



Behold the Lamb
Publications

Simply Christ

Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

Volume 14

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

Simply Christ

The Apostle Paul spoke of a time when Christian people would *“heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”* II Timothy 4:3-4. A fable is something which is “made up.” Fables find a home in the church because they tell people what they already want to hear. Sadly, we live in an hour where the hearts of many would rather believe a fable that the record of God’s word.

You can prove almost anything by using only the scriptures which support your belief. If you really want to know if your belief is the truth, go to God’s word to see if it can be disproved

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

by the scripture. The truth is not afraid of the truth!

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 Insight

Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

Volume 14

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I WOULD ABOVE ALL THINGS

Almost every personal letter I have ever read began with a greeting and well-wishes from the sender. Many times, words similar to this are used, *“Dear (name), I hope this letter finds you in good health and everything is well.”* The apostle John wrote such a letter to a man named Gaius. This was not an open letter to the churches such as most of the New Testament epistles are. Neither was it a pastoral letter of instruction, such as the letters to Timothy or Titus. It was a personal letter sent from John commending Gaius for his charity and informing him of John’s plan to visit.

As John begins his personal letter to Gaius, he makes the following statement. *“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.”* ^{III John 1:2.} This expression of John’s “well-wishes” for Gaius are very natural and common to us all. Indeed, most of us would desire something very similar if we were writing to a friend or even a stranger. I trust, however, that few of us would expect our personal well-wishes to be received as the will of God.

For decades I have heard ministers present John’s personal “well-wishes” for Gaius as God’s greatest will for every believer. While some are sincere, many of these ministers have used this passage purely for deception and personal gain. I heard Jim Bakker confess publicly that this verse of scripture was the most effective tool he had in soliciting great sums of money from the followers of his PTL Network in the 1980’s. There are vast numbers of people who want to believe that monetary prosperity is God’s great will for their life. For them, the misuse of this passage spiritualizes their own carnal desires.

There are many things in God’s purpose for you which are more important than natural prosperity. The Apostle Paul continually prayed for the saints that they would see and seek the *“unsearchable riches of Christ”* ^{Ephesians 3:8} which are *“spiritual blessings”* stored in heavenly places for us all. ^{Ephesians 1:3. I Peter 1:4.} Compared to these riches, all the wealth of this world is mere slop and rubbish.

The enticement of natural wealth is recorded as one of the greatest snares set before the people of God. Paul warned the believers of

this, saying, *"...they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."* I Timothy 6:9-10. This *"love of money"* gets such a hold on people that Jesus said, *"...it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."* Luke 18:25. Why would anyone who believes the words of Jesus think that God's greatest will for a person is money?

I know a brother in Christ who is also a very successful and wealthy businessman. Everything I know about this man says he is a godly and giving person. Yet, a few years ago, I heard one of the senior ministers in this man's circle of fellowship declare that this man's *"anointing"* was to make money to support the work of God. I knew immediately that I was hearing words which were meant to *"protect the goose that lays the golden eggs."* I was offended both for the gospel's sake as well as for this man's soul and calling. Whatever this man's anointing is, it is not to make money. He may have an ability to make money, but making money is most likely his biggest hindrance from discovering God's divine will for his life.

The Apostle Paul exhorts every believer to *"...present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, ...that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."* Romans 12:1-2. God *"wills"* that every believer be a partaker of a spiritual ministry. Yet, we will never discover this *"will of God"* if we do not keep our bodies on his altar of sacrifice. It only as each believer presents their body for God to work in by his Spirit, that the fulness of Christ can be manifested in the church. Satan's uses many tools in his effort is to keep each of us out of this divine purpose. Jesus forewarned us of what would be most effective in making us fruitful. He said it is *"...the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things..."* Mark 4:19.

Does God bless and provide for his people? Absolutely! But if you think that earthly prosperity is God's greatest will for you, you have either been blinded by covetousness, or deceived by a covetous minister. I exhort you to set you heart upon the true and eternal riches. As the Apostle Paul exhorts us, *"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on*

the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” Colossians 3:1-3.

DEATH BEFORE LIFE

What if one event in the Biblical account of Jesus’ resurrection was changed? The angel still appeared to Mary and said, *“He is not here: for he is risen.”* Jesus still appeared to the disciples and said, *“Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.”* Luke 24:39. Peter also still stood on the day of Pentecost and spoke of Jesus, saying, *“Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.”* Acts 2:24. What if the only difference in the story of Jesus’ resurrection was that Jesus never died? The answer is obvious. Without the death of Christ there could not have been a resurrection.

If Jesus did not die on the cross, then the evidences of his resurrection were only an illusion. Of course, Jesus did die on the cross. The Apostle Paul tells us, *“Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”* I Corinthians 15:3. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead was God’s confirmation that his crucifixion had accomplished its divine purpose.

When Jesus said, *“...because I live, ye shall live also”* John 14:19, he was telling us what would be accomplished for us through his resurrection. Simply put, his resurrection would give us life. Paul relates to this connection between Christ’s resurrection and our receiving life when he says, God has *“...quicken (reanimated) us together with Christ...”* Ephesians 2:5. It is only through being joined to Jesus Christ in his resurrection that any person has the life of Christ within them. This is the reason Paul says, *“...nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:”* Galatians 2:20.

Peter also confirms this connection, saying, *“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. The reality of

being “*born again*” is given to us through the power of Jesus’ resurrection. The resurrection is even the cause and power of our new walk in Christ. Paul says, “*Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*” Romans 6:4.

