



Behold the Lamb
Publications

Simply Christ

Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

Volume 11

*Sixteen 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 everyone else should easily understand it also.

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



Leroy Surface



Keith Surface

As a young man I was told by an elder minister that I should just accept what the leaders of “our movement” told us was true rather than believe what I saw the scriptures to be saying. I

chose to believe that the word of God is true. Anyone that will do the same will find the gospel of Christ to be a simple message with the power to make everyone who believes it ...free indeed!

Simply Christ

Gospel Newsletter

Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

Volume 11

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WHY HAVE YOU COME?

They thought they had eternal life, but in reality, they did not even have LIFE. This was Jesus' message to some of the most religious people he encountered. Without the Life of Christ within, the hope of eternal life is just a fallacy. Consider Jesus' words: *"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. Take a closer look. His message was **"...ye think ye have eternal life... And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."** In other words, *"You don't even have Life!"*

This was not the only time Jesus contradicted some who were confident Heaven would be their eternal home. He spoke of those who would say, *"...Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."* Matthew 7:22-23. These people believed they would be received by the Lord, but they were deceived. Certainly, this stands as a warning to those who think a "Christian's" sin will not matter when they stand before God. Pay close attention to who will be commanded to depart in that day. Jesus said, **"...depart from me, you that work iniquity."** These people thought they would receive eternal life, but they had believed a lie. II Thessalonians 2:10-12.

I want to share three examples of those who's hope of eternal life was based upon a fallacy. One of which are those who try to serve God simply because they do not want to go to Hell. I am not saying that the fear of damnation cannot get a person's attention and cause them to start looking for an answer for their sin-sick soul. It's just that Jesus Christ cannot be viewed as a "fire escape." I can assure you that those who view him as such will not escape the fire of damnation.

The Bible tells of others who were caught up in the excitement of the miracles Jesus did. John records, *"...many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man."* John 2:23-25.

Why was it that Jesus would not commit himself to these who “believed on him?” It is because he knew their attraction to him was based on his power to amaze them, and not because they valued the Life that he offered. These were no more than “circus fans.” The next circus they flocked to was a Roman styled crucifixion as they cried for the death of the Son of God. Miracles may get a person’s attention, but no one can serve God based upon their desire to see the miraculous.

After Jesus fed the five-thousand with the *“five loaves and two fishes,”* the multitudes were determined that Jesus should be their king. John 6:15. When Jesus departed from them and went across the sea of Galilee, the people took boats and followed him. After they found him, Jesus said, *“Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.”* John 6:26-27. These were pursuing Christ because he filled their belly. In the conversation which followed, they pressed Jesus for bread and even “manna” like the children of Israel received in the wilderness. He was unable to persuade them to seek him for the heavenly bread. They also soon forsook him.

In this generation many people have been taught to follow Jesus for food in the pantry, a car in the garage, a house in the neighborhood, cash in the bank, and money in the retirement account. You cannot follow Christ in search of such things. Of course, He is our provision and his blessings are without number, but where is the one among those who “seek the loaves” who says with the Apostle Paul, *“I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”* Philippians 4:12-13.

The great treasure the redeemed find in Christ is the Life of God that he is in, and to, them. To God’s people, this Life is more to be desired than miracles, money, or even the promise of Heaven itself. For such a person, God will be there when they need a miracle,

provide for them in every circumstance, and call them home to Heaven when this earthly course is run. They have eternal life, because they have found the source of Life, Jesus Christ!

THE WHOLE THING IS DESTROYED

There is a verse in the Bible which is so complete in describing the reason Christ died upon the cross that it has the power to revolutionize the experience of everyone who believes it. *Romans 1:16*. The understanding of this verse is so vital to us that I believe it necessary for us to consider it word by word.

“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*.

“Knowing this...” The apostle considered the message of this verse critical for every believer to know. In fact, he deals with it as common knowledge to those he had brought the gospel to. This is something you must know!

“...our old man...” The *“old man”* is the person you were before you were redeemed. Remember this: *“Your past is not your past as long as it is still your present condition.”* Paul said if anyone is in Christ, *“...old things (old man, old nature) are passed away.”* *II Corinthians 5:17*.

“...is crucified with him (Christ)...” In the Greek language, the words *“crucified with”* mean *“to impale ^{G4716} in union with. ^{G4862}”* This does not speak of us imitating Christ’s crucifixion or us at a later date seeking to suffer as he suffered. It means when Christ died we died with him; same time; same cross; same death! In these few words, the heart and power of the gospel are discovered. It reveals why *“the Word was made flesh”* to die upon the cross. It was not about penalty, punishment, or payment of some kind of debt. Jesus Christ died on the cross in order that we could also die there in union with him. This is the means by which God *“delivered us from the power of darkness.”* *Colossians 1:13*. Without this death with Christ, we would still be eternally enslaved ...and lost!

“...that the body of sin...” The Greek word translated “body” speaks of “*the sound whole.*” A hand is not the body; neither is a foot, an eye, or the tongue. Each of these are merely members of the body. You can lose a foot, and the body still live, but if the body dies, all the members die with it. The “*body of sin*” does not speak of individual sins. It speaks of the whole of sin. One person’s sin may manifest as fornication while another person’s sin may manifest as greed, but the cross deals with them all as a whole. In fact, it deals with the source of sin. If each sin were dealt with individually, salvation would be a lifetime process, but that is not God’s method of salvation. God chose to deal with the entire “*body of sin*” upon the cross.

