “new spirit” that God promised in redemption. Ezekiel 36:26. It is also in this new birth that God fulfills his promise to *“...put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”* Jeremiah 31:33.

The redeemed serve God with the spirit and in the Spirit, and, as Paul said, they serve *“in the gospel of his Son.”* The human mind is never the source of their walk. In fact, the gospel of Christ is foolishness to the natural mind. It is for this reason that a person must *“believe in their heart.”* Paul tells us *“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness...”* Romans 10:10. The person who is transformed by the gospel has first received it in their heart. Paul says, *“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”* II Corinthians 4:6. Satan blinds the minds of those who believe not II Corinthians 4:4, but Christ shines into the heart of those who believe.

We hear a lot about the *“renewing of the mind.”* Some view the mind to be like computer that we must continually input good data onto its hard drive. They believe that as we continue to do this we are changed into the image of Christ. This sort of teaching reeks with carnality. Those who take this course become as those Paul spoke of who are *“ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”* II Timothy 3:7.

It is the Spirit of God that transforms the mind of a person from carnal to spiritual. Paul said those who have been taught by Jesus, heard that you must *“be renewed in the spirit of your mind.”* Ephesians 4:20-23. This is part of what Paul spoke of as *“the renewing of the Holy Ghost.”* Titus 3:5. The renewing of the mind is a spiritual work accomplished, not by inputting data, but by visitation of the Spirit of God! As a person serves God with their spirit, their heart, soul, and mind is continually renewed by God’s Spirit.

The Apostle Paul begins the seventh chapter of Romans saying, *“...we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.”* Romans 7:6. Those who serve in *“oldness of the letter,”* must serve through the mind. Those who serve God through Christ Jesus, *“serve in newness of spirit.”* Those who serve with the mind are partaking of *“the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”* They believe that if they input *“good”* then they will end up being godly, but it never gives them what it promised. Those who serve in newness of spirit are partaking of *“the tree of life.”* The heavenly things they receive in their spirit spring up and flood their heart soul and mind.

Paul takes most of this seventh chapter describing the futility of serving in *“oldness of the letter.”* This is the testimony of his life serving the Law before he came to Christ. He tells of being *“carnal, sold under sin.”* Romans 7:14. He remembers the continual agony of wanting to do good, but evil is ever present. He loved the Law of God; he studied the Law of God; he served the Law of God with his mind. Yet all its principles, precepts, commandments, and ordinances availed him nothing. He was always being pulled downward into darkness and there was nothing he could do to

change it. Finally, after he cried *“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death”* Romans 7:24, he found the deliverance he longed for through *“Jesus Christ our Lord!”* Romans 7:25.

The last sentence of this chapter is Paul’s conclusion of the whole matter. He explains why he had never been able to break free from the darkness. He says, *“So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”* Romans 7:25. The word “So” is from a Greek word that speaks of *“drawing a conclusion.”* Paul’s conclusion gives two reasons why he had served the law of sin with his flesh. The problem was *“how he served”* and *“what he served.”* *“With the mind”* was *“how he served.”* *“The Law of God”* was *“what he served.”* The apostle who began this epistle saying *“whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son...”* reveals the source of his darkness was that he attempted to serve *“with the mind.”* When you serve with the mind, you can only serve in *“oldness of letter.”* God is not served with the mind. The Law is served with the mind. *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”* John 4:24. Paul gives this conclusion so everyone will know that if you serve with the mind, then you serving in *“the oldness of the letter,”* and you will be bound to serve the law of sin with the flesh.

This entire generation of the church has been programmed to serve God with the mind. This is why our generation of “believers” are more bound by sin than perhaps any since the reformation. The teachings of “renewing the mind” sound so wise and wonderful, but why is your freedom and victory always just a few more principles or precepts away?” Why does it never give you the freedom from sin that Jesus promised? It does not because it cannot! It can only condemn you to serve in *“oldness of letter.”*

This gospel of Christ is still foolishness to the mind. It is not reasonable. You do not figure it out. It gives you nothing to do other than believe the report. Yet when it shines into your heart, it revolutionizes your entire being. You become a spiritual being, and with that new spirit you begin a walk in *“righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost!”* Romans 14:17.

