



Behold The Lamb
Publications

Simply Christ

Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

Volume 12

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

Simply Christ

If every person would determine in their heart not to speak anything about God or His word unless they could first show where it is written in the Bible, ninety percent of all false doctrine would just evaporate. It is a shame, but what we hear from the modern pulpit amounts to little more than religious gossip. One person says something that sounds good, then another picks it up and tells it to others who spread it to even more. This continues until everyone is sure of it, but no one has checked to see if it is found in the word of God. They call it gospel, but it is really just gossip.

I challenge every person to open their Bible and see if it actually says or refutes what your doctrine says. Then make a conscience decision to believe what the Bible actually says!

“But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”
Matthew 15:9

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 are not defenders of denomination, dogma, religious tradition, or the newest religious fad. We have set our heart to simply say what the word of God actually says.



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 12

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I WILL NOT HOLD THEM GUILTLSS

Whether it was a prophet, a priest, a teacher, or someone who swore an oath in the name of the LORD, God always took notice when his name was invoked. He said, *"Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."* Exodus 20:7. The words "in vain" are from a Hebrew word which speaks of "desolating" or "ruin." God was saying "I will not hold the person guiltless who ruins my name."

Many oaths were made where a person would swear by a thing of great honor and value. The greatest and most fearful oath any person could make was to swear by God himself. Isaiah 65:16. This was not evil of itself because even the prophets spoke of a day when, *"...he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth..."* Isaiah 65:16. Yet, to swear by the name of God was a serious thing indeed, and to break such an oath brought a person under the direct indignation of God because it reproached his holy name.

Israel was quick to take up the name of the LORD, but they also often took his name in vain. God said, *"And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, **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. First they profaned his name with their abominations. Then, after he scattered them among the nations, they profaned God's name by being called his people. God was so tired of the insult they brought to his name that he said to them, *"As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord GOD; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me: **but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols.**"* Ezekiel 20:39.

God still watches today when we take up the name of the Lord. When a minister speaks, do they speak the truth in his name? or do they speak deception? Are they a faithful steward of the gospel? or do they speak for earthly gain and glory? No one has more reason to fear in the day of judgment than the person who

presumptuously speaks in the name of Jesus Christ. Even the Apostle Paul did not forget this. He said *“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God...”* II Corinthians 5:11.

Perhaps the severest warning to those who *“take the name of the LORD”* is given to those who seek to stand in the ministry of a prophet. God said, *“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.**”* Deuteronomy 18:20. God was not playing around. This was very serious to him. It is not the indignation of man a presumptuous prophet must fear. It is the indignation of God. He made it very clear. *“**The LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.**”* Exodus 20:7.

It is a great honor and an awesome responsibility to be called to speak in the name of Jesus Christ. Only a foolish person would take it lightly. We must never forget that *“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”* Hebrews 10:31.

MORE THAN A MAN

Many teachers and theologians have presented that Jesus walked upon earth as 100% man. We are told he did this to show us what a man can become and do through faith, fasting, and spiritual consecration. Is this true? Did Jesus walk among us as only a man, or was he something much, much more?

If we can set our lofty theology aside and look solely to the word of God, it becomes evident the above-mentioned doctrine cannot be true. According to the scripture, Christ, who was *“in the form of God”* and *“thought it not robbery to be equal with God,”* was *“made in the likeness of men.”* Philippians 6-7. Being made *“in the likeness of men”* is not the same as being made exactly as a fallen man.

The Apostle Paul describes this difference saying, *“The first man **Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam (Jesus Christ) was made a quickening spirit.** ...The first man is of the earth, earthy: the*

second man is the Lord from heaven.” I Corinthians 15:45-49. There was never a moment in Jesus’ life upon earth when he was the same as any other person. Adam, the father of all humanity, was made to be a *“living soul.”* Jesus Christ, on the other hand, was made to be a *“quickenning spirit.”* Although Jesus walked among men clothed in human flesh and faced the same tests we face in life, he was far from being just a man.

From the moment of conception in the womb of Mary, Jesus would forever be both the Son of God and the son of Mary. I have a natural mom and dad. There has never been a moment of my life when I have not been the offspring of both my parents. Jesus also had a mother and a father. He never took a single action when it was not the son of Mary taking that action. Neither did he do anything when he was not equally the Son of God. Even today, Jesus is both the Son of God and the son of man as he sits at the right hand of the Father. Acts 7:56.

The key to everything Jesus did on earth began with who he was. He was *“the only begotten son of God.”* John recognized this, saying, *“...we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father...”* John 1:18. There was no prayer, no faith, and no consecration that could have produced what Jesus was. This could only be a product of a heavenly birth.

Jesus was more than just a man. He had no sin in his nature or in his heart. John 14:30. God Almighty was his father, and that reality affected everything he did on this earth. But what about those who come to Christ and are also born of God? Are they the same as natural men and women?

When Paul tells us *“The first man **Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam (Jesus Christ) was made a quickening spirit,**”* he adds to this, saying, *“The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. **As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.**”* I Corinthians 15:45-48. He is clear that just as Adam was a *“living soul”* those who are *“earthy,”* the unregenerate person, are also living souls. They may exist forever, but they are not *“spirit”* as

Christ is. Those who teach that a natural man “is a spirit who has a soul and lives in a body,” teach an error. It sounds good. It’s just not scriptural.

The Apostle assures us that although the “earthly” are not “spirit,” the children of God are *“as the heavenly* (Jesus Christ).” If you are born of God, you are not merely a *“living soul.”* As Christ is spirit, even so you are now spirit! Jesus also confirmed this powerful truth when speaking to Nicodemus about being *“born again.”* He said, *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”* John 3:6. Jesus is measuring the natural birth against the spiritual birth. All of us are born into this world as *“flesh,”* but **only those who are “born of the Spirit” are spirit.** Those who teach that “God is in every man” are deceived and they are deceiving you.