“...might be destroyed...” The word “*might*” should not be interpreted as a possibility word. In fact, there is no word for “*might*” found in the Greek text for this passage. It was added to help the flow of this sentence. “*Destroyed*” is the key word in this phrase. The reason “*our old man is crucified with Christ*” is so that the whole “*body of sin*” would be “*destroyed!*” Some point out that the Greek word used for destroyed means “*to be (render) entirely idle,*” which is true. They wrongfully attempt to show that salvation only makes sin “*idle,*” but that it will reengage on a regular basis and we will continue to sin. But the Apostle Paul uses this same Greek word for “*destroyed,*” when he wrote, “*The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.*” 1 Corinthians 15:26. When “*death*” is destroyed, it is not coming back. Imagine a Roman war machine, such as a catapult, which has been broken and cast to the ground in pieces. It can no longer cast boulders against the enemy’s wall because it has been destroyed. It has been rendered idle. This is what Paul says our crucifixion with Christ does to the whole “*body of sin.*” It has been broken, cast to the ground, and put to death. It cannot wage war in you!

“...that henceforth...” This means “*no further!*” It describes a point in time from which sin can no longer function in you because it has been destroyed through crucifixion with Christ. This is not a work in process. It was finished on the cross and

received when we believe the truth and recognize that we are in fact *“crucified with Christ.”*

“...we should not serve sin.” Again, there is no Greek word for *“should”* in this passage. This is not describing how things *“should be”* in Christ. It is describing how things ARE! Those who are in Christ do not serve sin. The entire *“body of sin”* has been destroyed, and they are made free.

“For he that is dead (with Christ) is freed from sin.” Romans 6:7

IS GOD STUCK WITH US?

One of the most foolish statements I have ever heard is that God is *“stuck with us.”* In other words, God is required to give us certain things, has to overlook our sins, and must ultimately take us to Heaven because we have entered into a covenant from which He cannot escape. Is such a statement really faith, or is it just foolish arrogance?

John the Baptist warned the Jewish people against such an attitude. It seems they believed since God made covenant with Abraham and his seed, God was bound by covenant to give them the promises made to Abraham. They felt like God was *“stuck with them.”* John warned them, saying, *“And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that **God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.**”* Matthew 3:9. This was a warning to Israel that God could take the covenant made with their fathers and fulfill its promises upon another people if he chose to do so.

Israel wrongly assumed that *“the children of Abraham”* had to be of Abraham’s bloodline. They thought it absurd that *“the blessing of Abraham”* could be given to anyone other than themselves. The Apostle Paul refuted such arrogance and taught that the children of Abraham are those who believe God like Abraham did. He wrote, *“...they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.”* Galatians 3:7. Those who believe God are in fact the *“stones”* | Peter 2:5 which John the Baptist said God could raise up as Abraham’s children.

Paul warned us against the same arrogance of which Israel was guilty. Since they were the “*natural branches*,” Israel believed God had no choice but to receive them, ...but they were wrong. The “*natural branches*” (unbelieving Israel) were “*broken off*” and branches from a “*wild olive tree*” (believing Gentiles) were grafted in. Yet listen to Paul’s warning to the believing Gentiles. He wrote, “*For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: **otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.***”

Romans 11:21-22.

Spiritual arrogance will always lead to a fall. No one should believe God is stuck with them. There are drug addicts and prostitutes whom God can replace you or me with if we choose not to “*continue in his goodness.*” The promise that God will never forsake us comes with a warning. The Bible says, “*The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.*” II Chronicles 15:2

You can walk in God’s goodness all the days of your life, free from sin and kept by his grace. It is as simple as believing the gospel and trusting in Christ. Hold to Jesus and he will uphold you. The Bible says He “*...is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy*” Jude 1:24, but do not think that God cannot deal with you, or anyone who forsakes the goodness of Christ, the same as he dealt with the unbelieving Jews. Paul said, “*For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, **lest ye should be wise in your own conceits...***” Romans 11:25.

CRIMINALIZING HUMANITY

When I was a young Christian, one of the most quoted Bible passages was “*There is none righteous, no, not one.*” Romans 3:10. People heard in these words what they wanted to hear and ignored the Apostle Paul’s explanation that this was what the Law spoke to those who were “*under the Law.*” Romans 3:19. These words, which were written to show the universal need for salvation, were

misused to silence those who reminded us *“the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”* | Corinthians 6:9.

I soon realized these words had become “the great consolation” of the modern church. In a strange way its use comforted people by falsely assuring them that every believer was sinful. The thinking seemed to be, “Why should I be troubled about my iniquity? If everyone is unrighteous just as I am, then I must be alright.”

As this mindset took hold, conviction over sin evaporated from the church house. The truth that the blood of Jesus Christ delivers us from sin was discarded as churches rushed to embrace the error that the sins a believer commits are covered and hidden from the eyes of God.

In the decades since, the blindness has only increased. Churches across America now open their services welcoming visitors by declaring, “We are all sinners just like you.” I admit that it almost seems foolish to disagree. Fornication, pornography, profanity, and covetousness fill the lives of professing believers in staggering proportions. Although we are told Christians are sinners just like those in the world, in many cases, it is worse than in the world. It is as though Paul was speaking of today when he wrote, *“It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles...”* | Corinthians 5:1.

It seems the only damnable sin a believer can commit today is to deny the assertion that God’s people are still sinners. That person is immediately assaulted with “proofs” they are both self-righteous and exceedingly sinful! They are told: “If you exceeded the speed limit, you sinned!” “If you got upset with your children, you sinned!” “If you had a less than perfect thought, you sinned.” Really? **The church has criminalized “being human” so they can justify being sinful.** Jesus referred to this sort of religious blindness, saying, *“Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.”* Matthew 23:24. Yes, we are human and may come short of the full manifestation of Christ, but there is a vast difference between being human and being sinful. The Bible never says, “Those who

get upset with their children shall not inherit the kingdom of God,”
...but it does say the fornicator shall not!