THE INTERRUPTION

The Law of Moses with all its sacrifices, ceremonies, commandments, and other ordinances was never God's plan for Israel. It was Israel's plan for Israel. God delivered them out of Egypt and brought them to Mt Sinai where he wanted to speak to them and bring them into the covenant he made with Abraham. There he instructed Moses to tell them, *"...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 19:4-6. Abraham, in believing God and obeying his voice, received the covenant of promise. Genesis 22:16-18. If the children of Israel would do the same they would be a people unlike any the world had ever known.

When the people heard the voice of God and saw the thunders and lightning and fire upon the mountain, they drew back and said to Moses: *"Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die."* Exodus 20:19. With these fateful words, Israel rejected God's voice and His covenant of blessing, and chose *"the ministration of death."* II Corinthians 3:7. This was the day the covenant of promise was "interrupted" and the Law of Moses began. Paul said this *"Law" was "...added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made..."* Galatians 3:19. In a very short time, the children of Israel rejected God's voice, worshiped a golden calf and gave it glory for delivering them from Egypt, and then refused to enter the promise land. They murmured against God and Moses continually. Moses' *"law"* came as a spiritual disciplinarian. Its job was to forcibly keep Israel separate from the other nations until the promised seed (Christ) would come. Paul tells us that Israel was *"...kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed."* Galatians 3:23.

God reminded Israel of their decision centuries later, saying, *"Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh. For I spake*

not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.” Jeremiah 7:21-24.

Before he died, Moses instructed the Levites to *“Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee.”* Deuteronomy 31:26. As long as the Law of Moses stood, it was a witness against Israel. Not only did it give witness against them for their sins, but its very existence was a continual witness that they had rejected God’s voice and his covenant of promise. The Law spent its curses upon Israel without mercy until one day it cursed the sinless Son of God for being hung upon a tree, Galatians 3:13 and for that offence it had to be abolished. Ephesians 2:15. Jesus Christ came, not only to take away our sin, but to also redeem Israel from the Law if they would believe upon his name. Galatians 4:5.

Our redemption is the fulfillment of God’s covenant with Abraham. Paul said, *“...if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”* Galatians 3:29. The New Covenant is not “New” in respect to age because it actually predates the Mosaic Law. Paul said, *“...the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.”* Our covenant of redemption was confirmed in Christ four hundred and thirty years BEFORE the Mosaic Law was given.

Six centuries before Christ appeared in ministry, God promised the demise of the Law. He said, *“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not*

according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD.” Jeremiah 31:31-32. From the moment God spoke of a “*New Covenant*” it was established that the Law of Moses had been made “*Old*” and would pass away. This is like the employees of a company being told that a new supervisor has been hired. The existing supervisor is now the “*old*” supervisor. He may be around for a while longer, but his days are numbered as he waits for the “*new*” supervisor to appear. The apostle confirms this regarding the two covenants, saying, “*In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.*” Hebrews 8:13. Through the offering of Jesus Christ on the cross, the “*interruption*” has been taken away and the Abrahamic covenant of promise has been restored. Colossians 2:14.

THE ASTOUNDING WORK OF CHRIST

Capt. Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger is known as the pilot who successfully landed a commercial airliner in the Hudson River after both engines were disabled by a bird strike. The actions he took in this most perilous of situations saved the lives of 155 persons aboard. Because of his actions that day, Capt. Sullenberger merits our respect and admiration. He is rightfully treated as an American hero and his bravery is extolled by many, from school children to presidents. No one can claim the honor Capt. Sullenberger receives is without merit. However, it is important to remember that on that fateful winter day, January 15, 2009, not a single person was saved by Capt. Sullenberger's merit. All 155 persons aboard US Airways Flight 1549 were saved by his actions.