Perhaps a lesser understood part of our redemption involves the power of Jesus’ crucifixion. It is in his death that we are delivered from the power and presence of sin. This message is clearly articulated by the Apostles. Paul told us “*Knowing this, that **our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.***” Romans 6:6. The sin nature of those who are “*crucified with Christ*” Galatians 2:20 is destroyed through the power of Jesus’ death and they are thereby “*made free from sin.*” Peter reminds us of this, saying, “*Who (Jesus) his own self **bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness...***” 1 Peter 2:24. This deliverance from sin becomes our reality when we through faith are “*crucified with Christ.*” The cross of Christ is not the beginning of your struggle with sin. It is the end of the struggle because it is where sin is destroyed for those who trust in Christ. The cross is where our “*old man*” died.

Somehow, almost universally, the church has confused the order of these two vital parts of redemption. People come to a place of repentance and/or confession. Someone instructs them on “how to be saved” and then tells them they are now born again but will also continue to be sinful as long as they live in a fleshly body. What is forgotten is there can be no new birth through resurrection with Christ if there has been no death to sin through crucifixion with Christ. Crucifixion comes before resurrection!

In redemption, no one lives with Christ who has not first died with him. Paul reminds us of this important truth of the gospel, saying, “*It is a faithful saying: For **if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him:***” II Timothy 2:11. Paul again reminds us of this gospel “order” as he exhorts us to seek heavenly things. He says, “***If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. ... For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.***” Colossians 3:1-3. Consider his statement: **If you**

are in fact risen with Christ, you are dead! Those who are risen with Christ are already crucified with him!

Paul instructs us to recognize and acknowledge this very important fact concerning our union with Christ. He says, *“For in that he (Christ) died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* Romans 6:10-11. If you truly know Christ, then you are both dead to sin and alive unto God. You need to recognize this powerful truth of the gospel! Because Christ died, you are in fact dead to sin with him! Because Christ lives unto God, you are also made alive unto God through him! This is not a mere confession. This is the reality of those who know Jesus Christ. This is why sin has no dominion over them! Romans 6:14.

What does your profession of faith acknowledge? Does it agree with the multitudes which say “I am a child of God, but also still a sinner who will continue to sin until I lay aside this mortal body? Or, does it agree with Paul and the other Apostles who say, “We are in fact dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ”? The first is a fallacy which will keep you in darkness. The latter is the truth of the gospel, which Jesus said, *“Shall make you free!*

WHAT GIVES YOU POWER OVER SIN?

I knew a man who was a lifelong alcoholic. One day he sobered from a night of drinking and realized he had severely beaten his wife in a drunken rage. He said “If alcohol can make me do this, I will never drink again,” and he did not. This man lived another twenty-five years and never touched another drop of alcohol. I cannot dispute that this man exercised power over the alcohol which once had so much power over him.

The church of our generation has so foolishly embraced the belief that God’s people are still sinners and will continue to sin as long as they live in a fleshly body. From this basis of universal sinfulness, much teaching and effort is applied seeking to give the people power over the sin that dominates them from within. From the time of conversion, most Christian people are assured that God, through the Holy Spirit, will help them overcome the workings of

sin in their members. And so, they step into a lifetime process of seeking this **“power over”** *“the power of darkness”* Colossians 1:13 which works in their own heart.

The alcoholic I mentioned above exercised absolute power over alcohol. Yet, he did not credit God or even Alcoholics Anonymous for this power. His power was in the force of his will. He was still angry, deceitful, and vengeful, but his power over alcohol never failed him even once. This man had more power in his depraved condition than the vast majority of Christians who profess that the Holy Spirit is giving them power every day.

The “Holy Spirit” does not give us power over sin. This is neither His work nor His purpose. The Holy Ghost is sent to teach us, guide us, lift us up into the glories of Christ, and anoint us for the work of the ministry. God’s complete answer for sin is found in the shed blood of Jesus Christ. The Bible says, ***“Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.”***

Hebrews 13:12. The word of God is clear. Jesus Christ is our sanctifier and he does this through the power of his shed blood. The book of Hebrews tells us that the one who sanctifies the people *“...is not ashamed to call them brethren.”* Hebrews 2:11. The Holy Ghost did not shed a single drop of blood for you, and He is certainly not your “brother.”

The truth is, “Nothing in redemption gives us power over sin.” God’s answer for sin is not to grant us power over it, but to take it away. I John 3:5. This is how he makes us free. A person with fornication in their heart needs power over it, but the person who is free from lusts in their heart does not. You only need power over sin when it is present in your heart.

Jesus never promised to give us power over sin, but he did promise to make us free from sin. John 8:36. Those who seek to exercise power over sin fight a continuous battle which is never won. The person who is made free from sin simply rests in the victory of Christ.

Are you a believer? Can you believe the words of the Apostle Paul which are written below?

“Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” Romans 6:18.

“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.” Romans 6:22.

“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. For he that is dead is freed from sin.” Romans 6:6-7

If you still cannot believe the words written by the Apostle Paul, can you believe words spoken by Jesus himself? He said, ***“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”*** John 8:36.

As long as a person believes that sin must always have a place in their heart, it will! Though they exercise absolute power over it until their last breath, as the alcoholic mentioned above did, that person will still die in their sin. John 8:24. Only the blood of Christ can wash it away. This is *“the truth,”* and if you will believe it, *“the truth shall make you free!”* John 8:32.

WHEN SOMETHING IS VERY WRONG

Many years ago, a guest minister at our annual Campmeeting shared an incident where he stumbled upon a pornographic magazine on the side of the highway. He told of picking up the magazine, and being compelled within, he began look through it to gaze upon the naked women in their erotic poses. Finally, he became fixated upon the naked woman laid out in the “centerfold.” After a bit, he forced himself to discard the magazine and continued on his way. He then followed this account with this statement: “If any man tells you he is not tempted by a beautiful woman, he is lying to you.” I knew then that this minister was struggling with lusts in his own heart. The depth of this struggle would become evident in the years to come.