The “wise” among us tell us the Biblical statements concerning what children of God DO NOT DO only mean they do not repetitiously “practice” those things. Even many Bible translations have retranslated the words “*does not commit sin*” | John 3:9 into “*does not practice sin.*” Has anyone considered how foolish that is? How many times must a man “practice” rape before he is actually a rapist? Must a person commit murder multiple times before they are a murderer? Are you a thief only if you steal on a regular basis? The things which the apostles called sin are things those who know God simply do not do. In fact, the Bible says they “cannot” do it! | John 3:9. If you cannot believe me, can you believe the Apostle John? He wrote, “***Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.***” | John 3:6.

The church desperately needs ministers who will boldly stand for the truth and say, “Yes, we are human, but we are not all sinners! Jesus Christ shed his blood ‘*to take away our sin*’ | John 3:5, and that is exactly what He has done!”

WHAT DOES GOD SAY ABOUT PROPHETS?

HOW DOES GOD CALL A PROPHET?

*“And he said, Hear now my words: **if there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.** My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not **in dark speeches...**”* Numbers 12:6-8

HOW DO WE KNOW IF A PROPHET IS OF GOD OR MERELY A PRESUMPTUOUS PROPHET?

*“But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? **When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the***

thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.”

Deuteronomy 18:20-22

DO SIGNS OR WONDERS PROVE THAT SOMEONE IS A PROPHET OF GOD?

“If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”

Deuteronomy 13:1-5

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF A PRESUMPTUOUS PROPHET?

“Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: **they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD. They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.”**

Jeremiah 23:16-17

“They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and **they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word. Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination whereas ye say, The LORD saith it; albeit I have not spoken? Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because **ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies,** therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord GOD...”*Eze 13:6-8***

WHERE DOES A PRESUMPTUOUS PROPHET GET THEIR PROPHECY?

“And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and **say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; **Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!”****

Ezekiel 13:1-12

“Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them:” *Jeremiah 23:30-32*

WILL GOD ENTRAP A PRESUMPTUOUS PROPHET?

“And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the LORD have deceived that prophet...” *Ezekiel 14:9*

WHAT JUDGMENT AWAITS A PRESUMPTUOUS PROPHET?

“...I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. And they shall bear the punishment of their iniquity: the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh unto him;” *Ezekiel 14:9-10*

“And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the LORD: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth.” *Zechariah 13:2-3*

HOW CAN A PRESUMPTUOUS PROPHET REPENT?

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive: But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.” *Zechariah 13:1-5*

VISION OF A “LIGHT BOMB”

In October 2020 we were in a “solemn assembly” prayer service when my daughter-in-law received a vision from the Lord. She saw

a map of the United States laid before her, and in the center of the map there arose what appeared to be a mushroom cloud from a giant explosion. This explosion did not destroy cities or people, however. It was instead an explosion of light as though a “light bomb” exploded across the nation.

As I thought on these things, the scripture came to mind which says, *“For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But **all things that are reprovèd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.**”*

Ephesians 5:12-13. I believe God was letting it be known that something would soon happen which would manifest the hidden secrets of darkness. After the election, my mind went to the confusion which followed. Was God soon to reveal the enormous fraud we had heard about, but had not been proven? Or, was God going to reveal something in the church?

On January 6, 2021 the light bomb exploded! On the same day that rioters stormed the Capitol building, the United States Congress confirmed the election of Joe Biden as the 46th president of the United States of America. The “light bomb” which exploded that day did not reveal the massive election fraud we had been told took place. Perhaps there was massive fraud, but to this point the evidence does not support it. What was revealed on January 6th is that not a single one of the “prophets” who told us “God said Donald Trump would be re-elected and serve a second term as president” had heard from God. It was like another Mt Carmel. They prophesied, they chanted, they demanded, they invoked, and they accused, ...but the fire did not fall on their altar.

To say these prophets were correct, but it did not happen because the election was stolen is like saying the fire did actually fall on the prophets of Baal’s sacrifice | Kings 18, but the air was too humid for it to ignite. Would these also claim that Hananiah’s prophecy Jeremiah 28 was correct when he said “Jerusalem would be delivered from Babylon within two years,” but Nebuchadnezzar cheated by using his army. Of course, that is absurd! God is never caught off guard, neither does his word return void!

This was not merely a mistake. Those who may have said “I believe Donald Trump will be re-elected” were mistaken, but these claimed “**God said** Donald Trump will be re-elected.” This was not a mistake, it was a lie! How do I know this? Because God said, “*And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.*”

Deuteronomy 18:20-22.

Some of these prophets are simply charlatans and deceivers looking for fame and glory, but some may have been sincere. Yet sincerity is no excuse for usurping a ministry which God has not given to you. To that sincere “presumptuous prophet” I speak directly. “The fact that you sincerely believed God was saying Donald Trump would be re-elected is your proof that you are not a prophet. Repent of your presumption and perhaps God will repent of his indignation against you.” Remember, “*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*” Hebrews 10:31.

I believe this election was a trap set by God to ensnare and reveal the true nature of America’s prophets. God said, “*And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the LORD have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel.*” Ezekiel 14:9. The dream of glory was too great for these to resist. People loved what they spoke and would love them even more when it happened, ...but it did not happen!

This “light bomb” is more that God’s judgment upon the presumptuous prophets. It is an opportunity for sincere believers to separate themselves from such. Maybe you thought these were prophets of God. Now you know better. Do not heed the call for unity in this hour. It is the wrong call. When Korah and the “company” Numbers 16:11 of men with him gathered themselves against Moses, God did not call for unity. He called for separation. Numbers 16:26. The earth would soon open and swallow Korah and his company. Numbers 16:32-33. It is time for God’s people to separate from

the foolishness of these “prophets” and gather themselves solely unto the Lord.

“The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?” Jeremiah 5:31.

WHO SHALL BRING CHRIST DOWN?