Ever since Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) introduced his satisfaction theory of atonement, church theologians have been infatuated by a supposed salvation brought to us through the merit of Christ's sufferings. It seems they believe

that God demanded satisfaction, which he could not have unless he saw his own son suffer and die upon the cross. The satisfaction theories basically present that Christ honored God so greatly though sacrificing himself upon the cross that the merit of his great honor offsets the dishonor to God we have caused through disobedience and transgression. We are thereby restored to God through the merit of Christ's sacrifice. This all sounds wonderful, but it is just not found in the scriptures. In fact, such teaching blinds the hearts of multitudes to the true work of Christ upon the cross. The freedom from sin and Satan his shed blood provided is lost in the fog of a meritorious based human philosophy.

Jesus Christ gave himself upon the cross to accomplish one fundamental work. He died *"to destroy the works of the devil!"* | John 3:8. Satan brought about the entrance of sin through Adam's transgression. Christ came to destroy Satan and his works. In doing so, he delivered us from sin and restored us back to God. This was not accomplished by the "merit" of his actions, but by his actions themselves. Jesus' actions in going to the cross were a "violent act of warfare" Matthew 11:12 that completely cast down and destroyed Satan and his works. Let us consider what the Bible clearly says about the work Christ accomplished upon the cross.

He destroyed the devil! *"...that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;"* Hebrews 2:14. Just as the Nazi regime was destroyed by the Allies in World War II, Jesus Christ destroyed Satan and his power through the death of the cross.

He destroyed sin! *"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. Sin may be rampant in the world around us, but it has no power, presence, or place in those who abide in Christ.

He took away our sin! *"And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin."* | John 3:5. Just as the crimson dye became one with the fabric, sin could not be

separated from the heart and nature of humanity ...that is until Christ took our sin away! *Isaiah 1:18.*

He delivered us from Satan's domain! *"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:"* *Colossians 1:13.* The child of God abides in Christ where there is neither sin nor Satan. It is a place of victory over every power of darkness.

These and many other passages in the Bible clearly tell us the reason for the sufferings of Christ. None of these things are based upon the merit of Christ's work, but rather upon the actual power of what he accomplished that day. We are free from sin and Satan because Jesus Christ destroyed our adversary and broke every shackle of darkness.

Now let's consider the difference between the testimony of the scripture and how we hear the gospel presented by many today. We are told that God only sees us as righteous based upon the merit of Christ, but the scripture says Christ actually made us righteous. *Romans 5:19.* Calvary did not change the way God sees things, it changes who and what we are. We are also told that Christ only took away the guilt or penalty of our sin based upon the merit of Christ' sufferings, but the Bible says Christ actually took away our sin! His work upon the cross makes us free from even the presence of sin in our heart and life!

Does Christ have great merit? Absolutely! His praises shall be proclaimed throughout all ages. *"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."* *Revelation 5:12.* We certainly benefit from his merit, but we are not saved by his merit. We are saved by the blood that flowed from his wounded side.

SERVING GOD WITHOUT FEAR

"That's it!" the man said with tears in his eyes. "I live my life in fear that the things in my heart are going to take control of

me. I have never before heard anyone say that I could be free from sin.” The man who was speaking had been in church for most of his life and was seeking to serve God with all the strength he could muster. Yet he lived his life in fear, continually struggling with the darkness that plagued his own heart. Would today be the day that he succumbed to the powers of darkness and sin?

I had just preached a message on how the blood of Christ purges our inner man from sin. Hebrews 10: 2, 22. The minister in the prior service had brought a tremendous message, but speaking of the epidemic of pornography involving people in the church, she said, “These people are in the church. These are the blood-bought!” As I took the pulpit later, I said, “It can be rightfully said that every person upon this earth is blood-bought because of the fact that Jesus Christ died for all, but the blood-washed are clean!

