

Getting the Covenant Right



Message by: Leroy Surface

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SURELY THE MAKER OF THE UNIVERSE

A Song by Robin Surface Knott

Creation was formed in a moment of time,
As God spoke and the worlds came to be.
Let the earth bring forth after its own kind,
Grasses and flowers and trees.
He made every bird of the air, every beast of the earth,
Every fish that swims in the sea.
Surely the maker of the universe,
Can make a new creation out of me.

chorus

He spoke and the worlds came to order;
His word caused the mountains to rise from the sea.
Surely the maker of the universe,
Can make a new creation out of me;
Surely the maker of the universe,
Can make a new creation out of me.

The new creation was formed in a moment of time,
As God's son gave his life on a tree.
And all who kneel there are destined to find,
A life that from sin is made free.
Hearts are made new in joyous rebirth,
Transformed as God said they would be.
Surely the maker of the universe,
Can make a new creation out of me.

Songs in the Night

**Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night?
Job 35:10**

Whenever there is true revival, it is always accompanied by “songs” that are “*given in the night.*” Every true move of God throughout history has been recorded by the songs they sang. When God first began revealing His truth to me over twenty years ago, I searched for confirmation in the doctrines of the great preachers of the past, but I did not find it there. Only in the songs that were “*given in the night*” during the “*times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord*” (Acts 3:19), did I find the confirmation I sought, and most of these were written over a hundred years ago. Music in the church has become a billion dollar industry. Most of the songs published in this generation have been written for the entertainment of the people, but the message of the song is as shallow and empty as the one who wrote the song. I have been amazed, however, to see God once again “*giving songs in the night,*” to His children. It is only one of many evidences that we are seeing the beginning of a true outpouring of the Spirit of God upon those who seek Him. True revival is always accompanied by the joyful sounds of the congregation worshipping God in song.

The song that I have placed on the cover is one of many songs that God has “*given in the night*” to those who have “*seen a great light,*” the “*light*” of the gospel of Christ, shining into their hearts. It is a beautiful song that I have placed on the cover because of its message. It is strange but true, that a God given song can carry a message further than a preacher can go, and say more than the preacher can say. We offer this song for the edification of you and all who hear it. It is a beautiful “*special*” that brings a powerful truth to the hearer. If you would like to receive an audio of “*Surely the Maker of the Universe,*” I will send it to you upon your request. My address is on the outside back cover.

Getting the Covenant Right!

Message by: **Leroy Surface**



Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jude 1:3-4

The year of 1989 was a year of much conflict in my heart. I had just completed a three year period of ministry during which I had cried out against the sins of the church in general, and against the hidden sins of several well know ministries that God had spoken to me about specifically through the numerous visions He had given to me of things to come. At that time, my monthly publication was called "*The Watchman*," and our radio ministry, which was heard on several stations throughout the southern states, was called "*The Sounds of His Coming*." Some people would have thought this period of ministry was a wonderful time in my life. I had preached as a "*watchman on the wall*" who saw, in visions from the Lord, much sin and corruption that was in the churches and super ministries of that day. I saw and preached the downfall of the two largest ministries in the world, long before their scandals broke on national news, but I received no joy in seeing those "*mighty ones*" fall. In fact, at the end of the three year commission God had given to me in March of 1986, I was in great inner turmoil, because every time another well known preacher fell to scandal, I actually relived in my heart, the "*scandal*" of my own backsliding, which had taken place over ten years before. It was at such a time in my

own ministry that I told the Lord, “*If you can show me scandals in the church and ministries before they happen, surely you can show me the answer to the sin problem that is in the heart of man. If you do not give me the answer to this sin problem, I will close my Bible and never preach again.*” I said this, not as a “*threat*” to God, but simply because I could not continue to condemn others for sin when I did not have the answer for sin; to do so was to condemn myself.

During this same time period, I began hearing the voice of the Spirit speaking in my heart, “*Restore the covenant of grace.*” It seems strange to me today that at that time I made no connection between what I was telling God and what He was telling me. How could the “*Covenant of Grace*” be the answer for the sin problem, if grace was only a “*covering for sin?*” I saw the words of Jude, the half brother of Jesus, who told us that ungodly men had crept into the churches (wolves in sheep’s clothing) “*turning the grace of God into lasciviousness.*” A question gnawed at my heart. If the “*grace of God*” was “*turned into lasciviousness*” before the end of the first century, who, in the nineteen hundred years since Jude wrote these words, has “*turned it back*” into the grace of God? The Greek word that was translated “*lasciviousness*” is “*aselgeia*,” which means “*licentiousness.*” The “*American Heritage Dictionary*” defines licentiousness as, **1.** *Lacking moral discipline or ignoring legal restraint, especially in sexual conduct.*” **2.** “*Having no regard for accepted rules or standards.*” For many in the church today, “*grace*” is simply a “*license to sin.*” They, however, would never say it exactly that way.

It is the Corinthian church of the first century that epitomizes those who “*turn the grace of God into lasciviousness.*” The apostle Paul begins his indictment of them by pointing out the “*envying, strife, and divisions*” that were among them (**I Corinthians 3:3**). He began **chapter five** by telling them that it was “*commonly reported* (common knowledge)” that there was fornication among them, and rather than grieving over that condition, they were “*proud*” and “*puffed up*” (**I Corinthians 5:1-2**). In **chapter six**, he reproves them for using the secular courts to settle their differences. They were suing one another at law, and seeking advantage over one an-

other. The entire epistle of I Corinthians is written in this tenor. They abused marriage (**chapter seven**); they “*sat at meat (fellowshipped) in the idol’s temple*” (**I Corinthians 8:10**); they “*fellowshipped devils*” (**I Corinthians 10:20-21**); they “*abused the sacraments (chapter eleven)*”; and in **chapters twelve through fourteen**, they were totally ignorant of spiritual things (**I Corinthians 12:1, 14:38**), even though they thought they were “*very spiritual.*” Paul exposes the root of their problem in **I Corinthians 3:3** where he says to them, “*Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*” The doctrine of “*total depravity*” is certainly confirmed in the Corinthian church; but on what basis do we believe that these “*sinners*” were also the children of God? Their religion was of “*human origin*;” their service to God was only in the realm of “*human understanding*,” and their walk was not “*with God*” or “*in the Spirit*,” but “*as men.*” They must have believed they were “*under grace* (therefore God cannot see us; **Ezekiel 9:9**),” but they were actually under the righteous judgment of God and in danger of His wrath (**Ephesians 5:3-7**) because of their “*lasciviousness*” which they called “*grace.*”

Not everyone believes that grace is a license to sin, however. There are those who believe that “*law*” is the answer to the sin problem. They believe they are “*saved by grace*,” but “*kept by their works.*” This was the error of the Galatian church, which shows up in many different forms in our modern day churches. “*Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?*” (**Galatians 3:3**). These also “*walk as men*” (**I Corinthians 3:3**), but they do not walk as the Corinthians walked. Their “*walk*” is a very strict and straight walk, but it is also a very “*human walk.*” The lascivious among us tell us that the only reason the “*law*” cannot save us is that it is impossible to keep the law. Saul of Tarsus and the other Pharisees have all proven this premise to be wrong. The apostle Paul writes of those things he trusted in before he was converted to Christ; “*If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching (concerning) the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching (concerning) the righteousness which is in the law, BLAMELESS. But*

what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” (Philippians 3:4-8). Saul of Tarsus kept the Law of Moses perfectly, but he was not saved, simply because, “...it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4).

