



Behold the Lamb
Publications

Simply Christ

Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

Volume 9

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

Simply Christ

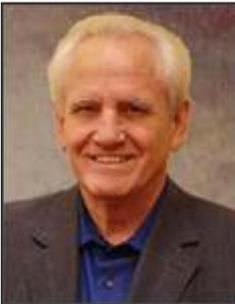
A minister should never try to preach something they believe is “a deep revelation.” If what you bring is not simple and clear to you, it will bring confusion to those you minister to. I am not saying that others may not perceive what God has given you to be “deep,” but it must be simple to the one who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

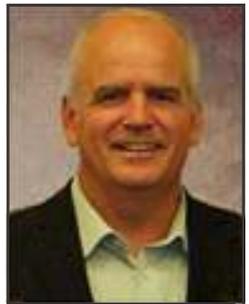
yourself: “A child could have understood this. Why have I been blind to it for so long?” True revelation from God is as though you just discovered that $2 + 2 = 4$. The thing God reveals becomes so simple to you that you feel every one else should easily understand it also.

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

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



Keith Surface

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 9

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THE CHRISTIAN'S BOOGIE MONSTER

When I was a child, my three brothers and I shared a room in the attic that had been converted into a bedroom for us boys. There was no air conditioning, just a window on each end that we kept open hoping for a slight breeze to blow through. When older boys would spend the night they always ended up telling scary stories which usually include something called the boogie monster. This was a fictitious creature that almost always ended up eating the littlest of the boys. After the stories were finished, we younger boys would lay there in terror. There would be no trips to the restroom tonight. Our feet would not dare touch the floor. Surely the boogie monster was under the bed, in the closet, or most certainly waiting in the stairway for the foolish child who dared to attempt to make it downstairs to the toilet!

Over fifty years later, I realized the church has created its own version of the boogie monster. It seems to be the source of all our woes. It hides in the darkness; it lies in wait; it prepares to pounce on those who are foolish enough to let down their guard for even a moment. There is nothing you can do about it. Even the Son of God in all his glorious redeeming power fell short of slaying this great beast. It is the Christian's boogie monster. It is called "OUR SINFUL NATURE!"

It's not that I do not believe in a "sin" or "sinful" nature. The scripture is clear that through Adam's transgression we were made sinners. Romans 5:19. When "*sin entered the world*" Romans 5:12, it did not hide in a cave; it found itself a home in the human heart. This is why Jesus said those who sin are "*slaves to sin.*" John 8:34. The Apostle Paul describes the carnal man as being "*sold under sin*" Romans 7:14, and he also tells us that sin "*reigns*" over the lost individual. Romans 5:21. Still, the scripture never actually tells us there is something called "the sin nature."

Sin is actually a great pollutant that contaminated the hearts of fallen mankind. It is certainly a mighty power of darkness that works in every person who is without Christ. Its poison flows

through us from birth, and left unchecked it completely debases and perverts the thoughts and actions of us all. Our parents, our laws, and our moral education, all do their best to keep this monster from having full control of our lives. We may subdue it, but we cannot eliminate it. It is woven into the very fabric of our being.

The power of sin in the human heart is such that many fail to see the greater power of redemption. Simple scriptures such as *“Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world”* John 1:29 become unbelievable to us. We say we believe his word, but we scoff at the thought that Christ actually takes sin away. But if Christ does not actually take our sin away, why did the Apostle John write, *“And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not...”*? 1 John 3:5-6. Is this “boogie monster” greater than our redeemer?

The simple truth is that whatever is in your heart is your nature. You are only immoral by nature if immorality is in your heart. You are only haughty by nature if pride is in your heart. Jesus did not say that a person is defiled by what is in their nature. He said the things that come from the heart defile a person. Mark 7:20-23. If your heart is purified from sin through faith in Jesus Christ, you do not have a sinful nature! Yet if sin is in your heart, it is evident that your sin has not been taken away by the blood of Christ. If that is the case, do not sit there and blame it on “the boogie monster.” Call upon the name of the Lord, believing that his blood was shed to sanctify you from all sin. Hebrews 13:12.

SINKING INTO DARKNESS

I was a young pastor and so very hungry to see a move of God. As I sought the Lord, he began to teach me through his word many foundational precepts of the gospel of Christ. He showed me in the scriptures that the New Covenant is God’s law written in the heart of his people by the Spirit of God. Hebrews 8:10-11. He let me understand that this is not a process, but the miracle of salvation itself. He also showed me how the redeemed have

received corresponding grace for each grace that Jesus was filled with. John 1:14. The Apostle John said *“And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.”* John 1:16. As I ministered these things, our congregation came to life. Many were lifted out of their struggles into the glorious liberty of the children of God. The freedom from sin and Satan that Jesus promised became their reality. Righteousness was not an effort, but simply the natural condition of those who live in Christ. It truly was an hour of refreshing in the presence of God.

One day something came to my attention that began to change things. I became aware of an activity involving one of our church members, and I was convinced something had to be done. Looking back I confess I was probably more insulted that such a thing would dare to be in “my church” than I was concerned for the person involved. Still, I was not too overly alarmed. I may have been young, but I could be tough if I needed to be. I could certainly “handle” this situation.

My message quickly changed from declaring glories of the gospel of Christ, which God had been revealing in my heart, to a message that declared “You better get right or else.” We had been seeing great rejoicing in the presence of God, but this subsided as saints began to come into the altars to repent. I believed this to be a good start, but it was not enough because as of yet I had failed to reach the one person about whom my mind was troubled. Service after service I preached what God required his people to do. Today I call this a “do better” gospel. It seemed that a majority of the congregation was now repenting in almost every service except for the one person I was preaching to. Still I could not help but notice that the presence of God and “rejoicing in Christ Jesus” Philippians 3:3 had lifted from our gatherings.