The power of the new birth is such that it produces a creation which did not exist before. Through this new birth, we who were *“living souls”* receive a spirit from God himself. In that moment we become *“spiritual”* beings. This new spirit is not “Christ and you,” it is *“Christ in you!”* Sin is no longer your nature because the *“old man”* of sin has been crucified with Christ. Romans 6:6.

If you are a child of God, you are not just a cleaned-up man or woman. Yes, you are human, but you are more than human; you are more than Adam; you are more than a man! The Spirit of God has given birth to a new creation whose life, meat, and drink flows from heaven itself. You cannot be sustained by earthly things. You are not of this earth. You are more than a man!

THE MIND OF CHRIST

The “spirit” of a natural man is the soul. The Apostle Paul tells us, *“The first man Adam was made a living soul”* | Corinthians 15:45, and then he reminds us *“As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy...”* | Corinthians 15:48. We are all born into this world as *“living souls.”* As such, we were earthy, carnal, and the children of Adam.

Unlike Adam, Jesus Christ was not merely a living soul. The Bible tells us he *“was made a quickening spirit.”* I Corinthians 15:45. This is important to understand because the Apostle builds on this truth, saying, *“...as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.”* I Corinthians 15:48. Just as Christ is, a child of God is inherently more than what Adam was.

Those who have been born of God’s Spirit are no longer just *“living souls.”* Because they have been born of God’s Spirit, they are now *“spirit”* beings. Jesus spoke about this in absolute terms, saying *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and **that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.**”* John 3:6. No one is *“spirit”* as Christ is *“spirit”* without first being born of God’s Spirit.

For decades we have been taught that we are in the process of *“being born again.”* If that is the case, you are not yet a child of God. Perhaps we could call it a process when God’s Spirit begins to convict a sinner and draw them to Christ. Maybe we can say the process continues when saving faith begins to arise in their hearts at hearing the truth of the gospel. But, when *“the Spirit of Christ”* comes into a person, the process of being *“born again”* is complete. From that moment, they are a *“spirit,”* and as a newborn child of God they begin to *“grow”* in the things of Christ. The redeemed are not *“becoming the children of God.”* The Apostle John says, *“Beloved, now are we the sons of God...”* I John 3:2.

Even the mind of God’s children is different. The child of God has been given a *“spiritual mind.”* The Bible tells us that those who have *“learned Christ,”* heard from Christ that you must be *“renewed in the spirit of your mind.”* Ephesians 4:23. If the *“spirit of your mind”* is not made new, all the *“spiritual”* teaching in the world will do nothing for you.

The mind of a natural man is carnal. The Bible says, *“the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”* Romans 8:7. Again, Paul tells us, *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”* I Corinthians 2:14. Without having received a

“spiritual mind” a person does not have the ability to receive the things of the Spirit of God.

When the Bible speaks of “*spiritual*” or “*carnal*” we usually think of those who are mature in the Lord compared to those who are not. But actually, the word “*spiritual*” speaks of those who are “*spirit*” because they are born of God’s Spirit, whereas “*carnal*” speaks of the unregenerate person. A “carnal Christian” is someone who professes to have been born of God, but they appear to be just like an unregenerate man.

Paul faced this issue when writing concerning the problems in the Corinthian church. He said, “*And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.*” I Corinthians 3:1. The Apostle almost seems unsure as to whether many of these were just unregenerate, or they were like infants who had an unhealthy birth and never left the incubator. This is confirmed two verses later when he says, “*For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*” I Corinthians 3:3. “*Carnal*” describes the condition of the unregenerate person. Yet Paul told these at Corinth, “You are walking like carnal men walk!” Something was very wrong!

If you are born of God, the Apostle Paul includes you when he said, “*But we have the mind of Christ.*” I Corinthians 2:16. You are a “*spiritual*” creation,” and he tells us “*he that is spiritual judgeth (discerns) all things...*” I Corinthians 2:15. You can discern, or understand, the things of God which the unregenerate person can never receive. Every child of God who gives themselves to seek God in his word and prayer will abound in heavenly wisdom and spiritual understanding. God gave each of us this gift when He gave us “*the mind of Christ.*”

THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST

The message of the early apostles and the early church can be summed up in the words “*Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God!*” As simple as this message is, there seemed to be an order the Apostles took in preaching this gospel. Before they preached

“Jesus,” they would first preach the message of “Christ” using the words of the Old Testament prophets. These prophecies went into great detail about “Christ,” but they never mentioned Jesus by name. After these early believers shared what the scripture said about “Christ,” they would follow up with the proclamation that Jesus of Nazareth is in fact “*The Christ*” whom the Law and the prophets had spoken of.

On the day of Pentecost, as Peter was speaking, he reminded the Jews of God’s promise to David that “...of his loins, according to the flesh, he would **raise up Christ** to sit on his throne.” Acts 2:30. He also showed them by the scripture that Christ would in fact be raised from the dead. Acts 2:31. Peter then followed this message of “Christ” with the shocking proclamation that God had raised Jesus from the dead and “...made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both *Lord and Christ.*” Acts 2:36.

The Bible also gives us insight as to how Philip preached the gospel. It says, “Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and **preached Christ unto them.**” Acts 8:5. This message would have begun with the prophecies of Christ from the scripture, showing the things Christ would accomplish when he came. After he had preached “Christ,” he would then prove to them that “*Jesus is the Christ.*” This manner of preaching the gospel seems to be revealed in the words “...they believed Philip preaching **the things concerning the kingdom of God, AND the name of Jesus Christ...**” Acts 8:12.

Even Saul of Tarsus (the Apostle Paul) began with the message of “Christ” as he preached in synagogues of Damascus after his conversion. The Bible records that “...straightway he preached *Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.*” Acts 9:20. This he showed from the words of the prophets. Yet, before he was finished, he presented Jesus to them “...proving that this is very *Christ.*” Acts 9:22.

