



Behold the Lamb
Publications

Simply Christ

Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

Volume 10

*Fourteen 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 10

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THERE IS A RESERRUCTION

On February 5, 1984, after much resistance, I surrendered myself to Jesus Christ and was born again of the Spirit of Almighty God. My warfare with the Lord had lasted several years, but he prevailed and my strength came to its end. In the few years leading up to this hour, I sunk into such gross darkness and became the kind of person I had always despised. I had been married for only one year, but that was falling apart and we were on the verge of divorce.

I did not come to Christ in order to save my marriage. The truth is I was in so much darkness that I did not care if my marriage survived or not. I thought only of myself and how miserable I was. Discontent and immorality filled my heart and thoughts. As much as she tried, there was nothing my wife could do to make me happy ...and I let her know how unwanted she was.

It was no different at work. One morning I showed up at work with a hangover from the night before. A young man walked in singing "There is power in the blood." Glaring at him, I said, "Why don't you just shut up?" As I turned to walk away, I heard him say, "Conviction, conviction, conviction." Before he had the third "conviction" out of his mouth, I grabbed him by the collar and slammed him against the wall, shouting, "It is not!" I believe I was so angry because in my heart I knew that he was right. It is hard to *"kick against the pricks."* Acts 26:14.

Even my closest family seemed to enrage me. I was helping my dad put a roof on his house when he started telling me about how God was moving in the church, a place I had not been in several years. He told me how the Spirit of God had settled in the place and of all the people who were being saved. My oldest brother had come to the Lord and a few weeks later his wife also was saved and baptized with the Spirit of God. As he began to tell me of others, he saw the "smirk" upon my face which revealed the "yeah right" thoughts of my mind. He looked at me and spoke sternly, saying, "Son, Your problem is that you don't even believe there is a God." Immediately, the anger arose inside of me. "How dare he question my belief in God? I know more about God than almost anyone I

know.” You see, I really thought this was true. There were times I even sat in a nightclub with a drunken “buzz” and “straightened” people out concerning their beliefs about God. What a fool I was!

My dad’s statement pierced me like a dagger and caused my misery to increase a hundredfold. As I fought with the question of “Did I believe in God,” I began a freefall into emptiness and darkness. As a child I had been in so many services where the presence of God filled the place. I saw miraculous healings and I had even received a miracle myself. I did not understand it, but God was beating down my walls of resistance. All I knew was that my life was unbearable.

In an attempt to save our marriage, my wife began to push me to go to church. I told her no, but she kept insisting. Finally, in order to get her to be quiet about it, I said that I would go. The next Sunday morning she woke me up saying, “You need to get dressed so we can go to church.” I’m not going to church,” I responded. “You told me you would last week,” she said. “Well I’m not going,” I replied. “You can at least be man enough to keep your word,” she answered. Upon that I relented and begrudgingly said, “OK.”

When it was time to leave the house, I asked, “Where are we going?” My wife suggested we try a particular church down the road. “No,” I snapped, “If I am going to waste my time going to church, I’m going somewhere where God is.” Looking back I have asked myself a hundred times, “How could such a statement come from such a blind fool as I was at the time?”

I do not remember if I heard anything the visiting evangelist said that day at Calvary Outreach Church. All I knew is how hopelessly lost I was and so ashamed at what kind of person I had become. Neither do I know how I ended up kneeling at the front pew during the altar service. I just know that Jesus met me there. In that hour he took my sin away, and washed it from my heart, mind, and nature. Never has there been a day since that I have had any desire for such things. In its place, righteousness, peace, love, and joy filled my entire being.

Since that day I have faced my share of trials, hardships, heartbreaks and uncertainties. In all of these I have found my Lord,

Jesus Christ, to be healer, provider, comforter, and friend. Yet nothing has ever compared with what he did for this poor arrogant fool who was dead in sins, and too blind to see it. As the scripture says, *“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ...”* Ephesians 2:4-5.

When Jesus said, *“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live”* John 11:15, he was not just speaking of the day when he would call us out of the physical grave. Jesus was pointing to the hour when he would call us out of the grave of sin. Every person in whom sin dwells is in fact *“dead in sin.”* When Christ resurrects us out of it, even the stench of the old life is left behind. I am not offering a theory when I tell you there is a resurrection. Jesus Christ is the resurrection ...and when he raised me up from such horrible death of sin, he placed his life within me!

The darkness of death takes many forms. The scripture speaks of those who are dead while they yet live. 1 Timothy 5:6. It does not matter what you face in this hour. Your circumstance or the condition of your heart may seem inescapable. My message to you is this: There is a resurrection! His name is JESUS CHRIST!

SUCH AS I HAVE

It is impossible for any of us to give something we do not possess. This is especially important to understand in the area of spiritual ministry. A person can only minister that which is presently working in their own heart and spirit. If the spirit which is working in us is not of God, it is impossible for us to minister anything of God to the people.

When Peter and John came upon the lame man who was laying at the gate called *“Beautiful,”* Peter told the man something that reveals one of the greatest secrets of ministry. He said, *“Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee:”* Acts 3:6. It was only because Peter had received something from God that the lame man was healed and went *“...walking, and leaping, and*

praising God.” Acts 3:8. The Apostle Paul confirms this, saying, *“The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits.”*

II Timothy 2:6. If a minister does not personally possess the realities of Christ, it is impossible for them to minister the reality of Christ to others.

John, the Apostle, when writing about “love,” said, *“which thing is true in him and in you.”* I John 2:8. Not only is God’s love the reality in Christ, but it is also the reality in those who know Christ. In fact every reality that is true in Christ is also true in those who know Christ. If righteousness is true in Christ, then righteousness is also true in his people. This is why John wrote, *“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.”* I John 3:7. The words a minister speak are of vital importance, but if what they speak is not “true” in them, their ministry is not ministry at all. When such a person begins to minister, they can only give what they possess in their heart, regardless of what they say with their mouth.