A darkness began to settle over the church. One by one, saints who had been rejoicing in the glories of their salvation, came to me expressing how their hearts were now troubled with things that had once been taken away by Jesus Christ. “Alas!” I thought. “Things are worse than I knew. The problems must be

spreading throughout the congregation.” The devil had found a place. But where? I determined to preach harder, tougher, and straighter than ever before. This devil would have no place to hide. Yet the more I pressed my case, the worse things became. It seemed nothing could be done as both the congregation and I sunk into darkness.

I did not understand it at the time, but my ministry had become the source of the darkness. I had set aside the power of the gospel of Christ because I saw one person who seemed unaffected by it, and had become like those Paul spoke to asking, “*Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*” Galatians 3:3. Satan had baited the hook, and I swallowed it.

The Apostle Paul made a comparison between ministry that brings condemnation to the people and ministry that brings righteousness to them. He said, “*For if **the ministration of condemnation** be glory, much more doth **the ministration of righteousness** exceed in glory.*” II Corinthians 3:9. The first ministry he spoke of condemned the people because of sin, but it had no power to change what they were at heart. The second ministry he speaks of is the ministry of the gospel of Christ. It alone has the power to make the people righteous. This is why it is called the “*ministration of righteousness.*” Why would a minister choose a ministry that can only condemn, when God has committed to us a ministry with the power to completely transform those who receive it? II Corinthians 4:1.

The Apostle Paul preached “*repentance toward God, AND faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Acts 20:21. A message of repentance that does not point to the blood of Jesus Christ as the complete and only answer for sin and uncleanness, is an empty and impotent message. If I get ten thousand people into an altar promising God to “do better,” all I have done is solicit ten thousand promises that would not please God even if they were kept. There is only one means given whereby a person is changed into the image of Jesus Christ. It is through seeing the redeeming power of Christ with the eyes of their understanding.

Paul said, *“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 Corinthian 3:18.

To preach the gospel is to preach “Who Christ is,” “What Christ was sent to accomplish,” and “How Jesus Christ did it all through His death on the cross!” The person who understands this sees *“the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”* II Corinthians 4:6, and they are changed into that same glorious image!

GRACE, GRACE, UNTO IT!

Decades ago I heard a famous minister teach on “Saved by grace, but rewarded by works.” His teaching was that we get into Heaven by grace because it covers the failures, faults and sins of those who believe in Jesus, but when we actually get to Heaven our reward will be based on the works we have done laboring for the Lord.

As I listened, I got a mental picture of a mom raising her children by herself whose “only” contribution to the kingdom seemed to be that she was godly in life and faithful in prayer and intercession before God. I also got another picture of a “great” preacher who preached to tens of thousands of people. This preacher was very haughty and his life was filled with hidden sin. In this scenario, both of these died and went to Heaven because of “God’s grace.” When they got there, the woman received a modest shack because of her meager service upon earth, but the “great preacher” received a mansion, riches, and great authority because of the “great things” he had done for Christ. When I considered these things, I said to myself, “There is something very wrong with this teaching. It reveals a complete lack of understanding of both grace and works.” As a side note, within a few months the minister I heard this teaching from was exposed to be in a very immoral condition.

The Apostle Paul, who considered himself to be the chief of sinners because he had once persecuted the church, tells us more about grace than any other writer in the Bible. He spoke of himself,

saying, *“For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But **by the grace of God I am what I am**: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, **but the grace of God** which was with me.”* 1

Corinthians 15:9.

Paul’s first witness of God’s grace in the above passage is his transformation from one who was filled with *“threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord”* Acts 9:1 to an apostle of Christ who would lay down his life for the gospel’s sake. When Paul was “saved by grace,” his hatred was washed away and *“straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.”* Acts 9:20. Paul was not a sinner being covered by grace. He was a new creation who had been delivered from sin by God’s grace. He would tell others of this glorious freedom saying, *“sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”* Romans 6:14.

The grace of God in Paul’s life was evident for all to see. He said, *“Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe.”* 11 Thessalonians 2:10. He also said he *“...renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but **by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.**”* 11 Corinthians 4:2. This manifestation of grace was not just in his “public life,” but in the most trying of times. He wrote, *“And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:”* 1 Corinthians 2:3. Everyone seems to have grace when the cameras are rolling, but the redeemed manifest God’s grace even in their most trying times and private hours.

Just because salvation is not of works does not mean that grace does not work in us. In fact, Paul said the grace that was with him *“labored more abundantly”* than all the other apostles. The apostle

gives us a wonderful understanding of grace in the following three verses.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Ephesians 2:8. Our deliverance from sin, Satan, and the power of darkness is all a work of grace which we receive through simply believing the gospel of Christ.

“Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Ephesians 2:9. There is nothing we can do to help or produce the glorious salvation that grace brings to the believer other than believe the gospel and trust in Christ.

“For we are his workmanship...” Ephesians 2:10. The transformation that comes with salvation is fully the work of grace. The same God who created the Heavens and the earth, takes a sinner and transforms them into a new creation through the miracle of salvation. We are His workmanship!

“...created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10. Even our labors in the service of Christ are by the grace of God. Paul said he was ***“...made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.”*** Ephesians 3:7. The same God who gave the grace that delivered Paul from sin, gave him grace that transformed him into the greatest of apostles. This why Paul says of his labors, ***“...yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”***

Everything of eternal value in our walk with God is by grace. Paul asked, ***“...what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”*** 1 Corinthians 4:7. From salvation to service, if it is not by grace, it is not of God. This is revealed in the following prophecy spoken of Zerubbabel who was rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem.

“This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.” Zechariah 4:6-7.

A SELF-EVIDENT TRUTH

There are many religious teachings people believe to be true, but here is one self-evident truth. It is not possible for anything that says "You cannot be free from sin" to be true, because Jesus said, *"the truth shall make you free."* Therefore, everything that denies "freedom from sin" is also counting Jesus to be a liar.