In his later years, the Apostle Paul continued to preach the gospel in this manner. The Bible says, “And Paul, **as his manner was, went in unto them, ...Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; AND that this Jesus,**

whom I preach unto you, is Christ.” Acts 17:2-3. First, he would preach “Christ” from the prophecies of the scripture. Then he would continue on to prove that *“Jesus is the Christ.”*

To understand the message of *“Christ,”* you have to go back to the Old Testament prophecies themselves, of which there are many. Yet, it was the angel Gabriel who delivered the clearest prophecy of Christ ever given to man. This prophecy of Gabriel told us exactly what *“Christ,” “the Messiah the Prince,”* would accomplish when he came. His mission would be *“to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness...”* Daniel 9:24. We know this prophecy was the basis for what the early believers preached about Christ because we have their words. What passage other than this promise that Messiah would *“make an end of sins”* could be the basis for the following declarations? *“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”* John 1:29. *“We know he was manifested to take away our sin.”* I John 3: 5. *“...now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”* Hebrews 9:26.

The modern church has selectively chosen to believe some prophecies concerning Christ and ignore others which do not fit their particular view. Consider that many teachers are quick to tell us that Christ died to reconcile us to God, but are equally as quick to deny that he made *“an end of sins”* upon the cross. Yet, both of these prophetic statements are found in the same sentence of Gabriel’s prophecy. Still they choose one and reject the other.

If the work of Christ as revealed by the prophets is selectively rejected so that its fullness is stripped from our understanding, the message that *“Jesus is the Christ”* becomes an empty message. It is like an ocean without water, a forest without trees, and a breath without oxygen. It becomes a gospel with no power deliver those who believe it.

A SOUND MIND

The 1st chapter of Romans was written as a spiritual history of Israel leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem by the armies of Babylon. They were *“without excuse”* because *“when they knew God, they glorified him not as God...”* Romans 1:21 This chapter, which was written almost two thousand years ago to describe events which began to take place almost fifteen centuries before, could very well have been written in our day because it parallels perfectly the present history of America.

Because of Israel’s idolatry and rebellion there were three great judgments which God gave to prepare them for the hour of destruction at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. These same three judgments have also come upon America. God will not destroy a righteous nation, but when a nation rejects him, God will destroy their righteousness. Consider the judgments of God which have already come upon our great land.

The first judgment is described this way: ***“Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves.”*** Romans 1:24. This judgment was God’s response to a people who *“changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man...”* Romans 1:23. From the pulpit, the White House, the halls of Congress, and our high courts, to the schools where our children are taught, the name of God has been corrupted and maligned in America. God’s response was to give America up to sexual uncleanness. Marriage has been almost forsaken and completely corrupted. Pornography fills the lives of believer and unbeliever alike. “Live in” arrangements are as common among church goers as among the unbelievers. We have become a nation of people who like the animals of the field, simply follow *“the lusts of their own hearts.”*

The second judgment is even worse. The scripture says, ***“For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned***

in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.” Romans 1:26-27. This judgment came because beginning in the pulpit and extending nationwide, we “...*changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator...*” Romans 1:25. When a nation is given over to vile affections the perversion will claim the children of the politician along with the children of the atheist and the children of the preacher. Such is the case in America today. School age children are being swept into perverted activity by the tens of thousands. The nation, its entertainment, its courts, and its politicians vilify anyone who dares stand and speak against such things. We truly have been “*given over to vile affections.*”

The third judgment has taken us like a mighty storm. The scripture says, “*And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, **God gave them over to a reprobate mind**, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.*” Romans 1:28-32. Can anyone who knows God see the events of the past couple years and not see that our nation has been given over to a reprobate mind? Vulgarity, maliciousness, and indecency is in full display at every level of society. Violence and theft is justified, while anyone who stands for the truth of God is presented to be a hate-filled closed-minded bigot. It seems there is no soundness of mind anywhere.

Even in what is called fundamental Christianity “*strong delusion*” seems to have taken hold. I hear conspiracy theories with absurd outcomes on a regular basis. I get emails calling Franklin Graham a heretic for encouraging people to get a COVID vaccination. Another told me “The Democrats” released COVID upon the world! People

tell me “those who hear prophetically” know that Donald Trump will be President before the summer is passed. The things are so delusional they remind me of the apostle’s words “...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.

In the midst of a nation, and much of what is called the church, which has been given over to a reprobate mind, the people of God still have a promise from God. The Apostle Paul said, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; **but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.**” I Timothy 1:7. The answer in such a time as this is still “*stir up the gift of God, which is in thee...*” I Timothy 1:6. If you are a child of God, he has given you the “*mind of Christ.*” I Corinthians 2:16. It is a sound mind! Do not be led around by politicians on either side, by radio or television personalities, by self-proclaimed prophets, or even by friends who have everything figured out. “**Stir up the gift of God that is within you!**” Seek God for the fullness of his Spirit. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Romans 8:14.

CHRISTIANS AND COVID

On April 14, 70AD, three Roman Legions surrounded and laid siege to Jerusalem. The siege would last for five months before Jerusalem fell and was completely destroyed by the Roman army. Hundreds of thousands of Jews were killed and all the remaining ninety-seven thousand were forced into slavery.

One factor which added to the death toll was that the siege began just three days before the week of Passover. So confident were the Jews of God’s protection that they continued to gather into Jerusalem even after the siege began. Although the Romans allowed the worshippers to enter the city, they were not allowed to leave. This misguided confidence that God would protect them from the Roman armies led these committed worshippers to their destruction.