Over the past several years, certain ministries have published surveys stating that around 68% percent of men and over 50% of pastors in evangelical churches admit to consuming pornography on a regular basis. While I confess a bit of skepticism about these numbers, one thing is certain. The multitude of pastors involved in pornography is the reason so many in the congregation are bound in such horrible darkness. If the pastors are unclean in their heart, those who partake of their ministry are drinking from a contaminated fountain. An unclean minister is a fountain of uncleanness flowing into those who eat and drink at their table.

After God rejected Saul from being King over Israel, the Bible says *“...the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.”* I Samuel 16:14. Saul had rebelled against the word of God, so God turned him over to an evil spirit. What is astounding about this is that when the evil spirit came upon Saul he prophesied, just like he had when the Spirit of God came upon him. The difference is that now an evil spirit was the

source of his prophesies. King Saul had fallen from being an instrument of God and became the instrument of an unclean spirit. It was while the evil spirit was upon Saul to prophesy that he attempted to kill David with a javelin. I Samuel 18:10-12. A minister who is unclean at heart may indeed have supernatural manifestations, but you can be certain their “manifestations” are not coming from God, but from the same spirit which works uncleanness in them.

Ministry is not an intellectual exercise. Neither is it a product of talent or cinematic knowhow. Sadly, such has become the case in many places. True ministry must proceed from the Spirit of God. If it does not, it is mere religious activity. When a minister is content with something less than the reality of Christ that is exactly what they will possess. But such a minister should take heed. Paul was speaking first of ministers when he wrote *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”* II Corinthians 5:10. Every minister, including myself, will stand to be judged, not only for what they have spoken, but for what they have given. ***“Such as I have give I thee.”***

DROWNING IN TRUTHS

The Apostle Paul spoke of a time when people would be *“...ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”* II Timothy 3:7. How is such a thing possible? Is the truth something so “deep” that only those with a superior intellect can understand it? Or perhaps the truth can only be comprehended by one who has received revelation through an “out of the body” experience. Is it possible that God doesn’t want some people to be saved? Of course these suggestions are absurd. Paul explains why some are *“never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”* It is because they *“...resist the truth!”* II Timothy 3:8.

If we believe Jesus, then we know there is one absolute way to identify this thing He called *“the truth.”* He said those who know it

would be made “*free indeed*” from sin. John 8:31-36. Many things are true, but only one thing is “*the truth.*” The mathematical equation (2 + 2 =4) is true, but it has never delivered anyone from the bondage of sin. The same can be said for science, history, economics, or philosophy. These such things are filled with “truths,” but they cannot save a single soul.

Jesus spoke to the most religious among the Jews when He said, “*Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*” John 5:39-40. These believed they had salvation through their knowledge of the scriptures. They filled their minds with “truths” from the word of God, but were completely blinded to “*the truth.*”

These Jews knew the “Torah,” or “Old Testament” forward and backward. They studied the Psalms, Proverbs, Prophets, and the Mosaic Law. Yet with all the “truths” they found in the scriptures, they were unable to see or accept the fulfillment of the most important promises God had ever given. Because of their blindness they rejected and crucified Jesus Christ, who was their Messiah, the Son of Almighty God. Paul spoke of such, saying, “*Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.*” Romans 1:22. They resisted “*the truth,*” so they perished in an ocean of “truths.”

Not much has changed in the past two-thousand years. The church of today is flooded with “truths.” Every Sunday, in fact every day, we are fed more and more religious insight and principles. But here is the question: Has the endless acquisition of “truths” done for you what Jesus said “the truth” would do? Or has it always left you just a little short of being free from the power and presence of sin in your heart and nature?

“*The truth*” is actually very simple. It is the truth about Jesus Christ. To “*know the truth*” is as simple as understanding these four things about Christ as revealed in the scriptures.

1. Know who Christ is: Christ was in the beginning with God and was God. John 1:1. All things were made by Christ. John 1:2. Christ “*is before all things, and by him all things consist.*” Colossians 1:17.

2. Know what God promised Christ would accomplish when he appeared: Christ would bruise the head of (destroy) the Serpent. Genesis 3:15. Christ would come to *“...make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness...”* Daniel 9:24. Christ would *“justify many”* people through the knowledge of the truth. Isaiah 53:11.

3. Know these things were all accomplished through Christ’s death on the cross: Christ destroyed the Devil and his works. Hebrews 2:14 | John 3:8. Christ took away our sin. John 1:29 | John 3:5-6 Hebrews 9:26. Christ destroyed our sin and made us *“free from sin.”* Romans 6:6-7. Christ *“washed us from our sins.”* Revelation 1:5. Christ finished on the cross everything God said he would accomplish. John 19:30.

4. Know that JESUS IS THE CHRIST! Matthew 16:16, | John 5:1. This is *“the truth”* which Jesus said, *“shall make you free!”*

WHAT FORGIVENESS COULD NOT DO

God’s forgiveness is a powerful thing. Without it none of us could have fellowship with God. In fact, we would all be eternally lost. Yet as wonderful as God’s forgiveness is, there is something that it could not accomplish. That “something” is called redemption.

The Apostle Paul utilized a particular argument on multiple occasions to reveal the purpose and power of the sufferings of Christ. He presents that Christ died to accomplish a work that nothing else could achieve. In fact, if the purpose for which Christ died could have been accomplished any other way, then the death of Christ was unnecessary and without cause. Paul’s words were *“...then Christ is dead in vain.”* Galatians 2:21.