Jesus spoke the words, *"You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free"* to some Jewish people *"who believed upon him."* John 8:31. Upon hearing this statement, they denied there was any need for them to be *"made free"* because they had never been slaves to anyone. They demanded Jesus explain what he meant by *"You shall be made free."* His answer turned these "believers" into a mob of people who were ready to kill him. John 8:37.

Jesus told them that everyone who commits sin does it because they are sin's slave. John 8:34. Can you imagine the effect this statement had upon these Jews who had always heard that they were the special people of God? They had thought themselves to be above all others, but in their mind Jesus' words included them in the lowest group possible. He said they were slaves!

Jesus then uses an illustration to drive home his point. He compares a religious sinner to a slave assigned to work in a great house. They may be in the house, but the house is not their home. When the slaves' work is done, they must leave. Only the owner's children live in the house. The hour always comes when the slave is cast out of the house! A few verses earlier, Jesus had told the people *"...if ye believe not that I am he (the Christ), ye shall die in your sins."* John 8:24. As long as they were still sinners they were slaves; and as long as they refused to believe the truth, they would still be sinners.

Having stripped them of all their supposed spirituality, Jesus then offers hope ...if they would receive it. He said *"If the Son*

therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." John 8:36. This simple statement is the embodiment of "the truth." His purpose for coming into the world has always been to "...save his people from their sin." Matthew 1:21. Jesus is "the Messiah the Prince" who came "...to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." Daniel 9:24. This was their great hope, but they were blind to it. They rejected Jesus as the Christ, and they died in their sins just as he told them they would. Most of them died as slaves, never believing "the truth" which would have made them free.

How is the modern church any different from the Jewish people in the days of Jesus' ministry? Just like those Jesus spoke to, many profess to "believe upon him," but they refuse to believe his words. In fact, like those Jews, they become angry at the words "He that commits sin is the slave to sin," and even angrier at the words "If you will listen to my words, you shall know the truth, the truth shall make you free."

It may be comforting to hear a preacher say "I am a sinner just like you." or "We are all sinners and always will be as long as we live!" You may even feel consoled when others tell you not to worry about the sin of your heart because "everyone struggles with sin." Yet if any of this is true, why did Jesus say "If the Son therefore shall make you free, **ye shall be free indeed.**"? John 8:36. Do not cling to a belief just because it consoles you. The Apostle Paul warned of those who would "believe a lie" and "be damned." II Thessalonians 2:11-12. Consider the plight of these God spoke of in the following passage.

*"A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and **what will ye do in the end thereof?**"* Jeremiah 5:30-31.

TERMS OF JUSTIFICATION

When God sent an angel to Gideon and called him a *“mighty man of valor,”* it was true. Gideon did not know it yet, but it was still true. When God, who *“...calleth those things which be not as though they were”* Romans 4:17, told Abraham, who had no children, *“a father of many nations have I made thee.”* Genesis 17:5, it was true. He had already made Abraham to be something that others simply were not yet aware of. It was not long, however, that whole world would see the many nations of which Abraham is the father.

Much of the church views *“justification”* as God declaring a person to be something different than what they actually are. We are told he declares the guilty to be innocent, the sinful to be righteous, and the ungodly to be perfect. Such teachings are absolutely false. In fact, such teachings make God out to be a liar. If God says a person is righteous, you can know they are in fact righteous.

There are four ways justification is described in the gospel. These terms may intertwine and overlap each other, but they are also separate in definition and effect. Let’s briefly look at each of these to see their role in our great salvation. First consider the following definitions.

Just (righteous) = equitable (right) in character or action

Justify = to render (show to be, or cause to be) just (righteous)

Justified by faith: This term is used by the apostles to show that God considers the act of believing God to be greater than religious works. The Apostle Paul used the fact that Abraham *“...believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness”* Genesis 15:6, as spiritual precedent to show a person can be received by God without coming through the Law. Others approached with sacrifices, commandment keeping, ritualism, and various religious works, but were rejected by God. Paul lets us know that when a person believes God, *“...his faith is counted for righteousness.”* Romans 4:6. Abraham’s faith was the *“act of righteousness”* God was looking for. Yet as great as it was, it is important to remember that Abraham’s *“justification by faith”* is not the equivalent of the salvation we receive through faith in Jesus Christ.

Justified by His blood: As Abraham did, we also come to God by faith, but the Apostle Paul tells us there is a great difference between us and Abraham. He says we are *"...now justified by His blood..."* Romans 5:9. Although Abraham was *"justified by faith,"* he died in faith without receiving the redemption God provided for us through Christ Jesus. Hebrews 11:13, 39-40. Our greater justification required the death of God's own Son. The blood of Christ was shed to change the essence of who and what we were. It is the agent of our deliverance from Sin, Satan, and the Law, and the cause of our sanctification. All of this is part of the redemption Christ provided so we could be delivered from sin and be *"made righteous."* Romans 5:19. Through the power of Jesus' blood, we who were once sinners are now delivered, transformed, and made to be *"the righteousness of God in Him."* II Corinthians 5:21. We have been justified by His blood!

Justified by His grace: The Apostle Paul first describes salvation as *"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."* Romans 3:24. Because this is *"through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,"* it is separated from the justification that Abraham knew. This describes the full work of Christ which makes us to be new creatures and restores us back to God. Paul even tells us that *"...the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour"* Titus 3:5-6 is actually part of being *"justified by His grace!"* Titus 3:7. Justification by grace describes the full and complete work of our salvation!

Justified by the faith of Christ: Paul wrote that, *"... a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ..."* Galatians 2:16. *"The faith of Christ"* is synonymous to *"the gospel of Christ."* It embodies who Christ is, what Christ was sent to do, and how Christ accomplished it all upon the cross. Only through believing the gospel of Christ do we receive this glorious salvation. This is summed up in Jesus' words, *"You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."* John 8:32. Our freedom from sin and our sanctification Romans 6:22, as well as receiving a new heart, a new mind, and a new spirit, are all a part of what it means to be *"justified by the faith of Christ!"*

ON THEIR SHOULDERS OR IN THEIR SHADOW

I was visited by two Mormon missionaries one day. They told me about their prophets and the great revelation which was given to Joseph Smith. One offered me a Mormon bible and asked if I would read it and pray about whether it was the truth. I said, No!" "Why not?" he asked. The following is a summary of my response.

