



Behold The Lamb
Publications

Simply Christ

Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

Volume V

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

A Simple Gospel

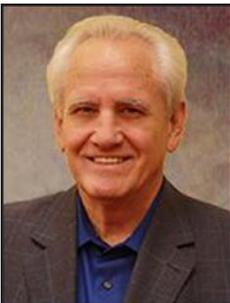
When God reveals something to you it never makes you feel as though you are the smartest person around. Usually you are left wondering why you had never seen this before. You may say to yourself: “A child could have understood this. Why have I been blind to it for so long?” True revelation from God is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

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

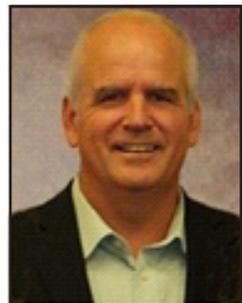
At times the gospel is presented in a fashion that resembles a person attempting to prove that $2 + 2 = 5$. A person may spend their entire life seeking to understand what is being presented to them, but never seem to be able to grasp it. Some may come to the conclusion of themselves that they are just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

The purpose of Simply Christ and other Behold the Lamb

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



Leroy Surface



Keith Surface

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

Simply Christ

Gospel Newsletter

Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

Volume V

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THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

The gospel of Christ is an absolute message. It is the everlasting gospel Revelation 14:6, which means it does not change from generation to generation. It is the record of who Christ is, his purpose for coming into the world, and how he accomplished his mission. The scriptures contain different terms that are synonymous with “*the gospel of Christ.*” Several of these terms are listed below.

The Faith of Christ – The Faith – The faith of Christ has nothing to do with how much faith Jesus possessed or Jesus somehow believing for us. The faith of Christ is the same as the gospel of Christ. The apostle Paul wrote, “... *we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by THE FAITH OF CHRIST...*” Galatians 2:16. We believe that Jesus is the Christ in order that the power of the gospel of Christ will deliver us from sin and make us righteous. Romans 5:19, that is, “*justify*” us. Jude exhorted us to “...*earnestly contend for THE FAITH which was once delivered unto the saints.*” Jude 1:3. Do not settle for anything short of the gospel of Christ that was revealed through the prophets and apostles and recorded in the scripture.

Our Faith - This is not our ability to believe or even how strongly we may believe. “*Our Faith*” is what we believe, therefore if “*our faith*” is the gospel of Christ, it is the victory that overcomes the world. The apostle John wrote “...*and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even OUR FAITH.*” I John 5:4. In the next verse John wrote, “*Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*” Those who believe the gospel of Christ overcome the world.

The Testimony of Jesus Christ – The Word of Our Testimony – The apostle John wrote, “*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by THE WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY; and they loved not their lives unto the death.*” Revelation 12:11. The “*word of their testimony*” is the gospel they preached. It is the weapon they used

to overcome the dragon (Satan). Even so, *“the word of our testimony”* must be *“the testimony of Jesus Christ.”* Revelation 1:9. It is the gospel Jesus told us to declare to the entire world. We live in an hour where many identify themselves as “prophets” of God, yet they neither know nor carry the truth of the gospel of Christ. These cannot be “prophets” of God because, as John recorded, *“...the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”* Revelation 19:10.

The Truth – Word of Truth – It was Jesus who said, *“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”* John 8:28. The equation (2 + 2 = 4) is true, but it will not make you free. *“The truth”* Jesus spoke of is not merely “a truth” or one of many “truths.” You may discover countless “truths” in this life, but these do not qualify as *“the truth.”* *“The truth”* is not a knowledge about yourself. Neither is it something you find through continuous religious study. You can quote scripture in every sentence you speak and still not know *“the truth.”* Paul spoke of those who were *“Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”* II Timothy 3:7. *“The Truth”* Jesus spoke of is the truth about himself. The apostles called it *“...the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation...”* Ephesians 1:13. According to Jesus, those who know *“the truth”* are made free from sin. John 8:32-37.

The Doctrine of Christ – The doctrine of Christ is not just the things Jesus taught. It is the truth about Christ; who he is; why he came; what he accomplished; and how we receive it by faith. The apostle John said, *“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:”* I John 1:9-10.

The gospel of Christ tells us who Christ is:

He is *“the word”* who *“was with God and was God!”* John 1:1.

He is the one by whom *“all things were made.”* John 1:3.

He is *“before all things, and by him all things consist.”* Colossians 1:17.

He was *“in the form of God,”* but...

He “...took upon him the form of a servant” Philippians 2:6-7 and came “in the likeness of sinful flesh.” Romans 8:3.

The gospel of Christ tells us why Christ came:

He came to “bruise the head of the serpent” Genesis 3:15 and “destroy the works of the devil.” John 3:8.

He came to “...to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness...” Daniel 9:24.

He came to “take away the sin of the world.” John 1:29.

The gospel of Christ tells us how Christ accomplished his mission:

He “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” Hebrews 9:26.

He “sanctified the people with his own blood.” Hebrews 13:12.

He “crucified our old man and destroyed the body of sin.” Romans 6:6.

He, “through death destroyed the devil.” Hebrews 2:14.

The gospel of Christ tells us: JESUS IS THE CHRIST! Matthew 16:16.

IS THERE NONE RIGHTEOUS

Is it really true that no one is righteous? After all, didn't the apostle Paul say, “*There is none righteous, no not one?*” Well, not exactly. What he wrote was “*As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.*” Romans 3:10. He was quoting what the prophets who ministered under the Law had spoken about Israel. Paul continues quoting the prophets in the next verse saying, “*There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.*” Romans 3:11. What about you? Do you seek after God? Do you believe the apostles sought after God? Of course they did! If we are going to promote an absolute statement that there is none righteous then we must also promote that no one seeks after God. Neither of these statements fit the reality of the redeemed.