Jesus had warned of this event almost forty years before. He said, *“And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.”* Luke 21:20-22. His words were clear for everyone to hear. **If you stay in Jerusalem after the siege begins, you will not be protected from the slaughter.**

I am not a political person. If the Apostle Paul could say, *“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel...”* 1 Corinthians 1:17, I certainly can say, “For Christ sent me not preach politics, but to preach the gospel.” Yet, as I have pointed out before, I have seen a spirit of delusion and confusion take hold among those who are called by the name of Jesus Christ. Because I see this, I must speak of things that perhaps I would not usually address. One of these is about vaccines.

The vast majority of anti-vaccine holdouts are among Christian conservatives. I certainly believe that every person has a right to decide what they put into their body. It’s just that most of the anti-vaccine information out there is absurd. Many Americans cannot remember the ravages of Polio and how common it was to see people of all ages on crutches, in wheelchairs, on braces, or “iron lungs.” It is easy to be anti-vaccine when a vaccine has eliminated the horrors of a disease from your midst.

We are now facing a wave of the COVID Delta Variant across America. Above 90% of the cases are among the un-vaccinated. A precious lady in our church lost both parents last year to COVID. They were two godly people who would most likely still be with us if a vaccine had been available. Now her oldest brother, a strong Christian man, is in the hospital fighting for his life. Her nephew is also in the hospital in serious condition. Both are anti-vaccine believers. A dear man of God also contacted me last week because his wife was in serious condition because of COVID. I believe she is in her twenties.

The Christian community in America is in danger of being ravaged because they have chosen “to stay in Jerusalem while the Roman armies gather.” Not only are they keeping themselves at risk, but they are earning the resentment of a nation which has fought with this horror for almost two years. Jesus’ words to the believers was “*flee to the mountains.*” My advice is a little simpler. Get vaccinated!

THE MARK OF GOD ...OR THE BEAST?

“This is what we were warned about in the book of Revelation. It is ‘the mark of the beast!’ Revelation 13:16-18. If you refuse to take it, you will not be able to buy or sale, but if you do take it, you will be damming your soul.” No, it was not a COVID vaccine these preachers were speaking of. These things were commonly believed by many Christians when the United States government first began to issue a Social Security number.

I was not even born when the American Social Security System was instituted. My dad related those events to me. However, I do remember in the early 1970’s there were ministers who claimed a credit card number was “the mark of the beast.” It fit perfectly. We could all see how that without it we could not buy or sale. Again, in the late 1970’s, some ministers were warning the “bar code” used in grocery stores was “the mark of the beast.”

I am not saying I know what the number “666” means or if it will ever be manifested by a literal mark upon a person’s right hand or forehead. Those such things will be manifested in their time. I do know, however, that you will never understand the mark of the beast until you understand “the mark of God.”

As a young man, the Prophet Ezekiel received a visitation from God. In this experience, God picked Ezekiel up by the hair of his head and took him in a vision to Jerusalem. There he showed Ezekiel the idolatry and abominations in Jerusalem for which God had determined its complete destruction. Ezekiel 8.

Ezekiel then heard God call for the destroyers to converge upon the city. Before releasing the “destroying angels,” however, He first sent “a man” with a “writer’s inkhorn” and commanded him to “Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and **set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.**” Ezekiel 9:4. When God released the destroyers to destroy the city, He told them “Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but **come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary.**” Ezekiel 9:5-6.

It is important to understand that no one in Jerusalem received a literal “mark” in their forehead. Yet, there were many who received the mark of God. This mark could not be seen by man, but it was very real. When the armies of Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city of Jerusalem, these who had the mark of God were spared and carried to Babylon for their protection.

In the book of Revelation, Jesus gave a promise to the overcomer, saying, “**I will write upon him the name of my God ...**” Revelation 3:12. It is also recorded that those who stood with “the Lamb” on Mt. Sion had “**...his Father's name written in their foreheads.**” Revelation 14:1. Even in the New Jerusalem, we are told, “*And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.*” Revelation 22:3-4.

The name of God written upon the people of God is not a “tattoo” or implanted “chip.” It is in fact the Spirit of God himself. Paul told us, “*...after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.*” Ephesians 1:13. The word “sealed” in this text means “to stamp (with a signet or private mark) for security or preservation” Strong’s Dictionary. God “marks” his people with His Spirit.

When people come to me concerned about the newest thing others are calling “the mark of the beast,” I tell them, “You will not receive the mark of the beast unless you receive the spirit of the beast.” This is not saying, “Do not be concerned.” It is saying just

the opposite. Many will carry “*the mark of the beast*” who would never let someone write “666” on their hand or forehead. Yet, these same people will follow false prophets and partake of the false spirit of these prophets. They will cling to doctrines which excuse sinfulness and in doing so drink of the spiritual uncleanness these fallacies bring unto them. Multitudes who believe themselves to be the people of God will be “marked by the beast” simply because they have already embraced the spirit of the beast.

The Apostle Paul told us, “*Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.*” II Timothy 2:19. God knows his people and He marks his people. Satan also knows his people, however religious they may be, and he certainly marks them also.

SAVED ...FROM WHAT?

Words have meaning. The biblical word “*saved*” means “*to deliver or protect.*” A person who is drowning needs to be saved from the water. A person trapped in a burning building needs to be saved from the flames. A person who is held captive needs to be saved from their captors. When someone speaks of being “*saved,*” I always ask, “*Saved from what?*”

The words “*save,*” “*saved,*” and “*salvation*” are used many times by the New Testament writers, yet there are only three verses which, while using these words, actually speak of what we are saved from.

The Apostle Paul told us that we “*shall be saved from wrath through him (Christ).*” This seems to indicate that “*salvation*” is “*to be saved from wrath,*” but an honest look at this passage reveals this “*saving from wrath*” is a promise of something in the future for the redeemed. This promise is given to those who are presently “*justified by his blood*” and already “*reconciled to God.*” Paul said, “*Much more then, **being now justified by his blood,** we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, **we were reconciled to God** by the death of his Son, **much more, being reconciled,** we shall be saved by his*

life.” Romans 5:9-10. If our “salvation” is “saved from wrath,” then being “justified by his blood” and being “reconciled to God” is not part of salvation because the promise of being “saved from wrath” is only given to those who have already been “justified by his blood” and “reconciled to God.” “Saved from wrath” is a future deliverance promised to those who have already received an even greater deliverance.

