

BIBLE'S POWER TO TRANSFORM LIVES

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THE DIVINE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

Inspiration of the Bible

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions shall be tried."

This is the first Article of Faith of a great many Baptist churches in our Southland. The first statement is, "We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired." This brings us at once to the subject of the inspiration of the Scriptures. The word inspiration is derived from the Latin word *inspiro*, which means to breathe on or to breathe into. That is the literal meaning of the word.

The theological meaning is to breathe on or to breathe into for the purpose of conveying the Holy Spirit, in order that those inspired may speak or write what God would have spoken or written. That is inspiration.

A Scriptural example of this is found in John 20:22: "AND WHEN HE SAID THIS HE BREATHED ON THEM AND SAITH UNTO THEM, RECEIVE YE THE HOLY SPIRIT." That gives us the true conception of inspiration. Following that, verse 23 gives the result: "WHOSESOEVER SINS YE FORGIVE, THEY ARE FORGIVEN UNTO THEM; WHOSESOEVER SINS YE RETAIN, THEY ARE RETAINED." That is, an inspired man can declare exactly the terms of remission of sins, and the terms upon which sins cannot be remitted, because he is speaking for God.

The book that a man, so breathed on, writes is called *theopneustos*, a Greek word meaning "God-inspired."

Example:

"From a babe thou hast known the sacred writings, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus. Every scripture is inspired of God . ." II Tim. 3:15, 16.

After God breathed into man the Holy Spirit in order that he should accurately write the things which God wanted written, then the book that he wrote was called *theopneustos*.

So that this second passage is a very important one in discussing inspiration, probably the most important in the whole Bible.

If the book is God-inspired, then it is God's book and not man's book.

Another illustration is found in the second chapter of Genesis:

"And Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul."

The body was present, but it was dead. It had no vitality. The distinction between a body that is in-breathed and a body that is not in-breathed is the distinction between death and life. Therefore, a man's book is a dead book. I don't care how lofty its thought, how fine its argument, or how perfect its rhetoric, the book will pass away. It has not the principle of eternal life. But books that are God-breathed are called "LIVING ORACLES" (Acts 7:38). It is impossible for a God-book to die.

The oldest book that was ever God-inspired is as much living as the latest one, and it will be unto the end of time a living oracle.

But what is an oracle? In Greece there were certain shrines - certain deities - such as the oracle of Apollo at Delphi. There was a priestess that ministered at that shrine. Men would stand before her and ask a question and the priestess would fall into an ecstasy, and while in that ecstasy her answers were called oracles. Heathen oracles are all dumb, but these God-inspired oracles are living.

They are not only called living oracles, but they are called the oracles of God, as we see from Romans 3:2:

"What advantage hath the Jew? Much every way, for first of all they were entrusted with the oracles of God."

The advantage is that these Old Testament books were entrusted to them, not as man's books, but as containing the speeches of God, as well as the works of God.

Now, I will briefly set forth the inspiration of both the Old and the New Testament. II Timothy 3:15, 16, covers all the Old Testament. Paul says to Timothy: "From a babe thou hast known the sacred writings." Any other writing is what is called profane writing, not in our modern sense of profanity, but means not divine, but rather human or secular. "Thou hast known the sacred writings, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation. Every scripture is inspired of God," etc. He first speaks of the books of the Old Testament in groups, *ta hiera grammata*, the sacred writings. Then he speaks of them distributively, *pasa graphe*.

Every one of these sacred writings is **God-inspired**. We may stand on that one declaration to affirm the inspiration of every one of the Old Testament books.

Another passage bearing on Old Testament inspiration is Peter 1:20:

"No prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit."

Here again is the idea of inspiration. An inspired man, when he speaks, does not speak his will; when he writes, he does not write his will, but he speaks and writes for God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.

Now let us take up the New Testament. In John 14:26 we find that a promise was made, before inspiration was given, that they should be inspired:

"But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you."

Again in 16:12, 13:

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come he shall guide you into all the truth; for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak; and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come."

That is, Christ in His lifetime did not complete the revealed truth. They were not prepared to receive it all. But He made provision for the revealing of the truth by promising the Holy Spirit who would teach them all that it was necessary for them to know. What Christ said in His life time, which they had forgotten, the Holy Spirit enabled them to remember and guided them into the completion of the truth. So, after His resurrection Christ breathed on them and said unto them, "RECEIVE YE THE HOLY SPIRIT" (John 20:22). This is inspiration and fulfills His promise to them. This same thought is emphasized in I John 2:27:

"The mystery in Scripture is something that stays concealed until God chooses to reveal it. Knowledge of God and His will come not by human discovery but by divine disclosure." David Porter (ed.), Purity and Power, (England: STL Books, 1981)p.88.

"The anointing which ye received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you; but as his anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, even as it taught you, ye abide in him."

One other passage, a very important one, is I Corinthians 2:6-13:

"We speak wisdom, however, among them that are full grown; yet a wisdom not of this world, nor of the rulers of this world, who are coming to naught: but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, even the wisdom that hath been hidden, which God foreordained before the worlds unto our glory: which none of the rulers of the world hath known: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory: but as it is written, Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, And which entered not into the heart of man, Whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him. But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God. But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words."

Here is the promise again clearly stated; that what is to be communicated through this inspiration is something that eye could not see, ear could not hear, nor the heart of man conceive. It is a revelation, and it comes through the Spirit that knoweth the things of God. As your spirit alone can know you (your neighbor does not know you as well as you know yourself), so the Holy Spirit alone knows the will of God, and that Spirit has communicated it to inspired men in man's words. Mark this verbal inspiration: "combining spiritual things with spiritual words."

It has always been a matter of profound surprise to me that anybody should ever question the verbal inspiration of the Bible.

The whole thing had to be written in words. Words are signs of ideas, and if the words are not inspired, then there is no way of getting at anything in connection with inspiration. If I am free to pick up the Bible and read something and say, "That is inspired," then read something else and say, "That is not inspired," and someone else does not agree with me as to which is and which is not inspired, it leaves the whole thing unsettled as to whether any of it is inspired.

Henrietta C. Mears says, "The Word of God is alive and every part is necessary to the perfection of the whole." Henrietta C. Mears, What the Bible is all about. (California: Gospel Light Publications, 1966) p.10.

What is the object of inspiration? It is to put accurately, in human words, ideas from God. If the words are not inspired, how am I to know how much to reject, and how to find out whether anything is from God? When you hear the silly talk that the Bible "contains" the word of God and is not the word of God, you hear a fool's talk. I don't care if he is a Doctor of Divinity, a President of a University covered with medals from universities of Europe and the United States, it is fool-talk. There can be no inspiration of the book without the inspiration of the words of the book.

Very briefly I have summed up proof of the inspiration of the Old Testament and of the inspiration of the New Testament, and now I will give you some scriptures on both Testaments together. Hebrews 1:1, 2:

"God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son."

In old times there were inspired men; but the culmination or completion is in the Son. That covers both. Hebrews 5:12 also covers both:

"When by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that someone teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God."

Here the New Testament is called "oracles" as well as the Old Testament. Those were Christian people who had learned the first principles of the oracles of God and stopped. Another passage is I Peter 4:11: *"If any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God."* Peter is here talking about the Old and New Testaments. If a man gets up to speak, let him remember that there is a standard, and that that standard is fixed. He must speak according to the oracles of God. These Scriptures cover both.

Now let us consider some observations:

First, the books of the Bible are not by the will of man. Not one of the books of either the Old or the New Testaments would ever have come into being except by the inspiration of God. I want to give you a searching proof on that, found in I Peter 1:10, 11:

"Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories which should follow them."

Here are men moved by the Spirit of God to record certain things about the future, and they themselves did not understand it. They studied their own prophecies just as we study them. They knew that God had inspired them to say these things, but they did not understand, *e.g.*, God instructed a prophet to say that the Messiah should come forth out of Bethlehem of Judea. God inspired each and every item concerning the Messiah. To show that these things did not come from the will of man, the man himself could not explain them. It was a matter of study and investigation to find out what these signified. They found out that their prophecies were meant for the future, that is, for us.

The second observation is that the propelling power in the speaking or writing was an impulse from the Holy Spirit. They, the inspired men, became instruments by which the Holy Spirit spoke or wrote. Take, for instance, that declaration in II Samuel 23:2, where David said:

"The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me, and his word was upon my tongue."

In Acts 1:16 we find that the utterances of David were being studied. We have a declaration that the Holy Spirit spake by the mouth of David concerning Judas; and in the third chapter of Acts we have another declaration of the same kind. Always the speaker or writer was an instrument of the Holy Spirit.

The third observation is that this influence of the Holy Spirit guided the men in the selection of material, even where that material came from some other book, even an uninspired book, the Spirit guiding in selecting and omitting material.

From such declarations as John 20:30, 31 and 21:25, we learn that Christ did many things, that if all were written it would make a book as big as the world; that what has been written was written for a certain purpose. The Holy Spirit inspired Matthew, Mark, Luke and John to select from the deeds and words of Jesus that which God wanted written; not to take everything He said, but only that which was necessary to accomplish the purpose.

The fourth observation is that inspiration is absolutely necessary in order to awaken the power of remembrance. John 2:22 says that after His resurrection they remembered what He had said, that is, the Spirit called it to remembrance.

To illustrate, take the speeches of Christ, viz.: that address delivered at Capernaum on the Bread of Life, the Sermon on the Mount and, particularly, the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of John.