Paul explains these statements a few verses later when he writes “*Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law...*” Romans 3:19. These statements were written concerning those who were under the Law of Moses. The Jewish people accepted that the gentiles were sinners, but believed

themselves to be righteous because of the Law. Paul was showing by the words of their own prophets that this self-righteous belief was a fallacy. No one has ever been made righteous by keeping the Law of Moses or any other religious law. The fact that Israel needed a religious law to live by in itself revealed that they were sinners. Paul said, *“Therefore 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.

Years ago I compared this verse (*there is none righteous, no, not one*) with another verse. The scripture says, *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived...”* 1 Corinthians 6:9. Paul was warning against the deception of those who claim unrighteous people will inherit the kingdom of God. I quickly saw that if *“the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God,”* and *“there is none righteous,”* then the kingdom of God would be empty since there would be no righteous people to inherit it. I knew there had to be a gospel “bridge” between these two statements.

Paul, the apostle who wrote both, *“as it is written there is none righteous, no, not one,”* and, *“the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God,”* also gave us the gospel “bridge” between these two statements. He said, *“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. The *“one man’s disobedience”* spoken of here is the transgression of Adam. His disobedience brought sin into the world, and fallen humanity became its dwelling place. Through this fall, sin became the natural condition of the heart of every person. This is why many speak of sin as a “sin nature.” When sin is in your heart it is natural for you to sin.

Most Christians rightfully believe that Adam’s offence made us to be sinners in every sense of the word (heart, soul, and act), but why is it so many have trouble believing the second part of Paul’s statement, *“...so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous”?* *“The obedience of one”* he speaks of is the obedience of Jesus to the death of the cross.” Philippians 2:8. Jesus went to the cross to “undo” what Adam did to you. Adam’s transgression made

you a sinner. Jesus died to deliver you from that bondage and make you righteous.

I hear many people say, “But that is only in the eyes of God.” Were we sinners only in the eyes of God? Or, were we sinners in heart, mind, and nature? Was Paul saying we were really righteous but God just saw us as sinners? Of course not! We all know better than that. Why then do we use doublespeak to nullify the word of God when it says Christ made many righteous? The apostle is making an exact comparison. The word he uses for “so” means “*in this way.*” In the same way that Adam made us to be sinners, Jesus made us to be righteous. Both changed the very essence of who and what we are.

Paul uses statements such as “*there is none righteous, no, not one*” and “*all have sinned*” to show the absolute need for Jesus’ death upon the cross to “*save his people from their sins.*” Matthew 1:21. Christ is the bridge from unrighteousness to righteousness. Aside from the redemption he purchased, there is nothing anyone can do to become righteousness because, although you may be able to change your actions, you cannot change your heart and nature.

It is impossible for any person to produce the righteousness God accepts. Some, understanding the futility of seeking to please God through our own “*righteousness- es*” Isaiah 64:6, have reasoned that God then simply accounts the righteousness of Jesus to us and proclaims us to be righteous. Although this is almost universally believed, there is not a single verse in the Bible that says the righteousness of Jesus is accounted to anyone. Abraham’s faith was accounted to him for righteousness, but he “*died in faith not having received the promises.*” Hebrews 11:13. His faith was indeed a righteous virtue, and so it is when anyone believes God. But the promise he died without is the promise of the Christ who was to come, not just to account you as righteous, but to make you to be “*the righteousness of God in him.*” II Corinthians 5:21. This is the promise we receive through faith in Christ Jesus. It changes who and what we are!

THE CHRISTMAS STORY

The Christmas story did not begin in the manger. It actually began, well ...in the beginning. After making all the majestic things we call the universe, God decided to do something even more astounding. He decided to make another creation in his own image.

The bible says, *“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. ...And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.”*

We do not know how long the man and woman, Adam and Eve, lived in the garden. We only know how this paradise was lost to them. There was a creature called “the serpent” who began to question Eve about what God had commanded concerning the forbidden tree. Later, this serpent would come to be known to us as Satan, Lucifer, or the devil.

Eve told the Serpent what God had said to Adam. *“But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.”* “You will not die!” the Serpent said. God knows that if you eat it *“then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”*

Eve believed the Serpent, ate the forbidden fruit and gave some to Adam her husband. Immediately they knew something was wrong. A change took place in both Adam and Eve and for the first time ever they were ashamed. They tried to cover their nakedness with fig leaves, but the nature of this nakedness could not be covered up. As God had warned, they had died when they ate the forbidden fruit. This death was more real to them than a physical death because it was death to their spirit. The life of God had departed. These whom God had made in his own image now bore the nature of the serpent in their heart. They were sinners. This was their nakedness. This was their shame.

God came to visit the man and woman he had made, but they hid from his presence. As God revealed to them the consequences of their actions he turned to the Serpent and said: *“Because thou hast*

done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” Genesis 3:14-15. In these words, we find the first promise of “*the Christ*” who would come and what his mission would be. He would be born of a woman and he would bring vengeance upon the Serpent, but in bruising the Serpent’s head, this “*seed of the woman*” would also be wounded.

Adam and Eve learned through much heartbreak how devastating their rebellion had been. They lost fellowship with God and were banished from the paradise he created for them. Their firstborn son murdered their second son, and they lived long enough to see the entire earth filled with iniquity in every form, and knew it was all due to their own disobedience.

Thousands of years passed, yet the depravity of man only grew worse. Wars, murder, perversion and every evil thing filled the earth. Most people forgot about the promise God had made of the “*seed of the woman*” who would come to bruise the head of the serpent and thereby destroy his works. I John 3:8. But God did not forget. One day He gave a promise through a prophet named Isaiah: “*Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”* Isaiah 7:14. It was no great thing that a son would be born, but it was humanly impossible that one would be born to a woman who was a virgin. Still even more astounding was that his name would be called “*Immanuel,*” because Immanuel means “*God with us!*”

Then Isaiah prophesied something even more amazing. He said “*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform*

this." Isaiah 9:6-7. Surely this meant that the promised "*seed of the woman*" would now come and bruise the Serpent's head.