In **Matthew 23:27-28** Jesus spoke directly to the Pharisees saying, “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!** for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly **APPEAR RIGHTEOUS** unto men, but **within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.**” Notice that He repeatedly called them “*hypocrites,*” which is translated from the Greek word “*hupokrites.*” Strong’s Greek Dictionary defines the word as “*an actor under an assumed character (a stage player).*” They were only playing a part, but in so doing, they kept the Law of Moses to such perfection that Jesus testifies of them in **John 15:22**, saying, “*If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke (no covering) for their sin.*” Their “*cloke for sin*” had been a self righteous covering that hid what was truly in their hearts. Jesus tore it away by exposing the contents of their heart.*

About twenty three years ago we held the first of what has become our annual Thanksgiving Camp Meeting. It was during that time that I had begun preaching the wonderful news of the provision Jesus Christ made for us at Calvary (i.e., the gospel of Christ that makes those who believe it free from sin). An evangelist, who was very much a “*holiness*” preacher, came to one of the night services. This man had preached in our church numerous times in the past, and I thought he would rejoice to hear the things God was revealing to us. Instead, at some point in my message that night, he understood that I was telling the people that the children of God are not sinners, because sin has been taken out of their heart and nature through faith in Christ, who came to “*take away the sin of the world*” (**John 1:29**). We who knew and respected this man

were amazed to see anger rise up in him until, at the close of my message, he “*exploded*.” He stood up and literally ran out of the service, saying, “*It’s not sin until you commit it!*” This man was not a “*lascivious*” man. His lifestyle was very clean. No one could look at his life and say “*That man is a sinner.*” He was not one of those who “*commit sin*” and claim the grace of God as a “*covering*” for his sin; instead, he “*covered*” sin in his heart with a self-righteous lifestyle. He was a very good man, but the fact that he had never “*committed*” the sin that was in his heart was a “*cloak*” that hid his inward sin from the eyes of man. That night, his “*cloak*” was torn away by the message of truth, and all that saw and heard his reaction to the truth knew that something was wrong in his heart. His “*righteousness*” had been the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. Of that kind of righteousness, Jesus had this to say; “*...except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*” (**Matthew 5:20**).

Getting the Covenant Right

My good friend, B.H. Clendennen, who is “*present with the Lord*” today, used to tell the story of a teacher who gave her young students a test. The “*test*” was in the form of a puzzle of the United States, and the object of the test was to place all the states in their proper places in the shortest time. A prize would be given to the first one to finish the puzzle. To the amazement of the teacher, one young boy finished the puzzle in half the expected time. She commented to him, “*You must have really studied the map of the states very well to have completed the nation so quickly.*” He answered, “*No, teacher. I do not know much about the states, but I did notice there was a picture of a man on the opposite side of the puzzle. I turned the pieces of the puzzle over, because I knew that if I got the man right, the nation would be right.*” What a powerful truth this little illustration contains. It is obvious that if the people of the nation are righteous, the nation will be a righteous nation. The lingering question is this; “*How do you get the man right.*” This question is at the root of almost every religion known to man. To resolve that question is the reason Christ, who made the worlds (**Hebrews 1:2**), came into the world. To use Brother Clendennen’s

analogy of the little boy and the puzzle, turn it over again and you will find an “*image*” of Christ. When we get our “*image of Christ*” right, only then will we get the man right. The apostle John says it best; “*We shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is*” (I John 3:2).

A couple of weeks before our 2013 Spring Camp Meeting, I went to the church one night to pray. As I walked past the sound booth, I saw a copy of our February 2013 “*Behold the Lamb*,” which is titled “*The New Covenant*.” Suddenly I experienced a “*flashback*.” First I remembered the story Brother Clendennen told about “*getting the man right*.” In the same instant, I remembered the command I had heard from the Lord, twenty four years before, to “*restore the covenant of grace*.” It was at the time that I was yet seeking for an answer to the sin problem which is “*in the heart of man*.” I still, however, had not made the connection between “*the answer to the sin problem*” and “*the covenant of grace*.” It was in that “*flashback*” moment that I suddenly realized that everything God has revealed to me during the past twenty four years concerning the cross and the blood of Christ, has been restoring His covenant of grace in me. It was in that moment that I heard the voice of the Lord saying to me, “*When the covenant is right, the man will be right; when the covenant is right, the church will be right; and I will pour out my Spirit and confirm the covenant with signs following*.” At this, I was overwhelmed with the feeling that we were very close to “*getting the covenant right*,” and seeing a mighty move of God. Within days I saw God perform two great miracles within two hours, in the same day. They were miracles that could be seen by the natural eye, and could not be denied. One of the miracles is such that it can still be seen and cannot be explained by natural causes. Days later, our Spring Camp Meeting began with small crowds, but ended four days later with large crowds and the greatest outpouring of the Holy Ghost this preacher has seen in many years. I believe these things were done to confirm the words the Lord had spoken to me, which I had related to the church; “*When the covenant is right, the church will be right, and I will pour out my Spirit*.” In this message I will give five criteria that must be in place before we will have the “*covenant of grace*” right according to the scriptures. When these five criteria

are met, the “*blessings*” of the covenant will begin. The first criterion is this:

1. Know Who Christ Is

To know who Christ is, is to know who He was before He was “*made flesh*” in the womb of Mary. It is a revelation from God that is most clearly revealed in the scriptures by the apostle John. In defining Christ we must be careful to say only what the scriptures of John and the other apostles say, because it is only in their writings that we will find the correct understanding. We must not look outside of the scriptures for our understanding of Christ, because no man, or any group of men, has any “*private interpretation*” beyond that which the apostles understood.

John 1:1-3: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*” John begins by telling us about one, whom He calls “*The Word,*” who existed “*in the beginning with God*” and “*was God.*” Compare these first three verses in John’s gospel (**John 1:1-3**) to the first three verses of the Bible.