There were no shorthand reporters in those days, and there is not a man on earth who could, after a lapse of fifty years, recall *verbatim et literatim* what Christ said, and yet John, without a shadow of hesitancy, goes on and gives page after page of what Christ said just after the institution of the Lord's Supper. Inspiration in that case was exercised in awakening the memory so that John could reproduce these great orations of Christ.

Of the orations of Paul, take that speech recorded in Acts 13, an exceedingly remarkable speech, or the one recorded in Acts 26, or the one on Mars' Hill, in chapter 17, one of the most finished productions that the world has ever seen. Inspiration enabled Luke to report exactly what Paul said. Luke never could have done that unassisted. Luke, as a man, might have given the substance, but that is not the substance, it is an elaborate report, the sense depending upon the words used.

The fifth observation is that inspiration was to make additions to the Scriptures until they were completed, in order that the standard may be a perfect treasure, incapable of being added to, unsusceptible of diminution; we want what is there, all that is there, and no more than is there; therefore, when we come to the last book of the Bible, this is said which, in a sense, applies to the whole Bible:

"I testify that every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book." Rev.22:18,19.

It was the design of inspiration to give us a perfect system of revealed truth, whose words are inspired. As an example of verbal inspiration, take Paul's argument, based on the "seed" in the singular number. Everything in the interpretation depends upon the number of that noun. Apart from verbal inspiration, how on earth would Paul hinge an argument on whether a word is singular or plural?

The next observation is that inspiration was to give different views of the same person or thing by different writers, each perfect according to its viewpoint, but incomplete so far as the whole is concerned, all views being necessary in order to complete the view. There is a Gospel by Mark, written for the Romans, beginning with the public ministry of Christ. Then there are the Gospels of Matthew, Luke and John, and a Gospel by Paul. Each of them is perfect according to the plan which the Spirit put in the mind of the writer. They are perfect so far as the viewpoint of each is concerned, but incomplete so far as the whole thing is concerned. We have to put them side by side in order to get a complete view of the life of our Lord. That is what we mean by harmonical study. Each is infallibly correct, but it takes the blended view of all to make the whole thing.

Apart from inspiration, no man on earth can account for Genesis. Just see in what small space there is given the history of the world up to chapter 11 - how much is left out. We see the same plan all through the book. It first takes up the wicked descendants, gives their genealogy a little way, then sidetracks them and takes up the true line. Then of their descendants it follows the wicked first a short way and eliminates them and goes back and takes up the true line and elaborates that. That principle goes all through the Bible.

For instance, the first missionary period of Paul's life covered a greater period of time than any other, and there is no record of it, just a single reference to it in Acts. So with his fifth missionary journey. There are only a few references to it in Timothy and Titus. But the intervening three journeys are elaborately given.

Now we come to an important point. When these inspired declarations were written, they were absolutely infallible. Take these Scriptures: John 10:35, *"The scripture cannot be broken;"* Matthew 5:18, *"Till heaven and earth shall pass away, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished;"* Acts 1:16, *"It was needful that the scripture should be fulfilled."*

That is one of the most important points in connection with inspiration, viz.: that the inspired word is irrefragable, infallible; that all the powers of the world cannot break one *"thus saith the Lord."*

Another observation is the power that comes upon the inspired word. Hebrews 4:12:

"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

Yet another observation is the object of the word. There are two objects. John sets forth the first one when he says that they are written that we might believe, and, believing, have life, or, as Paul says to Timothy, "which are able to make thee wise unto salvation." They are both expressed in the nineteenth Psalm:

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple."

The last observation is on the sufficiency of the word: that the inspired record is complete; that it is all-sufficient. That is presented in two Scriptures, Luke 16:29: Abraham said to the rich man in hell who wanted a special messenger sent to his brothers:

"They have Moses and the prophets, and if they cannot be moved by Moses and the prophets, neither could they be moved even though one from the dead went to them."

The other is II Timothy 3:17:

"That the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work."

Let me say further that only the original text of the books of the Bible is inspired, not the copy or the translation.

Second, the inspiration of the Bible does not mean that God said and did all that is said and done in the Bible; some of it the devil did and said. Much of it wicked men did and said.

The inspiration means that the record of what is said and done is correct. It does not mean that everything that God did and said is recorded. It does not mean that everything recorded is of equal importance, but every part of it is necessary to the purpose of the record, and no part is unimportant. One part is no more inspired than any other part.

It is perfectly foolish to talk about degrees of inspiration. What Jesus said in the flesh, as we find it in the four Gospels, is no more His word than what the inspired prophet or apostle said.

That is the folly of the Jefferson Bible. He proposes to take out of the four Gospels everything that Jesus said and put it together as a Bible.

What Jesus said after He ascended to heaven, through Paul or any other apostle, is just as much Jesus' word as anything He said in the flesh.

Here are some objections:

First, "only the originals are inspired, and we have only copies." The answer to that is that God would not inspire a book and take no care of the book. His providence has preserved the Bible in a way that no other book has been preserved.

The second objection is, "We are dependent upon scholars to determine what is the real text of the Bible." The answer is that only an infinitesimal part of it is dependent upon scholars for the ascertainment of the true text, and if every bit of that were blotted out it would not destroy *the Holy Scriptures*

REALIZING BIBLE'S POWER TO INFLUENCE

Evelyn Christenson says, "The Holy Spirit frequently brings to my mind Scriptures I have hidden in my heart so that I can teach other truths that God has taught me." Evelyn Christenson, Lord Change me, (England: Scripture Press Foundation, 1987)p.84.

Test Case 1.

"Myrtle, did you ever read the 24th chapter of Matthew?"

"Well-no. I don't remember that I ever did. Why?"

"Oh-on Sunday I heard our minister preach from that chapter.

It talks about the end of the world. And what is going to happen to people!"

"The end of the world? What is going to happen?"

From there it was simple. I told her about the two people in bed together – one was taken up into the air to meet Jesus, and the other was left alone in bed! I told her about the two men working in the field – one was taken "up" and one was left standing in the field! I told her about the two women shopping in a supermarket (grinding at the mill) when one of them just disappeared and the other one couldn't find her!

Did she want to be one of those left behind? Alone?

Did she? She did not. Right there I told her how I gave my heart to Jesus Christ, and that she could give hers to Jesus too, and be ready to meet Him when He came in the clouds of the sky. And She did.

We often hear Christianity is a relationship with the living God. This is true. But in order to have and maintain this relationship, we are to know God through his revelation found in a Book, the Bible. Without this Book Christianity cannot exist for long. Wherever this Book has been hindered or removed, the evidence of anything Christian became rare. It is for this very reason so many tried to destroy the Bible and even today do not allow it to be read in their countries. This Book we know as the Bible, is God's Word to us today. Remove the teachings of the Bible from humanity and Christianity will eventually pass into oblivion. No Church can say they are worshipping and obeying God without the Bible being taught. The Church's role has always been to uphold the writings that were Scripture, by protecting and proclaiming them. In this way the church is the pillar and the ground of truth. If it does not do this, then it is not the pillar and ground any longer.

The understanding of the Word is at an all-time low. Why? Most people do not know how to share their faith, but it is a command in Scripture itself, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense (answer) to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15). We are to be set apart for the Lord's service ready to give an answer, (apologia) an account, a legal plea of whom and what we believe in. This is to be done in humility but with the fear of God. Maybe Peter

had in mind what Luke wrote in 12:11-12 “And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say for the Holy Spirit shall teach you in that very hour what ye ought to say.” It is only by knowing the Word can we know God’s ways and be able to explain it and give testimony to the least and the greatest.

“The goal of the Christian mission is not success, but faithful witness; not power; but proclamation; not technique, but truth; not method, but message” (Michael Horton *Power Religion*, p.15)

Many do not have the confidence to witness, and defend the faith because they do not know Scripture. I don’t mean just memorizing it, because some people are able memorize whole portions of scripture and do not understand it. But having the ability to apply it when they are challenged. When we absorb the Word in our mind and heart and understand it we can have boldness to speak. Holy Spirit preaching is His Word that communicates Jesus and gives people understanding, so they are moved to obedience. “If you abide in *My word*, you are My disciples indeed. “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31-32) Interesting note, that He said My word singular, as in *all the Bible* as the Scripture is all about him as he stated in Jn.5:39.

To do this we must learn to study. Considering we have more Bibles, books on the Bible and tools today then in all of history of the church, the church should not be in the state of biblical illiteracy that it is in: but it is.

When the Bible was first written it had no divisions of chapters or verses. Since the Bible came to us in the English translation it has been divided in chapters and verses. Because of these divisions of chapters and verses it has made it more convenient to find certain subjects and sayings, it also has made it convenient for many teachers to select certain scriptures as one- liners removing them from their context they were originally written in. They then preach whole sermons on these out of context subjects. This fragmenting of the Scripture has led to many of the errors and falsehood’s preached from the pulpits today.

There is a great need to read the Bible through, and more importantly read it the way it was written by the books or letters. By doing this we absorb the Scripture in its context and are able to understand the theme of the letters as well as the minutiae contained in them. By doing this it prevents the Scripture being made into pretexts and stringing together ones own doctrine from them. After one sees the letters as a whole they can put together certain topics contained throughout all the letters to arrive at what the Bible actually says on any given subject matter. From this exercise we can rightly divide the word. By rightly divide the Word of truth we increase our knowledge and our usefulness and effectiveness for God.