After the service I was questioned by some people about the things I had spoken about being made free from sin. I referred to the prophecy spoken by Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist. He said, *“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us ...That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.”* Luke 1:68-75. It was this promise of being able to serve God without fear that so took hold of the man standing before me.

To serve God without fear of our enemies is to know that the things which once possessed us, controlled us, tormented us, and destroyed us, are now destroyed through the blood of Christ. This is the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise that *“you shall find rest unto your souls.”* Matthew 11:29. If we abide in Christ where there *“is no sin”* 1 John 3:5, we have no need to fear that sin will “rise up and take control of us.” If we know that Christ destroyed the devil and his works, then we know as we abide in Christ that sin has no place or power in our heart or life.

Paul confirms these things, saying, *“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”* Romans 6:14.

Years ago I visited a revival and listened to a preacher tell the people a dozen times, “The devil is going to get you!” “You are going to fail! You are going to sin! It doesn’t matter how long you walk this walk, the devil is going to get you!” No one who believes such a thing can serve God without fear of their enemies. Religious teachers so often fill our minds with the inevitability of being overcome by sin and Satan that you would think Christ was the one who was defeated at Calvary. Until you see and believe the absolute victory of Christ over sin and Satan, THE DEVIL WILL GET YOU! But if you can see Christ in all his victory, you will understand that you never again have to fear that sin or Satan “is going to get you” because you know that CHRIST IS GOING TO KEEP YOU! Jude 24.

It is strange that the modern church has taught us to fear Satan, but has cast away the fear of God. If you believe the way the gospel is often presented, you might come to the conclusion that Christ died so that we would no longer need to fear God. They say we cannot be touched by his wrath. He cannot see our sins or judge us because of them, and we have a heavenly home assured that he cannot take away. It seems God is stuck with us, so why should we fear him? This ignores the words of the apostle who said, *“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”* Hebrews 10:31. The children of God are not “afraid of God” as they abide in Christ, but they understand that to neglect their walk with Christ is to bring themselves under the severity of God. Paul confirms this saying, *“For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.”* Romans 11:21-22. You can live in the goodness of God, but have no doubt, if you neglect your walk with Christ, you can find yourself living under the severity of God ...and cut off!

Our complete redemption in Christ is such that you can abide in his goodness and victory all the days of your life. There is nothing Satan can do about it as long as you simply abide in Christ. You need not fear the devil, and you need not fear sin. These things have no place in the children of God, and these have no power to take you by force. O child of God, you need to know and believe this truth of Christ, so that you being delivered out of the hand of your enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of your life.

A HEART OF FAITH

One person's junk is another person's treasure. The things you may despise, another holds in high regard. This is certainly true with God. Jesus said, *"...that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."* Luke 16:15. When a person begins to see things as God does, their sense of "true value" is completely changed. As Saul of Tarsus, Paul once viewed his natural lineage and religious works of the Law as his greatest possessions, but when he saw the glory of Christ, those things he once trusted in became as garbage in his own sight. Philippians 3:1-8.

When Paul said, *"Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness"* Romans 4:3, he was not saying God credited to Abraham something which was not actually true. He was reminding us that God views the attribute of *"believing God"* and *"trusting in Him"* to be greater value than any religious work. A "heart of faith," such as Abraham possessed, may not seem valuable to many people, but it has great value to God. Its value is such that God deems it to be righteousness. Consider how this *"righteousness" of "faith"* in the heart of Abraham affected his relationship with God.

The Bible says, *"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."* Hebrews 11:8. When a person believes and trusts in God, he can call them, send them, or lead them, and they will follow him.

God promised Abraham a child by Sarah, who was barren. The Bible says Abraham “...*staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.*” Romans 4:20. If God finds a person who believes and trusts in him, there is no limit to what God can do for them, in them, and through them for his glory.