The gospel of Christ as preached by the early apostles was built upon the writings of the Old Testament prophets who foretold the work Messiah would accomplish upon earth. The most prominent of these prophecies was the angel Gabriel’s message to Daniel that Christ would *“make an end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness.”* Daniel 9:24-27. These three central points of redemption described to perfection the work of Christ, but the Jews were blind to what they meant. They could not comprehend such a work would be accomplished in the heart and nature of those in whom Christ dwells.

Just like some Christian’s today, many of those to whom the apostles preached believe these scriptural promises, but thought Christ would come at a future date and fulfill them. The Apostle Paul speaks to this, saying, ***“Say not in thine heart, **Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)***** Romans 10:6-7. His message was clear. You must not look to the future for Christ to come and fulfill these promises because he has already come and finished the work. He walked among us, was crucified, and God raised him from the dead. If you believe *“the record God gave of His Son”* | John 5:10, then you must accept that Christ has already accomplished it all upon the cross. It is not a future work or a work in progress. It is finished, and you need only to receive it! If you look to the second coming of Christ to fulfill these promises, you look in vain. **Christ’s second coming will not make an end of sin in you, but it will bring judgment upon those who work iniquity.** Matthew 7:23. He has already shed his blood to make you free.

Paul's words, ***"...if thou shalt confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus"*** Romans 10: 9 are directly connected to his statement, *"Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:). The word "confess" means to "acknowledge" the truth. If you believe "the Christ" whom God promised would come to "make an end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness" has come, and is in fact Jesus, the Son of God, open your mouth and acknowledge it. Let it be known that you are trusting him to fulfill this work in you. Do not be ashamed of what the word of God says Christ has done! Stand up and confess, or acknowledge, that "the gospel of Christ" is true!* Romans 1:16. This is important because ***"...with the mouth confession is made unto salvation!"*** Romans 10:10.

"Believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead" Romans 10:9. The entire work of Christ is accomplished, not by his second coming, but by his death, burial, and resurrection in His first coming. To deny this work was accomplished when he died, was buried, and rose again from the dead, is to deny every promise of redemption.

Consider the power of these words written by the Apostle Paul: ***"And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins."*** I Corinthians 15:17. Can you see that for those who are *"yet in their sins,"* it is as though Christ has not risen from the dead? It is his crucifixion which destroyed sin, and it is his resurrection which lifted us out of it. Is this what you believe in your heart? Every promise of your deliverance through Jesus Christ depends upon it. Christ died and rose again to bring *"everlasting righteousness"* into you, but there is only one way for you to receive it. You must believe the truth! Why? Because ***"...with the heart man believeth unto righteousness...!"*** Romans 10:10.

SPIRITUAL DECEPTION

None of us want to be deceived, especially when it concerns the eternal destiny of our soul. Yet, spiritual deception is one of the foremost things Jesus and the early apostles warned us against. There is a simple and obvious truth which we tend to lose sight of.

“We are rarely deceived by those whom we believe are sent by Satan. Deception almost always comes through someone we believe has been sent by God.”

The Bible tells us before the return of Jesus Christ, *“that man of sin”* will be revealed *“sitting in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”* ^{II} Thessalonians 2:3-4. Some believe this speaks of a person called *“The Antichrist”* who will sit in a rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem. Yet, the Apostle Paul, who wrote these things, was adamant that the church is *“the temple of God.”* ^I Corinthians 3:17. This being the case, Paul must have been speaking of something in the church which was not of God, but presented itself to be God!

Jesus personally warned us these things would happen before his return. He said, *“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if **it were** possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”* ^{Matthew 24:24.} In the phrase *“if **it were** possible,”* the words *“it were”* were added by Bible editors. What Jesus actually said is *“...if possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”* We all must understand this one thing. **“It is not impossible for you, or I, to be deceived!”**

Paul said this *“man of sin”* who would be revealed sitting in the Temple of God, would do according to *“the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness...”* ^{II} Thessalonians 2:9-10. In other words, this *“man of sin”* would use signs, lying wonders, and every trick of Satan to deceive the people of God who also gathered in the house of God. It is certain this great deception which Paul warned of would happen in the midst of those who believed they were following Christ.

The apostle gave one primary reason this *“man of sin”* is able to deceive the people and cause them to perish. He said, *“...because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”* ^{II} Thessalonians 2:10. These are those whom God sought to reach, sought to warn, and sought to reveal the truth to, but they did not want to hear it. They seemed to love the deception. It told them things they wanted to hear. ^{II} Timothy 4:3. The truth did not matter. They loved the word of their favorite *“messenger”* more than they loved the word

of God. So finally, the apostle said, *"...for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."* II Thessalonians 2:11-12.

There is, however, another people spoken of in the scripture. These are those who *"love the truth."* The truth matters more to these than personality, signs, or great phenomenon. These are like those in Berea who did not judge the gospel based upon their traditions or personal beliefs, but *"...received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."* Acts 17:11. They are like the Apostle Paul, who weighed the record God gave in the scripture against the many voices who denied it, and wrote, *"let God be true, but every man a liar..."* Romans 3:4.

Sometimes the truth of God comes to us as the great treasure for which we have always searched, but sometimes it hits us like a freight train when it comes. Regardless of how it comes, *"the truth"* is the truth. The truth may not be what we presently want to hear, but it is always what we need to hear. It may seem difficult to *"love"* when it first comes to us. Yet, for those who love the truth because it is *"the truth,"* it will deliver them from every work of darkness and certainly save their souls.

PAUL'S AGONY

In the 7th chapter of Romans, the Apostle Paul vividly describes the events which led to his conversion to Jesus. He begins the chapter by speaking of the Law's dominion and tells of his efforts to serve God under the Law. He describes this time as being *"in the flesh."* He says, *"For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death."* Romans 7:5. He had lived his entire life *"in the flesh"* and for the most part had done fairly well. Sin was no great problem for him, and he viewed himself as exceedingly righteous. In fact, he looked back and said, *"...touching the righteousness which is in the law, (he was) blameless."* Philippians 3:6.