Before the first generation of the church had passed, Jude had to exhort the saints to *"...earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."* Jude 1:3. In this passage, Jude is clear that the truth of the gospel had already been delivered to the saints. Yet less than forty years after the resurrection of Jesus, the glorious message of the gospel of Christ was being corrupted by those with a "new revelation." This "new revelation" would lead the church into the dark ages. Jude was not directing the saints to look forward for something new, but back to that which had already been given through the early apostles and prophets of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul spoke boldly of the gospel he preached, saying, *"I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."* Galatians 1:11-12. So absolute was the gospel he preached, that Paul said, *"Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."* Galatians 1:8. (Joseph Smith claimed he received his writings from an angel.)

The early apostles were foundation layers. They preached *"Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God!"* Matthew 16:16. Their message is the gospel foundation for every generation of the church. Paul said, *"According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. **For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.**"* I Corinthians 3:10-11. A different gospel message from that which Paul preached is no foundation at all.

The Apostle John was equally bold. He said ***“We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.”*** ^{1 John 4:6.} John wrote these words in the same letter in which he wrote ***“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. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”*** ^{1 John 3:8-9.} Do you believe these words which John wrote? You do if you know God!

The question is not whether Joseph Smith, or any other person, received their revelation from an angel, in a vision, or heard a voice from heaven. The only question is whether their revelation is the same as that which was first delivered to the saints and recorded in the scripture. If it is not, as Paul said, let those who bring it be accursed. I told these two men, “Until you are ready to believe the word of God above “your prophet,” you will never know the truth which Jesus said *‘shall make you free.’*” ^{John 8:32.}

The Mormons have their “men” which they look to as the measure of truth, yet they are not the only ones who do so. Many are indignant that Mormons “foolishly look to their prophets as the measure of truth,” but they themselves look to John Calvin, Martin Luther, John Wesley, or some other “great” bible teacher. If their man said it, it should not be questioned.

Others may not have a certain person they look to, instead they have “the fathers.” This usually speaks of a certain denomination or religious movement. Many years ago I was told by an elder Assembly of God Pastor whom I loved dearly that I should not question what the men of God in the general council had decided was “the truth.” I responded with the scripture ***“God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar...”*** ^{Romans 3:4.}

It’s not that many of those who went before us were not men and women of God; it’s that they are not the measure of truth. God and His word are! Martin Luther saw a great truth which helped deliver millions from the darkness that filled the church of his day. In the history of the world, it would be rare to find a person who took

such a giant and courageous step as he did, yet there was also much that Luther did not see and was even absolutely wrong about. Those who hold up Luther as the measure of truth may hold to the truth he saw, but they are also locked into his blindness. The only way to honor a man like Martin Luther is to do as he did and believe God above men regardless of the cost.

I was always taught to “stand on the shoulders of giants.” If you do this, you might see more than they were able to see. Instead, many are stuck hiding under the shadow of their fathers. Maybe they are afraid of dishonoring their fathers by seeing more than they did. Yet, I believe the greatest way to dishonor a man or woman of God is for those who honor them to uphold their word over the word of God. Do not ever be afraid to see more in God’s word than those who taught you have seen. They may have taken the journey through the wilderness so that you could stand on their shoulders and see the Promised Land!

This message is not a call for anyone to seek out a new revelation. It is a call for men and women to dust off their Bible, read it and believe it for what it says. Look back to *“the faith”* which was once delivered to the saints. Find out for yourself what Jesus, Peter, John, Paul, and the prophets said about the gospel. Search out the unsearchable riches of Christ!

WHAT IS SO SWEET ABOUT BITTERNESS?

What is so sweet about bitterness that causes people to cling to it as though it is their most prized possession? It does nothing for the person in whom it dwells except to keep them in pain over the wounds of the past. So it is with other similar bondages of the soul, such as envy, jealousy and hatred. These destroy a person from within, and offer only misery and loneliness in return. It has been said that bitterness is like drinking poison and expecting someone else to die. This is very true, but bitterness is also contagious and will often infect and destroy those around the person in whom it dwells. Still, most people will hold to it even though it cost them happiness, family, friends, and even their own soul.

In the scripture, bitterness is included among the things which will *“grieve the holy Spirit of God”* Ephesians 4:31 such as wrath, anger, and evil speaking (vilification). If God’s Spirit is grieved by a person, He will depart from that person and they will find themselves sitting in darkness. Bitterness is difficult to hide, and when the object of a person’s bitterness is mentioned, their bitterness can hardly be contained. The Apostle Paul spoke of those *“Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:”* Romans 3:13-14.

Most people can point to a reason to justify their bitterness, envy, or hatred towards another person. It is usually based upon what someone has said or done. Sometimes these reasons have merit and sometimes they are just plain silly; it really makes no difference. The embittered person almost always feels as though they “have a right” to be bitter. Perhaps they do, but they are clinging to a “right” that is destroying them.

For years I have told people, “You may have a right to be bitter, but you also have a right to have peace with God. Just know that you cannot have both.” The Bible says the kingdom of God is *“righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost!”* Romans 14:17. If you are born of God’s Spirit, you have full privilege to walk in that righteousness, peace, and joy all the days of your life. But if you do, you will surrender your right to bitterness, envy, strife, and hatred. Such things have no place at all in *“the Kingdom of God’s dear Son.”* Colossians 1:13. You must know that as a child of God, you have no right to such things at all.