The apostle said, “*By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead...*” Hebrews 11:17-19. When a person has a heart of faith like Abraham, God can ask anything of them, and they will freely give it to him.

Because Abraham “*believed in the Lord*” Genesis 15:6, God could say to him “...*a father of many nations have I made thee.*” Genesis 17:5. If God finds a person who will “*believe Him*” as Abraham believed him, he can make them to be everything he has purposed them to be.

When we see, as God does, the true nature of “a heart of faith,” we understand why God considers it to be righteousness. He values it far above sacrifices, religious works, and the keeping of ordinances, ceremonies, and commandments. A person can do any of those things and not even believe in God, but when God finds a person with a heart that “*believes Him,*” and will “*trust in Him,*” he has everything the person is and possesses.

The righteousness of having “a heart of faith” is a righteousness even a sinner can offer to God, but I promise you, if a sinner offers the “*righteousness of faith*” to God, they will be a sinner no longer! As the publican in the temple did, they also will go home justified! Luke 18:13-14. This “*righteousness of faith*” is the “*faith*” that gives us “*access into God’s grace!*” Romans 5:2.

The “*gift of righteousness*” Romans 5:17 we receive through redemption is different than the “*righteousness of faith.*” The “*righteousness of faith*” proceeds from our hearts and is received by God. The “*gift of righteousness*” proceeds FROM God and comes into our hearts. Paul calls this the righteousness “...*which is through*

the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:"

Philippians 3:9. We can only receive this righteousness when we believe God as Abraham believed God. This righteousness changes everything that we are. It imparts unto us a new heart, a new spirit, and a new nature. It is the work of Christ within us, who died upon the cross to *"make many righteous!"* Romans 5:19.

Abraham *"died in faith"* without receiving the promises he truly longed for. Hebrews 11:13. He could only see Christ and the great redemption he would bring *"afar off."* Yet anyone today who has the same "heart of faith" as Abraham, can receive every promise of redemption. There is no limit to what God will do in them. He will call them and they will come. He will give them the "unbelievable" promises of Christ, and they will not stagger at believing them. He will say, I give you the promised blessing of a new heart, a new nature, and a new life, and they will receive it. He will ask for their full surrender, and they will freely give themselves unto him. He will speak through the gospel saying, *"I have made thee a vessel of honor for my glory"* and they will in every way *"...be to the praise of his glory!"* Ephesians 1:12.

THE GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

There are numerous kinds of righteousness. Some are acceptable to God, and some or not. Let us consider a few.

SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS is self-justification. A self-righteous person is usually ready to proclaim their own righteousness. Their actions, or their belief about their personal character, are the basis of their self-justification. Jesus rebuked such, saying, *"Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts:"* Luke 16:15.

OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS-ES: These are the *"works of righteousness"* Titus 3:5 a person does seeking to establish, show, or prove their righteousness. With Israel it was the offering of sacrifices and keeping of holy days. With others it is their religious giving or keeping of religious ordinances. For still others it is their "good deeds" and "charitable acts" which are done without love? ।

Corinthians 13:3. Many people trust in such things believing these will somehow make them righteous before God. Isaiah spoke of such things, saying, “...all our righteousness-es are as filthy rags...” Isaiah 64:6.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LAW: Just as Israel has done, multitudes in every generation have trusted “commandment keeping” to make or show themselves to be righteous. The apostle Paul is clear; “*by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*” Romans 3:20. If a person understands the purpose of religious law, they will never trust in it again. Paul said, “*Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners...*” I Timothy 1:9. Religious law identifies “sin,” but it can never take it out of the heart of a person. Those who seek to serve God by religious law are identified as sinners by the very law they serve. That is its purpose! If they were righteous, they would not need a religious law to serve God.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH: God considers the faith of a person who “believes and trusts” him to be a “*righteousness*” far above sacrifices, circumcision, or any other religious work. The Bible is clear, “*FAITH (believing and trusting God) was counted to Abraham for righteousness.*” Romans 4:9. This does not mean that Abraham possessed salvation as provided by Jesus Christ. It simply means that the “heart of faith” in Abraham held great value before God, and it opened the door for him to receive great and precious promises.