I believed this man to be a man of God, but knew that he was in a snare. It was evident that something was wrong, and if he did not find an answer, this thing which was “wrong” would destroy him. The problem was that he did not view anything to be wrong. Instead, he took his struggle with lusts and declared it to be normal for everyone. In doing so, he lifted up his “experience” as being “more true” than the word of God.

It was Jesus who said, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That **whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.**” Matthew 5:27-28. The Apostle Peter also warned us of those who would have “**eyes full of adultery.**” II Peter 2:14. If your eyes are full of adultery, your heart is full of adultery, and, according to Jesus, you are an adulterer.

It is not my purpose to condemn this preacher. He was in a snare and needed an answer. Yet, because he could not admit that something was very wrong, he could not accept an answer. His solution was to justify it as something everyone struggles with. Those who cannot admit that sin in their heart is both destructive and damnable will never find an answer for the things which destroy them from within.

If almost everyone in your community was infected with a deadly disease would the fact that so many were dying make you consider the sickness normal? Would you be one who would seek the cure and want to discover what was causing so many to be infected? Or, would you say, “It’s OK! Everyone is dying. This is just normal around here.” In this strange way, the fact that pornography, fornication, deception, and covetousness are rampant in the modern church is often presented as proof that this is just normal for the Christian walk. No one is willing to stand up and say, “Something is very, very wrong!”

Jesus Christ did not come to condemn us for sin, but to save us from it. John 3:17. Yet, many are “*condemned already*” though their unbelief. John 3:18. Jesus gave us the basis of this condemnation when he said, “*And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*” John 3:19. The darkness which some men love is their sin. The darkness which other men love are the doctrines which justify or excuse their sin. As long as you love either, Jesus Christ can do nothing for you.

The word of God is clear that the blood of Christ will “*...purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*” Hebrews 9:2. The “*conscience*” spoken of in this passage is your “*innermost thoughts and feelings.*” When this is washed, the worshiper has “*...no more*

conscience of sins." Hebrews 10:2. This means the works of sin are washed from your heart and you are made free.

You can spend your life struggling, believing those who constantly tell you, "Don't worry! We all struggle with sin in our hearts." Or, you can believe God's word and recognize that such things are both destructive and damnable to you and your eternal soul. Until you realize that something is wrong, you will never find the answer in Jesus Christ which will make things right.

IF WE SAY WE HAVE NO SIN

Thirty years ago, a minister who preached for us on a regular basis was in one of our Campmeeting services. Bro. Leroy Surface was ministering, and showing by the scripture how the blood of Christ was shed to purge sin from our heart and minds. He went to the words of Jesus to show that sin in the heart is equivalent to the act of sin. Jesus said, "*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*" Matthew 5:27-28. As the service was closing, the visiting minister was upset and left quickly. As he departed, he turned to the person at the church desk and protested, "**It's not sin until you do it!**" We never heard from that minister again.

Jesus' message was that sin in the heart is equivalent to the act of sin. Not only did he speak of lusts as being equal to adultery, but he told the scribes and Pharisees they were like "*whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.*" Matthew 23:27. He also told them they were like cups which were washed on the outside "*...but within they are full of extortion and excess.*" Matthew 23:25.

These words of Jesus stripped the Pharisees of their delusion of righteousness. Jesus confirms this, saying, "*If I had not come and spoken unto them, **they had not had sin**: but now they have no cloke for their sin.*" John 15:22. His words, "*they had not had sin*," spoke of how perfectly they kept the Law of Moses, but his words concerning sin in the heart tore their cloke of self-righteousness away. This was the root cause of their great hatred towards him.

The Jews of Jesus' generation had no concept of a "sin nature" and as a whole, did not believe themselves to be sinners. The Apostle Paul confirms that the Jews had this righteous image of themselves as he reminds Peter of their upbringing under the Law of Moses. He told Peter, "*We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles...*" Galatians 2:15-16. Paul told us all how perfectly he kept the Law of Moses before coming to Christ, saying, "*...touching the righteousness which is in the law, (I was) blameless.*" Philippians 3:6. Like most Pharisees of that day, Saul of Tarsus did not believe himself to be a sinner. What finally brought him to Christ was the realization that even though he kept the letter of the Law perfectly, he was still desperately sinful within.

The Apostle John addressed a similar pharisaic resistance to the gospel. He wrote of those who professed to know God, but denied that Jesus is the Christ. He called such a profession a lie, saying, "*Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.*" I John 2:22-23. If they did not believe that Jesus is the Christ, they were walking in darkness, and not in the light. John says to them, "*If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.*" I John 1:6.

Not only did these who walked in darkness claim to know God while rejecting Jesus as Christ, but they, as the Pharisees had done, rejected that they had any sin to be cleansed from. To these, John says, "*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*" I John 1:8. Just like the Pharisees which Jesus spoke to, these believed their ability to keep religious law made them righteousness. They rejected that the sinful desires of their heart bore witness of their true condition. John told them they were only deceiving themselves. He tells them "*Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.*" I John 3:15.

John's message was not that God's people are still sinners, but rather that the only way to be cleansed from sin is through the blood of Jesus Christ. Only those who walk in the light of the gospel of Christ are cleansed from sin in their heart. There is no other way. John says, "*But 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.” | John 1:7.