I do not believe a child of God has enemies. There may be people who dislike, hate, or despise you, but they cannot be your enemy. When Jesus said *“love your enemies”* Matthew 5:44, he is speaking of those who see you as an enemy in their eyes. Yet if you love them, they can never be an enemy in your eyes. Jesus said, *“Pray for them who despitefully use you.”* Matthew 5:44. Do not pray for God to punish them or straighten them out. Pray for God to lift them up and bless them! You will find it impossible to despise someone for whom you are sincerely praying.

A person in the grip of bitterness and hatred may read this letter and acknowledge every word of it to be true, yet still find it

impossible to turn loose of the bitterness that possesses their soul. For that person I have two words: Forgive & Trust.

Forgive: Jesus said, *“But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”* Matthew 6:15. Sometimes people refuse to forgive others because they do not believe the other person is “sorry” for what they have done. Sometimes people just refuse to forgive. What have you needed forgiveness for? What do you personally need forgiveness for? Forgive, and you shall be forgiven!

Trust: Only the blood of Jesus Christ has the power to cleanse the human heart. The Bible says, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* 1 John 1:9. God will not only forgive you for your bitterness and hatred, but he will wash it from your heart, mind, and soul. When the Bible says *“the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin,”* it means there is no bondage, no darkness, and no sin so powerful and strong that Jesus’ blood will not wash it all away. You can be free! You must simply trust that God’s word is true, and that He is true to His word. Find yourself a place and call out to Jesus Christ today!

A THOUSAND YEAR OLD RUT

A rut is a long deep track made by the repeated passage of the wheels of vehicles. The deeper a rut is, the more difficult it is for a vehicle caught in the rut to steer out of it. As long as you are in the rut, it is impossible to go anywhere except where those who made the rut had gone. Sometimes you just need to back up, get out of the rut, and start over!

For much of the history of the church, *“justification”* and *“sanctification”* have been presented as “Step 1” and “Step 2” in our salvation. Justification is presented as our “standing” with God, and sanctification is viewed as a change which follows at some point in the future. There are various versions of this theology, but they all usually end up in the same place. Over the years, many have attempted to correct the errors they find in this scenario, but

with little success. It is like trying to escape a rut that has been followed for a thousand years. Maybe it is time to go all the way back and start fresh based upon the word of God.

Paul's epistle to the believers at Rome is one of the most complete presentations of the gospel given to us by any of the apostles of Christ. He wrote this epistle in the Koine Greek language, which was the dominant language in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. In this letter he presents the gospel in terms the common man would understand and used the Greek understanding of "justice" to present the gospel as "*the righteousness,*" or "*justice,*" of God. Romans 1:16-17. Paul shows the work of Christ to be what God did to "*justify the ungodly.*" Romans 4:5. Hence, "*justification*" is at the heart of this presentation of the gospel.

The words "*made righteous*" Romans 5:19 are the defining words of the book of Romans. These words describe the complete work of justification we receive through believing the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul reveals this complete justification was accomplished through the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross. In it we find forgiveness for past sins Romans 3:25, peace with God Romans 5:1, deliverance from sin through crucifixion with Christ Romans 6:6-7, and freedom from sin with holiness as the result. Romans 6:22. This vast and complete salvation is what Paul calls "*Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*" Romans 3:24.

The epistle to the Hebrews presents the gospel in completely different terms than the epistle to the Romans. Its gospel presentation and writing style is so different chiefly because of who it was written to. The epistle to the Hebrews was not written to Gentiles as were the other epistles of Paul. To the Hebrews, Paul revealed the gospel of Christ in terms only a Jew would identify with.

Paul was born into the Jewish religious culture and mindset. He was trained in the Jewish religion and understood the importance of their sacrificial system. He reminds us "*...almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.*" Hebrews 9:22. In Hebrews, the gospel is not presented in terms of God's justice, or "*justification,*" as it is in Romans, but in

terms of *“sanctification.”* This *“sanctification”* is clearly shown to be God’s provision to purge sin from the heart of the believer. Hebrews 9:14, 10:2, 10:22. The summarizing verse of this letter seems to be *“Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.”* Hebrews 13:12.

The messages of Romans and Hebrews seem very different, but are actually very similar. Consider on one hand that the *“justification”* we receive through Jesus’ sufferings upon the cross culminates in our deliverance from sin. When Paul tells us *“our old man is crucified with Christ,”* he gives the purpose as *“that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”* Romans 6:6. Paul sums this up, saying, *“For he that is dead is freed from sin”* Romans 6:7, which accurately translated from the Greek text says, *“For he that is dead is justified from sin.”* This shows that the fullness of justification is our deliverance from the sin which was inherent in our heart and nature.

Now consider on the other hand that the epistle of Hebrews tells us the body of Jesus was offered upon the cross for our *“sanctification,”* which speaks of *“...having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.”* Hebrews 10:22. The apostle says, *“...we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”* Hebrews 10:10. Both of these epistles present that Jesus died to take sin out of our heart and nature, but use different terminology to show it. To the Roman audience the gospel was presented in terms of God’s justice. To the Hebrew audience the same gospel was presented in terms of the Jewish sacrificial system.

Another similarity is revealed in that both of these epistles present the work of Christ as accomplishing something which could not be accomplished by the Law. To the Romans, Paul writes, *“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.”* Romans 8:3. The Law could judge and kill the sinner, but it could not do anything about the sin inside the person. This Christ did when he destroyed *“sin in the flesh”* upon the cross.” Romans 6:6. This is the *“justice”*, or *“justification,”* provided for us through Jesus Christ.

In Hebrews, the apostle writes, “*For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should **take away sins.***” Hebrews 10:4. The next verse gives God’s solution in the words of Christ: “*Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:*” Hebrews 10:5. Christ offered his body to take away sin, something the blood of animals could never accomplish. The apostle confirms this, saying, “*...we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*” Hebrews 10:9-10. Again, Jesus is shown to have died upon the cross so he could sanctify us by taking away our sin, a work the Law could never accomplish.