Religious teachers have turned this simple truth into an absurdity. Some will tell you that the moment you confess Jesus Christ, God sees you as having the righteousness of Christ, perfect, innocent, clean, etc. It is commonly taught that if you “believe God,” he will consider you to be something that is not actually true. Nowhere does the scripture say such a thing.

The “*righteousness of faith*” as taught in the scripture is not the same as having the salvation and redemption that comes through Jesus Christ. The Bible speaks of many who had this “*righteousness of faith*” before Christ came, but they “*died in faith, not having*”

received the promises ... God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” Hebrews 11:13, 40.

Paul gives *“the righteousness of faith”* as the basis upon which any person can come to God. The Jews believed you had to come through the *“righteousness-es”* of the Law. Paul understood that anyone who would believe the gospel of Christ could come to God, whether they were a Jew or Gentile, pious or ungodly, slave or free. Their *“righteousness of faith”* would open the door of grace Romans 5:2 unto them so they could receive the salvation that Jesus Christ provided for all.

THE GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS is different than *“the righteousness of faith.”* The *“righteousness of faith”* is what we offer unto God through believing the gospel of Christ. The *“gift of righteousness”* is what God gives unto us when we receive his great salvation! This is the gift that we receive *“by grace ..., through faith”* Ephesians 2:8.

This *“gift of righteousness”* is the fulfillment of all the prophecies of redemption. It is the *“new heart”* and *“new spirit”* that God promised his people. Ezekiel 36:25-27. It is God’s law written in our heart as he said he would do. Jeremiah 31:31-34. It is the clean heart and righteous spirit that David asked for. Psalms 51:10. Those who receive this *“gift of righteousness”* dwell in the kingdom of Christ where it is said, *“Thy people also shall be all righteous:”* Isaiah 60:21.

The apostle explains the gift of righteousness in the verses below.

“...the grace of God, and THE GIFT BY GRACE, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.” Romans 5:15. This gift of righteousness abounds to as many as believe the truth of the gospel and trust in Christ.

“...THE FREE GIFT is of many offences unto justification.” Romans 5:16. This gift of righteousness can take the worst of sinners with *“many offences”* and *“justify”* them into a child of God, free from all sin!

“...they which receive abundance of grace and of THE GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.” Romans 5:17. Those who receive this *“gift of righteousness”* will reign in victory, IN THIS LIFE, over sin Satan and all the power of darkness. As Paul

later says, *“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”* Romans 6:14.

“...by the righteousness of one THE FREE GIFT came upon all men unto justification of life.” Romans 5:18. This free *“gift of righteousness”* does not just justify you *“in God’s sight,”* it justifies your entire life! Everything is made new. As Paul said, *“the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”* Galatians 2:20.

“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” Romans 5:19. Just as much as Adam made us to be sinners, Jesus Christ makes us to be righteous. It is his free gift to those who believe upon him. **It is “the gift of righteousness!”**

THE PRAYER LANGUAGE TRAP

I was speaking with a business owner about the gospel of Christ. When I mentioned the Spirit of God, he said to me, “I received the Holy Spirit Baptism at my church, but there really was not much to it.” Seeming to ignore his statement, I began to speak of the glory of what happens when Jesus Christ baptizes a person with the Spirit of God. I referenced both from the scripture and personal experiences. After a few minutes the man looked at me and said, “I didn’t receive the baptism of God’s Spirit, did I? “I knew that,” I said, “but you needed to recognize this for yourself.”

I believe and preach the baptism of the Holy Spirit, subsequent to salvation, and evidenced by speaking in other tongues as the Spirit of God gives utterance. I want this known in case any should think I am anti-Spirit or anti-speaking in tongues. Yet much of what I see today in the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements is very far from the reality of a true manifestation of God’s Spirit. I call it “The prayer language trap.”