What the blood of animals could not do: The common belief that the blood of Christ covers sin is based upon the word *“atonement”* as used in the writings of Moses. The Hebrew word from which the word *“atonement”* was translated means *“to cover.”* Based upon that Old Covenant definition, it seems logical to many to assume that Christ’s blood covers sin. Yet Paul is clear that Christ shed his blood to do what was impossible for the blood of animals to accomplish. He wrote, *“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls*

and of goats should take away sins." Hebrews 10:4. If God had wanted to merely cover your sins He would have spared His Son and let you offer another lamb. But because He wanted your sin "*taken away*" and "*washed*" from your heart, He sent His Son to do what the blood of goats and lambs could never do!

What the Law could not do: The Bible says, "***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 pass judgment upon the sinner, and had the power to slay the sinner, but it could not pass judgment upon and destroy the sin that was in the sinner. So God sent His Son to do just that! Through Jesus Christ, God fulfilled His judgment upon the sin within us without damning us in the process. He destroyed the sin that was in us and made us free. Romans 6:6-7. There has never been a law given which could do anything like this!

What punishment and wrath could not do: The same God who "*is love*" 1 John 4:8 is also "*a consuming fire.*" Hebrews 12:29. Because of their great iniquity, God destroyed all of humanity in the flood except for those eight who were gathered in the Ark. You would think such wrath would change everything, but it changed nothing. Within a few generations humanity was as wicked as ever. Remember Sodom and Gomorrah? Once again God showed His great wrath, but again it was soon forgotten. It was the same with the children of Israel. The Bible says, "***When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.***" Psalms 78:34-37. They would repent and make promises to God, but it was all a lie. When the wrath faded, so did their repentance. If God was going to have a special people, it would require something that would do what "punishment" could never do.

What forgiveness could not do: Some present the gospel as though forgiveness of sins somehow began when Jesus died on the cross, or that the purpose of His death was to forgive sins. Do they not

know that God has always forgiven sins? God proclaimed Himself to Moses, saying, *“The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, **forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...*** Exodus 34:6-7. On many occasions the children sinned and rebelled against God, but the Bible records, *“But he, **being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath.**”* Psalms 78:34-38. Still after every occasion in which they were forgiven, they turned back to their iniquity. Forgiveness deals with your past, but it cannot change what you are in in your heart. To change humanity, God would have to do what even forgiveness could never do.

The work of Christ: In the days of Ezekiel, God revealed something He would do that nothing else had been able to accomplish. He said, *“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and **ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.**”* Ezekiel 36:25-27. To bring the change which God desired required that something be able to wash the people from all their iniquity, take away their hard heart, and give them a new heart and spirit. Only then would they walk in God’s statutes and do God’s judgments. But what could do such an amazing work after so many other things had failed?

The answer to the above question is simple. It is the reason Jesus Christ died on the cross and shed his precious blood. The word of God says, *“Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.”* Hebrews 13:12. When Jesus Christ died on the cross to purge sin from our heart and nature, He did what nothing else could ever do. He made us free!

FALLING FROM GRACE

"Some people believe you cannot backslide. We believe you can ...and we practice it!" I was young in Christ when I heard a minister make this statement in a sad attempt at humor. What made it so very sad was the realization that it was in large part true. I had already seen many who at one time professed to know the reality of salvation, but ended up very far from anything that resembled a walk with the Lord. The only difference I could see between these was that some believed they could not lose their salvation while the others did not seem to care. In the end I think it's safe to say that if a person finishes their earthly course without Christ, what they believe about it is not going to matter in the least. Hell will be full of those who thought they had it all figured out.

It is difficult to make the case that you cannot fall from grace when the Apostle Paul clearly told some in the Galatian church, *"You are fallen from grace."* Galatians 5:4. The real question is: "What does it mean to fall from grace?" The answer to this question is actually discovered when you read the entirety of this simple verse. Paul said, ***"Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."*** Galatians 5:4. When a person is *"fallen from grace"* the work of Christ has ceased to have any effect in or upon them.

To define *"grace"* as *"the favor of God"* is in large part true. Yet if that is your only understanding of grace, you do not even see "the tip of the iceberg." Let's say someone gave you a car. If another person asked what you received, it would be true to say you received a gift, but that would not reveal the whole truth. A gift could be a fifty-cent candy bar, a twenty dollar watch, or a twenty thousand dollar car. It is important to know what was given in order to understand the gift. It is the same with grace. If you are to understand what it means to fall from grace, you must know what those who stand in grace have received.

Grace to serve God acceptably! It takes grace to serve God. Anyone can be religious, but God will not accept anything that is not a product of His grace working in us. Paul wrote, *"...let us have grace,*

whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” Hebrews 12:28.

The gift by grace! The Apostle Paul speaks five times of a “*gift*” which comes by grace in the fifth chapter of Romans. He calls this “*the gift of righteousness.*” Romans 5:17. It is the work of Christ which not only delivers us from the work of Adam which made us to be sinners, but it also gives us a righteous heart and nature. Paul summarizes this gospel truth, saying, “*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.

Grace to Be! Paul said, “*But by the grace of God I am what I am...*” I Corinthians 15:10. Grace has never produced anything sinful, but grace produces a child of God. Grace transformed Paul from being a hater, persecutor, and chief of sinners, into a holy man of God who would freely lay down his life for the gospels sake. By grace, Paul was made to be a “*manifestation of the truth.*” II Corinthians 4:2.

Grace that makes free! Paul makes an astounding statement about those who are in God's grace. He wrote, “*For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*” Romans 6:14. Sin has dominion only over those who are not under grace. Any person in whom sin works has either never entered grace, or they have fallen from God's grace, because grace is the very reason God's people are “*free from sin.*” Romans 6:22.

This next statement may shock some, but nonetheless, it is true. **Sin does not cause a person to fall from grace. Sin is merely the evidence that a person has already fallen.** Grace is the means by which God delivers us, transforms us, and keeps us from sin and Satan. In His grace sin is destroyed; outside His grace, sin rules supreme. Before a believer falls into sin, they must first fall from God's grace. On the other hand, those who simply believe the truth of the gospel and trust in Christ are lifted out of sin and kept by the grace of God. Jude said our Savior “*is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy...*” Jude1:24. Thanks be to God for His amazing grace!