Yet "*Immanuel*" did not come and the head of the Serpent was not bruised. Wars increased, Israel and Jerusalem were destroyed, and most of the people were carried away as captives to a foreign land. As the years of captivity drew to an end, a man named Daniel sought the Lord for understanding. God sent the angel Gabriel to tell Daniel "*The Christ*" would most certainly come. When he came he would "*make and end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness,*" but ...it would still be almost 500 years until his appearing. Daniel 9:24-25. Though disappointed that it would be so long before he came, at least now they knew the very year that Messiah, the Christ, the seed of the woman, would appear.

The centuries that followed were very harsh years and there was much war and oppression. Added to this, it seemed that God was silent and ceased to speak to his people. Had God forgotten his promise?

One day, as the appointed time drew close, God again sent the angel Gabriel to carry a message. This time it was to a young lady, a virgin, named Mary. He said, "*Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. ... Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*" Mary knew the human impossibility of what she had been told, so she asked the angel "*How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?*" Gabriel responded, "*The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*"

In the following year, Mary gave birth to her first child, who was the Son of God. The angel had instructed them saying, "*you shall*

call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."
Matthew 1:21. The "*seed of the woman,*" the Messiah, the Christ, had finally come. Thirty years later, in the exact year Gabriel had told Daniel of, God introduced his Son to Israel, saying, "*This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.*" Three and a half years later, upon a cross, he would bruise the head of the Serpent, and "*save his people from their sins.*" This is the Christmas story!

THE REVELATION OF CHRIST

The foundation of the Church is a simple knowledge ...or revelation. Jesus said "*upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" Matthew 16:18. "*This rock*" Jesus spoke of is the revelation that Jesus is "*the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" Matthew 16:16. The apostle Paul confirms this as the foundation of the church, saying, "*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ*" (properly understood as "*Jesus, the Christ*") I Corinthians 3:11. This simple revelation is "*the truth*" Jesus was speaking of when he said, "*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*" John 8:32.

Peter's statement concerning Jesus is so "filled" with "power and truth" that it would be blasphemy if applied to any other man. Let's look at Peter's revelation of who Jesus really is.

"THOU ART THE CHRIST..." It is impossible to express the power of this statement in this short letter, or even in a library of books. "*The Christ*" was the fulfillment and embodiment of every promise of God to the Jewish people. Yet he was not promised to the Jews alone. "*The Christ*" was God's gift to all humanity.

The first promise of "*The Christ*" is found in the first promise of our redemption. When God told of the "*seed*" of the woman who would bruise the Serpent's head Genesis 3:15, he was giving a promise of "*The Christ*" who would one day come. Based upon this promise, the apostle John later 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.*"

1 John 3:8. If Jesus was did not destroy the works of the devil, which is sin, he could not be *"The Christ"* which God promised would come into the world.

On the day Abraham offered Isaac on the altar to God, he saw by the Spirit that God would one day provide a *"lamb"* for a sacrifice. Jesus told the Jews, *"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad."* John 8:56. Two-thousand years before John the Baptist, Abraham saw *"the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."* John 1:29. It was then that God gave Abraham the promise of a *"seed"* who would *"possess the gates of His enemies"* Genesis 22:1-18. Paul told us that *"seed"* was Christ. Galatians 3:16. This promised is confirmed when Jesus said, *"...and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."*

Isaiah saw *"The Christ"* as God's "servant" who would be given *"...for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."* Isaiah 42:1-7. This "servant" would suffer greatly and be *"brought as a lamb to the slaughter"* Isaiah 53:7 in order that he might *"...sprinkle many nations."* Isaiah 52:15.

Perhaps the greatest and clearest prophecy of *"The Christ"* was spoken to Daniel by the angel Gabriel. According to Gabriel, *"The Christ"* would come to *"...to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness..."* Daniel 9:24-25. The apostles preached the message of *"Christ in you."* Jesus the Christ fulfilled this prophecy by offering himself to make an end of sin IN YOU, make reconciliation for iniquity FOR YOU, and bring everlasting righteousness INTO YOU!

"THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD." This second part of Peter's revelation seemed even more blasphemous than saying Jesus is *"The Christ."* The Jews understood that *"the Son of the living God"* could not be a natural man. They sought to kill Jesus *"because (they claimed) he not only had broken the sabbath, but also said that God was his Father, making himself equal with God."* John 5:18.

Most of the Jewish people believed *"The Christ"* would be a great deliverer like Moses, but he would be just a natural man, *"the son of David."* Jesus asked them, *"How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?"* Matthew 22:43-45. David prophesied of the day that God would beget his own Son, saying *"Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee."* Psalms 2:7. Isaiah saw that he would be *"Immanuel" (God with us)* Isaiah 7:14. If *"The Christ"* is the Son of God then he is much more than just a man. He is *"the Lord from heaven."* I Corinthians 15:47.

The apostles identified Christ as *"the Word"* who was *"in the beginning ...with God and was God"* and *"...by him were all things created."* The *"Word was made flesh"* in the person of Jesus the Christ and is *"...the image of the invisible God"* Colossians 1:15-16. Jesus was never just a natural man. He is not only *"The Christ,"* but he is also *"the Son of the living God!"*

This simple knowledge of who Jesus is, what he came to do, and that he in fact accomplished it all upon the cross, is *"the truth"* that Jesus said *"shall make you free!"* This simple truth *"turned the world upside down"* in the days of the early church, and it is still the only *"foundation"* that can be laid. Those who believe it, by faith alone are delivered from the presence and power of both Sin and Satan. Those who refuse to believe it are *"damned"* to a lifetime of struggle with both sin and Satan in their own heart, and eternity without God. As Jesus said, *"if ye believe not that I am he (the Christ), ye shall die in your sins."* John 8:24.

A HOLY ARMOR WITH A HEAVENLY CAUSE

The prophet Isaiah described our redeemer as a great warrior preparing himself for battle. Through his eyes we see this warrior arise to put on his armor. Isaiah says, *"...he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head."* Isaiah 59:17. There was never a time Christ lacked either righteousness or

salvation. He is the eternal "WORD" who "was with God and was God." He is "the Christ," eternally filled with righteousness. So why then would he put on a breastplate of righteousness or a helmet of salvation?