Genesis 1:1-3: “*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.*” In these **first three verses** of the Bible, we find “**God**” in the **first verse**, “*The Spirit of God*” in the **second verse**, and “*The Word of God* (God said)” in the **third verse**. None of these had a beginning, because they were “*in the beginning*” with God, and they were God. They are contained in the first four words of the Bible, “*In the beginning, God.*”

The apostle Paul tells us in **Hebrews 11:3**, “*Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*” We know that God did **not** use “*faith*” to create the **worlds**, because “*faith*” is to simply “*believe God.*” It is because we “*believe God*” that we understand that God “*spoke the worlds into existence.*” When Paul tells us that the **worlds** were framed by

“the word of God,” he uses the Greek word *“rhema,”* which means *“an utterance.”* The **worlds** were framed by the *“utterances of God.”* The **first chapter of Genesis** tells us what those *“utterances”* were that *“framed”* the earth when it was *“without form and void.”*

Genesis 1:3: *“And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.”*

Genesis 1:6: *“And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters....”*

Genesis 1:9: *“And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.”*

Genesis 1:11: *“And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.”*

Genesis 1:14: *“And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night.”*

Genesis 1:20: *“And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.”*

Genesis 1:24: *“And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.”*

Genesis 1:26: *“And God said, Let us make man in our image....”*

What God *“said”* was only an utterance, but *“when”* God said, *“The Word,”* which was *“in the beginning with God”* and who *“was God”* went forth *“from God”* to create all things. *“All things were made by Him (The Word), and without Him was not made anything made that was made”* (John 1:3). When the apostle John speaks of *“The Word”* he uses the Greek words *“Ho Logos,”* which is defined by Strong’s Greek Dictionary as *“The Divine Expression, i.e. Christ.”*

Isaiah 55:11-13: *“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish*

*that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. **Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.***” There is no word in the Hebrew which is the equivalent of the Greek word “logos.” Even so, this text in Isaiah is a promise of Christ, whom God would send into the world to “take away the sin of the world” (**John 1:29**). The “new creation” is promised in the words, “instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree;” the “thorns” and the “briers” being the “sin” that entered into the heart and nature of man through Adam’s transgression. Notice the two phrases, “It shall accomplish that which I please” (**verse eleven**), and “It shall be to the LORD for a name” (**verse thirteen**). “Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (**Matthew 1:21**).

Revelation 19:11-13: “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called **Faithful and True**, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: **and his name is called THE WORD** (the logos; the divine expression) **of God.**” This text speaks of the second coming of Christ to this earth to “execute judgment” upon the ungodly (**Jude 1:15**). It speaks of Jesus, the “only begotten Son of God,” but notice that He returns to earth in His eternal name; “His name is called **The Word of God.**” This is He, who was “in the beginning with God” and, who “was God.”

I John 5:7: “For there are three that bear record in heaven, **the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.**” These words written by the apostle John, who knew Jesus Christ better than any of the other disciples, give the simplest and best definition of the Godhead to be found in the scriptures.

Who is Christ? Christ is the eternal Word of God. He is as eternal as God is, because Christ is the one who was “*in the beginning with God*” and who “*was God.*” He was not created by God, because He was with God in the creation. Neither was He “*begotten*” by God because, as the “*Word of God,*” He was *eternally “with God,”* and He “*was God.*” Christ is the creator of all things, because, as John says, “*All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made*” (**John 1:3**).

2. Know What Christ Came to Do

The Bible never mentions “*The Christ*” by that name (title) until God sent the angel Gabriel with a message to the prophet Daniel. He told Daniel about one whom he called “*The Messiah* (The Christ),” who would come “*to finish the transgressions, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness*” (**Daniel 9:24-27**). This short prophecy (four verses) is the most significant promise in the entire Bible concerning the purpose of Christ’s coming into the world. It was, of course, a prophecy of Jesus; but to correctly understand who Jesus is, we must first look back to the beginning to see who Christ is. There are many other prophecies in the scriptures that tell what Christ would be, and what He would do, but none of them identify Him as Christ. Isaiah foretold the sufferings, death, burial, and resurrection of one he called “*the servant*” in the **fifty third chapter of Isaiah**. It is only after the fact (of Calvary) that we understand that Isaiah spoke of The Christ. The same is true of the promise of a “*virgin*” who would give birth to “*Immanuel* (God with us; **Isaiah 7:14**):” the prophecy had to be fulfilled before it could be understood what was meant. The message of “*The Christ*” was such that God did not reveal it in a dream or vision to one of the prophets. Instead, He sent His angel (Gabriel) to tell Daniel about the coming Messiah (The Christ), and what He would be sent to do.

Daniel 9:24-25: “*Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand,*

that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks.” This is the only prophecy in the Old Testament that gave the knowledge to the children of Israel of a specific person who would come at a specific time to do a specific thing. He would come exactly 483 years after King Artaxerxes of Persia gave a decree to “*restore and rebuild Jerusalem,*” which he gave in the year 457 B.C. He would be “*The Messiah* (the anointed one, i.e. The Christ),” whom God would send into the world to (1) “*finish the transgression,*” (2) “*make an end of sins,*” (3) “*make reconciliation for iniquity,*” and to (4) “*bring in everlasting righteousness.*” All of Israel was talking about the coming of “*The Christ*” in the same year that Jesus appeared at John’s baptism, and was anointed by the Holy Ghost to begin His ministry. Not only were they looking for one called “*The Christ,*” but they were expecting Him the same year He appeared among them, and they knew what the angel Gabriel had told Daniel that He would do. John the Baptist introduced Jesus at the Jordan River as “*The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*” Word began to spread throughout Judea that “*The Christ*” had come. Andrew was the first of the twelve “*chosen disciples*” to recognize Him as such. He ran to his brother Peter, crying, “*We have found The Messiah, which is, being interpreted, The Christ*” (John 1:40-41). Next it was Philip, who went to Nathaniel, saying “*We have found Him...*” (John 1:45). Peter, when questioned by Jesus, answered, “*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (Matthew 16:16). Martha, on the occasion just before Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, said to Him, “*I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world*” (John 11:27). All of these knew that He was “*come into the world*” to “*make an end of sins.*”

3. Know Who Jesus Is

I John 1:1: “*That which* was from the beginning....” The translators erred in the translation of the first two words of John’s first Epistle. John was writing to tell us about a “*person,*” not a “*thing.*” The Greek word “*hos,*” which is the first word in this epistle, is better translated as “*who*” instead of “*that which.*” A

very brief study of the Greek, which any one of us can do with a “*Strong’s Concordance*,” will confirm that what John actually said in the introduction to his epistle is as follows:

I John 1:1-4: “*He who was from the beginning, whom we have heard, whom we have seen with our eyes, whom we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, who was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) He whom we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*” The words, “*He who was from the beginning*,” speak of Christ, **who is “The Word,”** and in the Greek language, “*The Logos*,” which is “*the divine expression of God.*” Notice that He is called “**The Word,**” “**The Life,**” and “**That Eternal Life.**” Each of these speak of The Christ, who was “*with God, and was God*” for all eternity, past and future. When John speaks of “*whom we have heard, whom we have seen with our eyes, whom we have looked upon, and our hands have handled*,” he speaks of Jesus of Nazareth, whom John knew to be “*The Christ*” of eternity, the “*creator of all things.*”

I John 5:1: “*Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.*” This is possibly the greatest truth of the entire gospel, but I offer it in this message as the third criteria of getting the covenant right, because it is impossible to believe that Jesus is “*The Christ*,” in a saving way, if you do not know who Christ is and what He came to do. Many, who “*profess Christ as their savior*,” are so superficial in their “*faith*” that they believe “*Christ*” is Jesus’ last name. Others believe there are “*many Christ’s.*” For these to believe that Jesus is Christ has no saving power whatsoever. Jesus is “*The Christ*” whom God sent into the world to “*make reconciliation for iniquity and to make an end of sins.*” Notice in the scriptures, the believer’s confession of faith always speaks of “*The Christ*,” using the definite article to indicate that there is one and only one “*Christ.*” All of these knew the prophecy of **Daniel 9:24-27**, and each of them believed that Jesus was, and is, “*The*

Christ” of that prophecy. Andrew told Peter just two days after the Holy Ghost came upon Jesus of Nazareth, “*We have found **the Messiah (The Christ)***” (**John 1:41**). A few months later Peter would reply to Jesus’ question of who they believed He was with these words, “*Thou are **the Christ, the Son of the living God***” (**Matthew 16:16**). Martha told Jesus just before He raised Lazarus from the dead, “*I believe that thou art **the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world***” (**John 11:27**). The language indicates that each of these understood much about “**The Christ**” long before they ever heard of Jesus of Nazareth. Each of these had received the “*revelation of Jesus,*” that He is “*The Christ*” who was promised to come into the world.

When we understand that Jesus is “*The Christ*” of eternity who was “*made flesh* (prepared a flesh and bone body; **Hebrews 10:5-10; Psalm 40:6-10**)” so that He could “ *dwell among us*” (**John 1:14**), many other prophecies come to light that tell us more clearly who Jesus, the son of Mary was and is, and what He was sent to the cross to do. In the same day that sin entered into the world through Adam’s disobedience, God gave the promise of “*the seed of the woman*” who would “*bruise the head of the serpent*” (**Genesis 3:15**). Jesus is “*the seed of the woman.*” When God told Abraham to offer his son Isaac for a “*burnt offering*” (**Genesis 22:2**), Abraham told Isaac, “*God will provide himself a lamb...*” (**Genesis 22:8**). Jesus is “*The Lamb of God*” who was offered to “*take away the sin of the world*” (**John 1:29**). In **Isaiah 7:14** the prophet says, “*Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*” Jesus is “*the son of the virgin* (Mary);” He is “*Immanuel,*” which means “*God with us;*” He is “*The only begotten Son of God*” (**John 3:16**), which means He is the only one who was born a “*son of God*” from the womb of a woman. The prophet Isaiah gave promise that “*The Redeemer*” would “*come to Zion*” (**Isaiah 59:20**). Jesus is that redeemer.

John 1:14: “*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us....*” For all eternity before Jesus was born to Mary, Christ was the “*eternal Spirit*” (**Hebrews 9:14**), not having flesh and bones (**Luke 24:39**). The apostle Peter spoke of the “*Spirit of Christ*” that was in the prophets when it testified beforehand of “*the suffer-*

ings of Christ and the glory that would follow” (I Peter 1:10-11). It was for the purpose of those “sufferings” that He was “made flesh” and dwelt among us.

In **Hebrews 10:5** the apostle Paul speaks of Christ when He was “made flesh” in the womb of Mary. “Wherefore when He (Christ, the eternal Spirit) cometh into the world, he saith, ‘Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, **but a body hast thou prepared me...I come to do thy will, O God.**” The “flesh and blood body” that was prepared in the womb of Mary **is** the Son of God.

Luke 1:35: “And the angel answered and said unto her (Mary), *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called THE SON OF GOD.*”

Luke 2:11-12: “For unto you is born **this day** in the city of David a Saviour, **WHICH IS CHRIST the Lord.** And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” The “incorruptible seed” (I Peter 1:23), which was planted in the womb of Mary, **was** “Christ, the Lord.” That baby, which was born of Mary and laid in a manger, **was** “Christ, the Lord.” He **was** “The Christ,” who **was** “in the beginning with God,” and “**was God.**” He **was** the creator of all things; but that baby in the manger **was not** “in the beginning with God.” We should understand it this way. The baby Jesus was The Christ. The baby did not “become Christ,” because Christ is eternal. Instead, Christ became the baby Jesus. The angel Gabriel announced to the shepherds, the birth of “a savior, which is Christ the Lord.” Gabriel had told Joseph, “She (Mary) shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21).

The baby Jesus was The Christ that was in the beginning with God; but, the baby Jesus was **not** “in the beginning with God.” The baby Jesus was the Son of God, and the Son of God is The Christ. He did not become “The Christ,” as some teach; instead, in the womb of Mary, Christ became the Son of God. The angel Gabriel had told Mary, “That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” Christ **was** in the beginning with God,

but the Son **was not** in the beginning. I realize that many will believe this statement to be erroneous; but if you do, please show me by the scriptures that the Son of God **was not** “*made of a woman, made under the Law*” (**Galatians 4:4**).

It was by the will of God that Christ was “*made flesh*” and came to this earth as a man. That “*man*” was Jesus of Nazareth, who was also “*the only begotten Son of God.*” It is important to understand the words of Paul in **Galatians 4:4-5**, “*But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, **made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.***” The “*only begotten Son of God*” was “*begotten (born)*” of a woman. Christ, who was “*with God*” and who “*was God*” in the beginning, is the incorruptible seed that became the Son of God in the womb of Mary.