Yet something troubled this *"righteous"* Pharisee, as the tenth commandment began to speak to him in a way he never considered

before. The first nine commandments dealt with his actions, but he began to see that the tenth commandment dealt with the content of his heart. He said, *“I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, **Thou shalt not covet.**”* Romans 7:7. Paul (then known as Saul of Tarsus) had always viewed himself as a righteous man because he kept the deeds of the Law. Now he was faced with the realization that sin in his heart made him a commandment breaker. It seems Paul thought he could remedy this by taking control of his thoughts and desires, just as he controlled his actions, but this is where sin deceived him! Romans 7:11.

When Paul recognized that sin in the heart was in fact sin, he endeavored to purge this iniquity from his own consciousness. However, the more he struggled with it the more he discovered its grip upon his soul. The harder he fought, the more pronounced the sinful desires became. Romans 7:8. Sin, which for most of his life Paul had kept subdued, and thought was dead, revived! Romans 7:9.

Paul became so *“exceeding sinful”* Romans 7:13 in his own sight, that he was forced to acknowledge something which shattered his great religious self-image. I can imagine the horror which gripped this great *“Hebrew of the Hebrews”* Philippians 3:5 who believed himself to be spiritual above others, when he had to admit to himself, *“**I am carnal, sold under sin.**”* Romans 7:14. These words do not describe a child of God. Those who are born of God are not carnal (unregenerate). They are “spirit” (spiritual) because they are *“born of the Spirit.”* John 3:6. Neither are the people of God *“sold under sin.”* God’s children have been *“redeemed from all iniquity.”* Titus 2:14.

Listed below is the evidence Paul considered about himself which forced him to acknowledge that he was not spiritual, but was in fact a slave to sin.

*“**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. A slave is forced to do the things he hates and cannot do the things he desires to do.

*“**Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.**”* Romans 7:17. A slave is controlled by someone more powerful than themselves. This powerful master is SIN in the heart.

“...for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.” Romans 7:18. A slave will live his life longing to do certain things which his master will never allow him to do.

“For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.” Romans 7:19-20. Paul could no longer deny it. He was controlled by something more powerful than himself. Sin was his master and he was its slave!

This was Paul’s condition when he met Jesus on the Damascus Road. The “pricks” he was fighting were destroying him. In his heart he was crying, *“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”* Romans 7:24. He found that deliverance *“through Jesus Christ our Lord!”* Romans 7:25. He discovered that Jesus Christ truly takes away the sin which reigns in the heart of fallen humanity.

Although this 7th chapter describes Paul’s struggles before he came to Jesus Christ, many Christians find themselves in a similar darkness. The root cause is the same in both cases. As long as anyone seeks to serve God with the carnal mind, they will be servants to sin in their flesh. Romans 7:25.

THE WRONG SPIRIT

One Sunday I shared a dream which I received that same morning. In the dream I was visiting with some Christian people when someone said, “Sister (I do not recall the name) had a demonic fit yesterday, but she is alright, because today she was in the Spirit.” I did not know if the demonic fit was that she was throwing herself on the floor in convulsions or if she cursed someone out, but in the dream, I spoke up, saying, **“If she had a demonic fit yesterday and was in the Spirit today, it is the wrong spirit!”**

A lady was visiting in that service, and her brother shared this with me. He said, “My sister has been the pianist in another church for years, but just recently God truly saved her. Everything about her has changed, yet for some reason the other ministers in her church are now separating from her. My sister told me, ‘My pastor recently cursed me out, but the next service my pastor was in the pulpit and

seemed all spiritual. I do not know what to think about it.' Then you told your dream where you said, '...if someone had a demonic fit yesterday and was in the Spirit today, it is the wrong spirit!'"

The Apostle Paul told us *"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."* Romans 8:16. The words *"beareth witness with"* come from a Greek word which means *"testify jointly."* In other words, our spirit and the Holy Ghost both present evidence in unison that we are the children of God. But what does it mean when the witness of one seems to contradict the other? This was the case with the pastor mentioned above.

In promising redemption, God said, *"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."* Ezekiel 36:26. The receiving of this *"new heart"* and *"new spirit"* is the essence of what it means to be *"born again."* John 3:7. This happens when God sends the Spirit of Christ into our hearts.

The first evidence of this new birth is an unquenchable thirst for heavenly things, which is in fact our *"new spirit"* reaching out for communion with God our Father. Paul describes this, saying, *"God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."* Galatians 4:6.

The next great witness of this new spirit is *"love."* When a person is born of God, they become overwhelmed with love and compassion for others. Love is such a powerful evidence of being born of God that the Apostle John wrote, *"He that loveth not knoweth not God..."* I John 4:8. Yet, love is not the only evidence of knowing God. John also told us that *"whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him."* I John 3:6. John uses these things as the testimony our spirit gives as to whether we are God's children or not. He says, *"In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."* I John 3:10.

The manifestation of the nature of Christ in our heart and life is the *"witness"* our spirit gives that we are children of God. Yet Paul speaks of a second witness, saying, *"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit..."* When the Spirit of God fills a child of God, there is a second witness which begins to be given. The Spirit of God

begins to anoint, work through, and lead the person in a supernatural way. Speaking in tongues, the gifts of the Spirit, the anointing to preach, miracles, and many more such things are witnesses being given by the Holy Ghost that this person is a child of God. Yet it is important to remember that the Spirit of God will only *“testify jointly”* with those who also have the Spirit of Christ. Romans 8:9. The Holy Ghost will never bear witness with a sinful heart.