If the traditional view of “*justification*” and “*sanctification*” is correct, then only half the gospel was presented in the epistle to the Romans, and the other half presented in the epistle to the Hebrews. (Romans does not present Christ as “*sanctifying*” the people, and Hebrews does not present Christ as “*justifying*” the people.) The foolishness of such thought speaks for itself! Church theology has stripped “*justification*” of all its power and turned “*sanctification*” into a process involving religious works. In doing so, the message of both has been destroyed. In truth, both of these terms are simply describing the complete work of Christ to “*take away our sin.*” I John 3:5.

I know many will view this article as foolishness because it speaks contrary to so many centuries of “*religious wisdom.*” But if “*religious wisdom*” does not hold true to the word of God, then it is just another religious rut. It’s time we get out of the rut and speak the truth, contrary to all the “*wisdom of the wise.*” I Corinthians 1:18-19

I TELL YOU BEFORE

To be called by God into the ministry is a great honor, but it brings with it a tremendous burden of responsibility. Many things will weigh heavily upon a man or woman of God as they seek to be a faithful steward of the gospel of Christ. It was no different with the Apostle Paul. One such thing which weighed so very heavy upon Paul was to see those he brought to Christ being led away to trust in fallacies. He spoke often of the consequences of being deceived

by “*vain words.*” There was one particular warning Paul repeated over and over to the churches. He considered it to be of utmost importance that the believers understood this simple truth.

Paul gave this warning in his letter to the Galatians. He said, “*I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past...*” He had repeatedly told them something “*in time past,*” and he wants to be sure they have not forgotten it. Something is going to happen, and it is vitally important they know and understand it. This is why Paul says, “*I tell you before*” this happens. Let’s consider the following passage.

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Galatians 5:19-21.

The passage above is an absolute statement. It is a truth which Paul repeats to church after church. In the same epistle that he wrote “*For by grace are ye saved through faith...*” Ephesians 2:8, Paul reminds us, “*For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*” Ephesians 5:5. Salvation by grace does not negate this truth! Salvation by grace transforms you, so you no longer have any of these things in your heart or life.

This same message is repeated to the Corinthians. Paul writes, “*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? **Be not deceived:** neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.*” I Corinthians 6:9-10. Time after time, in clearest of terms, Paul makes sure we know that no one who does such things will inherit the kingdom of God. NO ONE!!

In writing these words, Paul is not concerned about our doctrine. He is concerned about our soul. In fact, these words do not care if

your doctrine says these things are covered by the blood of Christ and God cannot see them. They do not care if you believe the righteousness of Christ is imputed to you, and you will not be judged for such sins. These words do not even care if we believe our sins are forgiven “past, present, and future.” Even our doctrines of justification and sanctification are made irrelevant by these words. Paul is adamant, clear, and absolute, “...*they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*”

The Apostle assures us that any doctrine which says someone who does these sort of things will enter the kingdom of God, is just “*vain* (empty) *words*” that serve to deceive you. He wrote, “**Let no man deceive you with vain words:** for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them.” Ephesians 5:6-7.

Paul’s words, “**I tell you before...**,” are saying this:

“**I tell you before** it’s too late to repent and believe the gospel.” Mark 1:15.

“**I tell you before** it’s too late to have sin washed from your heart by the blood of Christ. Hebrews 10:22.

“**I tell you before** you hear the words, *I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*” Matthew 7:23.

“**I tell you before** you stand before God to be judged according to your deeds!” Romans 2:5-11.

Jesus died to make you “*free from sin*” Romans 6:22; to wash it out of your heart, mind, and nature. Revelation 1:5. Yet you will never be free as long as you hold to “*vain words*” which promise Heaven to those who continue in sin. The reality of this truth is too important to ignore. Along with Jesus, the prophets, and the apostles, “***I tell you before...!***”

THE EVERLASTING PATH

When my four children were young, we visited a state park in northern Arkansas. As we walked a trail through the

mountainous terrain, we came upon a huge rock formation that had a rounded slope which dropped off to a stream about 200 feet below. The area was roped off, and my wife and I were reading a warning sign when we heard my four year old son Tyler shout “Hey Mom! Look at me!” We looked up and saw him standing far beyond the barrier on the downward curve of the rock formation. He could have easily slipped and slid down the rock formation to his death. My wife and I were in shock and stood in silence for a few seconds not wanting him to make any sudden moves which might cause him to slip. “Tyler, you get over here now,” I said calmly and firmly. He just walked up the slope of the rock formation and was quickly out of danger ...except for maybe from his mother.

The Apostle Paul instructed those whom had been recently chastened of the Lord to “...*lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And **make straight paths for your feet**, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way...*” Hebrews 12:12-13. These had been corrected, and some even scourged. Now it was time for them to stand up and begin to walk as they knew they should. He told them to “*make straight paths for your feet.*”

The words “*straight paths*” must refer back to the prophecies given of Christ’s ministry and work upon earth. John the Baptist was “*The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, **make his paths straight**. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.*” Luke 3:4-5, Isaiah 40:3-5. This prophecy of “*the way of the Lord*” was declaring there would be a path without “*mountains,*” “*valleys,*” or “*crooked*” and “*rough*” places. It would be a path anyone could walk. Isaiah also spoke of this path, saying, “*Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people.*” Isaiah 62:10. This “*highway*” would be a path where the “*stones of stumbling*” had been removed. A child could walk this path, along with the elderly and the weak in body. This would be a road anyone could travel. Those who walked this path

would be called *“The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD...”*

Isaiah 62:12.

God called this *“highway,”* or way, *“the way of Holiness.”* Isaiah 35:10. It is important to see he did not say “holiness is the way,” but that this is the *“way of holiness.”* Jesus Christ is *“the way”* John 14:6, and those who walk in him have found *“the way of holiness”* through the sanctifying power of His shed blood. Hebrews 13:12. There is no danger on this *“highway.”* The scripture says, *“No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there:”* Isaiah 35:9. It is true that Satan is as *“a roaring lion ...seeking whom he may devour”*, but he cannot devour those on this path because he has no place on this highway. There is no devil in the kingdom of God! If you are walking in Christ, you are not one that Satan can devour.