The armor Christ took upon himself actually speaks of his purpose for coming into the world. Consider that His "cause" was our salvation. Jesus Christ came "to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10. The "helmet of salvation" tells the oppressed not to be afraid because this "warrior" has come to bring "...deliverance to the captives." Luke 4:18. Sin was the "captor" from whom Jesus Christ came to deliver us. As the angel told Joseph: "you shall call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:21.

When Christ "put on righteousness as a breastplate" he was not adding righteousness to himself. The Hebrew word translated "righteousness" means "rightness" or "justice." In this passage, Christ is presented as a warrior who goes to battle for the "cause" of justice. God's justice is extended to deliver the oppressed, but that same justice comes to destroy the oppressor. Paul takes this up, telling us the "righteousness (justice) of God" is revealed in the gospel of Christ. Romans 1:16-17. Adam's transgression brought a great injustice upon all humanity. Because of his actions we were all brought under cruel bondage to sin and death Romans 5:12, and oppressed by the "god of this world," Satan. II Corinthians 4:4. God's justice (righteousness) determined that this was not "right." His divine justice declared that since "...by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Romans 5:19. This is the reason Christ came.

Jesus described how he would institute salvation and justice. He said, "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Matthew 11:12. Christ did not come to make an agreement with sin, Satan, or death. He came to "violently" destroy it all. The violence he spoke of was what he accomplished through his death upon the cross. God had promised vengeance upon the Serpent Genesis 3:15, and that day was now at hand. A week before his crucifixion Jesus said,

“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.” John 12:31. The apostle would later tell us Christ became *“flesh and blood ...that through death he might **destroy him** that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And **deliver them** who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”* Hebrews 2:14-15. In this passage, can you see Christ fulfilling his mission of *“righteousness”* (justice) and *“salvation”* (deliverance)?

The church is sent forth into the world with the same armor that Christ came with. Paul calls this *“the whole armour of God.”* Ephesians 6:11. God sent his Son into the world with it, but now he places it upon us. His *“cause”* is now become our *“cause.”* We take up the *“cause”* by putting on the *“helmet of salvation”* and the *“breastplate of righteousness.”*

The difference between Jesus and us in this *“cause”* is that Jesus has already won the battle. We are simply his messengers, carrying the news of his absolute victory. He was the *“violent,”* but we are not. We may even be soldiers, but we are not an army. God does not need an army, because the war has already been won! The world was not *“turned upside down”* by those who *“marched in ranks,”* but by those who went forth one by one and two by two. We are his ambassadors of peace!

Everything mentioned in *“the whole armor of God”* is describing our *“cause”* for being in this present world. Salvation and righteousness (God’s justice) is what we as ambassadors of Christ have to offer. Truth, the gospel of peace, the word of God, and the faith of Christ are what we carry with us as we go forth. These are synonymous with the glorious gospel of Christ. With these we *“stand against” ...principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”* Ephesians 6:11-12 to see souls delivered from the strongholds of darkness.

In the gospel of Christ we find everything we need to fulfill the *“cause”* God has committed to the church. *“The truth”* pulls down every stronghold, the *“gospel of peace”* casts down imaginations,

“the faith” destroys every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and the *“word of God”* brings every thought into obedience to Christ. II Corinthians 10:3-6.

What is your purpose as you go forth in this world? Is your *“helmet”* called *“salvation”* or is it ambition? Is your *“breastplate”* called *“justice”* or is it personal gain? Do you carry *“the truth”* or do you go with religious philosophy? Do you speak the *“word of God,”* or do you lift up the words of men? Jesus Christ has won the war, yet billions of souls sit in darkness, oppressed by the enemy. They do not need anyone to fight another war, but they desperately need someone to bring them the gospel of peace. Stand up! *“Put on the whole armor of God”* ...and go forth in the name of the Lord!

CHIEF OF SINNERS

Why would the apostle Paul, a man who according every scriptural record lived an impeccable and godly life, refer to himself as the chief of sinners? Is there a part of his life we know nothing about? Or (as some insist) did he have a secret besetting sin? Did he truly consider himself the worst of the worst, or was he just expressing false humility? When considering all the sinners he helped bring to Jesus Christ through his ministry, how could he still consider himself the chief?

When we look at the scriptural record of Paul the apostle, the idea that he had a secret or besetting sin is absurd. If he did, we should discard everything he wrote that we call scripture because his worst besetting sin would have been hypocrisy. Look at some of his words in reference to himself.

“For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness: Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others...”

I Thessalonians 2:5-6

“Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:”

I Thessalonians 2:10

“But have 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.”

II Corinthians 4:2

Paul manifested the gospel he preached in every way; in heart, in life, in action, and in the power of the Spirit. He was not a hypocrite. He preached what he believed; and what he believed was the secret of the godly and victorious life he lived. It was Christ living in him!

Before he came to Christ, all evidence is that he was a sincere and devoted man. In fact he did not commit sin, as he understood it to be. After becoming an apostle he referred to his life before his conversion to Jesus, saying, “...*touching the righteousness which is in the law, (I was) blameless.*” *Philippians 3:6.* He was devoted to the Jewish faith, zealous of the Law, and highly regarded by others. *Galatians 1:14.* Even as an apostle, he reminded Peter that before believing in Jesus, they as Jews had not been sinners like the gentiles. *Galatians 2:15.* So what was it that caused this man to refer to himself as chief of sinners? To understand the truth sometimes we have to read more than just three words.

“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

I Timothy 1:12-15

Paul's claim of being the chief of sinners is based upon what he did before he surrendered to Jesus Christ. Just two sentences prior to calling himself chief of sinners, he reminded us that he “...*was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious:*” Even though he “*did it ignorantly in unbelief*” he still did not excuse himself. Paul told the believers at Corinth “*For 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.

As Paul gave witness before King Agrippa, he had this to say: *“...many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagoge, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.”* Acts 26:10-11. Paul never downplayed or whitewashed his horrible actions. He was open and honest about what he had done.