This next paragraph may shock some, but it is important to understand. If a person’s spirit is manifested by uncleanness, hatred, profanity, covetousness, or any other such things, although they may speak in tongues or prophesy, you can be certain their tongues and prophesy are not a witness from the Spirit of God. **Only a wrong spirit will give witness in unison with an unclean heart.** The same goes for those who preach, teach, or even seem to work miracles. If the witness of their spirit is not the nature of Christ, the spirit that works with them is not the Spirit of God. It is the wrong spirit!

WHAT CHANGE ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

The word of God promises *“we shall be changed”* | Corinthians 15:52 when the dead in Christ are resurrected to meet Jesus in the clouds. | Thessalonians 4:17. Most Christians look forward to the hour of their *“change.”* The important question is: *“What change are you waiting for? And what will that change be?”*

There are two changes promised in the Bible as the solution for the two conditions which will not inherit the kingdom of God. The Apostle Paul reveals the first condition when addressing fornication among believers. He wrote, *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived...”* | Corinthians 6:9. He continued on to let them know that the *“unrighteous”* includes all fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners. | Corinthians 6:9-10.

Paul then reminds us that many believers were once these kinds of people until something changed them. He said, *“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. This great change came about through the miracle of “*salvation.*” It is the work of the blood of Christ which washes unrighteousness from the heart, life, and nature of those who come to Jesus Christ.

This great transformation takes place when the light of Christ shines into our hearts. The Apostle Paul says, “*But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, **are changed into the same image** from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*” II Corinthians 3:18. This “*glass,*” in which we see the “*glory of the Lord*” is “*the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*” II Corinthians 4:6. Paul tells us this light is “*the light of the glorious gospel of Christ...*” I Corinthians 4:4. It is the testimony of what was accomplished in the first coming of Jesus Christ when he suffered and died for us on the cross.

The second condition which shall not inherit the kingdom is simply “*flesh and blood.*” Paul says, “*Now this I say, brethren, that **flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.***” I Corinthians 15:50. Those who have received the first change through faith in Jesus Christ must also receive a second change before they can enter Heaven’s glory. This change, however, will be accomplished by Jesus Christ at his second coming. Paul confirms this, saying, “*For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: **Who shall change our vile (lowly) body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.***” Philippians 3:20-21. The word of God tells us “*... the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*” I Corinthians 15:52.

There are many in the church who are confused and deceived about the two changes which must take place in each of us. Many people hope they will be changed from unrighteous to righteous when they die or when Jesus Christ returns. That belief is a false hope! “*Today is the day of salvation,*” not tomorrow!” II Corinthians 6:2.

Our deliverance from sin, Satan, and every power of darkness was accomplished in the first coming of Jesus Christ when he offered himself upon the cross. This free salvation must be received in this life. It will not be offered after we close our eyes in death. Those who *“die in their sins”* John 8:24 will remain in their sins for eternity. In that hour it will be according to God’s word which says, ***“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.”*** Revelation 22:11.

GOD’S COMPASSION

The word *“mercy,”* as used by the New testament writers, almost always comes from a Greek word which means *“compassion,”* whereas the Old Testament writers used a Hebrew word for mercy which means *“kindness.”* Because he is merciful, God is both compassionate and kind.

Some define mercy as *“God not giving us what we deserve.”* This may be true in many circumstances, but this definition comes short of explaining the true riches of God’s mercy. Consider the following examples of mercy in the ministry of Jesus Christ.

When Jesus told the story of the *“Good Samaritan”* who helped the man who was left half dead by the roadside, he asked a lawyer, *“Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?”* Luke 10:36. The lawyer answered, ***“He that shewed mercy on him.”*** Luke 10:37. Mercy, in this setting, was the compassion of the Samaritan who reached down to help the man who had been beaten by thieves.

When blind Bartimaeus cried out, *“Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me”* Mark 10:47, or when the woman of Canaan said, ***“Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil”*** Matthew 15:22, were they asking Jesus not to punish them for their situation? Of course not! They desperately needed Jesus to do what no one else could do. In both cases, Jesus was moved with compassion, and they were made whole.

Mercy in the Bible is almost always revealed when God does for us what we cannot do for ourselves. The Apostle Paul describes us all as being *“dead in sins.”* Ephesians 2:1. A dead person can do nothing for themselves. This is where the compassion of God reached down to us. Paul wrote, *“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, (by grace ye are saved;)...”* Ephesians 2:4-5. Because God was moved with compassion, his grace lifted us out of sin and gave us life!

The Apostle Peter also gives insight into the mercy of God. He wrote, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which **according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,**”* I Peter 1:3. Our new birth is a direct result of God’s mercy. Before being born of God’s Spirit, we were Adamic, carnal, sinful, and damned. There was nothing we could do to bridge the gap from sin to righteousness, or from death to life. In God’s compassion for us, he sent Christ to do for us what we could never do for ourselves.

In David’s great plea for God’s mercy, he asked God to purge his iniquity and give him a clean heart and right spirit. Psalms 51. In God’s great compassion, this is exactly what he does for those who come to Christ in repentance and faith. According to his promise, He cleanses them from all their *“filthiness”* and gives them *“a new heart and a new spirit.”* Ezekiel 36:25-26. God considered the helplessness of fallen humanity to change their own heart, so he sent Christ to do what we could never do for ourselves. O, what mercy!

When the apostle exhorts us to *“...come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”* Hebrews 4:16, he bases this upon the truth that Jesus Christ can *“be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.”* Hebrews 4:14. Grace is often given to us as strength to walk victoriously through the fiery trial II Corinthians 12:9, but mercy comes when the heart of God is moved with compassion over our great need. That same mercy can flow from God in the hour of your greatest trial. Yes, He can be touched with the feeling of your infirmity. Reach up to touch him today!