These prophecies tell of a place, which is Christ, where *“...we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him (God) without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.”* Luke 1:74-75. It is a path anyone can walk who will simply believe the gospel and trust in Christ. There are no cliffs or pitfalls on this way. You do not have to be strong enough to climb a mountain or trudge through dark valleys. It is a straight and simple path, and it is prepared in Christ for the people of God.

Those who had been *“chastened of the Lord”* were like my son Tyler. They had forsaken the *“way of the Lord”* and had chosen their own path, or were led there by foolish shepherds. It is a path where the *“children,”* the *“weak,”* and the *“lame”* were falling along the wayside; many were even perishing by the way. In a push for excitement, or to seem *“relevant”* to this world, many today are leading the people along spiritual *“cliffs,”* and paths filled with *“stones of stumbling”* which destroy the soul. We are losing our children in droves as our churches train them to walk, look, and act like the world. Christian people think nothing of alcohol use, gambling, partying, and such things, not considering the snares that lie-in-wait to destroy the soul. It is

rare when you find someone who knows what it is to simply walk in the presence of God. People want to walk like a “daredevil,” and that is exactly what the devil dares you to do.

God instructed the people, saying, “*Stand ye in the ways, and see, **and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.***” Jeremiah 6:16. The words “*old paths*” are not just speaking of the path your parents or grandparents may have walked. The word “*old*” is better translated from the Hebrew language as “*everlasting*.” God was saying, “*...ask for the everlasting path!*” It is the “*good way!*” It is a walk in freedom and victory. Anyone who will believe the gospel can walk this path. It is for “*whosoever will.*” It is the “*highway*” God prepared for his people through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, and those who walk in it “*find rest for their soul!*”

AM I A SLAVE?

Jesus’ words, “*the truth shall make you free,*” were received as an insult by those he was speaking to. They said, “*We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man.*” How dare he insinuate they were in some kind of bondage? They demanded an answer from Jesus, saying “*...how sayest thou, You shall be made free?*” John 8:31-36. Jesus’ answer only offended them more.

Jesus was very direct. He said, “*Whosoever commits sin is the servant (slave) of sin.*” Could this be true? Is sin a spiritual master over the sinner? Yes, it is true. A sinner is a slave and will be a slave until someone liberates them from sin’s bondage. Jesus confirmed this, saying, “*If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.*” John 8:36.

In the Apostle Paul’s testimony concerning what he experienced laboring to serve God by the Law before he came to Christ Romans 7:5, he takes us back to the time he was forced to acknowledge that “*the great Saul of Tarsus*” who “*touching the righteousness which is in the Law, (was) blameless*” Philippians 3:6, was in fact ...a slave to sin. This realization crushed him and threw his whole world into a turmoil.

Saul, like the Jews who disputed with Jesus, did not consider himself to be a sinner. In fact, Jesus even said, *“If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin...”* John 15:22. The Jews had no concept of a sin nature. They were blameless outwardly, but Jesus’ message was that sin in the heart IS SIN! A person who *“lusts to commit adultery”* is in fact an adulterer. Matthew 5:28. This message stripped away their illusion of spirituality, and it became the root cause of their hatred for Jesus.

Saul viewed himself to be blameless and without sin until he began to understand the tenth commandment. Its words, *“Thou shall not covet”* Romans 7:7, judged the content of his heart. As Saul sought to eradicate sin from his heart, something began to rage within and forced him to face an undeniable truth about himself.

Never in Saul’s life, before or after his conversion to Christ, is there any evidence of immorality, dishonesty, or deception. Even his statement that he was *“chief”* of sinners is directly connected to his role in persecuting the church. I Timothy 1:13-15. His words, *“For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do”* Romans 7:19 were not speaking of moral uncleanness, but were expressing Saul’s conflict over his persecution of the church. In all his raging against the believers, Saul never transgressed the Law of Moses. Yet the anger and rage which boiled up inside of him troubled Saul. He had always viewed himself as a *“spiritual”* man, but now he was filled with rage, dragging Christians from their homes and casting them into prisons? Saul hated what he was becoming, but he could not help himself. Something inside was driving him, and he could not control it. *“Cursing and bitterness”* began to spill from his mouth Romans 3:14, and he found himself *“...breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord...”* Acts 9:1.

Saul began to consider his own condition. If he cannot do what he wants to do, but instead does what he does not want to do, then it is evident he is under the control of something more powerful than himself. This is where the true fact of his condition hits Saul like a sledge hammer. He wrote, *“Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.”* Romans 7:20. He had

never before considered that sin dwelt inside of him, but the evidence of this was overwhelming. He concluded that if it was sin dwelling in him that was controlling him, then sin must be HIS MASTER! O the horror that swept over this self-righteous Pharisee at that realization. If this was true, then he was not the spiritual person he believed himself to be, but he was *“carnal, sold under sin.”* Romans 7:14. No! How can this be? The great Saul of Tarsus, a Hebrew of Hebrews, IS A SLAVE? His entire religious “house” began to crumble. As he drifted into hopelessness, his soul began to cry, *“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”* Romans 7:24.

Saul could no longer deny he was in fact a slave to sin, but who could make this wretched slave free? His next words reveal the answer. *“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord...”* Romans 7:25. When Saul surrendered to Jesus Christ on the Damascus road, he was delivered from sin, never to serve it again. Romans 6:6. The *“truth”* had made him free!

THE STAGGERING COST OF REDEMPTION

When we consider the cost of our redemption, we rightfully look to the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ upon the cross. This cost is referred to in the scripture as a *“ransom.”* This *“ransom”* was not paid to anyone, but it speaks of what it took to destroy our adversary the devil and deliver us from the tyranny of sin. Yet as horrible as the beatings and death by crucifixion were, these were finished after a period of time. There is, however, a price Christ paid for our redemption long before the first stripes were laid upon his back. This may be the true eternal cost of our salvation.