How could someone do such horrible things *“ignorantly in unbelief”*? The answer to that question is found in the Law of Moses. Under the Law it was commanded: *“And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him...”* Leviticus 24:16. When Paul (Saul of Tarsus) gave witness for Stephen to be stoned to death, the charges were that Stephen *“...ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law...”* Acts 6:13-14. Saul of Tarsus believed his persecution of the church was fulfilling the righteous judgement of God against blasphemers. As an apostle he would look back on his zeal for God under the Law saying, *“...Concerning zeal, persecuting the church.”* Philippians 3:6.

I believe Paul’s words in the 7th chapter of Romans speak of his time of persecuting the church. As he gave himself to this mission of stopping the “blasphemers,” something began to work in him. Hatred for these “blasphemers” took hold and began to consume him. The scripture says Saul was *“breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord...”* Acts 9:1. Yet they did not respond with hate; just as Stephen used his last breaths to pray *“Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.”* Acts 7:60. Saul began to recognize that something was not right in his own heart, but when hatred and rage get a stronghold in you, it becomes the one in control. He said, *“For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.”* Romans 7:15. I believe Saul knew he was out of control, but he could do nothing to stop the

rage that rose up from within. This “Jesus hater” who had been so righteous in his own sight finally began to realize that he was the one who was *“carnal, sold under sin.”* Romans 7:14.

When Paul surrendered to Jesus Christ, the grace of God washed the sin and hatred from his heart, life, and nature | Corinthians 15:10, but he never forgave himself for being a persecutor of the church. Can you imagine the effect on Paul, who suffered so much to reach the souls of men for Jesus Christ, when he considered those he had caused to be put to death for their faith in Jesus? Or what about those he had compelled to blaspheme the name of the Lord? Do you think Paul ever forgave himself for causing them to renounce their faith and damn their own souls? Paul's heart must have been broken over and over again when he remembered these things. The love of Jesus Christ and the souls of men meant more to Paul than even his own soul Romans 9:3, yet he had once done everything in his power to destroy both. You would never convince him that among a world full of sinners whom Christ came to save, he was not the chief of them all!

THE DOOR OF FAITH

When Paul and Barnabas returned from their first missionary journey, they spoke of the *“door of faith”* which God opened unto the Gentiles. Acts 14:24. This door is called the *“door of faith”* because only through believing the gospel of Christ does a person gain entrance into the Kingdom of God. As Paul would later write: *“... we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”* Romans 5:2. On the outside of this door there is only darkness and bondage. There Satan devours and the inhabitants live under the dominion of sin. Yet those who pass through this door walk in liberty and victory. Their sin has been taken away | John 3:5, their hearts have been purified by faith Acts 15:9, and they find rest for their soul. Matthew 11:29. Satan does not exist inside this door, for it is the Kingdom of God. It is a land of *“righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”* Romans 14:17.

Jesus Christ became the door into the Kingdom of God when he shed his blood on the cross. Because he died for all, this “door” is available to everyone. But this door, like most doors, requires a key. Before any person can enter, someone must bring them the key that opens the door.

Jesus gave us insight into the “key” when he rebuked the lawyers, saying, “...ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.” Luke 11:52. These “lawyers” were those who thought themselves experts in the Law of Moses. They were the theologians of their day. Jesus said they had “taken away the key of knowledge.” They had discarded the truth and replaced it with the commandments and doctrines of men. Mark 7:7. Because of this, neither they nor those who believed them could enter the Kingdom of God.

Jesus speaks the same way to the scribes and Pharisees. He said, “But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.” Matthew 23:13. In rejecting the truth, they had locked the Kingdom of God up against lost humanity. Because of this great offence, the “key” to the Kingdom of God was taken from them and given unto another. Matthew 21:43.

The “key of knowledge” Jesus spoke of is “the knowledge of the truth.” It is “the truth,” which Jesus said would make those who knew it free from sin. Isaiah had spoken of this truth saying, “by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many;” Isaiah 53:11. It is the knowledge of who Christ is and what he accomplished upon the cross and it is summed up in the words of Peter.

Peter’s great revelation was “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Matthew 16:16. These simple words reveal the glorious truth of the gospel. To declare “Jesus is the Christ” is to declare He is the one whom God promised to come into the world and bruise the Serpent’s head, thereby destroying the works of the devil. 1 John 3:8. God said the Christ would “make an end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness.”

Daniel 9:24-25. He was not just a natural man, but he is the Son of God, the “*WORD*” made flesh!

The revelation that “*Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God*” contains such power and truth that Jesus said “*upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*” Matthew 16:18. This simple truth is the foundation of the church. Of all the doctrines men hold up to be great truth, this is the only one Jesus said he would build his church upon. Though it is simple, the church built upon it will overcome even “*the gates of hell.*”

When Jesus told Peter this revelation was the “*rock*” he would build his church upon, he also made another amazing statement. His next words were: “*And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*” Matthew 16:19. I have to point out that in the Greek text there is no word for “*will*”, and the word translated “*keys*” is not plural. Jesus actually told Peter “*I give you the key of the kingdom of heaven.*” Not only is this revelation of Jesus Christ the foundation of the church, it is also the “*key*” that unlocks the door of the Kingdom of God. Beginning on the day of Pentecost, the apostles preached “*Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God*” everywhere they went. In doing so they were unlocking the Kingdom of God unto men.

This “*key to the kingdom*” came with both great promise and great warning. Wherever they preached it, the door to the kingdom of heaven was opened to everyone who believed the gospel. Using the “*key*,” what they “*loosed on earth was loosed in heaven.*” Everywhere it was preached, the “*door of faith*” was opened unto men.

On the other hand, if they, like the lawyers, scribes, and Pharisees, refused to preach the truth of Christ, the kingdom of God would be shut up unto men. In withholding the truth they would “*bind*” up the Kingdom of God on earth, and it will also be “*bound in heaven.*” If the disciples would not have preached the gospel, the door to the Kingdom of God would have been closed

and the whole world would have died in their sins. This “key” is now given unto us. Take up the key. Declare the truth of Christ and unlock the “*door of faith*” for those who will believe the truth and enter in!