Few people today would say, “We have no sin.” In fact, almost everyone claims to be a sinner. Yet, very few will acknowledge that their true spiritual condition is revealed by the content of their heart. John writes, *“For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.”* | John 3:20-21. If lust is in your heart, you stand before God as an adulterer or fornicator. If hatred is in your heart, you stand before God as a murderer. Only through faith in the blood of Christ can such things be taken away. Only then, will you possess a pure heart with confidence toward God. As Paul reminds us, *“Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.”* | Timothy 1:5

GOD’S REVEALING FIRE

The Apostle Paul was not only chosen to carry the gospel to the gentiles, but God also chose to reveal Christ *in* him through divine revelation. Paul wrote, *“I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”* Galatians 1:11-12. So absolute was the gospel Paul preached that he said, *“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”* Galatians 1:8. Paul described himself as a “wise masterbuilder” who laid the only foundation which could be laid for the church of Jesus Christ. | Corinthians 3:10-11.

Paul gave a sobering warning to every minister who would build upon the gospel foundation which had been laid. He said, *“Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; **Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.** If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”* | Corinthians 3:12-13.

Just two years ago, a renowned Christian apologist was laid to rest with words of praise and adoration from Christians around the world. This minister was so highly regarded that Vice-President Mike Pence spoke at the memorial service and added this comment on Twitter, saying, "God gave us the greatest Christian Apologist of this century."

Almost immediately following this minister's death, allegations arose that for almost a decade he had repeatedly manipulated, abused, and even raped women for his perverse sexual gratification. The global ministry he built commissioned an investigation which confirmed many, if not all, the allegations were true. God's day of revealing fire had come, and everything this man built was burned to ashes. What is even more sobering than the burning of all this man's work is Paul's warning that the state of his eternal soul would also be revealed by the same fire. Few would dare say it, but this fire revealed that this minister lost his soul also.

Paul told us that *"Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid."* ¹ Timothy 5:24-25. Sometimes the fire which will *"try every man's work"* comes in this life. Sometimes it comes after our death. Yet, it is certain that all will be revealed in the day of God's righteous judgement. Even our soul must face the day of God's revealing fire. It may be saved, but Paul says, *"yet so as by fire."*

Paul's warned that the fire would burn every worthless thing which was built. He called these things *"wood, hay, and stubble."* These are doctrines and traditions which are not founded in the truth of the gospel of Christ. These are also the things built by the ambitions and schemes of men, and not by the working of God's Spirit. Many "great" churches and ministries have been built which are nothing more than *"wood, hay, and stubble."*

I knew a Pastor who was successful in everything he touched. He had a great ability to move people and could gather a crowd to anything he was doing. Yet this man seemed more interested in doing something "big" than doing what was true and of God. He contracted a disease which took his life in a short period of time. Almost immediately after his death his lifelong work of ministry

was devoured and destroyed by those whom he had entrusted it to. I trust his soul was saved, but if so, it was *“yet so as by fire.”*

The Apostle Paul also gave promise to those who *“build upon this foundation gold, silver, and precious stones...”* I Corinthians 3:12. These are things founded in the truth of Christ and built by the working of God’s Spirit. This work is also tried by fire, but it will not be burnt and those who build such will receive a reward. Some men’s godly works are manifest in this life. Some are revealed after they die. Yet I say again, every man’s work will be revealed in the fire of God’s judgment and only that which is of God will endure.

I have seen great ministries and churches built by men who then had to watch helplessly as their life’s work was burned to ashes in the day of God’s revealing fire. If they build again they should remember: *“Only that which is built by God will remain.”*

It is not important that any of us do something *“big.”* It is important that what you do *“is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”* Philippians 2:13. There are worldwide ministries which will be completely burnt to ashes when the fire of God tries them. There are also ministries which can count their membership on one hand which will receive abundant reward because what they have built in the Lord will endure God’s revealing fire.

“All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.” Isaiah 40:7-8

FALSE SCENARIOS

Thirty-five years ago, a man questioned me about the following scenario. “There was man, who had once been an alcoholic, but was now saved and walking in the grace of God. One day his drive took him by a nightclub, and he decided to go in to refresh old memories. Soon he became overwhelmed with temptation just to take one drink. One drink led to another, and before long the man was drunk. He was then seduced by a prostitute, and while in the act of adultery, the police raided the establishment. Shots were

fired, and the man was accidentally killed. Would God send this man to hell just because he was overcome with one temptation?"

The man who presented this scenario expected me to argue as to whether God would send a man to Hell based upon his failure in one temptation, but I did not. Instead, I told him "It never happened." "How do you know it never happened?" the man asked. I replied, "Because you said this man was walking in the grace of God. The Bible says, *"...sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."* Romans 6:14. If this man was walking in the grace of God, sin would have had no power over him.

A few years ago, Swaggart Ministries was presented with a similar scenario. "Let's say a Christian has their faith in Jesus Christ and Him crucified and loves God, but gives in to temptation and commits adultery. Well, if Jesus raptures the church while they are in the middle of committing adultery, will they go in the rapture?" The answer the ministers gave to this question was both dangerous and appalling. They said a man could be in the act of adultery at the moment Jesus returned for His people, and Jesus would accept the adulterous man "...if his faith is anchored in Christ."

In subsequent broadcasts, the Swaggart ministers laid out a very wise sounding and convincing argument as to why this man who was in the act of adultery would be received by God. The only thing which stood in the way of their wisdom was the word of God itself. As the Apostle Paul reminds us, *"Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, ...shall inherit the kingdom of God."* I Corinthians 6:9.

In both scenarios mentioned above, we are asked to believe that the man in adultery is "walking in God's grace" and/or "his faith is anchored in Christ." Both of these are mere assumptions and absurdities. If the man in either scenario ever truly knew God, before he could in up in adultery, something had already gone very wrong with his walk with God.