Philippians 2:5-7: “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: **Who, being IN THE FORM OF GOD, thought it not robbery to be EQUAL WITH GOD: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.***” The apostle Paul reveals the same understanding as the apostle John concerning the eternal nature of Christ. Paul says He was “*in the form of God,*” and “*equal with God,*” but He “*made Himself of no reputation...and was made in the likeness of men.*”

Matthew 16:15-17: “*He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, **Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.** And Jesus answered and said unto him, **Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not REVEALED it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.***” Peter received a **revelation** from God of who Jesus of Nazareth is; “*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” Jesus confirmed to Peter that such knowledge is a “*revelation from My Father.*” It is based upon this **revelation** of Jesus that the apostle John can tell us, “*Whosoever believeth that **Jesus is the Christ** is born of God.*” This is not a superficial statement that John makes. He had served Jesus Christ for over sixty years when he wrote these words in his first epistle. Long before John met Jesus, however, he had some knowledge of “*The Christ.*” This knowledge of Christ had been

taught in the synagogues for almost five four hundred years before Jesus was born to Mary. This “**knowledge of Christ**” was also a “**revelation from God**,” brought directly to the prophet Daniel. It is commonly referred to today, as “*The Seventy Weeks Prophecy*.” In these words from God, sent directly to Daniel by the angel Gabriel, was the promise that before seventy weeks of years (490 years) would pass, **six things** would be accomplished, all in the last “*week (the last seven years)*” of the prophecy. At the beginning of the seventieth week, one called “*The Messiah, the Prince (The Christ)*,” would come. His sole purpose in coming is revealed in **Daniel 9:24**, because it was “*The Christ*” who would come to fulfill these promises. (1) He would “*...finish the transgression.*” (2) He would “*...make an end of sins.*” (3) He would “*...make reconciliation for iniquity.*” (4) He would “*...bring in everlasting righteousness.*” (5) He would “*...seal up the vision and prophecy.*” (6) He would “*...anoint (be anointed) the most Holy.*” The actual definition of the word “*Christ* (Strong’s #5547)” is “*anointed.*” Thus, Jesus of Nazareth was proven to be “*the holy one (the anointed one) of God*” when the Holy Ghost came upon Him at the Jordan River (See also; **Isaiah 61:1-3**; **Luke 4:14-21**; **Acts 10:38**). God confirmed that He is the Father of Jesus of Nazareth when the multitude heard His voice from heaven, saying, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*” (**Matthew 3:17**).

John 1:32-34: “*And John (the Baptist) bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.*”

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John 1:29: “*The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*” Over sixty years later, after all the other apostles have become martyrs for their testimony of Jesus, the apostle John writes these words (**I John 3:5**): “*And ye know that he (Jesus, the Christ) was manifested to take away our sins.*” Regarding Jesus being the

The word “destroy” in I John 3:8 is translated from the Greek word “luo” (#3089), which means “loosen.” According to a comparison given in “Strong’s” #4486, it speaks of a “reduction to the constituent particles.” The Son of God was manifested to “disassemble the works of the devil,” that is, He went to the cross to “undo what the devil did” in the Garden of Eden.

The word “destroy” in Hebrews 2:14 is translated from the Greek word “katargeo” (#2673), which Strong’s defines as “to be (render) entirely idle (useless).” It should be understood, however, that this is the same Greek word that was used by Paul in I Corinthians 15:26, “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” When “death” is “destroyed” (Revelation 20:14), it’s not coming back. When the devil was destroyed through the death of the Son of God at Calvary, he cannot return to those who abide in Christ.

“seed of the woman,” John writes, “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil” (**I John 3:8**). Jesus, through His death on the cross, “bruised the head of the serpent.” The apostle Paul confirms this when he writes of Jesus, “...that through death, He (Jesus) might destroy he that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (**Hebrews 2:14**). Jesus Christ will return to this earth a second time. It is not necessary for Him to return, however, to “make an end of sins” and “bring in everlasting righteous-

ness.” These things He did at His first coming, which was the purpose of His death on the cross.

4. Know What He Did

Christ, who was with God and was God, became a man in order to have a body and blood to offer to “take away our sin.” Of course he lived a perfect sinless life while on earth, but that was not what He came to do. There is an erroneous doctrine that tells us that Jesus obeyed the law and pleased God so perfectly that His “merit” gave Him an “overabundance” of favor with God. According to this doctrine, his “perfect lifestyle” is imputed to us in the form

of “*unmerited favor,*” and God “*sees us*” with the “*righteousness of Christ*” even though we are still sinners, who sin every day. This is a false doctrine which has its roots in Roman Catholicism of the dark ages. Christ came into the world to “*make an end of sins*” (**Daniel 9:24-25**). He was “*made flesh* (prepared a fleshly body)” in the womb of Mary, to fulfill the promise God gave that the “*seed of the woman*” would “*bruise the head of the serpent,*” which He did through His death on the cross. He came as the “*Lamb of God*” to “*take away the sin of the world,*” and He finished all that He came to do “*through death*” at Calvary.

Hebrews 2:14: “*Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.*” We see all around us that Satan is raging “*because he knoweth that he hath but a short time*” (**Revelation 12:12**). He was “*cast out of Heaven*” when Jesus died on the cross, and “*they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb...*” (**Revelation 12:10-11**).

II Peter 2:24: “*Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*”

Hebrews 9:27-28: “*And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was ONCE OFFERED TO BEAR THE SINS of many.*” Christ came into the world to “*bear our sins*” on the cross. He is not “*bearing our sins*” today as He sits at the right hand of the father, however. Everything He did for our redemption from sin He did through His death on the cross, and when He said “*it is finished,*” everything He came into the world to do was accomplished. Peter says Jesus “*bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that (in order that) we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.*” The Greek text has no word for “*should*” in this text. Peter actually said “*that we, being dead to sins, live unto righteousness.*” This is an absolute fact of the gospel for those who “*abide in Christ.*” Our sin, often referred

to as our “*sin nature*,” is what Jesus nailed to the cross for “*every-one who believeth*” (**Romans 1:16**).

Hebrews 10:1-2: “*For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers ONCE PURGED should have had no more conscience of sins.*”

Hebrews 10:4: “*For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.*”

Hebrews 10:10: “*...we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ ONCE for all.*”

Hebrews 10:14: “*For by ONE offering HE HATH PERFECTED FOR EVER them that are sanctified.*”

The Extremities of Religion

In a vision from the Lord in June of 1970, I saw a sleeping church. While the church “*slept*,” a huge snake with two heads, one at each extremity, wrapped itself around the church. While it is hard to imagine this, each of the heads looked upon the church with the appearance of great love, but if anyone woke up and tried to escape from its coils, it became extremely vicious. Someone, at some time, painted the devil bright red with horns, a forked tail, and a pitchfork. We need to lose that image of the devil. Instead, he is very “*religious*” and his greatest desire is to be “*god*” in the church, and receive the worship of the people. The apostle Paul warned Timothy of things to come, saying, “*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron*” (**I Timothy 4:1-2**). In **II Corinthians 11:13-15**, the apostle Paul speaks of those ministers who are deceived by the devil, saying, “*...such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the minis-*

ters of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”