A second passage which speaks of being “saved from” was spoken by the father of John, the Baptist. Zacharias had been struck dumb by the angel Gabriel many months before the birth of John. After John had been born, Zacharias’s speech was restored, and he began to rejoice and prophesy of the redemption which was at hand, saying, “*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be **saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he swore to our father Abraham, That he would grant unto us, that **we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies** might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life....***” Luke 1:68-75. This prophecy clearly tells us that to be “saved” means to be “*delivered out of the hand of our enemies!*”

The clearest verse in the Bible that tells us what we are saved from was spoken to Joseph soon after Jesus was conceived in Mary’s womb. An angel appeared in a dream and said, “*Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for **he shall save his people from their sins.***” Matthew 1:20-21. These simply words are filled with power and revelation for those who can receive it. Our greatest enemy is the sin which entered our heart and nature through the transgression of Adam. Jesus described “Sin” as a slave master which rules over us from within and causes us to commit acts of

sin. John 8:34. This great enemy is what Jesus came to save us from. He came to *“save his people from their sin!”*

Salvation is a great deliverance. It is the work of the blood of Christ which delivers us from the power and presence of sin in our heart and life. While it is true that many people are called *“saved,”* which are bound by pornography, covetousness, profaneness, and other such things, it is evident they have not been saved from their sin. I am not questioning that some are sincere or even may have had some kind of encounter with God. But if they are indeed *“saved,”* the question is valid which asks, **“saved from what?”**

THE STING OF DEATH

In the beginning of the Revelation, Jesus spoke to John, saying, *“Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”* Revelation 1:17-18. This statement was a declaration of victory and of promise fulfilled. The power of *“death and hell”* had been crushed, as foretold in the word of God.

There are two different Greek words translated as *“hell”* in the New Testament. One is *“geenna,”* which speaks of a place of eternal punishment. The other, which Jesus used in this passage, is *“hadēs,”* and means *“unseen, or the place of departed souls.”* It is translated as *“hell”* and *“the grave.”* This word is never used in reference to *“the lake of fire.”* In some places it seems to speak of those who departed this life without knowing God, but in other places it speaks of *“the grave”* in general as simply the place of departed souls. It would be an equally accurate translation to read Jesus’ words as *“I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of the grave and of death.”* Revelation 1:18.

When the Bible speaks of Jesus, saying, *“...thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption”* Acts 2:27,” it is speaking of *“hell,”* not as a place of punishment, but as *“the grave.”* Jesus entered *“the grave,”* to destroy its power, but he never went to the *“lake of fire.”* The

teaching that Jesus “*burned in hell*,” is a willing perversion of the word of God.

God had given a promise of Jesus’ victory over the grave through the prophet Hosea, saying, “*I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: **O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.***” Hosea 13:14. Countless souls have entered the grave because of deadly plagues which came upon them. This prophecy, however, was a promise that God Himself would be a plague upon death. In a sense, God would cause “the death” of death!

Jesus also gave a promise of “*the grave’s*” destruction. When Peter made the statement “*thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*,” Jesus said it was a revelation from the Father. In these simple words, Peter was stating that Jesus was the Messiah whom God promised would come “*...to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness...*” Daniel 9:24-25. He was the “*seed of the woman*” who would bruise the head of the serpent Genesis 3:15, which is Satan. Revelation 12:9. Jesus told Peter that upon this rock (this revelation of Christ), he would build his church “*and the gates of hell (the grave) shall not prevail against it.*” Matthew 16:18. This statement is actually a promise of the resurrection of the saints. It was a promise that “*the grave*” would not be able to keep or hold those who stood upon the truth of Christ.

The Apostle Paul reminds us of this promised victory when speaking of the resurrection of the redeemed. He said, “*...then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*” I Corinthians 15:54-55. In that day, both “*death*” and “*the grave*” will be powerless to hold the children of God. Death will be “*swallowed up in victory!*” This passage is actually a mocking of “*death*” and “*the grave’s*” impotency. Paul asked, “*O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*” Paul then identifies the “*sting*” of death. He says, “*The sting of death is sin!*” I Corinthians 15:56.

This thing called “Sin,” which Paul calls “*the sting of death*,” is what gives “*death*” and “*the grave*” dominion over a person. The Bible says “*death*” entered the world with sin, and “*passed upon all men...*” Romans 5:12. From that day, “*sin and death*” have been partners. Wherever sin is found, death reigns. Romans 5:14. As long as sin is in your heart, death has dominion over you.

Jesus Christ was “*...manifested to take away our sins.*” I John 3:5. Paul explains the reason Jesus suffered upon the cross, saying, “*...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. In our death with Christ, sin is destroyed, and death loses its dominion over us. Through this work of Christ, we are made free from sin to serve God in true holiness. Romans 6:22. We may one day depart this world by way of “*the grave*,” yet even so, “*the gates of hell (the grave)*” cannot hold us if we belong to Christ. **“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”**

THEY PROMISE LIBERTY

A true minister is a “dispenser” of grace. That is why the Apostle Paul spoke of “*the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward.*” Ephesians 3:2. The minister receives “*grace*” from the Lord for the people and “dispenses” that grace as they minister the word of God. This eternal truth of ministry is found in the words of Peter when he said, “*...such as I have give I thee...*” Acts 3:6. Yet, Jesus’ words give us insight to the dangers of being “ministered to” by those who possess something which is not “*grace.*” He warned, “*If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!*” Matthew 6:23. If those who minister to us are possessed by darkness they will “dispense” that same darkness unto those who receive them. **The words which we speak as ministers are only secondary to the spirit which possesses us.**

A few years ago, surveys were published which told us that over 50% of pastors in evangelical churches admitted to regularly viewing pornography. At first, I believed these numbers were exaggerated, but what I have seen in the last couple years makes

me wonder if the situation was actually understated. If this is true, these pastors are “dispensing” spiritual pollution into the hearts of those they minister to.