PROVOKED TO JEALOUSY

“Leroy, Jesus is not my Messiah!” “Why do you say that?” my dad asked. “If Jesus was my Messiah, he would have made an end of sins, and there would not be these prostitutes working the streets in front of my business.” My dad was speaking with a Jewish businessman whom he had known since high school. At their last encounter this man confessed privately that he believed Jesus was his Messiah, but now something had changed. “Jesus did make an end of sin,” my dad answered. “He did it in me. He died on the cross and shed his blood to take our sin away!”

On another occasion, this Jewish friend said to dad, “Leroy, you can’t tell me that we can go out and lie and cheat in business, and come to church and say ‘Father forgive, Father forgive,’ then go out and do it again and it will be alright!” “No! I won’t tell you that!” my dad responded! “Well, that is what the pastor I just spoke with told me I could do if I believed in Jesus.

This Jewish man knew something about Christ that very few Christians seem to understand. According to the prophecy of Messiah given to Daniel by the angel Gabriel, if Jesus did not make an end of sin, he cannot possibly be the Christ. The prophecy plainly declares that Christ would come “...to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness...” Daniel 9:24. The greatest proof to the Jew that Jesus is not Christ is the sinfulness of those who call themselves by the name of Jesus Christ.

If the twenty-first century church thinks its message of “We are all just sinners like you are” is going to reach the Jewish people for Christ, it is grossly and sadly mistaken. Every time that message is spoken it shouts from the rooftops “JESUS IS NOT THE CHRIST! JESUS IS NOT THE CHRIST!” It is proof to those who have rejected Jesus as Messiah that they have made the right choice.

God promised Israel that if they would obey his voice and keep His covenant, “...then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” Exodus 19:5-6. Israel rejected God’s

voice and never received these promises. In their idolatry they provoked God to jealousy, so God said, *“They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; ...I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people...”* Romans 10:19, Deuteronomy 32:21. Because they gave His glory to something that was not God, He would take their precious promises and fulfill them upon the Gentiles, who *“were not a people.”* | Peter 2:9-10.

Rarely, since the end of the first century, have the Jewish people seen a “church” that could provoke them to jealousy. They saw a “church” which took the entire world into the dark ages. They saw a “church” which practiced forced baptisms and conversions. They saw a “church” which raised armies to wage war for control of Jerusalem and commit unspeakable atrocities in the process. They saw a “church” that used the name of Jesus as an excuse to persecute and kill Jews. In our generation they have seen a “church” which thinks the most spiritual thing it can do is declare in every service that they are all still sinners. And finally today they see a “church” that is increasingly filled with “silly Christians” who think the height of spirituality is to pretend to be a Jew. What in these things could possibly provoke the Jewish people to jealousy?

The Bible tells us the church which Christ purchased *“is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”* Ephesians 1:23. Have you ever seen a church that is the fullness of Christ? It is described as being *“a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but ... holy and without blemish.”* Ephesians 5:27. Only when such a church is manifest will Israel be provoked to jealousy. They must see with their own eyes that the promise given to them of being a holy nation, a kingdom of priests, and God’s special treasure has been bestowed upon another people through Jesus Christ.

No one will ever see a church that is the fullness of Christ until the truth that *“Jesus is the Christ”* who came to *“...make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness...”* is believed and boldly proclaimed by those who are called by His name. As it was in the first century, God will pour his Spirit out upon such a church, and the fullness of Christ will be

manifest. In that day, God will keep His promise to *“provoke Israel to jealousy”* and turn their hearts unto Jesus Christ our Lord!

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

There are many “voices” which declare many “necessary things” if you are to be received by God. These include baptisms, sacraments, confessions, speaking in tongues, church membership, doctrinal purities, etc. Yet, all these things fall considerably short of the “necessary thing” which Paul preached.

Paul was bold and absolute when he wrote, *“Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”* Romans 8:9. The word of God is clear: If a person does not have the *“Spirit of Christ,”* they do not know God, and they do not belong to God. Without the Spirit of Christ abiding in our hearts, we may be religious, but our religion is not of God.

Paul makes a powerful statement concerning what happens when Christ enters a heart. He wrote, *“And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”* Galatians 4:6. When the Spirit of God’s Son enters a heart, Christ in them immediately begins to cry out to the Father above. An unquenchable thirst for Heavenly things takes hold of the person into whom Christ has come. This calling to the Father is not initiated by the person, but by Christ who is within them. This yearning for the things of God is one of the greatest evidences that a person has been born of God. The first sign of a healthy birth is a hungry baby.

The indwelling of the Spirit of Christ is so real that Paul uses it as the confirmation of who is a child of God. He said, *“Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”* II Corinthians 13:5. When Jesus Christ abides in a person, they are acutely aware of His presence in them.

In Romans, Paul tells us more about what happens when the Spirit of Christ enters a person. He writes, *“And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”* Romans 8:10. The word *“is”* was added by the

translators in place of an untranslated Greek word which means “*in fact*” and speaks of “*a concession.*” Paul concedes that when the Spirit of Christ enters a person, the natural body is still “*in fact dead*” as pertaining to doing the works of God. It is important to see that Paul did not say the body is “*sinful*” but that “*the body is dead because of sin.*” Because of this “*deadness*” our body is unable to do the works of God. This “*deadness*” came upon all of us because of Adam’s sin.

While conceding this “*deadness*” of the body, Paul tells us what has in fact changed with the entrance of Christ. He says, “*...but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*” When we receive the Spirit of Christ we are “*made righteous.*” Romans 5:19. Our sin is taken away and righteousness becomes our nature. Christ makes us alive through bringing righteousness into our heart and nature.