IT’S ONLY A THEORY

A few days ago as I awoke, I was hearing a message as though it was being preached in a church service. The message was about the theories people hold to be the truth of the gospel. I heard theory after theory concerning the reason Christ came and suffered the death of the cross. Finally the question was asked, “Why are we holding to theories when we have the word of God?”

When it concerns the word of God, a theory is not an undeniable truth. It is a hypothesis. You may believe it is correct, but you cannot prove it because the scripture does not actually say it. Here are two examples: **1.** “Jesus died for our sins.” (This is not a theory. It is plainly declared in the Bible.) **2.** “Jesus burned in hell for us.” (This is a theory because no scripture says this.)

In truth, a majority of church doctrine is based upon theories. The word of God does not actually say it, but our conclusions tell us it is true. To get around the obvious weakness of such a course of action, we spiritualize our theories by calling them “revelations.”

There are doctrinal theories that may in fact be true, but the scriptures do not directly address them. In these cases people use portions of scripture to formulate a doctrine and fill in the gaps with assumptions. The problem with this arises when these formulated doctrines become “more true” to us than what the scriptures actually say. When this happens we become guilty with those Jesus spoke of when he said, “*Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*”

Mark 7:7.

I am reminded of an incident when a man told me the scripture which says, “*...the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God...*” I Corinthians 6:9 could not be true because it contradicted the “doctrine of grace.” This man held his doctrine about grace above

what the scripture actually says. His "theory" was "more true" to him than the word of God.

It would be disingenuous of me to give the impression that there are not doctrinal "theories" which I believe to be true. However, I believe it is critical for each of us to face and acknowledge the difference between our theories and what the Bible actually and directly says. God compared those who had a dream and those who had his word, saying, "*The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?*" Jeremiah 23:28. Compared to the word of God a dream (or a doctrine) is nothing more than chaff!

I would challenge each of us to take the doctrines we consider to be most sacred and see if the Bible actually says what our doctrine teaches. If we find it does not, take that doctrine and list it in your thinking as a theory. That does not mean you are necessarily discarding it, but you are putting it in its proper place in comparison to the word of God. "*What is the chaff to the wheat?*"

We must see the difference between what is a "theory" and what is God's word if we want to see the truth of the gospel of Christ. Yet it is not always easy to admit something we believe is not what God's word actually says.

Listed below are just a few of the doctrines I have discovered the scriptures do not actually say. With some of these I almost felt like a heretic the first time I publicly said, "The Bible never says this. It is not the word of God," but as the apostle Paul wrote; "*...let God be true, but every man a liar...*" Romans 3:4.

Doctrinal theories the Bible never actually says:

Theory: "The perfect life Jesus lived is imputed to us when we believe in Jesus," or, "*the righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed to us.*" (The Bible never speaks of Jesus' righteousness being imputed to us, but it does tell us he died to make us righteous. Romans 5:19, II Corinthians 5:21. If you are "*made righteous*" you are no longer a sinner.)

Theory: “Jesus paid the penalty for sin upon the cross,” or, “Jesus suffered to take the punishment for our sins upon the cross.” (The Bible never speaks of redemption in terms of a penalty being paid or our punishment being taken. It does however say Jesus Christ purged our sins Hebrews 1:3, took away sin I John 3:5, put away sin Hebrews 9:26, destroyed the body of sin Romans 6:6, and made an end of sins Daniel 9:24.)

Theory: “When God looks at us he only sees Jesus’ righteousness,” or, “God cannot see the sin of a believer.” (The record of the scripture is actually the opposite of this theory. It says nothing is hid from God’s sight and all things are naked and open to his eyes. Hebrews 4:13.)

Theory: “The blood of Jesus covers our sins from God.” (The Bible describes the work of the blood of Christ as that which washes Revelation 1:5, cleanses I John 1:7, purges Hebrews 9:14, and sanctifies Hebrews 13:12, but it never tells us the blood of Christ covers any sin.)

Theory: “The sins of a believer are forgiven past, present, and future.” (The scripture is clear that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ declares God’s righteousness for “*the remission of sins that are past.*” Romans 3:25. Those who continue to sin believing they are automatically forgiven should remember the words of the apostle Paul: “*Be not deceived; God is not mocked...*” Galatians 6:7.)

The apostle Paul said, “*...when I became a man, I put away childish things.*” I Corinthians 13:11. For a believer who wants to know the truth of God's word, a theory is just not good enough. It is a “*childish thing.*” Put away “*childish things*” and build your walk on that which the word of God actually says. Anything else is only a “theory!”

BORN OF GOD

A strong case can be made that every member of the human race could be considered a child of God. I know this certainly sounds strange, but when speaking at “*Mar’s Hill,*” the apostle Paul acknowledged that we all “*are the offspring of God.*” He made this

statement concerning *“all nations of men”* that *“dwell on all the face of the earth.”* Acts 17:24-29. In the book of Luke, when the natural lineage of Jesus is given, it is traced back from son to father through David, Abraham, Noah, Seth, Adam, and finally to God. Adam, in one sense of the word, was a created a *“son of God.”* Luke 3:38. God formed Adam from the dust of the earth and breathed life into him. Adam was a flesh and bone manifestation of the invisible God because he was made in the image and likeness of God. Genesis 1:26-27.

Being the descendants of Adam, we are all the created *“offspring”* of God. Yet this does not save any of us. In Adam we all fell into sin and depravity. Although created to be the children of God, sin became our master and damnation became our destiny.