We are admonished, “*Study to show thyself approved, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed*” (1 Timothy 2:15). The word “study” in this passage means “to make an effort, to be earnest, and diligent, with labor.” The phrase “rightly dividing” comes from the Greek word “orthotomeo,” which means “to make a straight cut, to dissect correctly, to rightly divide.” In other words, with no hesitation, make every effort to *understand correctly* what the Word of God actually says, so it can be used to benefit yourself and those you speak to.

The Holy Spirit is to lead us into all Truth, His Word, not to lead us beyond it. As Paul wrote to Timothy sound doctrine will save both yourself and those who hear you.

We are to study and learn the Word that was delivered, staying in the parameters of its teaching.

To do this we need to ask the right questions to arrive at the correct answers.

We need to adopt a method that is inherent in the Scripture that will help us to arrive at the truth. We want to get as close as possible to what the original writers meant when they wrote it. Then we can see if it has any application for our lives. This means we may need to know something of the Jewish, Greek or Roman culture. We are to look at the letter and see whom the recipients are, why it is being written, is it repeated from somewhere else or gives us more information on a certain subject.

We are to let the text speak for itself and if it is not clear, we go to other statements made on the same subject that would qualify what is being taught in the text. We are to put Scripture next to Scripture and build on this as the basic foundation of beliefs are laid.

With all the technology and knowledge we have to help us we have become lazy. We need to develop some basic spiritual habits. Ps. 119:161-162 "But my heart stands in awe of Your word. I rejoice at Your word As one who finds great treasure." Do we search the scriptures hungry for God to speak and rejoice at his voice like finding hidden treasure? Prov. 2:1-5 "My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, So that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; Yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God." We are to train ourselves to listening to the Words of our God by the Scripture. We are to mine the word of God. How do we do this? We chip away at it piece by piece until we uncover the treasure. We pray for discernment understanding, with an open spirit we listen to his voice from the Word.

The Bible is deeper than the deepest ocean because it is knowledge about the infinite God. Many who have studied it have devoted their whole lifetime to knowing God's Word, and have not found any end to its teaching and wisdom. It is the only place to find the absolute truth about the creator who became man. Yet it is a drop in the bucket about the unlimited God, but sufficient to confound the greatest minds in history. God has communicated to man throughout history through his book, and His words are found in dialogues, prophecy, poetry and letters to men over the centuries. Zophar the Naamathite answered Job in his search for answers why he was afflicted and said to him: "Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than heaven-- what can you do? Deeper than Sheol-- what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea." (Job 11:7-9).

How much can we know of God? But a little, but what small amount we know, we want it to be accurate. To do this we must know doctrine, which means the teachings in the Bible. You can't have a relationship with God without the Word; it is central, not an option.

A.W. Tozer said it like this “The word doctrine means simply religious beliefs held and taught. It is the sacred task of all Christians, first as believers and then as teachers of religious beliefs, to be certain that these beliefs correspond exactly to truth. A precise agreement between belief and fact constitutes soundness in doctrine. We cannot afford to have less.”(A.W. Tozer, *Man, The Dwelling Place Of God*)

Jesus said “My sheep hear my voice.” That voice is found first and foremost through the Scriptures. John 17:20 Jesus praying to the Father says, “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word.” Whose word is he speaking of, the apostles whom he commissioned to record His sayings by writing them down. He then makes the statement that we would all be one, In Him and the Father and the world may believe. Our unity as the church is dependent on our adhering to the Word of God. As individuals If we want to be complete, mature, thoroughly equipped for what Christ has called us to as individuals and as the church, we need to *know the Scripture*. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The apostles wrote down the words inspired by the Holy Spirit through the entire New Testament; they are not just the ones written in red ink. They wrote them all with the same color ink, as Paul states “**all Scripture** is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16-17), not certain Scripture, there are not less inspired portions.

The Bible is a very practical Book, what you learn from it can be applied to your everyday living. One person has said, read this Book to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. As Jesus stated in Matt 7:24 “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.” It is stable so when the storms of life come, we will be able to stand because we are on the foundation that does not change or move.

Jesus often said, “he who has ears let him hear”, but he also said He said to them, “Hear and understand”

(Matt 15:10). When He had called all the multitude to Himself, He said to them, “Hear Me, everyone, and understand: (Mark 7:14).

When Jesus spoke the parable of the seed he gave four examples of the soil. Three of the soils within time lost the life of the seed. There was only one soil that had the seed sprout and grow and become a sturdy plant that was fruitful. Why? They all had the same seed applied, so what made this soil have it grow? We know that the soil represents a person’s heart, the seed was God’s eternal word that is heard and finds rest in it, and grows changing the individual who continually gives himself over to its instructions.

Mk.4:13: “And He said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.” The seed is the Word, and before this He explains how the people need ears to hear, so they can understand the spiritual meanings of

the word and be fruitful. In vs. 37 he explains that the sower of the good seed is the son of man which is either Jesus himself or those who preach the same message of His Word. When the seed becomes money, you have just missed the whole point of the parable and have become *spiritually deaf*! This is why Jesus said: "Take heed therefore HOW you hear" (Luke 8:18). The "good seed," is the truth preached by Christ, His apostles and us today. He was not preaching money or prosperity.

Matt. 13:19 Jesus states, "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart." Only one soil yielded variable percentages of fruit, it was those who understood His words. "But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Matt 13:23). Understanding requires a response, we cannot do from the heart what we hear and do not understand.

It was Mark Twain who once said "Most people are bothered by those passages in Scriptures which they cannot understand. But for me, I always notice that the passages in scripture which trouble me the most are those I do understand."

1 Pt.1:23 tells us we are "born with incorruptible seed which is the word of God." 1 Jn.3:9 "Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God." What this means is that we will not practice sin as we once did, a transformed life gives us the ability to live what is holy and right before God. As David said, "I have his your word in my heart so I may not sin against thee." The seed in us and makes it easier to live the way God desires and harder to live the way we once did. But to do this we must have the Word continually before us and be consumed with it to have this affect. Because the world our flesh and the Devil are always in competition for our soul, trying to influence us in disobeying the ways of truth and life.

In the Old Testament the way that was recommended to Israel to have God first is found in Deut. 6:6-9: "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart." You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up." You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes." You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." The word of God was heard, was written everywhere, and it became life itself to a nation as well as the individual.

Too many of us look for nice thoughts in sermons, something that will make us feel good and assure us where we are at. It not that the element of encouragement should not be included in sermons, but that should not be the only thing. What we really need is to be convicted and reproved by the word of God. We are to be moved to improve: But this kind of preaching is becoming more rare as pastors cater to the needs of their congregants having them feel good so they keep coming to the service. They are so afraid of losing people that they don't want to be offensive in any way. They no longer are doing what God said to do, shepherd them. Jesus did offend people; He offended people not by his personality but by telling them the truth.

In one instance as the multitudes gathered to hear Jesus Luke 5:1: "So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret." What do we come to see or hear when we go to a meeting or church? Are we there to listen and learn the Word? Do we open our heart to hear truth come in and dig out all the falsehood, the sin we accumulated, or are we wanting to drink a warm smooth glass of milk that will make us feel good and justify the wrong we do. What are YOU looking for?

Dr. R.J.K. Law stated "In times of danger and threatened disasters there are always those who claim to have extraordinary revelations. The devil stirs them up to fill men with false hopes in order to keep them in sin and false security. Then, when God's judgments come, they are taken by surprise. So whoever claims to have extraordinary revelations, encouraging men to feel safe while living a sinful life, does the work of the devil, for whatever encourages men to feel secure in their sins is from the devil." (Jer. 5:30, 31; 23:9-33). (Dr. R.J.K. Law, *Apostasy from the gospel, Communion with God and the Glory of Christ*)

In Mark 8:13-21 After the miracle of multiplying the bread and the Jesus charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod." These were the teachings, false doctrine. They interpret this as "he's scolding us because we didn't bring any of the left over bread." Jesus responds in v.17-18 in our modern vernacular it would be, How spiritually senseless are you?

Jesus asked the disciples again "When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?" They said to Him, "Twelve." "And when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of fragments did you take up?" And they said, "Seven." "So He said to them, "How is it you do not understand?" *Understand what? Who He is, How God provides; as he did with Moses leading the Israelites through the desert he will do through Christ. But to do this we must listen to His teachings, those who were fed bread miraculously by Christ were with him 3 days listening to his teachings. We are to be concerned with our spiritual sustenance first, not our physical needs. We squirm in church when the pastor goes an hour; some of us can't even listen to the Word of God unless it's dressed up with miracles and titillating stories. We need to question what we are there for, what is our motivation.*

In the middle of this conversation Jesus gives a short quote of having eyes and they do not see having ears and they do not hear and they do not remember.

Jesus was referring to *Mark 4:12* "Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them."

The people saw Christ's miracles, but not in their true light, they heard His words, but not in their true spiritual intent. They made the same mistakes as Israel did in the wilderness. As the church we have these examples so we will not repeat them. Matthew Henry had this to say, "Our not understanding of the true intent and meaning of God's favors to us, is equivalent to our not remembering of them" (*Matthew Henry's Commentary.*)

Jesus was justified in stating "And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive;

For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.' "But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it" (Mt. 13:14-17).

We are so blessed to have the full revelation of the Word today, we are more privileged than even those who were with Jesus, because in some ways our teachings go beyond what many of the apostles heard; as John the last apostle wrote the book of Revelation. Many did not see the Bible we have in our hands today. Jesus said to the people who blessed his mother for carrying and nursing him, "More than that, blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it."