The solution Paul gives for the “*deadness*” of the body is through the receiving of another Spirit in addition to the Spirit of Christ. He says, “***But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.***” Romans 8:11. The words “***shall also quicken***” tell us there is a second quickening which happens “***if***” the Spirit of God dwells in us. This is a reference to “*the Holy Ghost*” Acts 2:4, also referred to as “*the Holy Spirit*” Luke 11:13, “*the Spirit of Holiness*” Romans 5:2, “*the Spirit of God*” Matthew 3:16, “*the Comforter*” John 14:26, and “*the Spirit of the Father*” Matthew 10:20. Paul tells us that just as the Spirit of Christ makes us alive within, the Spirit of God will make our mortal body alive to do the works of God. We sometimes call this being “*anointed*” to do God’s works.

No one receives “*the Holy Ghost*” who has not first received “*the Spirit of Christ,*” although the “*Spirit of God*” sometimes comes immediately after. When the Spirit of Christ comes into the heart of a person “*crying Abba, Father,*” He is calling for the Spirit of the Father to come also. This expectation of being filled with God’s Spirit is why Paul speaks to those who have the Spirit of Christ, saying, “***But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you...***” The Spirit of Christ in you makes you “*dead indeed*”

unto sin, but alive unto God” Romans 6:11, even if your body is presently “dead” to the works of God because the Spirit of the Father has not yet come to dwell in you. I know this denies much modern theology, but it is what God has said in the testimony of the scripture.

CHURCH OF THE STUMP KNEELERS

As he walked through the forest, a man wept over the course his life had taken. As he approached a stump, he heard God speak to his heart beckoning him to kneel and call upon Jesus Christ. He knelt and called out for forgiveness and salvation. The Lord met him there and the glory of salvation swept over his soul. He stood up a new creation, delivered from sin and filled with the love of Christ. He went about telling everyone what Jesus had done for him while kneeling at the stump. So amazed were people at this man’s transformation that others begin to gather at the stump to seek salvation. Indeed, many found the Lord as they gathered around a stump in the woods.

One day someone said God revealed to them that kneeling at a stump was the way God had chosen to gather souls into Christ. No one could deny the lives which had been transformed, so many began to accept that true salvation had an unbreakable connection to stump kneeling. This was the beginning of The First Church of the Stump Kneelers.

The account given above is entirely fabricated, but this next story is absolutely true. I was in gross darkness and despair when I knelt in repentance by a wooden pew and surrendered my heart and life to Jesus Christ. The transformation that took place astounds me even to this day. I felt my sin wash away and I stood up a new creation with a new heart and a new spirit just as God had promised. Ezekiel 36:25-27. There has never been a day since that I wanted anything above serving the Lord and being in His presence.

In a few years God placed me in the ministry, but I felt so inadequate in my attempts to relay the glory and power of this great salvation. Repeatedly I found myself pointing to the wooded bench where I called upon the Lord as I recounted what Christ had done for me there. If only I could get others to do what I had done, then they could receive Christ as I had received Him. In the middle of a sermon, I was once again pointing to that bench when the Spirit of God rebuked me. **“What are you doing pointing to a bench? You were not saved on a bench! You were saved on a cross!”** Instantly the power and truth of those words burst into my heart as a great light shining from Heaven.

It was in that hour I realized I had fallen in the trap of presenting a fleshly form as the way of salvation. I believe in calling people to the altar, but that wooden bench has no power to do anything for anyone. On the other hand, if through the Spirit of God I can point them to the work of Christ upon the cross, they can receive this great salvation without my, or anyone else’s form. I have seen people saved and transformed sitting in the pew; others standing to worship; others were in their car; and still others were kneeling by their bed. Yet if a person finds salvation, it is not because of where they are sitting, kneeling, standing, or riding. Everyone who is saved is saved only because of what Christ accomplished upon the cross.

Paul said God’s people *“...have no confidence in the flesh.”* Philippians 3:3. He identified this *“flesh”* as religious affiliation, ritual, ordinance, and more. Still many people place their hope in such things. One person believes that water baptism brought them into the Kingdom of God. Another person believes their “sinner’s prayer” gave them a guarantee of Heaven. Another thinks their strict adherence to certain commandments will uphold them in the hour of judgment. Still another trusts that being part of a certain religious group insures their salvation. All these things are but “flesh.” Jesus said, *“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh*

profiteth nothing...” John 6:63. **Those who trust in such things cannot understand that anyone who truly found Christ did not find him because of these things, but in spite of them.**

The Apostle Paul made an astounding statement when he wrote, *“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel...”* 1 Corinthians 1:17. Paul was not “anti-baptism,” but he understood that it could never save a single soul. The same is true for every ritual of the church. Our rituals may be symbolic of powerful gospel truths, but not a one of these can impart grace to those who partake of them. The power of the gospel is invested solely in believing the truth and trusting in Christ. To look to anything else is to align ourselves with those who think salvation comes because we kneel at a stump.

“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed...” Romans 4:16

AN OFFENDER FOR A WORD

The Prophet Isaiah told us of a certain kind of people who would *“...make a man an offender for a word...”* Isaiah 29:21. If you spoke one word wrong, they would declare you to be a transgressor. He said they would *“watch for iniquity,”* meaning they spent their time seeking to find fault with others.

Jesus encountered these kinds of people during his earthly ministry. They had “sin tests” which Jesus himself did not pass. Consider that Jesus was declared to be a sinner because he healed the sick on the Sabbath day. His disciples were condemned because as they walked through a field on the Sabbath, they *“...began to pluck the ears of corn and to eat.”* Matthew 12:1. They were also condemned because they ate with *“unwashed hands.”* Jesus was even declared to be *“a gluttonous man, and a winebibber”* Luke 7:34 because he ate with *“publicans and sinners.”* You can make anyone out to be a sinner if you really want to, but that does not mean it is true.