The children of Israel were not *“created”* to be the children of God, but they were *“chosen”* to be his sons and daughters. They were not different than any other people upon this earth, but because of God’s love for Abraham, He chose the children of Israel to be His children. In the Law of Moses these words are spoken to Israel: *“Ye are the children of the LORD your God...”* Deuteronomy 14:1. When God sent Moses to Pharaoh, he instructed him to tell Pharaoh, *“Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: And I say unto thee, Let my son go...”* Exodus 4:22-23. In modern terminology we would say: *“The children of Israel are the adopted children of God.”*

Israel’s *“adoption”* does not save them. The apostle Paul tells us that his *“heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.”* Romans 10:1. But such was not the case. Paul was so heartbroken over Israel’s lost condition he said, *“I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption...”* Romans 9:2-4. Israel had been adopted by God to be his children, but they did not have the same heart and nature that God had. They were rebellious in heart and sinful in nature, so they never received the promise.

Even Moses saw that these “chosen children” were nothing like God who chose them. In the song of Moses he said, “*They have corrupted themselves, THEIR SPOT IS NOT THE SPOT OF HIS CHILDREN: they are a perverse and crooked generation. Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? is not He thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?*” Deuteronomy 32:5-6. Israel was chosen by God, but they did not have his heart or character. As Moses said, “*their spot*” (identifying marks) was not “*the spot* (identifying marks) of God’s children”!

When Jesus Christ came into the world he was identified as the “*only begotten Son of God.*” John 3: 16-18. He was not created from the dust of the earth and he was not chosen from among natural men. He was “*the Lord from heaven*” and he was “*born of God*” from the womb of Mary. This was not an adoption. This was a birth. The life of his Father filled his entire being. He had his Father’s heart and nature, and he walked in his Father’s love. John speaks of Jesus, saying, “*...and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father...*” John 1:14. Jesus in every way is the Son of God because he was “*born of God.*”

Although Jesus Christ will always be the only one who was begotten of God from His mother’s womb, he is no longer God’s ONLY begotten son. The writer of Hebrews describes Jesus as “*the firstbegotten.*” Hebrews 1:6. This tells us that although Jesus was the first to be born of God, there would be others who would also be born of God. The apostle Paul confirms this saying, “*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*” Romans 8:29. The redeemed are also “*born of God*” and are the “*many brethren.*”

Adam’s race was created to be God’s people, and Israel was chosen to be God’s people. Yet these facts alone do not save anyone. Jesus said “*You must be born again.*” John 3:7. In fact Jesus said without this new birth you “*cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*” John 3:5. Neither Adam’s race nor Israel’s adoption will mean anything when we stand before God. Only those who are “*born of God*” will abide with God.

Those who are truly "*born of God*" have the life and nature of God within them. The Spirit of God's Son, Jesus Christ, abides in them and, as Paul said, "*...I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me...*" Galatians 2:20. Peter says the children of God are "*...born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*" 1 Peter 1:23. The same eternal WORD that was made flesh John 1:14 in the womb of Mary, is the incorruptible seed the children of God are born of.

The new birth is not a process. It is a birth! Those who have been "*born of the Spirit*" John 3:6 are not becoming the sons of God. They ARE the sons and daughters of God. The apostle John says, "*Beloved, NOW ARE WE THE SONS OF GOD, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be...*" 1 John 3:2. When an infant is born, we may not know what its occupation will be as an adult, but you can know that it is already filled with the life of his (or her) parents. Even so when someone is born of the Spirit of God, it may not yet be apparent how God will manifest himself through them in the years to come, but they already have God's life and nature within. From the moment of the new birth, God is their Father, and they are his sons and daughters. They have received "*a new heart and a new spirit*" Ezekiel 36:26 because they are "*born of God.*"

Those who are "*born of God*" are neither like Adam nor Israel. They are like Christ. Paul told us "*The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.*" 1 Corinthians 15:47-48. God's children are holy because their Father is holy, and they "*do righteousness*" because they are "*born of Him.*" 1 John 2:29.

MARY'S TESTIMONY

Years ago a woman named Mary came to us who had been a lifelong alcohol and drug abuser. Mary was completely possessed by unclean spirits to the extent that if she even attempted to call upon the name of Jesus her throat would swell up and choke off

the words. The demons would speak through her at times and both threatened and attempted to cause her to take her own life. In the presence of God she would go into a “stone trance” and be unmovable for up to twenty minutes at a time. What astounded us was that in this condition Mary had been a platform musician at multiple “Spirit-filled” churches and had been assured that she was both saved and filled with the Spirit of God.

A year before she came to us Mary entered a major Christian treatment institution for drug and alcohol abuse. In this “Christian” rehab her Hindu psychiatrist used scripture as the basis for his treatment. The foundation scripture was Jesus’ words *“You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.”* John 8:32. Mary was told *“the truth”* that would make her free was the truth about herself. So under the covering of scripture ...in a “Christian” rehab institution ...with a Hindu psychiatrist ...Mary was indoctrinated against every precept of the gospel of Jesus Christ. She did not believe the Bible was the word of God neither did she accept that Jesus was the Son of God.

After over one-hundred thousand dollars of insurance money was spent on her treatment, she exited the center “dried-out” from alcohol and drugs, but still demon possessed, lost, and on her way to hell. I have no natural explanation of why she ended up at Calvary Outreach Church other than she said she had a dream that she would be delivered there. Mary would sit in service after service of gospel preaching and then argue against the things she was hearing, but ...she kept coming.

In a revival Campmeeting, a visiting pastor from Kansas ministered on broken cisterns. God had said *“For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”* Jeremiah 2:13. Something gripped Mary in this service and she began to weep uncontrollably. She realized she had been drinking from a “religious mud-hole” ...a “broken cistern,” but they had convinced her it was the fountain of God. I asked her if she was now ready for Jesus Christ, but Mary refused, saying, “I just cannot see that.”

Mary's world began to fall apart. Cravings for alcohol rushed in and thoughts of suicide began to fill her thoughts, but ...she kept coming and listening. Three weeks passed and one Sunday morning Brother Leroy Surface preached on the work of the cross of Christ. It was a wonderful service, but nothing extraordinary seemed to take place.