II Timothy 3:12-13: *“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, **deceiving, and being deceived.**”* Not everyone who believes a wrong doctrine is to be counted as the “*evil men and seducers*” that Paul warned of. Some are “*deceivers*” and some are “*deceived.*” Among the millions in this generation who have been deceived, many of them are very sincere in their love and service for God, but they will never know the “*glorious liberty of the sons of God (Romans 8:21)*” until they “*get the covenant right.*”

The church quickly moved away from the truth, and into apostasy, after the passing of the eyewitness apostles and their immediate successors. By the fourth century A.D, that which was called “*the church*” was apostate in both life and doctrine, and continued so for over twelve hundred years until the reformation in the sixteenth century. Until that time, only one doctrine was tolerated by the apostate church, and those who did not submit to the authority of the bishops and Cardinals under the Pope were persecuted in the most horrible ways, even to their death. In the reformation, the apostate church received a “*deadly wound (Revelation 13:3)*” by the revelation given to Martin Luther of “*Justification by faith.*” Sadly, that “*wound*” was also “*healed*” by the same reformers who dealt the deadly blow.

Jeremiah 51:9-10: *“We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: **forsake her**, and let us go every one into his own country: for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up even to the skies. **The LORD hath brought forth our righteousness: come, and let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God.**”* The Roman Catholic Church of the dark ages was the “*mystery Babylon*” of that age. It was an apostate church which held its people in absolute bondage through “*fear of death*” (**Hebrews 2:15**). In **Revelation 13:1-9**, it is the Roman Catholic Church of the dark ages that is depicted as one of the heads of a “*beast*” that had seven heads and ten horns, and caused the entire world to worship it. In **verse three**, the apostle John says, “*I saw*

one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed.” The “*deadly wound*” was dealt to the beast by the reformation preaching of Martin Luther in the sixteenth century. Having dealt the “*deadly blow*,” Luther and numerous other “*reformers*” should have forsaken the Catholic Church (**Revelation 18:4**). Instead, they tried to “*reform it*,” and in so doing, they “*healed*” the beast.

“*Reformation*” by definition does not seek to “*replace*,” but to “*change*” its object into a better “*form*.” Luther’s aim in the reformation was to correct a few errors in a church that had been apostate for over twelve hundred years. His goal was to “*heal*” that long apostate church that he should have forsaken. Instead of forsaking it, Luther was driven out of it by excommunication and a death warrant against his life. Basically, Luther remained Catholic in doctrine with only a very few minor “*reforms*,” which are still found in the church that goes by his name. It was the same with John Calvin. He also tried to correct and improve certain doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church, and gave us the doctrine of “*penal substitution*” which was an improvement over the Catholic doctrines of “*penance*” and “*purgatory*,” but was built on the **same erroneous foundation** as the apostate church. It is the doctrine of “*penal substitution*” that says, “*Jesus took the penalty for our sins.*” The intent of this doctrine was to tell those who were bound by the Catholic Church to “*do penance*” for their sins, and receive forgiveness through the purchase of “*indulgences*” with money, that “*Jesus took the penalty! You do not have to ‘do penance’ or ‘purchase forgiveness,’ because Jesus has ‘freely forgiven’ every sin you will ever commit.*” This was the intent of the doctrine of “*penal substitution.*” The result of it, however, is that the “*error*” has been intensified. As bad as the Catholic system of selling indulgences was (it was an abomination), the modern system grants unlimited indulgences to sin, and does so freely, because, they say, “*Jesus took the penalty.*” If Jesus “*took the penalty*” it follows that the “*believer*” of that doctrine believes they can continue in sin without suffering the penalty of eternal damnation. From this position comes the doctrine of “*unconditional eternal security*,” which in its extremity says that even an apostate will go to heaven if they have ever in their lifetime professed Jesus Christ as their

savior. In its lowest form (to date), this doctrine says that even adulterers will go to heaven if their faith is “*in the cross.*”

Luther sought to reform the apostate Catholic Church from the inside until he was driven out. Working from the outside, Calvin sought to reform the heretical doctrines of the Catholic Church into a better form. Jacobus Arminius tried and failed to reform Calvinist doctrine and gave us the Arminian doctrine of “*free will.*” John Wesley, who I believe was a great man of God, adopted and brought his reforms to the Arminian doctrine, giving us the Wesleyan doctrine and the Methodist Church. The original foundation of each of these, however, can be nothing more or less than that which was laid by Catholic philosophers; **not** by the apostles of Jesus Christ.

Recently, while doing a study of both the Calvinist and Armenian doctrines concerning man’s “will,” I was struck by the irrefutable fact that neither of these are the gospel of Christ. Instead, they are philosophies, developed by men to explain the internal workings of the human nature. It is obvious that one of these doctrines must be terribly wrong. I have come to the understanding that both are wrong, because they are “*man centered*” doctrines and not “*Christ centered.*” What difference does it make if man’s “will” is “bound” or “free?” Salvation is not of man or by man; “*salvation is of the LORD*” (**Jonah 2:9**). To those who believe in the bondage of man’s will, the Word of God says, “...*the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely*” (**Revelation 22:17**). To those who believe in the freedom of man’s will, the Word of God says, “*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy*” (**Romans 9:15-16**). Does the Word of God contradict itself? Absolutely not! But it does contradict every doctrine of man.

The Wrong Foundation

If I were to pick through the rubble of nineteen hundred years of doctrine, I could “*piece together*” a pretty good doctrine. I would

take a little bit of Luther, and little bit of Calvin, and a little bit of Arminius. I would add a little bit of Wesley, a little Spurgeon, perhaps a little more of Finney, and even a dash of Moody. If I were smart enough to choose the best of each, I would have a fairly decent “*doctrine*,” but it would be a concoction of religion. Perhaps all of these were men of God, I do not know; but I do know that none of them forsook the errors of the past, but tried to “*reform*” them, because they were “*reformers*.” Calvin built on Augustine, and tried to reform the Catholic Church. Arminius tried to reform Calvinism, which he was originally built upon. John Wesley, who brought one of the greatest revivals of religion of all time, built on the Arminian foundation, while Charles Spurgeon, who was one of the great expositors of all time, built on the Calvinist foundation.