After surrendering to Jesus Christ and answering the call to ministry, I began to encounter religious people who sought to prove that everyone was a sinner, and that we all sinned on a regular basis. If you were impatient, you sinned. If you had a less than perfect thought, you sinned. If you got upset, you sinned. If you misjudged a situation... well, you get the picture. I noticed that these people seemed compelled to make sure we knew that all of us sinned all the time, and so all of us were still sinners.

I soon realized that these who *“watched for iniquity”* were not attempting to keep people from sinning, but were actually seeking to shut the mouth of anyone who spoke out against sin. “How dare anyone say (as Paul did), *‘...the unrighteousness shall not inherit the kingdom of God.’* We are all unrighteous!” I finally began to understand that the great comfort and “Blessed Assurance” of these was not that Christ washes us from our sin, but it was the belief that we are all sinners and sin every day. SO MY SIN MUST BE OKAY! Anyone who challenged that belief was then challenging the assurance that their sin would not be judged by God.

When you make everything a sin, then in your mind nothing is truly sinful. The result of making impatience a sin is that we accept that there is no difference between the person who may lack in patience and the person who is a liar. But there is a great difference. The Bible never says the impatient shall not inherit the Kingdom of God, but it does say, *“...all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone...!”* Revelation 21:8.

If you want to know what true sin is, all you have to do is read what the apostles warned would not enter 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.) These are things that a child of God just cannot do. We all have our “human imperfections,” but if you truly know Christ you are not any of the things mentioned above. Neither do you do the things mentioned below. (*“...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.)

A reasonable argument can be made that anything which is short of Jesus Christ is in a limited sense a sin. I actually accept that argument, if it comes with the understanding that not all sin is the same before God. Jesus confirmed this as he stood before Pilate to be judged. He told Pilate, *“Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore **he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.**”* John 19:11. You may impute sin to one man because he is upset at you over a misunderstanding, but is his “upset-ness” which you call “sin” equivalent to the sin of someone who abused your child? Of course not! Not before man, and certainly not before God!

There are things many people call sin which are just part of being human, but being human is not the same as being sinful. The “sins” that *“shall not inherit the Kingdom of God”* are washed out of our heart and nature when we truly come to Christ. Those things came from the nature of the Serpent, and only the blood of Christ can take it away and make us free. This is why Paul wrote, *“**And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.**”* I Corinthians 6:11.

THE FAITH OF PETER

The evening before he was betrayed and crucified, Jesus turned to Peter and said, *“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But **I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not...**”* Luke 22:31. Much is revealed in this statement. Satan wanted Peter. Satan wanted to sift Peter. But, Jesus did not want Peter’s faith to fail!

I believe Satan wanted Peter to be the one who betrayed Jesus. It is certainly evident that Satan had put this in the minds of all the disciples. When Jesus said, *“One of you which eateth with me shall*

betray me.” Mark 14:18, one by one the disciples asked, *“Is it I?”* Mark 14:19. Every one of them had been tempted in their heart to reject that Jesus was the Christ, and betray him to the religious leaders.

Jesus’ prayer that Peter’s *“faith fail not”* was not just expressing hope that Peter would “hang on” through it all. In fact, Peter’s faith was not his assurance, confidence, or even his belief in one God. The Bible is clear concerning what Peter’s faith was. It is revealed when Jesus asked him *“But whom say ye that I am?”* Matthew 16:15.

Peter’s answer, *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”* Matthew 16:16 was a revelation from the Father Himself. So powerful was this revelation that Jesus called it the *“rock”* upon which he would build his church. This was Peter’s faith, and if Satan could not rob him of his belief of who Jesus is, the very gates of hell would not be able to stand when Peter stood to proclaim the gospel of Christ.

For Peter to believe *“Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God”* meant he believed Jesus was the fulfillment of all the promises of redemption. He was the *“seed of the woman”* who would *“bruise the head”* of Serpent, who is Satan. Genesis 3:15. He was *“Messiah the Prince”* who would *“make and end of sin and bring in everlasting righteousness.”* Daniel 9:24. He was God’s *“servant”* who would *“open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison”* Isaiah 42:7. He was *“Immanuel,”* which is *“God with us!”* Matthew 1:23.

Peter is not the only one who had this faith. Blind Bartimaeus expressed this same faith when he cried, *“Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.”* Mark 10:47. This was a reference to the promise that God would *“...raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.”* Jeremiah 23:5. This is the reason many tried to force Bartimaeus to be quiet. It was considered blasphemous for any to say Jesus was the promised Messiah. But Bartimaeus would not be silenced about what he believed. This is why Jesus told Bartimaeus, *“Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.”* Mark 10:52.

This was also Martha’s faith! When Jesus arrived four days after Lazarus’ death, Marth told him, *“Lord, if thou hadst been here, my*

brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.” John 11:21-22. What was the basis of her great confidence in Jesus? She explains it saying, *“Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.”* John 11:27. This was Martha’s faith, and it is the reason Lazarus was from the dead.

Each time Jesus told someone *“Your faith has made you whole,”* he was not saying they were without doubts or fears. Instead, Jesus was referring to their unshakable belief that he was in fact *“the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* They knew if he spoke, it would happen!

Peter’s faith was that *“Jesus is the Christ,”* and therefore would accomplish everything God promised through the prophets that Christ would do. It was this *“faith”* which Jesus prayed would not fail in the hour of testing. Because this faith *“...is the victory that overcomes the world!”* ¹ John 5:4.

A NEW NATURE

Six hundred years before Christ appeared, God laid out the terms of our covenant of redemption. He describes this *“New Covenant,”* saying, *“I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”* Jeremiah 31:33. This prophecy is used twice in the book of Hebrews to reveal the New Covenant Jesus established when he shed his blood on the cross. It shows the work of Christ as changing the very heart and nature of a person, because God’s law is written in *“their hearts”* and *“their inward parts.”* This speaks of both a new heart and a new nature.