What many Christian people fail to understand is "sin is not the cause of a person's backsliding, but the evidence of their fall from grace." When the Apostle Paul warned the Galatians of the consequences of turning from Christ to trust in circumcision and the Law, he said, **"Christ is become of no effect unto you,**

whosoever of you are justified by the law; **ye are fallen from grace.**" Galatians 5:4. Christ becoming "*of no effect unto you*" and "*fallen from grace*" are synonymous statements. The "*effect*" of Christ in God's people is that he cleanses our heart from sin and delivers us from the power of darkness. Colossians 1:13. He is the one who "*...is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.*" Jude 1:24. If Christ becomes of no effect unto us, we struggle to keep ourselves because we are no longer kept by grace.

When a person who has truly known Christ is found in the clutches of sin, that sin is not the cause of their fall from grace, but the result of their fall. Those who walk in the grace of God are "*...kept by the power of God through faith...*" 1 Peter 1:5. If they are turned from the grace of God, the only thing they have to keep themselves is their own determination and will-power. It is then only a matter of time before they succumb to the relentless assault of sin that has returned to work in their heart.

Jesus said, "*Abide in me, and I in you.*" John 15:4. This is the secret of the victorious Christian walk. Fellowship Christ and seek him each day of your life. Believe the truth of the gospel and stand upon it. Those who walk in such a manner need not fear sin nor Satan because their "*...life is hid with Christ in God*" Colossians 3:3, and he keeps them from falling.

MAKING GOD A LIAR

The Serpent was the first to accuse God of being a liar. As he challenged Eve to eat of the forbidden tree, she replied with what God had told them, saying, "*But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.*" Genesis 3:3. The Serpent's reply was an accusation against God. The Serpent said, "*Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*" Genesis 3:4-5. The message was clear. "God is lying to you. He knows you will not die, but you will become as he is because you will know what he knows."

Adam and Eve had not forgotten what God said, but the Serpent convinced them that they would not die when they ate of the forbidden tree. In their minds, “God was either mistaken, or he outright lied to them.” But God is never mistaken, and he does not lie. If they had believed God, they would never have eaten of the fruit which brought such death and pain upon us all.

Adam and Eve were created in innocence and all things were put under their dominion. Yet, when tested, they were found to lack this most important attribute required in those who would walk with God. Their unbelief led them to disobey, and their disobedience deliver all humanity into the clutches of Sin and Satan. From that day forward, God always sought out those who would believe what he said.

Faith is to believe what God says and trust him to keep his word. This “faith” is so important to God that he considers it to be a manifestation of righteousness. The Bible speaks of Abraham, that *“... he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness”* Genesis 15:6. God found in Abraham what he did not find in Adam. Abraham was childless, and his wife Sarah was barren. Yet, when God promised Abraham that his seed would be as the stars of heaven in number, Abraham believed that God was telling the truth. God knew that he could fulfill great promise upon this man because he possessed a righteous virtue called faith. The scripture calls it *“the righteousness of faith.”* Romans 4:13.

This may sound strange to some, but Abraham’s faith told God everything he needed to know about Abraham. Adam and Eve’s unbelief caused them to disobey God. Abraham’s faith ensured that he would obey God. When God tested Abraham, the scripture says, he *“...offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead...”* Hebrews 11:17-19. Abraham’s faith is the reason he obeyed God. In response, God swore by himself, saying, *“...And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”* It was evident that this man Abraham was not just another Adam.

Abraham believed God’s “staggering” promise that he and his barren wife would have a child. This *“righteousness of faith”* which

was in Abraham was the basis for all the promises he received from God. God has given us different promises than what was spoken to Abraham. Yet, everything we receive from God depends on whether we believe God's word is true, or untrue. God offers us the great promises of redemption which come through Christ Jesus. When these "staggering" promises come to us, God looks to see if we will be like Adam, or like Abraham. If we have "*an evil heart of unbelief*" ^{Hebrews 3:12} like Adam and Eve, we will receive nothing from God, but if we have a heart of faith like Abraham, there is no limit to what God can do in us.

To God, whether you believe him or not is a very serious matter. When you believe God, you are attesting that God is true ^{Romans 3:4}, but when you do not believe God, you are acting like God is a liar. The Apostle John confirms this when he says, "*...he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.*" ^{1 John 5:10}. It is a dangerous thing to make God a liar!

This "*record that God gave of his Son*" is summed up in the words "*Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God*" ^{Matthew 16:16}. God sent Gabriel to tell us that Christ would come into the world "*...to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness...*" ^{Daniel 9:24}. This record was given to us by the prophets and confirmed by Jesus and the Apostles. The Apostle John told us that Jesus Christ "*...was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.*" ^{1 John 3:5-6}. This record is "*the truth*" which Jesus said will make those who know it "*free indeed.*" ^{John 8:36}.

I could list many more scriptural verses showing the record God gave of his Son, but these are without value to the one who does not believe that God is true. This single most important question faces every person which has lived from Adam until now. **"Is God true, or, is God a liar? God is waiting for your answer!**

BELIEVING IN GOD

The 78th Psalm gives a detailed account of the great wonders God did for the children of Israel as he delivered them out of Egypt and

kept them during their journey in the wilderness. We are reminded of the mighty plagues upon Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, the cloud which covered them by day and the pillar of fire by night. God gave water out of the rock to drink and manna from Heaven for them to eat during their journey. Yet, after all this, the Bible records, ***“...they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation.”*** Psalms 78:22.

How is it possible they could see so many miracles and receive so many blessings yet *“believe not in God?”* To comprehend this, we must see the difference between believing God exists and *“believing in God.”* Many people who believe in the existence of God do not know God. James tells us, *“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.”* James 2:19. We must understand that everyone in Hell believes God exists.