TRUSTING IN SHADOWS

When I was a child, sometimes at night one of us would use a flashlight and our hands to make shadow creatures appear on the wall while the others attempted to guess what creature was being made. Sometimes you were sure the shadow was supposed to be a dog, but found out it was a lion. You might think it was a rabbit, but it was a kangaroo. When you are staring at shadows, one person may be convinced they are seeing one thing while another person is convinced of the opposite. This confusion should be expected because shadows are only produced by blocking out the light.

Shadows are not the same as reflections. Reflections reveal the truth. Shadows hide it. Jesus Christ is the reflection of God's glory. The Bible says he is "*...the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.*" Hebrews 1:3. The Law of Moses along with its ordinances and rituals are merely shadows. Paul said, the Law had "*a shadow of good things to come,*" but it was not "*the very image*" Hebrews 10:1 of that good thing.

Moses' law served to hide the glory of God from the people, whereas, Christ reveals the glory of God. Paul wrote concerning the Law, "*when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.*" II Corinthians 3:15. Yet concerning Christ, Paul wrote, "*But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image...*" II Corinthians 3:18.

Paul also described the Jewish rituals, ordinances, holy days, and the Sabbath as being merely "*a shadow of things to come; but, the body (the body which cast the shadow) is of Christ.*" Colossians 2:17. Paul was alarmed that believers were turning to religious ritualism. He said such a person was "*intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.*" Colossians 2:18. They believed themselves to be finding wisdom and spirituality in their religious rituals, but Paul was warning, "It's just a shadow! There is nothing there to see but darkness!"

In every generation there have been those who think they will understand redemption through studying the Law and the Tabernacle along with its feast days and ceremonies. They seem

blind to the simple truth that Christ came to do **“What the Law could not do!”** Romans 8:3. It is evident that the Law can never reveal the work of redemption because the Law could never accomplish that which redemption does in us. Consider the record of the scripture below:

“For the law made nothing perfect (complete), but the bringing in of a better hope did;” Hebrews 7:19. The Law could ceremonially cleanse the outside of a person, but because it cannot wash sin from the heart, its work is always incomplete. We who come through Christ have *“our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”* Hebrews 10:22. We are made complete!

“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away (remove) sins.” Hebrews 10:4. You can know everything there is to know about the sacrifices of the Tabernacle or even the Passover lamb, yet still know nothing about the blood of Christ. Christ shed his blood to do what it was impossible for the blood of animals to accomplish. The Bible says *“...we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”* Hebrews 10:10. The blood of animals could never accomplish such a thing.

Christ is never found in the shadows. Yet, many professing believers are searching the “shadows” of religion, believing they will find a closeness with God. Some turn to the rituals of Judaism while others put their trust in baptisms and other religious ceremonialism. These are not necessarily evil, but they are just shadows. Those who walk in shadows always walk in darkness.

A walk in Christ is one of simple faith and trust. We believe the gospel as recorded in the scripture, and we trust in Jesus Christ. He shed his blood to take away our sin, and we walk in that freedom as we walk with him.

“If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” I John 1:7.

WHY DOES THE CHURCH KEEP FALLING?

I do not believe the church Jesus will present to himself is weak and sinful. Yet what is called the church in this generation is beset by immorality and scandal on every side. While the entire world was facing the onslaught of the COVID19 pandemic, the American church was being hammered by shocking revelations within. From Christian “apologist,” to Christian university presidents, to gospel singers, every echelon of the church has been included in this unveiling of iniquity. Even America’s so called “company of prophets” had *“the shame of their nakedness”* revealed. Revelation 3:18.

I do not share such things with joy. I am very aware that each of these travesties affect the testimony of every Christian in a horrible way. The unbeliever looks at these and concludes this is what Christianity really is. God said, *“...they profaned my holy name, when they said to them, These are the people of the LORD, and are gone forth out of his land.”* Ezekiel 36:20. Such revelations not only cause Christians to be disillusioned and confused, but it also gives many in the secular world more fuel to denounce Christianity as a religion of moralizing hypocrites.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of all in this is when believers begin to accept these things as being normal. Why not? Most of us are told every Sunday that we are all still sinners, so why should we be shocked at such things in the ministry? In fact, many ministers regularly glory in their present sin. They find if they use a little profanity or talk about their wandering sexual desires, the congregants seem to identify better with them. Does anyone stop to consider that something has gone very, very wrong?

Jesus gave a warning in the days of his earthly ministry. He said, ***“...if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.”*** John 8:24. This was not spoken to the prostitute or street vandal, but to those who believed they were the elect of God. Jesus was letting them know that all their religious efforts would end up in failure. Why? The answer is simple. They refused to believe that Jesus was the Christ whom God promised would come into the world. Their unbelief condemned them to struggle in futile religious efforts

which can never deliver from the power of darkness. Their labors ultimately failed them, and they died in their sin.

These same people had spent their lives looking for one called “*the Christ*” who would fulfill the prophecy of “*Messiah the Prince*,” which was given to the prophet Daniel. At the heart of this prophecy was the declaration that Messiah would come to “...*make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness...*” Daniel 9:24. The truth, which Jesus said, “*shall make you free*” John 8:32 is the knowledge that Jesus of Nazareth is “*the Messiah the Prince*” and that he accomplished the work of Messiah through his death on the cross. Yet they rejected the truth and in doing so condemned themselves. John 3:18.

While Christians today accept that Jesus is “Christ,” as a whole they have rejected the promise that he came to “*make an end of sin*” in the believer. **They have accepted Jesus’ “Title,” but rejected his purpose.** Their unbelief condemns them also to “die in their sin,” just as Jesus foretold. You cannot reject the redeeming work of Christ without dire spiritual consequences.