Some attempt to portray pornography as just a weakness which godly men are susceptible to. It is not! It is a sin of the sort of which Paul told us *“they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”* Galatians 5:21. The words of Jesus perfectly describe the condition of those who partake of such things. He said, *“...whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”* Matthew 5:28. **Pornography is the open manifestation of both adultery and fornication in the heart of those who consume it.**

The Apostle Peter warned of teachers who were themselves enslaved in darkness. He said they speak *“great swelling words of vanity,”* but are actually bringing the people of God back into the bondage of corruption. Peter said, *“While **they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption...**”* II Peter 2:19. These teachers could preach about great *“liberty”* in Christ, but they did not possess that liberty because they themselves were prisoners of corruption.

Peter explains this, saying, *“for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.”* This statement is actually a reiteration of what Jesus told the Jews when he said, *“He that commits sin is a servant (slave) of sin.”* John 8:34. Sin is never independent of its source. The source of a sinful act is a sinful heart. The person who commits the act of sin does so because of its dominion over them. The Apostle Paul also confirms this, saying, *“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, **his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?**”* Romans 6:16.

Peter was speaking of those who once knew the reality of Christ when he said, *“For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.”* II Peter 2:20. These had been

delivered from *“the pollutions of the world”* through Jesus Christ, but were now back in sin’s bondage and worse off than before they ever came to Christ.

This epidemic of pornography is only symptomatic of a church which has lost its way and no longer knows *“the truth of Christ”* which Jesus said *“make you free indeed!”* ^{John 8:32-36}. Until the church returns to the simple message of the *“cross of Christ”* which *“destroys the body of sin”* ^{Romans 6:6}, and the *“blood of Christ”* which washes it from our heart ^{Revelation 1:5}, sin in the ministry will stand as proof that the church has lost its answer, even as *“salt”* which *“has lost its savour.”* ^{Matthew 5:13}.

HOW TO DIE IN YOUR SIN

Jesus made an astounding statement to the devout Jews he conversed with. He said, *“...if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.”* ^{John 8:24}. Compare this statement with the common belief today that we will all be sinners until we die, believer or unbeliever! We are told that salvation will not change this. Jesus Christ does not change this. Until we lay down this mortal body we will be sinners and continue to sin. In other words, "We will all die in our sins." This sounds right enough except for this one thing: **Jesus was speaking to unbelievers when he said, *“You shall die in your sins”*?**

Jesus spoke these words to the most zealous of the Jews. They would spend their entire lifetime seeking to keep the Law of Moses perfectly. Some were like the Apostle Paul before his conversion to Christ who said, *“touching the righteousness which is in the law, (he was) blameless.”* ^{Philippians 3:6}. Jesus’ words to these devout Jews were extremely harsh because His message was that all their efforts at righteousness would end in failure. When they took their last breath, they would still be sinners.

Jesus’ basis for this statement was simply, *“If you believe not that I am he.”* Those whom he spoke these words to were very studious concerning the scripture. They held to the words of Moses and the prophets. Their walk with God as they understood it was very

important to them. Yet they refused to believe that Jesus was in fact their Messiah, the Christ, of whom Moses and the prophets spoke of. Because of this unbelief, all their dedication, worship, and religious activity would profit them nothing.

Jesus had already told these “seekers” something difficult to understand. He said to them, *“Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me...”* John 7:34. How is it possible that a person can seek the Lord, but not find the Lord? The answer is found in his statement *“If you believe not that I am he.”* These believed in the promise of the Messiah. They diligently sought God and prayed for Christ to come, as many Jews do unto this day. They were totally convinced that they loved Christ, but they refused to believe that Jesus was in fact *“He,”* the Christ. Therefore, they fulfilled Jesus’ words that they would seek him (Christ) and not find him. They thought themselves to be spiritual, but their unbelief was damning their souls.

This same spirit of unbelief possesses many in the church today. They profess absolute faith in Jesus Christ. They truly believe that they believe in him. It’s just that they refuse to believe the testimony of the scripture concerning Jesus Christ. One example is Gabriel’s prophecy of Christ which was given to Daniel. Gabriel tells us Messiah would come *“to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness”* Daniel 9:24. Almost universally, Christians accept that Jesus Christ made *“reconciliation for iniquity”* for us on the cross, but are quick to reject that he made *“an end of sins”* in us through his death. Another example is those who readily believe that Jesus died for our sin, but are just as ready to reject the words of the Apostle John that *“he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not.”* I John 3:5-6. This selective believing is like the Jews who claimed to believe the promise of Christ, but refused to believe *“Jesus is the Christ”* I John 5:1. **The truth they believed was disannulled by the truth they refused to believe.**

It is not the believer, but the unbeliever who will die in their sins. Jesus confirms this when speaking of the Holy Ghost which would *“reprove the world of sin.”* He says, *“Of sin, because they*

believe not on me." John 16:9. The only power sin has to remain in the heart or life of any person is through the power of "unbelief." It is obvious that the person who rejects the words of Jesus that *"the truth shall make you free"* John 8:32, will never be free. The power of their "unbelief" disannuls the power of what they claim to believe. It is easy to die in your sin. All you must do is reject that Jesus suffered and died to take away your sin and make you free. If you do that you will successfully die in your sins. On the other hand, you can believe the truth of Christ and be made free!