Understanding

Holy Spirit miracle services are today's trend but when we look in the book of Acts the Spirit fell unexpectedly. Today people are gathering to see the Spirit move, to capture his presence. This cannot be done without the Word preached first and foremost; the Word and the Spirit go together. We can suffocate the truth by what is claimed His presence, if we separate these two essential components. There is no way to know God's presence without deep meditation, reflection on His Word. It needs to be taught correctly, not used as a means to an end.

C.D. Cole said "There is a clamor today in religion for the miraculous and sensational and spectacular. And this is because people tire of the word of God. People who are looking for miracles as a sign or proof of God's presence and favor are putting themselves in a good position to be deceived. What is supernatural is not necessarily Divine" (C.D. Cole)

The Word we have written sprang out the nature of God, Jesus said it was both He and His Father's word, it is so connected to God that to ignore this Word is to not listen to God. God's presence is His Holy Spirit whose purpose is to point to Jesus Christ, and uphold, interpret the truth, His WORD. The Holy Spirit moves us through the Word itself to explain what is meant. The Spirit gives the Word life and brings it to us as nourishment to our spirit.

When we seek to listen to voices outside the Scripture that leads us into new revelations for instruction, or an experience not in the Scripture and not practiced by the church, we are inadvertently denying the sufficiency of Scripture. This new trend is happening everywhere, not just in America. People gather for a Spirit meeting to hear a "fresh word" from God that is not found in the written word. They have been so removed from hearing the written word that "the written word becomes a fresh word to them." If you want the power of God in your life learn the Word and apply it daily.

When the word is taught and explained, the Holy Spirit works and carries it to an open heart to be effective.

Isa. 29:24 “These also who erred in spirit will come to understanding, and those who complained will learn doctrine.”

Some teach that the Holy Spirit is more important than doctrine or words. Satan can't have right doctrine, but he certainly can do signs and wonders. God will test us with what we see and experience to see if we will go to His Word and allow it to judge the thoughts and intentions of our heart.

Jonathan Edwards stated “If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.... The devil has ever shown a mortal spite and hatred towards that holy book, the Bible: he has done all in his power to extinguish that light and to draw men off from it: He knows it to be that light by which the kingdom of darkness is to be overthrown.... He is enraged against the Bible and hates every word in it: And we may be sure that he never will attempt to raise persons' esteem of it or affection to it.” (Edwards, Works of Jonathan Edward, Vol.2, 260).

Paul wrote to Timothy “Take heed to yourself and to the *doctrine*. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you” (1 Timothy 4:16).

A.W. Tozer wrote, “It would be impossible to overemphasize the importance of sound doctrine in the life of a Christian. Right thinking about all spiritual matters is imperative if we would have right living. As men do not gather grapes of thorns nor figs of thistles, so sound character does not grow out of unsound teaching.”

An unknown author said, “know it in the head, store it in the heart, show it in the life, and sow it in the world.” Is the Word of God foremost in your life, how important is it to you? Let the Word of God dwell in you richly, it will guide you and give you discernment in what is true and what is not. Because we are really going to need discernment in the days we are living in

As the psalmist turns to the temple to worship he writes in Ps. 138:2: “For You have magnified Your word above all Your name.” God's Word is His communication, His promise, the revelation of Himself to His people. It is to be a lamp to our feet in a dark and fallen world, without it we would have no way to know God or how to do God's will. Throughout scripture we have a consistent theme of the dichotomy of light versus darkness. The world we live in is darkness reserved for judgment. John the apostle in 1 John 1:5 tells us God is light. Light is God's very nature, it represents to us Holiness and perfection. This is why we often read that a physical manifestation of God 's glory is light or fire. Sin is associated with darkness and judgment. It implies imperfection, and principally ignorance, sinfulness, and misery.

The Psalmist asks Ps 119:9 “How can a young man cleanse his way? He answers, “By taking heed according to Your Word. Just a few more verses later v:11 “Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.” God's word keeps us from sin and keeps us on his path, as the Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Ps.119:105) in a dark world.

Ps. 43:3 Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me. s one reads the psalms one grasps the importance of the Word to the the people of Israel, especially the leaders.

To disregard God's Word that is holy, pure and absolutely true is to defame God's name and character. It is to bring ruin upon our walk. So it becomes the main focus point in our daily walk with Christ.

Jesus in his high priestly prayer, (the only one we have details on) says in John 17:6 "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word." Those who want to follow Jesus live by His Word, which separates them from the World, and sets them apart for His service. Jesus said that the words he spoke were not just his but the Fathers also. "For You have magnified Your word above all Your name" (Ps. 138:2). If Jesus manifested God's name, His nature to the people, how much more important is his Word that is exalted even above his name?

God has delivered to us all that is needed. The Bible says the Scripture is sufficient in all matters for the believers spiritual life, there is no need to go anywhere else to learn how to be spiritual. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:" (2 Tim.3:16-17). The doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures and its priority in all matters of faith is one of the core teachings of the Christian faith.

This inspiration has to do with the words; the Words of Scripture came from God; they were God breathed through the human agency of men. They as imperfect men did not affect the accuracy or infallibility of the Book. The Bible is as accurate and infallible as if God had written it without any human agent. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet.1:21). God has never left us without a witness; He commanded those who he revealed himself to, prophets, judges or Kings to write down what he has said. The writings were God breathed; He purposely moved the prophets and scribes to write the words down. So it was not by there own initiative, they were not the source but God instructed them and it became God's communication to mankind.

The word for Scripture in Greek is "graphe" it means "a writing," or "anything written." The expression "Holy Scriptures" is found twice in the New Testament: "Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the Holy Scriptures" Rom.1:2. "And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" 2 Tim.3:15. Wherever we see the word Scriptures it is referring to the Divine writings. The Bible does not contain the Word of God; it is the Word of God.

In a day of various opinions The Bible stands as an absolute reliable source for us to know exactly what God wants us to know, believe, and act in our the spiritual life. Christ is the focus and the theme of all the Scripture, John 5:39.

Peter recalls 2 Pet. 1:18-21 "And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which

you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Peter heard the audible voice of God and saw Jesus transformed as showed the disciples the power of the future Kingdom and who He really was by revealing his glory. Peter did not exalt his experience over the Scripture; his experience validated the Scripture. He showed us that we are to make Scripture the rule of our experience. The light that shines in a dark place is our world. We are to take heed to the Word from God as a light for us in the world until the "day" dawns (v.19). That day will establish everlasting righteousness, Christ's kingdom come to the earth. At that time the "morning star" will arise in our hearts and a new day, the messianic age will begin. This refers to Jesus, as the "bright morning star" (Num. 24:17; Rev. 22:16), the one whose presence will illuminate any uncertainty that we now experience. At that time our faith will become sight, and we will know even as we are now known (1 Cor.13:12). But until Jesus comes, our first and final authority must always be the sacred Scriptures, which is a lamp unto our feet.

It is written!

Knowing, trusting and obeying God's Word is our shield to falsehood and the temptations of the world. Christ quoted the Bible as his ultimate authority and witness and it is to be our ultimate authority and guide to living. The Bible, according to the way Christ and the apostles used it, sets the standard for us, providing us with everyday guidance. So why have so many put the Scriptures into a second place next to the Spirit? Why is the word read less and studied in the churches than ever before? The answer is one that you may not like, Jesus said in John 14:24 "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not *Mine but the Father's who sent Me.*" *Jesus wants His words to consistently be first in our life, having the highest priority or we will not be led by the Spirit into truth, but be lead away.*

Jesus prayed in John 17:17 "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." God changes the believers life through the Word, it is a steady work of the Holy Spirit as we walk, yield and obey, He fills us with the Spirit. There is no impartation that will change us like this. The Word is Spirit, and it affect us by our understanding it so we can be changed into the people Christ wants us to be. Ps.119:130 "The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple."

Christians that insist on the Holy Scriptures as their only most trusted source of spiritual knowledge are mocked as unspiritual and some consider them to be in idolatry of a book. Move with the spirit is cry of the experientialists. But to have a spirit divorced from the word proves it cannot be the same Holy Spirit who wrote the Word.

Christians since the Scriptures were written have always faithfully revered the Holy Scriptures as the VOICE of GOD. If we're practicing bibliolatry were in good company with David, Moses, Jesus and the apostles.

Only Christians who want to know God by his HOLY WRITTEN WORD, and enter by faith will hear from him. Those who want to know God without it, by any other means are not following the Holy Spirits direction and are only fooling themselves. God does not speak to us new doctrine, it is complete and written down. We are to get in the Word, and let the Word dwell in us, as Jesus said whoever does these sayings of mine will build their house on the rock. These saying are written by the apostles to the church. They are our sure foundation.

Listen to the Psalmist who wrote, "My soul faints for Your salvation, But I hope in Your word. My eyes fail from searching Your word, Saying, "When will You comfort me?" (Ps. 119:81-82) Ps. 119:134-136 "Redeem me from the oppression of man, That I may keep Your precepts. Make Your face shine upon Your servant, And teach me Your statutes. Rivers of water run down from my eyes, Because men do not keep Your law."

To put the Word as first is to fear God Himself. Isa. 66:2. "But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My Word." Isa. 66:5 "Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at His word" Ezra 10:3 "tremble at the commandment of our God." Do we do this today? To honor God's Word is to honor the God of the Word; He makes no distinction. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all" (Eccl. 12:13). To fear God is to respect His Word above all else. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." But for those who do not have this respect The Lord says in Prov.13:13-14 "He who despises the word will be destroyed, But he who fears the commandment will be rewarded."