A house which is built on a faulty or rotten foundation should not be reformed; it should be forsaken. It should be utterly destroyed; otherwise, it will soon fall of its own weight, taking with it the lives of its occupants. Jesus warned us of the house which is built without a foundation; it will be destroyed in the storm. Likewise, the spiritual house that is built upon the wrong foundation will guarantee that the occupants will never enjoy the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Those who believe their “*will*” is in bondage **will** continue in sin, believing that every sin they will ever commit is already forgiven. Those who believe their “*will*” is free, while believing their past sins are forgiven, will struggle throughout their lifetime, trying to “*make the right choices*,” believing they are “*free*” to do so. Neither of these understand, nor was there a single “*reformer*” in history who understood, or dared to tell us that Jesus Christ died “*to take away our sin*;” that is, to take sin out of our heart and nature.

Adam did not have “*sin*” in his heart or nature when he walked away from the “*Tree of Life*” and ate of the “*tree of knowledge of good and evil*.” He was created in the image and likeness of God (**Genesis 1:26**). He breathed the breath (the Spirit) of God (**Genesis 2:7**). He was crowned (clothed) with the glory and honor of God (**Hebrews 2:7**). God gave Adam authority over every work of His hands (**Genesis 1:28; Psalms 8:6; Hebrews 2:8**). In fact,

according to the correct meaning of **Psalms 8:5**, Adam was made “*just a little lower than God* (the elohiym).” Adam was not created with a “*sin nature*,” but being a man, he did have a “*human nature*” and a “*free will*” to choose between the two trees in the midst of the garden. He could have eaten of the “*Tree of Life*” and lived forever in the paradise of God. Instead, he “*chose*” to eat of the only tree in the garden that God had forbid him to eat of, saying, “*in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*” (**Genesis 2:17**). Adam did not choose “*sin*,” he had never heard of sin and had no consciousness of sin whatsoever (**Hebrews 10:2**). He chose to eat of a tree that promised to make him “*as gods, knowing both good and evil*.” I realize that what I say will be offensive to many, but those who believe they have a “*free will*” to “*make the right choices*” and thus “*please god*” have already made the wrong choice; they are “*eating*” of “*the tree of knowledge of good and evil*,” believing that with such “*knowledge*” they can “*choose the good*” and “*shun the evil*.”

Deuteronomy 30:19-20: “*I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you **life and death**, blessing and cursing: **therefore choose life**, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: **for he is thy life**....” Moses set both **life** and **death** before the children of Israel in the last day of his life among them, and pleaded with them to “*choose life*.” This is likened unto the two trees that were set before Adam and Eve in the midst of the garden. If they chose “*life*” they would “*live*.” Only if they “*chose life*” could they “*love, obey, and cleave*” to Him “*who is our life*” (**Colossians 3:4**). The “*life*” that Moses set before the children of Israel was the LORD, who had spoken to their father’s from Mount Horeb forty years before. If they chose Him, they would have life. The “*death*” that was set before them was the “*Law of Moses*,” which was a “*tree of knowledge of good and evil*” to them. These “*two trees*” are “*two covenants*,” the “*old*” and the “*new*,” the “*covenant of law*” and the “*covenant of grace*.” In **II Corinthians 3:7-9**, the apostle Paul calls the Law of Moses a “*ministration of death*” and a “*ministration of condemnation*.” In the same verses,*

he calls the New Covenant of grace a “*ministration of the Spirit*” and a “*ministration of righteousness.*”

We have a “*Tree of Life.*” Our “*Tree of Life*” is Christ. Jesus said, “*As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me*” (**John 6:57**). Christ came to take sin out of the heart and nature of all who would “*choose Him.*” He not only “*reconciled us to God,*” but He “*restored us*” to the condition of Adam before he disobeyed God. As long as we abide in Christ, who is our “*tree of life,*” and eat daily of Him, we “*cannot sin.*” On the other hand, if we cease to “*eat of Him*” and turn to trust in our ability to make right or wrong choices at the tree of knowledge of good and evil, we, as Adam did, will die a spiritual death, and sin will revive. “*For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died*” (**Romans 7:9**).

What Does “Cannot” Mean?

Please read the **entire second chapter of II Peter**. Notice that it speaks of the “*false teachers (verse one)*” that Peter foretold would be in the church. Notice that “*many shall follow their pernicious ways (verse two)*” and “*the way of truth shall be evil spoken of*” (**verse two**). Notice that they will be “*covetousness,*” that is, “*greedy for money*” and will “*make merchandise*” of their followers by use of “*feigned (fictitious) words*” (**verse three**). Notice that they will “*walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness*” (**verse ten**). Notice that they have “*forsaken the right way*” and have followed the way of the prophet Balaam, who prophesied for money (**verse fifteen**). Notice that they are “*wells without water*” (**verse seventeen**), that they “*speak great swelling words of vanity*” to “*allure (entrap)*” the people “*through the lusts (desires) of the flesh (human nature)*” (**verse eighteen**). Now, let us return to **verses 12-14**, where Peter compares them to “*natural brute beasts,*” and please understand as we do so, that Peter is speaking about teachers of false doctrines that would come into the churches.

II Peter 2:12-14: “*But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand*

not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; Having eyes full of adultery, and that CANNOT cease from sin....” These whom Peter speaks of are not mere “pew warmers” who occasionally attend church while claiming to be saved; these are the teachers of false doctrines that stand in the pulpits service after service, spewing out beautiful words that are designed to deceive. It is obvious, however, that these teachers of false doctrines do not have a “free will” to make the right choices, because Peter says they “cannot cease from sin.” On the other hand, they are not what they are because their “will” is “bound.” If the doctrine of “sovereign grace” and “bondage of the will” is correct, then God must receive these into heaven at the end, because they have “already believed in Jesus Christ,” as they say. Peter obviously did not know anything about such doctrines, however, because he said they shall “receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time” (**verse thirteen**).

How is it that Peter speaks of these false teachers as being those who “cannot cease from sin?” Surely they must, as “believers” in Jesus Christ, have the ability to stop sinning. The reason for their “bondage to sin,” even while professing Jesus as their savior, is found in the doctrine they believe and teach. Peter said they are “false teachers” and they are teaching a “false doctrine.” We are not told what their false doctrine is, but what they are is a result of the doctrine they believe. What about the doctrine of “penal substitution” that says Jesus died on the cross to “take the penalty for our sins?” What about the doctrine that says “every sin you will ever commit has already been forgiven?” What about the doctrine that says “we are all sinners, we sin every day, and we will be sinners as long as we live in this body of flesh?” These are all false doctrines that were given to us within the past five hundred years. Many sincere Christians believe these doctrines because it is all they have ever heard, but if they have been truly “born of God” their “experience” will deny their doctrine. There are, however, multitudes that “love” these doctrines because they “love unrighteousness (**II Thessalonians 2:12**)” and want to believe that sin

cannot keep them out of heaven as long as “*their faith is in Jesus.*” Paul also speaks of those who “*profess Jesus,*” but “*cannot cease from sin.*” “*They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate*” (**Titus 1:16**). They are like the Jews Jesus spoke to in **John 8:21-24**; “*Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come. And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for IF YE BELIEVE NOT THAT I AM HE, ye shall die in your sins.*” Churches today are filled with people who “*cannot cease from sin*” because they have believed the tradition given to us by false teachers, and do not believe that Jesus is “*...the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world*” (**John 11:27**). How can I make such a statement? The prophecy of “*The Christ,*” **Daniel 9:24-27**, says He would come to “*finish the transgression, make an end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness.*” The Jews did not believe that Jesus is “*The Christ.*” The false teachers do not believe that Christ came to “*make an end of sins.*” They do not believe that He is “*the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*” They do not believe that Jesus is “*He* (the Messiah; the Christ) who came into the world to “*make an end of sin.*” They “*cannot cease from sin,*” and except they repent of their error, they will “*die in their sins.*”