John the Baptist described Jesus as “*the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*” John 1:29. If I offered to take away your money, you would not be confused about what I meant. Yet people twist God’s word inside and out seeking to deny that Jesus actually takes sin away. But he does! He takes it out of our heart, out of our life, and out of our nature! You will continue to struggle with sin until you believe God’s word and trust in Jesus to take it all away. He is the Christ, therefore this was his purpose; this was his promise; this is what he has done!

TRUSTING GOD

When the man told me what he was planning to do, I plead with him not to. I told him it was unscriptural and foolish. “No,” he said, “I’ll just do this and trust the Lord to make it work.” “That is not trusting God,” I responded. “This is doing your own will and thinking that God will be stuck with fixing it once you have done it. This will not work out according to your plan.” This man was my friend, but his plan ended in heartbreak and tragedy.

Somewhere, somehow, the thought that faith is the key to getting God to do what we want him to do, took hold in the church. Such thinking is about as far from true faith as you can get. True faith is simply believing God for who he is and what he says. We trust in him to fulfill his desire and purpose in our lives.

Believing God is not based on certain things God has spoken. It is based upon God himself. Many of us have been taught to search the Bible for promises we can claim as our own. That is good if God gives you the promise, but if not, it can lead you into a fallacy. Many a person who has been faced with a deadly affliction has claimed the words of Jesus concerning Lazarus, *"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God..."* John 11:4. On the other hand, I have never seen anyone lay hold of God's words to Hezekiah, saying, *"Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live."* Isaiah 38:1. Yet, both verses are the word of God! In this same manner people will boldly declare John's words *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves..."* I John 1:8, but will disregard the same apostle's words when he wrote, *"...whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him."* I John 3:6. This kind of selective believing has led many people into tragedy, some even to the point of damning their own soul.

God is not only true when he speaks what we want to hear. He is also true when he says the opposite. I am reminded of a morning Campmeeting service Bro. Leroy Surface was invited to preach. As the service the night before was closing, a minister (who was unhappy that we were present) stood up saying he had a word from the Lord. He said, "I feel God wants me to tell you that if any minister gets in this pulpit and speaks something negative, you should not listen to him." The next morning as Bro. Surface began to minister, he started with these words. "I want to warn you that I am a negative preacher. If you take the negative cable off your battery you will not have the power to start your car, and if you take the negative out of the gospel you will not have the power to save a soul!" You need to hear the negative in God's word along with the positive.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not know what would happen when they were thrown into the fiery furnace, so they told

Nebuchadnezzar, *"...our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. **But if not**, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."* Daniel 3:17-18. Their faith was not outcome based. Even if they were to burn in the furnace, they determined to trust God. They were like Job, who said, *"Though he (God) slay me, yet will I trust in him..."* Job 13:15

The greatest miracles I have received in my life did not come through "believing," but through "trusting." Yes, there have been times I could say, "I know God will do this certain thing," but in the greatest tests, usually all I could say was "I will trust God." I did not always know what the outcome would be or what God was going to do, but I did always know that my answer was found in Jesus Christ. I have always believed that he can be touched Hebrews 4:15 and I know that we can trust him!

HOW LITTLE OF GOD CAN I GET?

To many in the church, the term "saved" simply means, *"the minimum experience or the minimum amount of God a person must have in order to go to Heaven."* Some will say, "Not me." Well, maybe not, but don't be too quick to answer. Do you have a child, or other loved-one who had a religious experience sometimes in the past, but is not presently living for God? How do you think they really stand with God? If you are honest, you will probably answer something like *"I know they are not where they ought to be with God, but I believe they are saved."* Translation: *"I believe they have at least the minimum experience or minimum amount of God it takes to get to Heaven."* Even believers whose walk has degenerated into a dead form, often tell themselves; *"Well, at least I'm saved."* In almost every group in Christianity today, the word "saved" has come to speak of the minimal Christian experience or the minimal amount of God they believe it takes to get to heaven.

To illustrate this point, all I must do is to ask how many have ever been to the funeral of someone who was lost? The truthful answer is that we all have. It's just that, at their time of departure, we lay

hold of some minimal standard to announce their arrival at the pearly gates. They may have lived their lives scoffing at, or avoiding a real relationship with Jesus Christ, but surely that is not what matters now. We remember when they were baptized or when they confessed Jesus as Lord many years ago. Occasionally they referred to “the man upstairs,” or some other irreverent, disrespectful term. They even allowed someone to pray for them on their death bed. So then, somehow, somehow, we “*know*” they must have been saved and are now in a much better place. We know they didn’t have much, but surely, they had the minimum that God requires. Will such a person have boldness in the Day of Judgment to say, “*O Mighty God, I know I don’t have much of you, but I just did not want more than was actually required?*” Since when did God become the God of the minimum?

The Apostle Paul said God has “*called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” ^{II Thessalonians 2:14}. God has no minimums and no stopping points. He has never called a sinner only to repentance. From the moment a sinner first hears the gospel, or feels the touch of God, they are being invited to sit with Christ in heavenly places and partake of His glory. God is inviting them to be made free from sin and receive the riches of His grace. He is beckoning them to be filled with His Spirit and to experience a life of miracles.

I have heard all my life that God is calling people *to* repentance, but the truth is, God is calling people **through** repentance. He is calling them **through** faith. He is calling them **through** the cross. He is calling them **through** the baptism with the Holy Ghost. He is ever inviting men and women to come and partake of the glory of His Son, Jesus Christ. Yes, there are many things He calls us **through**, but there is just one “*hope of the calling.*” ^{Ephesians 4:4}. There will be repentance and faith. There will be deliverance of sin through the power of the cross. There will be the baptism in the Holy Ghost, but none of these are a stopping point in Christ. God offers no minimums. He only offers “*the unsearchable riches of Christ.*” ^{Ephesians 3:8}.

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