Things are changing all over the world, and they are also changing inside the church. There are those who want to hear something new from God, showing their disrespect for what he has already spoken. Those who want to hear the fresh word of God need to look for it where it has always been "For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Pt. 1:12) The word which is eternal continues to be the same eternal absolute truth to all generations. We may change; our culture our society may change, it has not, the Word continues to have the same power and life to make us new creations.

The Bible states without faith it is impossible to please God, yet the Bible also tells us faith comes from hearing, and hearing from the Word of God. Our faith cannot be divorced from the Scriptures, to honor and practice what God has said is to respect the God who said it. Our faith is developed by learning the doctrines by applying them to our life. Scripture can be divided into numerous subjects with its teaching spread throughout the Word. We are to gather the scriptures on subjects to know what God has said and train ourselves in His worldview, so we would be in the world not of it. The Bible states us if you do not continue in the doctrine of Christ you are not his. "Whosoever abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, HATH NOT GOD. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." (2 John 1:9) That's how important doctrine is, and the doctrine of Christ can only be found in the word of God, the Bible. We need to be in the Word of God.

The Word is the like the lines on the highway that keep us driving correctly. But we need to listen to it. Many of us have become frustrated because we do not see the results that others have, God is not a respecter of persons, he wants you to be fruitful. To be in Christ and be

fruitful we must abide in His teachings, walk in the Spirit. Jesus said in John 15:1-5 "I am the true vine" "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me." I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." John goes on writing in v:10-11 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full."

The commandments are all his instructions found in His Word (He is not just talking about 10). The abiding factor is done by the Holy Spirit who is in us, when we yield to him.

As Jesus himself said in John 15:26: "when the Helper comes... He will testify of Me [the truth]." I John 2:27 "But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him." He (the Holy Spirit) is to give us understanding to comprehend the truth: knowing Scripture. The Word of God convicts, saves, and changes us daily.

The Scripture does tell us what the church will be like in the end of time, they will no longer adhere to sound doctrine, they will heap up teachers for themselves. "Now the Spirit speaks expressly that in the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Timothy 4:1). They will hear other spirits who teach them, leading them away from the Word of God. They will think they are hearing from God when in fact it is the enemy of their soul. We seem to have a built in tendency to wander away from what is right and good for us. We also have an enemy who is constantly trying to remove us from being in the truth and doing the will of God.

Because the Israel did not obey God's word, he needed to send prophets. The prophet Jeremiah was frustrated because of the peoples unwillingness to hear God's word "To whom shall I speak and give warning, That they may hear? Indeed their ear is uncircumcised, And they cannot give heed. Behold, the word of the LORD is a reproach to them; They have no delight in it. Therefore I am full of the fury of the LORD" (6:10-11) Jeremiah had a godly anger against the people that were now unable to hear what God had to say. They had listened to the false prophets messages for so long that they were unable to hear what God really had to say. They could no longer listen to the voice of God because they were trained to hear another's voice.

When Jesus was among the people he asked and answered his own question. "Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word"(John 8:43)

Matt. 11:15-17 "He who has ears to hear, let him hear! But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, and saying: 'We played the flute for you, And you did not dance; We mourned to you, And you did not lament.'" Jesus is explaining to them that they were unmoved in the heart from something that should bring joy, or something that would have them grieve. They were unresponsive, cold; it was all a matter of their heart.

This generation that Jesus offered his messiahship to was more privileged than any other, He was there physically in front of them, they saw the miracles and how he cared for people, they heard His voice, but many were not moved in their innermost being to take to heart what was said and follow. At one point the Scripture says that all the people were going after him but when the questions came up the religious leaders stepped in and the people instead listened to their leaders who were not leading them to know the Word of God, but their own words.

So Jesus was justified to scold them, "Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered"(Luke 11:52).

"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in." (Matt 23:13) What happened to the loving Jesus, this doesn't sound like tolerance. Actually this was the most loving thing he could do, reproof them so they would turn. Yet today we hear do not judge what anyone says, but we see Jesus' example of doing this all through the Scripture. **Those who apostasize from the truth always come against those who stand for it.**

Peter said of Paul in 2 Peter 3:15-17, "Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain *some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures*, to their own destruction. Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, *be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men* and fall from your secure position." Yes ones faith can be shipwrecked by listening to those who cannot explain things and yet dress them up as a message of faith. "A Christian would love and adhere to what Jesus and the apostles said before any man. "He who loves the Lord hates everything that offends him" (W.M Cowper)

Much of the church is in denial that they have taken part in any deception. Many do not believe in any deception affecting the Church. Its as if we are behind some wall invulnerable to anything negative taking place. By thinking this they are denying Jesus' own words who said that deception would take place from false teachers and prophets from inside the church at the end of the age (Mt.24:4-5,23-24). I know none of us like to hear this or talk about it, we want to hope that anything like this will just go away. These heresies have become like stampeding elephants inside the church, yet people act as if they are but a flea that's barely been noticed.

When someone does not admit this they only going further into the darkness of deception, turning themselves over to the ones leading it, instead of dealing with them.

There are many who want to lead the church into new things, new ways of doing church. One can often hear we don't need doctrine we need a fresh word, we need to hear from the spirit. To say "lets dispense of doctrine" in place of the spirit is equivalent to saying "lets get rid of truth." For the truth is given in the doctrine of Christ. The Catholic church has already

set the precedence for this by allowing their church to dictate new teachings they call sacred tradition and made it equal to written the doctrine of the apostles. The evangelicals that once were protestants have done this in even a greater way. By allowing what they call signs and wonders, miracles to have precedent over the teaching of the Word.

Listen to this story that represents the way the majority of Christians think today. R.W. Shambach tells a story of him having an evangelistic crusade and asking a woman to come up to the stage. He then told the interpreter to repeat what he says, so he states in the name of Mohammad heal her. The interpreter complained about this, he did not want to repeat this, he told him to repeat it anyway. After a bit of haggling he did so. This name did nothing; but then he prayed in the name of Jesus be healed and she miraculously was. He was asked, what if she got healed in the name of Mohammad? He replied, then I would be telling about Mohammad today, not Jesus.

What is he saying? If someone is healed in another name and he has results, that is what counts. This gives us the bankrupt mindset that miracles mean more than what Jesus said. For if he did not produce a single miracle at all, we would still be asked to believe and follow because of who he is, not for what miracle He does. Jesus actually rebuked the people on this by saying to the great crowd around him they came for the miracles and not for his teaching. Think about it?

Enemies of all reason

Jer. 23:36: "And the oracle of the LORD you shall mention no more. For every man's word will be his oracle, for you have perverted the words of the living God, the LORD of hosts, our God."

Paul admonishes us in 1 Corinthians 4:6: "that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written "do not go beyond what is written." God makes us wise to what is written not beyond it, what is written is wisdom for living. *Today's new revelation teaching has done just as much harm to the growth of Christians than the cults, because it comes from teachers within the Church, those that many have trusted.* The Bible is made to prove anything under the qualification of "the Spirit showed me" but when examined its not in the context of its original meaning. To obey God's voice is equal to hearing it from Scripture. The sheep are to hear the voice of the shepherd who is found in the word, not in new words by those calling themselves prophets. Paul's recommendation for our spiritual health is not exceed beyond what is written. When we do not esteem the word as our source of authority and look to something other than Scripture we become prompted by pride. This warning is given so pride will not have a chance to operate. Intentional false teaching always finds its source in pride. People do not want to submit to its original intent, so they do not seek what the actual meaning of the Scripture but conform it to what they want it to mean. They allegorize it, spiritualize it so it no longer has a literal meaning or application.

When someone says they are anointed or led by the Spirit and teach contrary to the Word in its accurate context you can be assured they are not led by His Spirit.

Is God's Word your "lamp" and your "light" (Ps 119:105)? Does what He say settle it? Or have extra-biblical sources, personal experiences and particularly feelings become the favored components for your Bible interpretations.

The word when preached in its truth with conviction is like water flooding the desert; it will nourish the ground for life. Every personal revival begins with God's Word as Ps. 119:25-28 David wrote "My soul clings to the dust; Revive me according to **Your Word**." (Ps. 119:107, 133, 154).

Ps 19:7 "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul" This is His Word that brings salvation to those yet in unbelief, and it Believers sanctification changing us to be like the one we are to follow, Jesus the Son of God.

Isa. 55:11 So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."

Jesus said, "My words are spirit and they are life. The flesh profits nothing Notice MY WORDS." When his close disciples saw the people leaving because of what had said was to hard to understand, He asked them will they leave also, Peter replied, where else can we go only you have the words of eternal life. Jesus himself said, "He who does not love Me does not keep My words" John 14:25. To be devoted to the Word shows our love of Christ. The Word is said to be more desirable than honey Ps.10:10. Apostates like those in the book of Hebrews could only taste the good word, they did not feed on Jesus Christ as he asked. They do not stand His gospel as Paul writes in 1 Cor.15 "hold fast that word I preached to you, by which you stand, by which you are also saved." Somewhere along in their growth they neglected the Word and turned away from the spiritual food set on the master's table. We cannot live on mere tasting; we are to feed on the Word as we feed on food. Just as food is digested and runs through our system to give us nourishment and life so it is with the Word of God, it is life to our spiritual life. We want to grow and be sufficient in doing spiritual works and fulfilling our ministry. In this the writer of Hebrews gives the rebuke to his own brethren "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb 5:12-14).