The Apostle John begins his description of Christ, saying, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.”* John 1:1-3. Christ, the WORD (the divine expression), was with God and was God!

Paul tells us that Christ was *"...in the form of God, (and) thought it not robbery to be equal with God."* Philippians 2:6. Christ was not in the form of a man. He was in the form of God. The statement *"thought it not robbery to be equal with God"* tells us that it is not "robbing" the truth to say Christ was equal with God. I will be first to tell you there is much I do not understand about the things of the "Godhead." I will also tell you that those who believe they have these things figured out have more likely only deceived themselves.

Paul continues this passage telling us that Christ who was *"in the form of God," "...made himself of no reputation."* This phrase literally means *"to make empty."* Christ emptied himself of his glory and power, and *"took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men"* Philippians 2:7. The one by whom *"all things were made"* emptied himself out so he could be made like his creation. Christ gave up *"the form of God"* so he could take on *"the form of a servant."* The Bible says, *"Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren..."* Hebrews 2:17.

The death of Jesus on the cross was not fulfilling a "requirement" that a perfect man die for our sins. Such a death would have accomplished nothing. Our redemption could only be accomplished by the death of the one by whom we were created. God would have to lay down His life to destroy the work of Satan. He would have to shed his blood to cleanse us from our sin. This was a great problem because God cannot die and he has no blood to shed. This is the reason *"the WORD (Christ) was made flesh."* John 1:14. Every human "body" has, not only a mother, but a father also. The body and blood that was offered at Calvary was not just that of a natural man. It was in fact the holy body and holy blood of God's Son, who was in fact *"the Lord from Heaven."* I Corinthians 15:47.

When Christ was *"made flesh"* and *"took upon him the form of a servant,"* this was an eternal abasement. This was confirmed when Steven saw *"the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."* Acts 7:56. The term *"Son of man"* always speaks of someone who is *"born of a woman."* Jesus Christ is at the Father's side, yet he is still in the *"likeness of men."* When the

Apostle John saw Jesus in the Revelation, he was “...like unto the Son of man.” Revelation 1:13. He will eternally be “in the likeness of men” and not “in the form of God.”

There is even more scriptural evidence for the staggering price of our redemption. The Apostle Paul tells us that Christ “...must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.” I Corinthians 15:25. Yet when the last enemy is destroyed “...**then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.**” I Corinthians 15:28. I know this verse will make a theologian turn in his grave while he sits on his pew, but it is still the word of God. Christ, who in the beginning “...thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” will abide eternally “...subject unto him that put all things under him...” This is what Christ gave up for you. This is the cost of your redemption. I am only pointing out what the word of God clearly says. With such things in mind, let us all remember the words of the apostle: “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation...!” Hebrews 2:3.

THE CORONAVIRUS STORM

The entire world is currently in the midst of a coronavirus pandemic. The realization of what has come upon us all has caused fear and anxiety to grip the nations as they seek to contain the spread of the virus without completely destroying their economies. Left unchecked, this virus will kill millions. The price of stopping it will likely cause a worldwide recession, or even an economic depression.

A few months ago, most would have scoffed at the suggestion that we could be in this situation. The American (and many other nations) economy was soaring and our technological breakthroughs were coming at a breathtaking pace. The advances in medical science suggested that even human immortality would someday be achievable. It is stunning how fast things have changed in the last few weeks.

The prophet Isaiah spoke of those who believed they had made “a covenant with death.” God had sent prophets to warn of impending

judgment, but the people said *“We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves.”*

Isaiah 28:15. The *“lies”* and *“falsehoods”* were things they trusted in other than God to keep them from the judgment He had promised. Perhaps others would be destroyed, but these believed they had everything under control.

Isaiah warned them this was a false security. He said, *“...your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.”* Isaiah 28:18. They felt secure in the provision they had made for themselves, but God promised a storm was coming and *“...the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.”* Isaiah 28:17.

The people had trusted in *“lies,”* but they did not know they were lies until it was too late. The *“lies”* were their riches, power, and position in society. They trusted their covenants and treaties would keep them in the time of trouble, but these were all *“falsehoods.”* When the storm arrived, God promised *“From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and **it shall be a vexation only to understand the report.**”* Isaiah 28:19. How similar this is to the news reports we now hear day after day.

Yet as terrible as this storm would be, God promised a singular hiding place which would be a safe shelter from the storm. He said, *“Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.”* Isaiah 28:16. This passage is one of the great prophecies which foretold of the Christ who would come. He would be a *“tried,” “precious,”* and *“sure”* foundation. Those who believed upon him would not have to flee when the flood arose because their *“house”* would be *“built upon the rock.”* Luke 6:48.

This *“precious cornerstone”* came into the world as *“the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.”* John 1:29. To believe

upon Jesus Christ is to believe that he came to do that marvelous work in you! He really does take away sin, out of your heart, mind, and nature. Many have traded such a savior for one who leaves them to continue in sin and only covers it with his blood. I do not want to seem harsh, but that is “a refuge of lies!” The Bible still says, “...*the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*” 1 Corinthians 6:9. Much of the “church” has lost its way and the flood waters from the storm are overflowing its “hiding place.”

I am not telling you that someone who knows the reality of Christ and the freedom from sin Christ gives to his people will not get sick or even die as this storm rages around the world, but I am telling you their “spiritual house” will not fall. The same Lord who “*delivered them from the power of darkness*” Colossians 1:13 will keep them through every storm that may come upon the earth.

Here is a final thought. Psalms 91 gives a promise to those who “*dwell in the secret place of the most High.*” Christ is that “*secret place*” and the promise is “*A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.*” Psalms 91:7. As a child of God, I rejoice in such a promise, but my heart reaches out to God for the “*thousand*” at our side and the “*ten thousand*” at our right hand who are perishing. I am praying for a speedy and certain end to this storm which has engulfed the whole earth.

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