The Apostle Paul describes this new *“nature”* in his epistle to the Romans. He says, *“For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew **the work of the law written in their hearts**, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.”* Romans 2:14. Paul saw firsthand how this *“New Covenant”* of

redemption was fulfilled in the gentile believers. The nature of these had been changed from sinful to righteous. Their righteous lifestyle did not proceed from a commandment, but from the new heart and nature Christ had imparted

Those who are born of God keep His commandments, but not because they have a list of commandments to keep. Paul said they *“do by nature the things contained in the Law.”* When Christ comes into a person, everything in their heart and nature changes. Their desires and longings are different. Sin, which they used to enjoy, is repulsive to them. As a newborn babe desires the mother’s milk, so these desire the things of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ which abides in them can be seen in their thoughts, words, and deeds. It is to such a person John writes: *“And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.”* ¹ John 3:24.

Some claim the redeemed have both a righteous nature and a sinful nature, and these are in a constant battle inside a person. This teaching is truly absurd. Many an alcoholic has been found to be both gentle and violent. When they are drunk they may become aggressive and violent. When they sober up they may become apologetic and meek. Yet such a person does not have two natures. The alcohol only removes inhibitions so the violence can be manifest in their actions. When circumstances cause someone who professes Christ to engage in sinful activity, it is not because they have two natures, but because the restraints of their true nature have been torn down for a season.

There is a scriptural passage which many use to promote the theory of two natures, but it actually says the opposite of what they suppose. The Apostle Paul makes a powerful and absolute statement, saying, *“Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”* Galatians 5:16. To *“walk in the Spirit”* is to simply walk in this *“New Covenant”* of the grace of God. Anyone who does so *“shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”* Paul gives the reason for this assurance in his next words. He says, *“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”* Galatians 5:17. Many present this to mean *“the flesh”* and *“the Spirit”*

are at war inside of a person, but nothing could be further from the truth. Paul is showing how opposite these are. If your walk is in the Spirit you are drawn to the things of God. If your walk is in the flesh you are drawn to the things of this world. Those who walk in the flesh, which speaks of serving God through carnal religious activity, have desires which are the opposite of those who walk in this New Covenant of Spirit and Life. This is why Paul says if you walk in the Spirit *“ye cannot do the things ye would”* (you cannot do the things you would do if you walked in the flesh.) Nothing in your heart or nature will allow you to do what those who walk in the flesh do.

If your original nature (old man) has not been replaced with the nature of Christ, your religion is merely *“commandment keeping”* and you are bound and condemned to *“walk in the flesh.”* Is it not time for you to believe this gospel and trust in Christ who shed his blood to *“take away our sin”*? John 3:5.

MIRACLES

Almost forty years ago, a group from our church attended a revival meeting to hear a famous singing husband and wife team, who also preached. The woman minister approached a young man from our church who was totally paralyzed from the waist down, and commanded him to *“rise up and walk in the name of Jesus.”* She seemed agitated that nothing happened so she said to him before the entire congregation, *“God just told me you can get up and walk anytime you want to.”* It was both amazing and sickening how this minister saved face by placing the blame for the lack of a miracle on the young man who was totally paralyzed.

Our pastor, Leroy Surface, was very upset, and told the young man, *“If a minister ever does that to you again, take all the strength you can muster and throw yourself out of that wheel chair.”* If he miraculously walked, the minister would be confirmed as being of God, if not, the minister would be exposed as a pretender. Bro. Surface later told me, *“All my life I have seen ministers attempt to raise people out of wheel chairs who have never seen God heal even a headache through their ministry.”*

God is a miracle worker! For me to deny this would be an outright lie because I have seen God do so many miracles over the past fifty plus years. There is one basic truth about miracles that everyone needs to understand, however; **“there are no methods that can produce a miracle.”** Miracles do not issue out of “faith,” or “principles,” or “knowhow.” True miracles come only out of the Spirit of God.

The word of God is clear that the “gifts,” or “manifestations of the Spirit” are given selectively as the Spirit of God chooses. The Apostle Paul spoke of nine of these manifestations and said, *“But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit...”* I Corinthians 12:11. In other words, a person cannot choose how and what God will do through them; they can only yield themselves to that which God has chosen to do through them. No one can choose the gifts of healing or miracles. We are to *“covet earnestly the best gifts”* I Corinthians 12:31, but God chooses whom He will to operate such gifts through.

A “Private” in the military may perfectly learn the way a “General” commands an army, but he will never lead the army unless he is promoted. Where spiritual things are concerned, promotion comes only from God. A person God has anointed with a certain spiritual gift will learn many things about how God works through them, but no one can be educated into operating a spiritual gift which God has not chosen to work in them. If they can, then their “gift” is not from God.

Not everyone is, or can be, a worker of miracles. Some manifestations of the Spirit go with the ministry God has called a person to. Paul confirms this, saying, *“Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.”* II Corinthians 12:12. Other manifestations of the Spirit may be given to one person, but not to another. Paul asked, *“Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?”* I Corinthians 12:29-30.

There is one prerequisite to any person receiving a manifestation of the Spirit of God. They must first be filled with the Spirit of God

(the Holy Ghost). This is not “having a prayer language,” nor is it having a doctrine about the Spirit of God. Many people believe they received the baptism of God’s Spirit when they received Christ, but that is neither scriptural nor true. The baptism of the Holy Ghost is a real and sovereign happening, and it is received subsequent to salvation. I have seen too many people who seem to believe that being filled with the Spirit is something you just accept to be so by faith. That is also a fallacy.