Some have been eating a word that is so far away from the truth that they need to lay the foundation again and wean on milk. It is better to do this than to continue on their current present course. They need to learn the basics all over again because of their neglect; they were not faithful in building on the foundation. It is for this same reason we put up with so much false teaching in the church, solid food is not being taught. It's a fact that those who have a diet on milk that finally eat meat will get indigestion. It immediately makes them feel uncomfortable and bad and they are repulsed; though in the long run it would eventually do them good, if they would continue to eat it and learn to digest it. It takes time to train oneself to take it in and live it out. Jesus said "If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority" (John 7:17). Today we can know if someone speaks on their own authority or God's by the doctrine they keep.

Heb 6:4-6 "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame." They wanted to go back to Judaism to avoid persecution and temporarily reject the once and for all sacrifice.

They tasted the gift by the Holy Spirit, they heard the word, they saw the salvations, but it was not enough to move them to faith to hold Christ as dear to them as life, they did not consume Jesus but only tasted what was needed for their immediate need. Eventually they went back to Judaism rejecting the once and for all sacrifice.

Eph. 5:26-27 "that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish." Only the Church that allows itself to be washed by the Word will be cleansed and stand before the Lord. As Jesus said to Peter if you do not allow me to wash your feet you can have no part of me.

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words” John 14:25. “But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.” I Jn. 2:5. To be devoted to the Word shows our love of Christ. The Word is said to be more desirable than honey Ps.10:10. Apostates like those in the book of Hebrews could only taste the good word, they did not feed on Jesus Christ as he asked. They do not stand His gospel as Paul writes in 1 Cor.15 “hold fast that word I preached to you.” Somewhere along in their growth they neglected the Word and turned away from the spiritual food set on the master’s table. We cannot live on mere tasting; we are to feed on the Word as we feed on food. Just as food is digested and runs through our system to give us nourishment and life so it is with the Word of God, it is life to our spiritual life. We want to grow and be sufficient in doing spiritual works and fulfilling our ministry. In this the writer of Hebrews gives the rebuke to his own brethren “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb 5:12-14).

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We can see today's church is in the same place Israel was numerous times, "Then the boy Samuel ministered to the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days: there was no widespread revelation."(1 Sam. 3:1) Do we really grasp what we have in our hands today, we have the final and complete revelation of what God has spoken in our hands, people died so we can have this book. So many Bibles and too few readers! And even less who understand. I think it's time for a change. Lets get back to what is called "the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15), "the Scripture of Truth" (Dan.10:21), the Word of life (I Jn.1:1). When we walk in the light of His word, then we will have victory over the world. In Luke 11:28 the people blessed Jesus' mother for bearing him He responded, "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it." Let's all be blessed.

BIBLE'S GOSPEL POWER

Paul was called by the Lord to be a foreign missionary, and is known as the Apostle to the Gentiles. As he lay on the ground on the Damascus road, Christ said to him, Get up, for I am sending thee to the Gentiles: *"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me"* (Acts 26:18). After his conversion, commission, and baptism, Paul preached Christ in the synagogues of Damascus, proving Jesus to be the very Christ to the discomfiting of the Jews. Because of a plot to kill him, the Apostle goes to Arabia for a season, returning to Damascus, and three years later going to Jerusalem. For the second time, Paul is told that he is to go far hence to the Gentiles; that the people of Jerusalem will not receive his testimony. In obedience to this call, Paul blazes a trail deeper and deeper into heathen territory. He wants to preach the gospel where Christ was not named, so that he might not build upon another man's foundation. In this spirit of a pioneer he wants to go to Rome and then to Spain. He wants converts at Rome as well as among the Gentiles. He is not ashamed to preach the Gospel anywhere, although he knew it would be met with scorn and contempt. However, he did not expect to preach in vain, and so he says, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth ;...."* (Rom 1:16).

To understand the audacity of these words we must listen to them with the ears of a Roman. Here was a little insignificant Jew with his head full of notions about another Jew whom the Roman governor had delivered to be crucified in order to satisfy other Jews and keep order in the province. This was what the natural Roman would think about Paul and his message. But Paul knew that he had good news which would bring salvation to every one who would believe it.

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

We are fortunate to have a direct Scriptural statement of what the gospel is, but for the sake of clarity, and by way of amplification, we shall treat the question both negatively and positively.

NEGATIVELY:

All Bible truth is not gospel truth. In the Bible there is truth about law and sin and death and judgment and numerous other things that are not the gospel. One may preach the gospel. Many think the Old Testament is the law and the New Testament is the gospel. But the truth is that both law and gospel are found in both Testaments. Some of the finest gospel texts are in the Old Testament, while some of the strongest law texts are in the New Testament. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is full of the gospel; from this chapter Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch and he was saved. Paul and others had only the Old Testament from which to preach the gospel.

The law should be preached, just as all the Bible should be preached. The law, properly preached, will reveal to men that they are sinners and slay their self-righteousness. For this purpose Christ preached the law to the rich young man: *"And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"* (Matt. 19:16), and to a certain lawyer *"And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"* (Luke 10:25). By the law is the knowledge of sin. Paul did not know that he was a lost sinner until he saw what the law required: *"For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died"* (Rom. 7:9). The law tells man what he ought to do; the gospel tells the sinner what Christ has done. The law condemns the best man; the gospel justifies the worst man. The law makes demands; the gospel bestows blessings. The law deals in justice; the gospel deals in mercy. The law belongs to the covenant of works; the gospel belongs to the covenant of grace.

Baptism is not the gospel. Paul clearly differentiated between baptism and the gospel when he said, *"For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel..."* (I Cor. 1:17). He reminded the Corinthians of the few he had baptized, and then to the church as a whole he said, *"...I have begotten you through the gospel"* (I Cor. 4:15).

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are not saving sacraments, but preaching symbols. They do not procure salvation, but proclaim salvation through Christ. They are not saving acts, but contain a saving message in symbol or picture. Baptism does indeed wash away sin symbolically or figuratively, but the blood of Christ washes it away actually. Baptism has its place in the Christian life, but it must not become a substitute for the blood of Christ as an object of faith or trust.

The Church is not the gospel. Joining the church is not the same as believing the gospel. One should believe the gospel before joining the church.

The new birth is not the gospel. The new birth is an experience---a work wrought in us; the gospel is the good news of something done for us. The gospel is objective light. *"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them "* (II Cor. 4:3,4); The new birth gives subjective light so that the gospel can be savingly understood: *"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"* (II Cor. 4:6). *"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"* (John 3:3). The gospel is the story of what Christ did on the cross; the new birth is what the Holy Spirit does in us when He imparts life to us. Justification is the result of Christ's death for us *"But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;"* (Rom. 4:24); regeneration is the effect of the Holy Spirit's work in us. Justification is life imputed; regeneration is life imparted.

Repentance is not the gospel. Repentance is what the sinner must do to be saved; the gospel is what Christ has already done for our salvation. "...*Repent ye and believe the gospel*" (Mark 1:15). Here repentance and the gospel are differentiated. No man is saved by faith in his repentance; he is saved by faith in the gospel.

Faith is not the gospel. The gospel is the object of faith. Saving faith is in the gospel. Faith does not save; it is faith in the gospel that saves. We do not have a perfect faith to be saved, but there must be a perfect gospel.

POSITIVELY:

The gospel is good news. The acid test of a gospel message: is it good news to bad men? The gospel is for sinners; it is the revelation of the righteousness God has provided through Christ for the unrighteous: "*For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith*" (Rom. 1:17).

The gospel is good news about a person, the Lord Jesus Christ. "...*For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12). Men are not saved by doing this and that, or going here and there; they are saved by coming to the Lord Jesus Christ, who has so graciously said, "...*him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out*" (John 6:37). Salvation is not a matter of geography. There is not a safe spot from the wrath of God anywhere. Salvation is not in bodily flight; it is in heart trust in Him Who is our passover, sacrificed for us.

The gospel consists of certain historical facts with a certain and particular theory or explanation of those facts. The facts are given us in "... *Christ died for our sins; was buried, and rose again ..*" (I Cor. 15:3,4), Or as Paul puts it "*Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.*" (Rom. 4:25).

The least part of a fact is the visible part of it, and has no meaning without an explanation, and so Paul not only gives the facts but also explains them. The mere fact that Jesus of Nazareth was crucified is no more the gospel than that the two criminals were crucified beside Him. It is the explanation of the facts that makes His death the gospel rather than their deaths. His death was the death of Christ, the Son of God, and it was for our sins.

Christ, the Son of God, died for our sins. What does that mean? Some claim that it merely means that Christ died on our behalf, but not our Substitute. They insist that we should have no theory of the atonement, but with a little investigation we find that such people have a theory of the atonement. Let them tell us how Christ could die on our behalf; how His death could save us, unless He died as our Substitute to render satisfaction to Divine justice for our sins. For His death to save us, it must cancel our guilt before the law of God, and how could it cancel our guilt unless He suffered for the guilt that was ours? He suffered, the Just for the unjust, and how could this be unless He suffered in our room and stead? Christ dying as a martyr for a good cause, or as a mere example of faithfulness

unto death, or as a gesture of love to conquer the human heart, would in no sense redeem sinners from the curse of the law. Divine justice calls for Divine punishment, and the only way the sinner can escape judgment is for Christ to bear the punishment due the sinner. Those who deny blood atonement worship a god different to that of the Bible, and practice a religion different to that of the Bible.