The following day Mary showed up at Brother and Sister Surface's home to speak with them. She said, "Leroy, something happened to me while you were preaching yesterday." What was that?" he asked. "Well it felt physical, but I do not believe it was. While you were preaching something leaped inside of me and I knew I believed!" Being a little skeptical, Brother Surface asked, "What did you believe, Mary?" She answered, "I knew I believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. I believe He died on the cross for my sins, was buried, and raised again on the third day. I knew that I was crucified with Him, buried with Him, and raised again with Him in newness of life. I knew that I am saved, and **I know that I am free!**

Through simple gospel preaching, without anyone laying hands on her, she was instantly delivered from every unclean spirit and the power and presence of sin. In that moment she was born of the Spirit of God, never to desire, seek, or need alcohol, drugs, or any such thing again. Her whole life became "*Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*" She became a great light to everyone she met until the Lord took her home almost a decade later.

Before she passed she moved to a northern state to be closer to family, yet continually sharing the gospel of Christ. The day Mary died family and friends lined up to speak to her knowing this would be the last time they would ever hear her voice in this world. To each person that came she spoke of Jesus and the gospel of this great salvation. When her pastor entered, she looked upon him and said, "It's all about the gospel! Preach the truth of the gospel! At the funeral the pastor said, "I only pray that when my time comes I can die like she died." Brother Surface responded, "If you will believe the gospel she believed, then you will die like she died, with the same grace she died with."

The truth that made Mary free was not a truth about herself. It was the simple truth of who Christ is, what he came into the world to accomplish, and that he finished it all upon the cross for everyone who will believe *“the truth.”* Believe that Jesus IS the eternal Christ, the Son of God, who came into the world *“to make an end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness.”* Daniel 9:24-25. Believe that upon his cross he destroyed your *“body of sin”* Romans 6:6 to deliver you from sin’s power and presence both upon and within you. This is the truth that Jesus said *“shall make you free.”*

THE CROSS AND THE RESURRECTION

The cross Jesus died upon was just a piece of wood. It held no special power and it could never save a soul. It is very likely that his cross was used multiple times to execute men. The only thing different about this cross was who died on it that day. Christ, the eternal *“WORD”* by whom all things were made, became a man and was put to death on that piece of wood. The power of the cross is not about the cross itself. It is about what happened when *“the Lord from heaven”* died on that cross. The things accomplished through this event are what the apostle Paul called *“the preaching of the cross.”* I Corinthians 1:18.

If we set aside religious philosophy and look solely to the scripture, there is only one conclusion we can come to about the cross of Christ. *“He did not die so that we would escape death. Christ died in order that we would DIE with him!”* Paul tells us, *“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. The purpose of Christ’s crucifixion was to crucify something about us. Paul calls it *“our old man.”* This is the *“Adamic man.”* It is that person who was polluted with sin. If this *“old man”* were to die with Christ then the *“body of sin”* (the entire source of sin) would be destroyed and we would *“no longer serve sin.”* Romans 6:6.

The only answer the Law had for sin was to ultimately kill the sinner. Yet to God this was no answer at all. He did not want to kill the sinner; he wanted to kill the sin. Paul explains this, saying, *“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 purpose of Jesus Christ’s death on the cross was so our sinful person would be put to death with Christ, thereby delivering us from both the power and presence of sin. This is why Paul boldly said *“I am crucified with Christ!”* Galatians 2:20.

The scripture never speaks of our crucifixion as an ongoing process. It always refers to it in the past tense. *“Ye are dead...”* Colossians 3:3. *“I am crucified...”* Galatians 2:20. *“Our old man is crucified...”* Romans 6:6. *“It is finished.”* John 19:30. This is the message of the cross. It is a message of death. There is no life in it at all. It is the death of sin! It is the death of the old! Everything that was joined to Christ on his cross is dead. It is in this death that we are made free from every work of darkness. Paul exhorts us to “recognize” this absolute fact. He says, *“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin...”* Romans 6:11. If you cannot “see” this truth, you will not believe this truth, and it will not be effectual in you.

The *“death of the cross”* with Christ gives us absolute deliverance from sin, but death is not the ultimate end, because *“death”* is not *“life.”* Being *“dead to sin”* reveals what we no longer are, but there is much more to being a child of God than not being what you once were. This *“much more”* is called *“eternal life.”* Life is not found in the cross. Life is found in resurrection. Christ came out of the grave to raise us up in the *“newness of (his) life.”* Romans 6:4. Paul says God has *“...quickened us together with Christ.”* Ephesians 2:5. It is through this quickening with Christ that we are born of God’s Spirit. Peter tells us God has *“...begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...”* 1 Peter 1:3. The life we possess is directly connected to the person of Jesus Christ. Through his resurrection we receive *“a new heart and a new spirit”* Ezekiel 36:26 when the Spirit of God’s Son is sent into our hearts. Galatians 4:6. Without his resurrection there would be no life at all. Paul reminds

us, *“And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.”* I Corinthians 15:17.

If Christ had not been crucified there would have been no resurrection of Christ. Even so, no one is *“risen with Christ,”* who is not first *“crucified with Christ.”* There is no such thing as being both a sinner and a child of God. One is the old and one is the new. One is dead and one is alive. If the sinner is alive there has not been a crucifixion. And, if there has been no crucifixion with Christ, there is no resurrection with Christ. Remember Paul’s words: *“It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him:”* II Timothy 2:11.

Consider these words from the Apostle Paul in II Corinthians 5:17: **“Therefore if any man be in Christ...”** Anyone! Everyone! Every person who is in Christ!

“...he is a new creature...” They are new creations; born again through the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

“...old things ...” The old man! The body of sin! The sinful nature!

“...are passed away...” Deceased! Dead! Gone!

“...behold, all things are become new.” A new heart! A new spirit! A new nature! A new person!

Many people are being taught to place their faith in the cross. This is misplaced faith, because our faith belongs in Christ, who died on the cross. The *“cross”* is not the source of anything to the believer, because it is the absolute end of *“the old man”* and everything that pertains to him. The resurrection is the birth of the *“new creation,”* and the source of everything new. His death is our death, His burial is our burial, His resurrection is our resurrection, and His victory is our victory. Hallelujah! Christ is risen!

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