I was very young when I first heard the “strange” exhortation for all the saints to begin to pray together in tongues. I say “strange” because we had never before heard of this. Speaking or praying in tongues was not initiated by the believer. As the Spirit-filled

children of God began to pray or worship God in their native language, they would at times be “caught up” in the Spirit, and God’s Spirit would begin to give them utterance in tongues. They called this “praying through.” When the Spirit of God came upon them, some might resist speaking in tongues, but no one could initiate it because they could speak only as the Spirit of God gave them utterance. Acts 2:4. They simply yielded to the Holy Spirit as he came upon them. At times the Spirit of God would come upon individuals and begin to make intercession through them, sometimes in English and sometimes in tongues. Romans 8:26. This was not a dry form where they just began to speak words in tongues, but it was a visitation of God’s Spirit. In these times the saints were truly built up, or edified, by the Spirit of God. I Corinthians 4:14, Jude 20. This is why the exhortation to speak in tongues at your will was a very “strange” thing to hear. Still, many thought “What harm could it bring?”

We began to hear of others who claimed they could teach you how to speak in tongues. Multitudes flocked to these teachers, and sure enough, they “spoke in tongues,” but something was missing. Gone was the visitation of God’s Spirit. Where once the speaking in tongues came only when the presence of God moved upon the worshipper, it became common to hear people who were spiritually dry and cold turn their “tongues” on and off like a light switch. Yes, many were speaking in tongues, but where was the presence of Almighty God? The reality had been exchanged for something far less. It’s like owning a three dollar bill. It may arouse curiosity for some, but it is worthless.

Many times over the years, I have seen people come for prayer for salvation or deliverance from sin. Yet when you begin to pray with them they immediately begin to speak in their “prayer language.” They never make the connection that God and sin are not co-inhabiting the same Temple. Their “tongues” are as far from being of God as their sin is. They can know that something is very wrong concerning their walk with God, but their “prayer language” gives them a false assurance of spirituality. This “assurance” is the greatest guarantee Satan has to keep this person from knowing the reality and freedom that is in Christ Jesus. Until they lose that false

“assurance” they will never find the answer they seek. I fear such in the case for many, many souls.

Today, many ministers are teaching the people to receive the Holy Spirit baptism by saying words they hear in their mind. These ministers claim to be different from those ministers who once gave the people words to say in order to speak in tongues, but they are not different at all. They are giving the people a false assurance of spirituality whose only evidence is they can speak in tongues at their will. Multitudes who are bound by sin, Satan, and other demonic power believe themselves to be saved, Spirit-filled, and possessing “spiritual gifts,” because they have a “prayer language.” It grieves me to acknowledge that no one loves the sound of their tongues more than Satan himself.

Your native language is your prayer language. That is the language God wants to hear from you. There are things you need to tell God that must come from your heart in words that you understand. The Spirit of God will not repent for you! Neither will he express to the Father your hunger and thirst for heavenly things. You must do this in a language that you understand. I am not saying that a Spirit filled believer will not pray in tongues, but it will not be their effort. It will be as the Spirit of God settles upon them and begins to give utterance through them. It is a sad truth that a “prayer language” has in many cases eliminated the true prayers of the saints.

The baptism of God’s Spirit is real, and its evidence is speaking with other tongues. On the other hand, speaking in tongues without the Spirit and presence of God upon you ...is worthless. Do not seek the tongues, but seek the true infilling and manifestation of God’s Spirit. When the Spirit of God comes to you, he will give utterance at his will. I cherish the times the Spirit of God falls upon his saints until they can no longer speak in their native language, but I loathe the *“sounding brass and tinkling symbols”* ¹ *Corinthians 13:1* of the prayer language gatherings of our day. Ignore those who seek to get you to speak in tongues at their will. Stay out of “the prayer language” trap!

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