WHAT THE GOSPEL DOES

In a word, it saves all who trust it. And the gospel to be trusted is what Christ, the Son of God, did in laying down His life for our sins and taking it up again for our justification. *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek"* (Rom. 1:16) is usually made to mean that the preaching of the gospel has power to convert sinners, that is, to make believers. But this is not what the verse says. It is the power of God to or for believers. It presupposes a believer. The gospel saves believers, but it has no power to make believers. The preaching of the gospel is the means of making believers, *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Rom. 10:17). Aubrey Malphurs says, "A vital aspect communicating divine truth is the application of that truth to life...unless we understand what's taking place in people's lives, both lost and saved." Aubrey Malphurs, Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992) p.165.

We repeat, that the preaching of the gospel is the necessary means to faith, for *"...how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?..."* (Rom: 10:14). If sinners are saved, the gospel must be preached to them as the means to faith and resultant salvation. However, there is a difference between means to faith and the power for faith. The power to make believers is in the effectual call of the Holy Spirit. Paul preached Christ crucified indiscriminately to the Jew and Greek. To the natural Jew such a gospel was a stumbling block, and to the natural Greek it was foolishness; but the called, both Jews and Greeks, saw the wisdom and power of God in the plan of salvation through a crucified Christ.

The apostle is not writing about the power of his preaching, but of the power of what he preached. What he preached, Christ crucified, had power to cancel the sin-debt. We sing "There is power in the blood," by which we mean that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin. That which is shameful and foolish to the masses is the very thing God uses to save sinners. What Christ did in death and resurrection has power to cancel the sin-debt. The gospel was provided by God; it was not a human expedient. God put His Son to death; He laid on Christ our iniquity. We are not saved because men killed Jesus: that was murder. We are saved because He was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. God sacrificed His own Son for our safety. Amazing and sensational?-- yes! But we must remember that sin is terrible in its nature and effects, and nothing but a sensational remedy will avail.

ILLUSTRATION

Here is a man who has committed murder for which the penalty is death by hanging. The murderer was acting as the tool of another man who, himself, was under sentence of death, with no provision for pardon. But the law allows a substitute for the murderer. The substitute is found and is hanged in the murderer's place out of love for the doomed man. Now the death of the substitute cancels the guilt of the murderer and sets him free. It is the power of the court and also power with the court. The court is satisfied with the death of the substitute and the guilty man goes free. It is the power of the court and also power with the court that is satisfied with the death of the substitute and the guilty man goes free. To interpret this parable: man became a sinner against God as a dupe of the devil, who was already a sinner under sentence with no provision for pardon. The Divine law allowed a substitute for the human sinner. The Son of God gladly gave Himself as the sinner's substitute, suffering, the Just for the unjust, that the sinner might not perish in his sins.

BENEFICIARIES OF THE GOSPEL

Paul says, "...*To every one that believeth...*" (Rom. 1:16). The death of Christ does nobody any good who scorns it and refuses to trust it. "*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him*" (John 3:36).

A fuller discussion of saving faith must be reserved for a later article the Lord enabling. However, there is space for a few words here and now. There is so much that passes for faith, that we must be on our guard lest we mistake what saving faith is. Saving faith is something more than the mere assent of the mind to a proposition, however true; it is heart trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Saving faith is not being satisfied with self; it is being satisfied with what Christ did on the cross for our salvation. One who is once satisfied with Christ will never be satisfied with anything else.

The value of faith depends upon the worth of its object. If I trust an object or a person that cannot or is not willing to save me, then my faith has no value; it is vain faith, however strong. Faith itself may be dangerous, as well as saving. It is safe to trust the Lord Jesus Christ, because He is both willing and able to save. He is able to save because He is alive. No dead person can be a real Saviour, and must not be an object of faith. It is the office of a priest to make sinners right with God. Old Testament Priests could not make sinners right with God because of two things; they could not continue as priests, and they did not have saving sacrifices to offer "*For it is not possible the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins*" (Heb. 10:4). But Christ continues forever, and hath an unchangeable priesthood: "*Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*" (Heb. 7:25).

Here is ground for saving faith, and a challenge to strong faith. Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

The Influence of the Gospel

We know that there are many things that are lethal to us today. We are all concerned with our environment. Pollution can harm the human race, there is air pollution we all have to live with. Toxic waste from hazardous materials is still impossible to get rid of. There are pesticides in the food we eat that can give us cancer. The ozone layer is an issue as the sun's protection is being depleted. What do you consider the most toxic substance on earth?

The Bible teaches it is sin, for it can affect our lives now and our eternal destiny later. As man was made in God's likeness we all have eternity in our heart, which is our spirit, and we are aware of something unseen that continues after this life. This is why there are so many different religions in the world, they know there is a God. But none have a solution for the sin factor. This is why there must be a gospel, and its origin is found in God.

From the beginning of time God promised a redeemer. After the first sin was committed by Adam and Eve they immediately knew that something had changed and they went to dress themselves in fig leaves. God drew them out of hiding and showed them that they could not cover their own sin by leaves. It was God who slain an animal (Gen. 3:21 The first sacrifice) God did the first sacrifice in front of Adam and Eve and covered them in animal skin. This word cover is *kaphar* in the Hebrew, which is the word for atonement or covering. We don't know which was the first animal sacrificed, but considering the mention of a lamb and Jesus being the lamb slain from the foundation of the world, it would not be far reaching to believe it was this kind of animal that was used. From this time forward there was a precedent set, everyone was to approach God with a blood sacrifice. This was a physical illustration to remind us of the effect of sin and show our mortality. It was also to literally cover our sin that we now were living in. The coats of skin were symbols of the covering as robes of righteousness which they lost by their transgression. This original righteousness was their nature when they walked in obedience. The clothing was made from the death of animals; so the first animals killed were not for food, they were offered in sacrifice-slain in type of sacrifice which was to cover sin and restore the righteousness they had lost by their fallen state. From this time forward God must be approached by the means of sacrifice.

(Gen.3:15) Before God dressed them he gave a promise called the *protoevangelium*, (first gospel) And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel. This is the only place in the Bible where it is called her seed and not his seed. The lineage was never attributed to the woman but the man this is why when we read the genealogies the women are not included in the records it was the man who begat.

This announced a struggle, a perpetual hostility that would have wounds on both sides with the eventual victory from the seed of woman. The prospect of a godly seed that would be an enmity with the Devil, became our first parents hope, as they were now under God's

judgment. It gave them hope for the future and lessened the severity of the breached relationship with God. Abraham is given a promise as God announced the gospel to Abraham- all nations will be blessed through you. Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, and to seeds, as of many, but as of one, and to your Seed, who is Christ?(Gal. 3:16). This promise sits quiet for centuries with no additional statement from God or the prophets until the time of the prophet Isaiah.(Isa.7:14 a virgin will conceive, something that never happened before in mankind's history). The promise in Gen.3:15 was finally answered through Mary a humble servant of the Lord.

God had ordained the means on how man from now on will approach Him in his sinful condition. This instruction is given from God and it is safe to assume Adam and Eve would have passed it on to their children Cain and Abel. The story of these two sons shows that we cannot give what we think is best to God, we can't meet His standards by our good deeds or by the work of our own hands (Gen 4:2-3). Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. Each brother offered out of the production of his own vocation. Considering all things were equal, the faith of the one bringing the offering was essential for it to be acceptable to God. When it was time to present his offering to God, Cain who was Gardener, brought the fruits of the ground. The Hebrew word *minchaah* (is seen in Ex 29:38-41; Lev 2:1-3,12; Num 5:15). According to the description of the Mosaic ritual, it was composed of an offering of fine flour, with oil and frankincense. a thanksgiving offering. It was a bloodless offering? as man was at the time vegetarian. Abel's offering consisted of the firstlings of his flock. (this later became the proper sacrifice under the mosaic law-the first-born of the flock were devoted to the Lord) Heb 11:4-5 By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks. The nature of Abel's sacrifice illustrated the genuineness of his faith showing his heart was right but the fruit of the soil offered to God by Cain was an worship on his own terms. There was no confession of sin or contrition for it, and from what we can see it was a disregard of instruction, the necessity of an atonement, and presented as a thank offering but not a sacrificial one. It expressed the barrenness of his faith. The offering of Abel was sacrificial, (as it was for the first transgression of their parents typifying the work of the promised Redeemer) it was blood offering. This showed the living faith of Abel. One was a vegetable offering, the other an animal; one a presentation of things without life, the other a sacrifice of life. 1 John 3:10-13 it says Cain's works were evil and his brother's righteous. God said IF HE DID WHAT WAS RIGHT he would be accepted. This could not be right by the work of his own hands but by bringing a right sacrifice it would cover sin.

The atonement continued by blood sacrifice and was ingrained in our human culture by those who followed God. This sacrifice became the basis for forgiveness of sin. We see this illustrated with Noah. The first thing Noah did after the flood waters receded, he left the ark and built an altar (Gen.8 and sacrificed one of every clean animal that was aboard the ark. God then promised he would never destroy every living breathing creature as he did in the flood. Notice it was clean animals not the unclean. This again a type of sacrifice that would come. We find Job was sacrificing as well, being the priest over his family. The sacrificial rites became more specific as God gave instructions to Moses to build a tabernacle and separate a priesthood.