To *“believe in God,”* is to possess the two components of faith. The first is to believe what God has spoken. Without this, no one can have a relationship with God. Those who do not believe what God has spoken are an affront and offence unto him. John tells us *“...he that believeth not God hath made him a liar...”* 1 John 5:10. A person you do not believe is a person you consider to be a liar. It is the same with God. To hold what God has spoken to be untrue is the same as calling God a liar.

The second part of faith is “trust.” A person who *“believes in God,”* trusts God. First, they trust him to fulfill his word. This is why Noah built an Ark and why Abraham left the land of his fathers. God spoke, and they trusted him to do what he promised. Believing God is always based on what he has spoken. Many people use religion to justify their own lusts and ambitions, while calling it “believing God.” Remember, there is sometimes a great difference between what God has spoken and what we wished he had said.

Those who trust God also trust him when he seems to be silent. Job embodied this trust when he said, *“Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him...”* Job 13:15. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego trusted God when they faced the fiery furnace. They said, *“If it be so, 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.

These trusted God in whatever he chose to do, even if it meant their death.

Together, believing what God has spoken and trusting God to perform his word is what it means to *“believe in God.”* Israel saw the great miracles and experienced the great deliverances of God, but *“they believed not in God.”* They did not believe what God spoke, and they did not trust him. At every opportunity they would rebel against him, believing he had brought them out of Egypt for their destruction.

It was a shock to me when I first realized that Adam and Eve did not *“believe in God.”* They knew God existed. They knew God’s power. They knew God’s blessings. Yet, in spite of all this, when their time of testing came by the Serpent, they readily accepted that God had lied to them. They did not forget that God told them they would die if they ate of the forbidden fruit. They just believed the Serpent instead of God. Because they did not believe and trust God, these who received dominion over God’s entire creation, lost it all.

The virtue of *“believing in God”* is what made Abraham so special to God. The Bible says, *“...he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.”* Genesis 15:6. This virtue of faith was not found in Adam and Eve. Neither was it found in Cain who thought God should be pleased with the works of his hands. In fact, this *“believing in God”* is always a rarity wherever it is discovered. If all the good works and sacrifices that have ever been done or given were placed against a single person who *“believed in the Lord,”* God would choose the person who believed in him. He cares nothing for the works of those who do not believe and trust him. They are just another Adam or another Cain. Because he did not *“believe in God,”* Adam lost the world. But because Abraham did *“believe in God,”* he became *“heir of the world, ...through the righteousness of faith.”* Romans 4:13.

Today, God beckons all of us to believe in his Son, Jesus Christ. To believe in Jesus, is to believe what God has spoken about him, and to trust Jesus Christ to fulfill God’s word in you. The gospel message is called *“the record that God gave of his Son.”* 1 John 5:10. It tells of who Christ is, and how he came to deliver us from sin and restore us unto God. When God finds one who will *“believe in him,”* he rejoices, knowing there is no limit to what he can do in them. But

when he finds those who, though religious, discount his word, he passes them by. Just like Adam, they will abandon God's truth for the lies of the Serpent.

BELIEVING IN JESUS CHRIST

Adam, Eve, and the children of Israel are the great examples of those who knew God and saw his works, but *"...believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation:"* Psalms 78:22. Because the children of Israel did not believe and trust God, God swore in his wrath, *"...They shall not enter into my rest"* Hebrews 3:11, and that entire generation perished in the wilderness. When Adam and Eve did not trust God, they lost their paradise and delivered all humanity into the hands of Satan and Sin. In both cases, these who knew that God existed and saw his mighty works, did not trust God, meaning they did not believe in God.

Abraham not only believed God; he trusted God! Through believing and trusting God, he became *"heir of the world"* and *"the father of all them that believe."* Romans 4:11. His example shows us what it means to *"believe in the LORD."* God found in Abraham a precious righteous virtue which was lacking in both Adam and Eve, and in the children of Israel. This was the righteous virtue of *"believing in God."* The Bible tells us that Abraham *"...believed in the LORD; and he (God) counted it to him for righteousness."* Genesis 15:6.

Jesus spoke to his disciples who believed in God, saying, ***"ye believe in God, believe also in me."*** John 14:1. This was instruction for them to trust in Jesus Christ just as they trusted in his Father. If they would do this, there would be no limit as to what Christ could do in them.

To *"believe in God"* is simply to believe what God says and trust him to perform his word. To *"believe in Jesus Christ"* is to believe the promises God gave concerning Christ, and to trust in Jesus to fulfill those promises in us.

Believing in Jesus begins with same revelation Peter expressed, saying to Jesus, *"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."* Matthew 16:16. Peter knew that Jesus was the promised Christ who came to *"...save his people from their sins."* Matthew 1:21. The truth that Christ's reason for coming was to deliver us from sin is so

central to believing in Jesus Christ that Jesus said, “...if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.” John 8:24. Yet, just seven verses later, Jesus spoke to those who believed in him, saying, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:32. Look at the contrast in these verses. Those who receive and believe his word will be made free from sin, but those who do not believe in him will die in their sins.

Believing in Jesus is not just believing a doctrine. It is not just believing Jesus exists, or even just believing that he is the Son of God. Those who believe in Christ, trust in Christ. They trust him to fulfill all that God promised Christ would do in them and upon them. This is the reason we are sent to preach the “*gospel of Christ.*” It is the basis for trusting in Jesus Christ.