Every believer should be presently seeking God, either to receive the baptism in the Holy Ghost, or thereafter to be continually filled with the Spirit. The Apostle Paul said, “...*though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day*” II Corinthians 4:16. This cannot be just assumed, or “taken by faith,” but is accomplished only as we “drink at the fountain” and “eat at the table” of our Lord every day that we live. Being “daily renewed,” we will be daily filled with God’s Spirit. Paul said to “...*present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God...*” Romans 12:1. Do this in prayer, worship, and service, and the Spirit of God (the Holy Ghost) will begin to work in you to manifest the works of God which he has chosen for you to walk in. Ephesians 2:10.

CHILDISH THINGS

My dad sometimes speaks of his childhood and how much he admired his brother Bill. He is six years younger than Bill, so growing up, Bill was his hero and mentor. To him, Bill was the wisest person in the world and anything Bill told my dad was immediately recorded in his mind as “wisdom.” There were times later in life as he faced times of decision, my dad would remember the wisdom Bill had given unto him so many years before. One day it dawned on my dad that he, a grown man with a family, was following the advice given to him by a twelve year old boy. He would always love and respect his brother, but he knew it was time to “*put away childish things.*”

When the Apostle Paul speaks of putting away childish things, he is referring to childish speaking, childish understanding, and childish

thinking. He says, *“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”* 1 Corinthians 13:13. These *“childish things”* were things the believers held to be wise, but it was not the wisdom of God.

None of us were born again with a divine revelation of all things. All of us were taught. Sometimes the teaching was good; sometimes it was not. Often the things we learned were in fact a mixture of scriptural truth and carnal understanding. Yet most of us accepted the things we were taught as *“truth and wisdom”* because they came from someone we loved and trusted to give us the word of God.

Although we should always honor those who have instructed us in the Lord, each of us must come to a place where we determine to *“...let God be true, but every man a liar.”* Romans 3:4. This is simply an acknowledgement that the words of any person, no matter how great they are in our sight, are just *“childish things”* in light of the word of God.

Decades ago, when we began to preach *“freedom from sin”* through the blood of Christ, we were well aware that it would be scoffed at by the *“wise”* in the modern church. We were not ignorant of the fact that this message was contrary to the dogma of almost every Christian group and denomination, and that it would cost us many friends in the ministry. Yet we did not choose to declare it because it is acceptable, but because it is what Jesus said (*“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”* John 8:36); it is what Paul said (*“Being then made free from sin...”* Romans 6:18); it is what Peter said (*“...that we, being dead to sins...”* 1 Peter 2:24); and it is what John said (*“Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not.”* 1 John 3:6). We had to make a conscience decision to *“...let God be true!”*

Someone once asked me why I preached that *“our old man is **actually crucified** with Christ and the body of sin is **actually destroyed** and we are **actually delivered** from sin.”* They said, *“Everyone else says that is not true. Do you think you know more than everyone else?”* My response was this: *“I preach it because*

every time I open my Bible it says, *‘Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.’* Romans 6:6. I choose to believe God.”

In light of the word of God, my thoughts are merely the thoughts of a child, but then so are yours. The words of the greatest ministers of our generation are no more than “nursery rhymes” if they run contrary to the gospel as recorded in the scripture. Each of us must come to the hour that we choose to “*put away childish things*” and believe God for what his word actually says. Only then will you “*...know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*” John 8:32.

REPENTANCE AND FREEDOM

Jesus began his earthly ministry saying, *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach **deliverance** to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at **liberty** them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”* Luke 4:19. In this text, the English words “*deliverance*” and “*liberty*” are both translated from the Greek word “*aphesis*” which means “*freedom.*” Strong’s #859. As we continue through the scripture, this Greek word for freedom (*aphesis*), becomes central to the gospel message which Jesus instructed his disciples to preach to all nations.

After his resurrection, Jesus commissioned his disciples to go “*...into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.*” Mark 16:15. Luke’s record of this great commission says Jesus told the disciples “*...that **repentance and remission of sins** should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*” Luke 24:47. Again, the Greek word “*aphesis*” is used, but although it is translated as “*remission,*” it still means “*freedom.*” Jesus’ instruction was “*that **repentance and freedom from sins** should be preached in his name among all nations.*” This is the fulfillment of

the words with which he began his earthly ministry, saying, *“He hath anointed me to ...**preach freedom to the captives!**”*

On the day of Pentecost after the one hundred and twenty were filled with the Holy Ghost, Peter began to speak and indicted Israel for killing their Messiah. He continued, saying, *“...God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”* Acts 2:36. The Bible says the people were *“...pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?”* Acts 2:37. The answer echoed the words of Jesus as Peter said, *“**Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.**”* Acts 2:38. The Greek word “aphesis,” which means “freedom,” was used and again translated as “remission.” Jesus had commanded the disciples to preach **repentance and freedom from sins** in his name, which is exactly what Peter did on the Day of Pentecost.

As this first revival grew, the religious establishment became increasingly alarmed. They arrested the apostles and commanded them not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. When they were again arrested, the high priest asked them, *“Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name?”* Acts 5:28. Peter answered with these words: *“We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for **to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.**”* Acts 5:29-31. Again the Greek word for freedom, “aphesis,” is used, but this time it is translated as “forgiveness.” What Peter actually said was that *“God exalted Jesus **...to give repentance to Israel, and freedom from sins!**”* Peter was speaking exactly what Jesus had commanded His disciples to preach to all nations!

Several years later, when Jesus sent him to preach the gospel to gentiles, Peter told Cornelius that Jesus commanded His disciples *“...to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth*

in him shall receive remission of sins." Acts 10:43. This word translated "remission" is again the Greek word "aphesis." Peter's message was consistently "**repentance and freedom from sins**" through Jesus Christ. The words of Jesus were fulfilled upon Cornelius and his household that day. For Jesus had promised, "*If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*" John 8:32.

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