NEITHER JEW NOR GENTILE

This past Sunday, I was thinking on Paul's words, *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God..."* II Corinthians 5:17-18. I have often quoted this verse while showing that those who are in Christ do not continue to sin because *"old things are passed away."* As I pondered these things, I began to question what Paul was speaking of when in the previous verse he said *"Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh..."* II Corinthians 5:16. Why was this statement important enough for Paul to include it in this passage? I found the answer in the next previous verse where Paul said, *"And he died for all..."* II Corinthians 5:15. Suddenly it hit me as to why the Apostle was adamant that everyone in Christ is a *"new creature."*

The Apostle Paul was very clear that a great mystery of the gospel, which for *"ages was not made known unto the sons of men,"* was that *"the Gentiles should be fellowheirs (with the Jewish believers), and of the same body (with the Jewish believers), and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel."* Ephesians 3:6. This revelation was the basis of his controversial message that *"Christ died for all!"* The early church did not accept this until Jesus chided Peter and commanded him to go share the gospel with Cornelius, who was a Gentile. Acts 10.

What made this revelation even more controversial was Paul's assertion that not only did Christ die for both Jew and Gentile, but

there was in fact *“no difference”* between Jews and Gentiles. He spoke clearly, saying, *“...there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.”* Romans 10:12. He reaffirms this when speaking of *“...the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference* (between Jew and Gentile): For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:22-23.

Someone could rightfully point out that Paul’s statements that *“there is no difference”* is based upon *“all have sinned.”* This is very true, but it is from this point forward that this message of *“no difference”* gets even stronger. When Paul speaks of those who are *“in Christ,”* he says, *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”* Galatians 3:28. It is shocking to realize that he did not say there are both Jews and Greeks in Christ. He said **“There is neither Jew nor Greek in Christ!”** How can it be that not only are there no Gentiles in Christ, but there are also no Jews in Christ?

The key to understanding this is found back in Paul’s statement, *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”* The Greek word translated *“creature”* means *“original formation.”* Those who are in Christ are not just *“changed”*. They are a *“new”* and *“original”* creation. Some who are in Christ may have been born Jewish, but no one is Jewish in Christ. Others in Christ may have been born a Gentile, but no one is a Gentile in Christ. Remember, *“there is neither Jew nor Greek.”* Everyone who is in Christ is a *“new creation.”* There are no blacks, or whites, or Asians, or Europeans in Christ. There is no one who is of a great spiritual lineage, and there is no one who of a base heritage. This is why Paul says, *“...henceforth know we no man after the flesh...”* Those who are in Christ are not known by their fleshly lineage. We know them by the spirit which they have received from God.

Paul continues speaking of those in Christ, saying, *“old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God...”* II Corinthians 5:17-18. The KJV translators did a disservice by adding the word *“things”* in this passage even though it was not in

the original text. What Paul actually wrote was: *“the old is passed away; behold, all are become new. And all are of God!”* Let’s examine these statements.

“the old is passed away” Paul said, *“...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. When your “old man (or woman)” was crucified with Christ, sin, which filled the “old man,” was destroyed and you were made free.

“all are become new” Paul said, *“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.”* Galatians 6:15. The question is not whether you are a Jew or a Gentile. What matters is “Has Christ made you to be a new creature?”

“all are of God” Everyone in Christ is a new creature, and every new creature in Christ became a new creature by being *“born of God.”* John 3:3. All are of God. They are the children of God!

Those who are born of God are not defined by earthly ancestry. Paul reminds us that Christ took the two, Jews and Gentiles, and made *“one new man.”* He said, Christ *“...abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace.”* Ephesians 2:15. There is only *“one body”* Ephesians 4:4, there is only one *“Church”* Hebrews 12:23, and there are only one *“people of God.”* I Peter 2:10. These are not identified by denomination, nationality, ethnicity, or creed. They are made up of all those who over the past 2000 years have been born again of God’s Spirit.

I believe that before the second coming of Christ, there will be a great turning of Jewish people towards Jesus Christ. Yet, there will never be Jewish Church, just as there has never been a Gentile Church. There is only “The Church” of the Living God, and it is only populated with *“new creations.”* Anything else is just religious flesh, and it will *“profit nothing.”* John 6:63.

GOD'S NEW COVENANT

When God said, *"I will make a new covenant..."* Jeremiah 31:31, He was very clear as to what this *"New Covenant"* would be. It would not be like the Ten Commandments written on stone, or the Law of Moses written on parchment. God said, *"But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, 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 of the *"New Covenant"* is quoted twice in the book of Hebrews as the prophetic basis for our salvation in Christ Jesus. Hebrews 8:8-12, 10:15-17.

God said in this New Covenant he would put his law in a person's *"inward parts"* and *"write it in their heart."* This speaks of a change of nature. The Apostle Paul, sharing his experience preaching Christ to the Gentiles, confirms this, saying, *"For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, ... shew the work of the law written in their hearts..."* Romans 2:14-15. These Gentiles were so transformed by the power of Christ that even though they had no *"law,"* they naturally did the things contained in God's law. Paul said this *"showed ...the work of the law written in their hearts..."* With this statement, Paul is declaring that these Gentiles had been brought into God's *"New Covenant."*

The Apostle Paul again confirms this message of God's law written in our hearts when he describes a believer as being an *"...epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart."* II Corinthians 3:3. When this *"epistle of Christ"* is written in the *"fleshy tables of the heart"* it fulfills God's promise of writing his law in our hearts.