Some people think that faith is just believing something about Jesus. That is not faith; it is delusion. The gospel of Christ as it is recorded in the scripture is the only basis for true faith. Paul speaks of trusting in Christ, saying, “In whom ye also trusted, **after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation...**” Ephesians 1:13. Until we hear the truth of the gospel we have no real basis for trusting in Christ. This is why so many professing believers are swept away by the storms of life, the working of sin, and the winds of deception. They have confused trusting in Christ with trusting the follies and religious fables of men.

Consider the promises listed below given to those who “*believe in him,*” which is to believe the record God gave concerning Jesus Christ and trust in Christ to fulfill that work in you.

“...whosoever believeth in him **should not perish...**” John 3:16.

“...believeth on me **shall never thirst.**” John 6:35.

“He that believeth on me **hath everlasting life.**” John 6:47.

“He that believeth on me, ... **out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.**” John 7:38.

“...he that believeth in me, **though he were dead, yet shall he live.**” John 11:25.

“...whosoever liveth and believeth in me **shall never die.**” John 11:26.

*"... whosoever believeth on me **should not abide in darkness.**"* John 12:46.

*"He that believeth on me, the **works that I do shall he do also...**"* John 14:12.

*"...whosoever believeth in him shall receive **remission (freedom) of sins.**"* Acts 10:43.

*"...gave he **power (privilege) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:**"* John 1:12.

MY BLESSING

Two weeks after I surrendered my life to Jesus Christ, my financial situation crashed ...and then got worse. In business we were left holding a staggering debt which myself and my dad spent the next dozen years working for almost nothing to pay. My monthly income barely covered our house mortgage payment so my wife worked to provide food and pay for our others living expenses.

I am not complaining. In fact, I rejoice. In that period, I saw God do many miracles in every area of our life. Even more, it was time of great spiritual blessings. I remember many visitations of God's Spirit. It was also a time when God revealed so much of what I see and understand in His word. Day and night my heart was set upon the Lord. I discovered I could live in His goodness in spite of natural circumstances. As time passed, we began to see God turn the natural situations around. For almost seven years my wife had been unable to bare children. The doctor's only answer was to confirm that she could not. Within six weeks of the day we surrendered this to God, my wife was pregnant with the first of our four sons. Our first child was diagnosed with a condition which (the doctors said) would require the removal and replacement of the front portion of his skull. We refused the surgery and saw God do what the doctors said was impossible.

Unable to either pay for or sell the home we lived in, I repented like a sinner before God for getting into such a mess. God provided a way out which gave us the \$18,500 we needed to purchase the home we still live in thirty-five years later. As we worked to repair and remodel the house we purchased, we came

to a point we were out of money and could do no more. I had earlier approached a company, seeking to buy needed windows and doors from almost new houses they were soon to demolish. They turned me down with an absolute “No!”

One night I came home from work with something in my heart from the Lord. I sat on the couch with my wife and prayed this prayer. “Father, you know I have never asked you for earthly things. My desire is for more of you and your presence, but I feel like you want me to ask you for those doors and windows. If this is your desire, then I ask you for these things we need.” The next morning, I received a phone call from my oldest brother, Mike. He said the lawyer for the company which owned the houses to be demolished had called him the evening before. The lawyer said the houses were to be demolished the following week. He remembered that someone had asked to buy the windows and doors, but could not remember who it was. The lawyer told my brother “If you know who it is, tell them they can have anything they want without charge. Just get it out before the weekend.” My eyes filled with tears at the report and speed of God’s provision.

One day I was ministering a service, and, as I had done multiple times, was telling of the most recent blessings of God upon our life. As I was sharing how God was providing the needed materials to repair our home, the Spirit of God asked me, “Is that your blessing?” Immediately, my heart broke and I replied, “No Lord! You are my blessing. You saved me from the depths of sin and have carried me through every situation. In the storms of life, you have filled me with joy and peace. Nothing of this world you have given to me compares with having you. You alone are my blessing. Without you it is all empty and vain.”

I am reminded of the Apostle’s words, *“But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; ... and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.”* Hebrews 10:32.

RELIGIOUS STRUGGLES

The following is a reply to questions we received from a pastor who believed that serving God required a continuous struggle with sin in our hearts. I am making this public in hopes it may help someone else.

Pastor _____,

I believe every sincere question deserves an honest answer. I accept your questions as sincere and will seek to answer to the best that God gives me understanding.

In your reference to Paul's words in Romans 7, you overlook that Paul is clearly speaking of his efforts to serve God under the Law of Moses before his conversion to Christ. He begins this chapter saying "*I speak to them that know the law...*" Romans 7:1. He then 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. It is from this basis that he describes the struggle with sin in his efforts to serve God under the Law.

His statement, "*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 is what convinced Saul of Tarsus that he was not "spiritual", but as Jesus said, "*a servant (slave) of sin.*" John 8:34. This brought him to the realization that he, Saul of Tarsus, was "*carnal, sold under sin.*"

You quoted Paul's words, "*But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members,*" but failed to see that four verses later Paul says, "***For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.***" Romans 8:2. Under the Law of Moses, sin ruled over Paul, but in coming to Christ he was made free from the law of sin and death which had once worked in his members and made him a captive of sin.

The concluding verse of the 7th chapter tells us Christ Jesus delivered him from the "*body of death,*" and then gives a warning for all who think they can serve God through the carnal mind. Below is an excerpt from Leroy Surface's commentary on Romans which I believe may be helpful in seeing the truth of this passage.