I John 3:9: “*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 the beginning of this message I told of a period of time, almost twenty five years ago, that I was desperately seeking God to give me the answer to the sin problem which is in the heart of man. It was during that time that I took **I John 3:9** as my text one Sunday morning. I explained, as I had been taught by others, that the words, “*doth not commit sin,*” actually meant that we “*do not ‘practice’ sin;*” that “*sin is not our habit, even though sin is still in*

us, and we occasionally fail and commit sin from time to time.” I believed strongly in living holy. I preached against sin more than most, but I “*knew by experience*” that the children of God **do** sin. In the middle of my message, the Spirit of God gave me a severe rebuke. I heard these words in my spirit, “*Stop making excuses for what my Word says.*” I was so shaken that I quickly closed the service and went home. I was in absolute confusion. I studied the scriptures and I prayed for understanding. I soon discovered that the Greek wording for “*doth not commit sin,*” used the word “*poieo*” for “*commit,*” which means “*to make or do* (a single act).” What John actually said is stronger than anything I could have imagined; “*Whosoever is born of God doth not make or do a single act of sin....*” If John had meant to say we “*do not practice sin,*” he would have used the Greek word “*prasso,*” which means “*to practice.*” Incidentally, most of the modern versions of the Bible, written during and since the twentieth century, have substituted “*prasso*” for “*poieo,*” giving us a lie and not the truth. When I came before the Lord after discovering these things, I said to Him, “*Lord, I don’t understand this scripture; my experience tells me it is not so, but your Word says it is so, therefore, I will believe your word. I will even preach it, because your Word says it.*” It was only after I committed to preach exactly what the Word says, that I received understanding of what it says.

The key to understanding **I John 3:9** is found in the phrase, “*for His seed remaineth in Him.*” Notice that I have emphasized both “*His*” and “*Him,*” because they both refer to Christ. It is the word “*seed*” that refers to those who are “*born of God.*” We are “*His seed!*” Look again at the **fifth and sixth verses** of this **same chapter**. “*And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in HIM sinneth not.*” We who are “*born of God*” are “*His seed*” and our “*dwelling place*” is “*in Christ.*” As long as we “*abide* (remain) *in Him*” we “*cannot sin,*” because He has taken our sin away, and in Him there is no sin. This does not teach “*human perfection.*” Let those who “*trust in the flesh*” to serve God be warned (**Philippians 3:3**). If the adversary can by any means move you away from absolute rest and trust in Christ, sinful desires will revive in your heart, and you **will** sin. This is true for every one of us. It is only those who

“*abide in Christ*” that “*cannot sin.*” The “*choice to sin*” is not set before them. Christ has taken their sin away and there is no sin in Christ, in whom they dwell.

Things That Were Common Knowledge

I John 3:5-6: “*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.*” Please notice that I have placed special emphasis on the words “*And ye know,*” because it was “*common knowledge*” in the first century church that Christ came into the world to “*take away our sins.*” We will point out that the use of the word “*sins*” (plural) in **verse five** is an error on the part of the translators. The apostle John believed exactly what John the Baptist had said, “*Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the SIN of the world*” (**John 1:29**). Christ came into the world to take away the **sin** that entered through Adam’s disobedience (**Romans 5:12**). He “*took it away*” through His “*obedience to death (Romans 5:19), even the death of the cross*” (**Philippians 2:8**). Sin has polluted the heart and nature of every person that has been born into this world since the transgression of Adam. Jesus came to take sin out of the heart and nature of those who believe the gospel and trust in Him. If He only took our “*sins*” away, He would be plucking the evil fruit from a corrupt tree. The “*corrupt tree*” is sin in the heart and nature of man, and the “*evil fruit*” is the sins that we have committed. Christ did not come to “*pluck the fruit*” (take away the **sins** we commit); He came to “*lay the axe at the root*” of the tree (take **sin** out of our heart and nature), and thus He destroyed the corrupt tree.

According to the apostle John, it was also common knowledge in the first century church that “*...in Him is no sin.*” Christ had no sin in His heart and nature, and He took sin out of our heart and nature. John tells us, “*whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not.*” Oh, how simple and how wonderful this is. Jesus promised “*rest*” to everyone who would “*come unto Him.*” What wonderful rest it is when sin is taken away, and we struggle with it no more.

5. Trust in Him that Did It

The final criteria for “*getting the covenant right*” is to simply “*trust in Christ*” who finished our salvation through His death on the cross. In criteria #1, “*Know who Christ is,*” there is a great emphasis in knowing that Christ is the creator of all things. This is most important, because only the creator of the old could discard it and bring in the new. He came to nail the old creation to His cross and create a new creation in Himself. “*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).

Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:10, “*We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus....*” In II Corinthians 5:17, he says, “*If any man be in Christ (created in Christ), he is a new creature (new creation): old things are passed away (the old creation man is passed away); behold, all things (everyone who is in Christ) are become new.*” Only the creator could do it, and there is absolutely nothing we can do but believe what He came to do and trust in Him who did it.

Ephesians 1:12: “*That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.*” The first eleven verses of Ephesians record at least ten things God did for the complete redemption and restoration of fallen humanity. In verse eleven, the apostle tells us that God “*worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.*” In the twelfth verse, he tells us what His will is; “*That we should be to the praise of his glory...*” and in the last phrase of the same verse he tells us of whom he speaks; we “*...who first trusted in Christ.*”

Those who “*first trusted in Christ*” were those who received the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost. Paul included himself among those as one who was “*born out of due season.*” The existence of such a people on earth brought great glory to Christ. There is no hint of that church being sinful, or of even one of those who God poured His Spirit upon having a sin problem. Paul tells us about that first church in Ephesians 1:22-23; “*...the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*” When we “*get the covenant right,*” that is what the church will be once again.

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