Many people balk when you tell them that true salvation changes a person's nature. Yet the Apostle Peter says the same thing, telling us that by the *"great and precious promises"* of Christ we are *"...partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."* II Peter 1:4. When Christ comes into

us, he both takes and gives. He *“takes away our sin”* | John 3:5 and he gives us his *“divine nature.”*

In his letter to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul tells how vastly different the desires of one who walks in the “New Covenant” (which he calls *“the Spirit”*) are from the desires of a person who walks in law of carnal religion (which he calls *“the flesh”*). He said, *“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary (opposite) the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”* Galatians 5:17. **The desires of “the Spirit” are so different and opposite from the desires of “the flesh” that it is not possible for those who walk in Christ to do the things they would do if they were still walking in “the flesh.”** What *“the flesh”* produces Paul calls *“the works of the flesh,”* but what *“the Spirit”* produces he calls *“the fruit of the Spirit.”* These are totally opposite of each other. They are as different as night and day. One is the nature of Christ, and the other is the nature of *“the Serpent.”* No one has both. This is God’s *“New Covenant!”*

YOU HAVE NOT MOURNED

Sometimes the truth is not a pleasant thing to hear. Such was the case when Paul penned his first epistle to the Corinthian church. The church was filled with carnality, contention, and strife. Some in the church were even living in fornication.

Paul’s harshest rebuke, however, was not to those who committed such things, but was directed towards how the church reacted to it. 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, that one should have his father’s wife. And **ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.”*** | Corinthians 5:1-2.

The believers at Corinth thought their ability to accommodate those involved in such things was a sign of spirituality. It was not! It was a sign of their carnality. Paul said they were *“puffed up.”* They were proud and haughty. They should have been broken-hearted

over the sin in the church. Instead, they acted like they were in the midst of great revival.

It was Jesus who told us, *“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”* Matthew 5:4. This was a reference to Isaiah’s prophecy concerning *“...them that mourn in Zion.”* Isaiah 61:2-3. These were those who *“mourned”* over the depraved spiritual condition of Israel. Their *“comfort”* would be found in the salvation Christ brought into the world.

We must have compassion upon the lost. We must not condemn the sinner for being a sinner. But sin in the world is not the same as sin in the church. Rampant sin in the world reminds us the world still needs the Savior. Rampant sin in the church tells us the church has lost the reality of true salvation.

The American church has been so inundated with scandal, sexual promiscuity, and excess that most people are “numb” to it. Consider how many Christians have been caught up in profane chants against certain political leaders? Do we laugh about it? Or is our heart broken by it? Since when did Jesus tell us to curse our enemies?

Even in ministry we have traded the presence of God for carnality. True ministry has in large part been exchanged for an entertainment-based production. Prophets are lifted up in fame, not because they hear from God, but because they tell us what we want to hear. It is similar to the condition which brought God’s judgment upon Jerusalem in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. God said, ***“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.

The church finds itself in such a condition because it has believed its own lie. We are told constantly that we are all still sinners just like the world. Sadly, in many cases, the lie has become true. When you accept that sin is normal for a Christian it has a two-fold effect. First, it denies the work of Jesus Christ who died to *“take away our sin”* | John 3:5-6. When this happens the basis of saving faith is destroyed and the believer begins to fall back under sin’s dominion.

Secondly, it destroys the moral compass of the believer. That which was once unacceptable becomes accepted. It then becomes justifiable. First in others, then in ourselves. The prophets described the resulting condition, saying, *“Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush...”* Jeremiah 6:15.

Nothing will change until the church realizes how far it has fallen from the glorious salvation Christ purchased for all. Only then will our hearts be able to mourn over our own condition, the condition of the church, and of our nation. Only then will God be able to revive us from the darkness which has filled the land.

PREACH THE WORD

I regularly receive emails asking for, and sometimes demanding, our statement of faith. Some want to be assured that we adhere to a specific established doctrine. What camp do we fit into? What denomination are we associated with? Are we Oneness or Trinitarian? Are we Calvinist or Arminian? What doctrinal box do we fit into? The only statement of faith I ever give is the same as the Apostle Peter’s. *“Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* Matthew 16:16.

I am reminded of the angel’s words to Joshua shortly before the battle of Jericho. When Joshua saw him standing with his sword drawn, Joshua approached him and said, *“Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?”* Joshua 5:13. The angel’s answer was strange yet simple. He said, *“**Nay**; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come.”* Joshua 5:14. He was not sent to be for or against Joshua. He was sent to do the will of God.

I’m not interested in defending a formulated doctrine (Something the scripture does not explicitly say, but men have reasoned to be true.). Every major formulated doctrine of the church, whether based in truth or not, can be traced back to a group of people who decided to establish what “truth” is, whether a denomination, a

reformation, or a council of men. Almost all Christian “doctrines” were established hundreds of years after the early apostles passed off the scene. Some may be very good and sound, but some are not. When a minister becomes a defender of formulated doctrines, they may be defending a truth which others saw, but they may also be defending error because of what others did not see. My point is this: We do not have to take their word for it. We can go back to the same source they had, which is word of God.

The Apostle Paul told Timothy to **“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”** II Timothy 4:2. The Greek word translated “doctrine” simply means instruction. Timothy was to instruct the people by preaching the word. We have that “word.” It’s called the Bible.

If we preach church “doctrines” instead of the word of God, we are using second-hand interpretations as the basis for truth. It does not matter that those who formulated these “truths” were great men who lived fifty, five-hundred, or even fifteen-hundred years ago. If what these men said was true, the word of God will still declare it. It is both dangerous and foolish to use second-hand interpretations when we can go directly to the word of God?

A few years ago, I invited a minister friend to share at Calvary Outreach Church. He presented a very popular and accepted doctrine of how God sees the believer. I saw him a few weeks later and in conversation asked where this teaching was found in the Bible. His drawn-out answer started with Adam and ended with Christ, but did not offer a single verse to support what he was saying. “But what scripture is this based upon?” I asked. He again began to explain all the reasons this was true without referencing any basis in God’s word. When he finished, I asked, “So there is not a single verse of scripture to support this?” His countenance changed and he almost shouted, “I don’t know! I’m not a walking Bible!” My answer to such a statement is this: “If you are going to stand and present something to be the truth of God, you should be a walking Bible. **Preach the word!**”

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