“So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.” Romans 7:25

There are three words in this passage which are often overlooked, but are of great importance. The first is the word “So.” It comes from the Greek word “ara” and speaks of “drawing a conclusion.” This last sentence is Paul’s conclusion of this entire chapter that deals with serving God “in the flesh.” The second overlooked word of great importance is the word “mind.” This speaks of the “intellect.” Here Paul is referring to himself or anyone else who may seek to serve God through the keeping of commandments. The intellect says, “If I know what is good and evil in my mind, I can do the good and shun the evil.” Perhaps the most misunderstood word in this passage is the word “but.” It comes from the Greek word “de” which is a primary particle (adversative or continuative). In this case it should have translated as “also.” Properly translated this last sentence would read: **I conclude then (if) with the intellect I serve the law of God; (I will) also with the flesh (serve) the law of sin.** His conclusion is that if you are seeking to serve the “law of God” through your human intellect, you will also serve the law of sin with your flesh.

You mentioned John’s statement *“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”* 1 John 3:3. Peter makes a similar statement saying, *“Save yourselves from this untoward generation.”* Acts 2:40. I do not think Peter was saying we are to be our own savior, but to come to The Savior, Jesus Christ. Those who *“purify themselves”* are those who come to The Purifier, Jesus Christ. As John reminds us, *“the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”*

You mention the overcomer. So did John. He spoke to the *“little children”* (Greek: *tekion* an infant), saying *“Ye are of God, little children, **and have overcome them** (the antichrists): because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world”* 1 John 4:4. These newborn babes in Christ were already overcomers, not because of their struggles, but because of the greatness of Christ who was in them.

You mentioned the *“whole armor of God.”* Ephesians 6:10-17. This is not defensive, but offensive. It is the armor of the church to go forth with the gospel to see souls delivered out of Satan’s kingdom.

Those who hide in a fort do not need an armor. We are clothed with faith, the gospel, truth, righteousness, and salvation. These are not giving us the victory over something within our own hearts, but are the tools of a warrior to stand against the powers of darkness which hold the souls of lost men and women. This passage is a reference to Christ putting on *“righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation”* to come deliver us, as spoken in Isaiah 59:17.

You mentioned that you are “dead to the penalty of sin.” Where is that found in the Bible? The word of God is clear. Those who are in Christ are *“dead to sin.”* Romans 6:2.

I do not believe or teach that a person cannot fall from the grace of Christ. The message of Jesus and the apostles was to *“abide in him.”* This is not through struggle, but through belief of the truth. John’s warning to the little children was against those who were denying that Jesus was the Christ. Those who believed such error would fall back into the struggles of religious darkness.

You quoted *“If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”* 1 John 1:10. Do you also quote *“And ye know that **he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 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.”*** 1 John 3:5-10.?

You mentioned John’s words *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”* 1 John 1:8. These are a reference to those who walked in darkness but claimed fellowship with God. 1 John 1:6. These were like John’s fellow Jews whom Jesus spoke of, saying, *“If I had not come and spoken unto them, **they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.”*** John 15:22. These rejected Jesus’ message that sin in the heart is equivalent

to committing the act of sin. *“But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”* Matthew 5:28. They thought because they had *“made clean the outside of the cup”* Luke 11:39 they had no sin. That is a deception. Everyone has sin until Jesus washes it from their heart.

I know I have not addressed all your questions but the word of God is clear. Those who are struggling with sin to serve God are walking in religious flesh. Before Paul warned of the *“works of the flesh”* in Galatians chapter 5, he said, *“Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”* Galatians 3:2. The *“flesh”* was their trust in was Moses’ Law. Those who *“walk in the flesh”* are walking in fleshly religion, and the *“works of the flesh”* will be the end result. Those who walk in the Spirit are those who walk in the grace of Christ, and the *“fruit of the Spirit”* fills their heart and life.

HE IS THE CURE

In the first recorded prophecy of Isaiah, God described the sinful condition of Israel in terms of a person stricken with disease throughout their entire body. Consider these astounding words:

“Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.” Isaiah 1:4-6.

Sin truly is a spiritual cancer which devours a person from the within. It may seem insignificant at first, but it never stops spreading and eating away at the person it inhabits. For all human history a cure has been sought, but none was found. The Jews thought the Law of Moses was the cure, but it only treated the symptoms of the disease. It could go so far as to kill the patient, yet, it could never take iniquity out of their heart.

Every human attempt to cure this disease has ended in failure. Humanity has been like the woman “...which had an issue of blood twelve years, And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse.” Mark 5:25-26. These “religious physicians” have vastly different treatments to contain, control, or subdue this evil thing that works in the human heart. The only thing they seem to agree on is that there is no cure. Thankfully, God does not concur!

Isaiah, the same prophet who described this horrid disease of sin and iniquity, also spoke of the cure. Most of us know his words well. He wrote, “*But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*” Isaiah 53:5. The word “healed” in this passage actually means “to cure.” Jesus Christ gave himself to suffer and die upon the cross in order to “cure” the incurable disease called sin. He came to do what “the blood of bulls and of goats” could never do. Hebrews 10:4-5. He came to “take away our sin.” John 1:29. I John 3:5.

The Apostle Peter presented this “cure” as the true purpose of Christ’s sufferings. He wrote, “*Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that (in order that) we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.*” I Peter 2:24. It is important to see and believe the reason Peter gives as to why Jesus “bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” He does not say, “To take our punishment,” “to pay a penalty,” or even “pay a price.” He says it was so that “we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness:” Christ died in order that sin in us would be destroyed through our death with Christ. This is God’s cure for sin in the human heart. Peter confirms this by quoting Isaiah, “*by whose stripes ye were healed (cured).*”

The Apostle Paul also confirms this as the purpose of Jesus’ death, saying, “*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. For he that is dead is freed from sin.*” Romans 6:6-7. Can sin in you really be destroyed and you truly be made free from its presence and power? Absolutely! Jesus Christ is the cure for this incurable disease. He came to make you free! John 8:36.

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