The nature of the gospel is important to understand. The gospel itself is God's arrangement by His grace. But it was costly, it cost God's Son his life. We enter into covenant (agreement) by His work through faith. It is initiated by our obedience, (faith is obedience by repentance-turning toward God and believing in what He said), by this we are accepted by him? Christianity teaches we are saved by faith alone, but it is not alone - it is accompanied by good works. However there are many today who say we can be accepted by God by our good works alone without any blood atonement (not by an animal but by the sinless Son of God). That we can ask for God's forgiveness on our own merits. This not good news but old news! It was Cain who wanted to approach God by his own good works, choosing his own offering. He wanted to be accepted as righteous on his own merit and not the blood sacrifice they were told to obey. *He* was the first person who rejected the way of God without any outside influence. (unlike Eve who was influenced into deception by the Devil). throughout mankind's history the Bible records that all righteous men sacrificed. This teaching comes from the garden when God by example showed Adam and Eve what is necessary for their sin. Since this first promise to Adam and Eve in Genesis there has been a mystery surrounding the gospel throughout history. The word mystery is found once in each of the Synoptic Gospels: once in Matthew; Mark; Luke. Paul used the word more than any of the writers; 21 times. It is used four times in the Book of Revelation, 28 times in all. The chief way the word Mystery is used as the Mystery Kingdom- God in the Messiah, the Gentile and the Jews together as the Church which is covered from different aspects in the book of Ephesians and Colossians. Then there were also hidden meanings found in symbols and types. This mystery was written by the prophets and given in typology throughout the Old Testament but it was not revealed until something happened unlike anything before in history- Gen. 3:15 took place, the seed of the woman.

Paul relays this mystery, making it clear this gospel was not found in the stars, the pyramids or anything else held by mankind. Rom.16:25-26: ? Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith--According to my Gospel.

Paul made this personal as he was saved from the law and learned true freedom under grace, that the gospel became his life so he calls it my gospel. It was not just something he taught but lived each and everyday. He was whipped for it, put in prison and suffered from his own brethren for going town to town delivering it as life to the gentiles to all the nations surrounding Israel.

The phrase since the world began in Greek means an eternal times in all past times this has always been concealed. But now God's plan of saving people was made known to all nations by the writings of the prophets. The prophetic writings contained the doctrines but they were not all understood by the writers but confirmed the truth that the Gentiles should be made fellow heirs to the gospel. It is to these writings the apostle appealed to that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles.

Gal. 1:11-13 But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Rom.1:1 Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh. Here we have Paul pointing back to the prophets writings saying it was a promise. Although he mentions the seed of David he certainly had in mind Gen.3:15 the seed of the woman. As he writes in Gal. 4:4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law.?

Rom.5:12 tells us sin entered the world through one man- Adam- and that everyone is given a built in death warrant because of their sin nature that has been passed on. The life is in the blood we are told in Leviticus. In Acts 20:28 it states God purchased the Church with his own blood.? The blood from Emmanuel's veins. This the very reason there had to be a virgin birth. It's not that God has any blood, but that the life that was in the Son was pure, sinless.

Paul states in Rom. 1:16-17 the gospel of Christ, is The power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, the just shall live by faith.

They lived by faith in the OT and we live by faith in the New Testament. They sacrificed animals to cover their sin but they had to have faith mixed with it or it was not accepted. It was brought to and through the Jews first- but it was meant for the Greeks / the gentiles as well.

In Galatians Paul states how this gospel was to affect all mankind. Gal. 3:8-9 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, in you all the nations shall be blessed. So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

It is in Eph. 3:6 we are told that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel. In Gal. 3:17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ. The promise of justification was made to believers in Christ Jesus, who are the spiritual seed, children of Abraham because of their faith. Abraham believed in God, and he was justified; as the Gentiles believe in Christ they are justified.

How was the Gospel preached to Abraham? This was done in a number of ways. In Gal.3:16 by the seed who is Christ and through his sacrificial act on mount Moriah.

In Gal. 3:16 Paul mentions a singular seed, the Messiah that would come through his lineage.

But Abraham had two sons, Isaac by Rebecca, and Ishmael by Hagar, along with numerous descendants by Keturah. So this had to be a certain line, which is through Isaac. God says in

Gen. 17:19-20 I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him. Gen. 21:10 Sarah said to Abraham, cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac.¹² But God said to Abraham, do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called.

It is later in Gen. 22:2 when Isaac is grown up that God said to Abraham, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you. ?Its not that Abraham had only one son, but there could only be one that could be taken to Moriah and be sacrificed, the seed of the promise.

When they get there Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, My father! And he said, here I am, my son.? Then he said, look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering. And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.? Abraham builds an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. Abraham takes the knife to slay his son. But the Angel of the LORD calls to him from heaven stopping him. Saying for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.?
Then Abraham sees a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place, THE-LORD-WILL-PROVIDE; as it is said to this day, ^{על}in the Mount of The LORD it shall be provided. Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD (Yahweh), because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son.?

The Hebrew is clear it means God will provide himself as the lamb, and it was on this very mount that Abraham held back from sacrificing his only son that God the Father almost 2,000 years ago did not.

The bible makes it clear that it was the purpose of Christ to come into the world was to die for sins. John introduces Jesus into his public ministry as the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. The lambs were slain for sin in Judaism.

Isa.7:14: Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, *a virgin* shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name, (Immanuel) God with us. The sign would be that a child would be conceived without any man. Isa.9:6 tells us a child would be born ,this refers to his birth and His humanity, the seed of a woman of Gen.3:15. It also says, a son will be given? this refers to His nature as the Son in his pre-existence. He is sent from heaven as the Son by the Father and comes the way of all humanity, being born through a woman. So he was fully human and fully God.

Mark 1:1-3 (also Lk.3) The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets: behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.

The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.' (also Lk.7:27) This portion is quoted from Malachi 3 however the next verse in Malachi says And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple, Even the messenger of the covenant.

Jesus came to the temple when he was 12 when his ministry began. He came and chased the money changers out in the beginning of his ministry (Jn.2:14) and at the end (Mt.21:12). He continued to teach in the temple throughout his ministry, the last time Jesus visits the temple is when he died and after he died He went in to rip the veil that separated the holy place from the holy of Holies.

Malachi speaks of two messengers. One that will prepare the way for the Lord, who is John the Baptizer described in Isa.40:3-4 as the voice crying out in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Isaiah adds to Malachi 'Prepare the way of the LORD by saying, God will visit them, (Isa.7:14). Immanuel, (Mt. 1:23) God with us, v.25 tells us it is Jesus. Luke Chapter 3 quotes Isaiah, attributing it to John the Baptizer as the voice in the wilderness. There is another messenger in the 2nd half of Malachi, it is the same being who has been God ambassador on earth who made covenant with Israel in the Old Testament. He becomes the new Testament covenant maker. How? By becoming man and dying for our sins. (Isa.53 describes this event) The Lord Himself (Jesus/ Yahweh) is the messenger of the old covenant who came to His own temple. This is part of the mystery of the gospel. The mystery of Godliness, God was manifested in the flesh (1 Tim.3:16).

There is a scripture that is often overlooked that compliments Isa.53 it is Isa.63:7-8 God explains to us that he/God would become a man, lo he became their Savior. In all their affliction He was afflicted; and the Angel (messenger) of his presence saved them. The same angel/messenger that appeared to Moses in the burning bush and saved Israel out of Egypt became a man in the NT. When was God afflicted? Isa.53: 4 surely He has borne our grief and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. V.7 says He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; he was led as a lamb to the slaughter. In this Jesus fulfilled John the Baptists introduction as The lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world?

V.10-12 Yet it **pleased the LORD to bruise Him**; he has put Him to grief. When **You make His soul an offering for sin**, he shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.11He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge **My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities**. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and **He bore the sin of many**, and made intercession for the transgressors. Oswald Chambers in My Utmost for His Highest beware of the pleasant view of the Fatherhood of God--God is so kind and loving that of course He will forgive us. That sentiment has no place whatever in the New Testament. The only ground on which God can forgive us is the tremendous tragedy of the Cross of Christ. To put forgiveness on any other

ground is unconscious blasphemy. God can forgive sin and reinstate us in His favor [only] through the Cross of Christ, and in no other way.

Jesus became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. This is the reason He became a human to give His body as a sacrifice, since God is Spirit, He cannot die. Heb. 2:14 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.

1 Cor. 1:21 for since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. This again relates to the mystery of the gospel now made known. They preached a crucified man.

The cross was symbol of shame to the Romans but glory to the Christians. No religion has ever recognized the cross. It makes no sense to the natural man that one could suffer in the place of another, take their deserved penalty and out of mercy give them His life of freedom and his riches for doing nothing on their own.

Test Case 2

A carpenter came to work in our house. Carpenter asked, "Lady, would you mind telling me about the poster above the table. I can read. And I've been going over and over those words, but I don't understand the meaning."

The hanging poster- picture with two scrolls on either side. The empty cross was there, nails, a hammer, a crown of thorns a whip, and verses referring to Christ's death and to his resurrection. Two hours of waiting! Two hours of God's timing! As best I could, I told him about Jesus. Who He was and why He came to earth. He listened intently without interruption. Then we knelt together and I taught Him to pray. He was ready. God had opened his heart.

Learning that God's opening of our hearts does not require our deliberate effort but rather quietly awaiting the time He appoints.

The non-Christian is not attracted to Jesus nor to you by the fact that you are "different." Even your testimony does not particularly interest him. It happened to you, so what? In all probability, he is content with his life as it is now. He doesn't want to be different. At least, he doesn't want to be like most Christians he has seen! What attract you non-Christian friend? Briefly, the quiet confidence born of truth. Security born of faith in God. Peace born as the gift of His Love and the courage to live and face life. These, expressed in daily actions, will speak far more eloquently to your non-Christian friends than most of your words.

The gospel was to be preached it began with Jesus and it is about Jesus. Mark 1:14-15 Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled,

and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel. Paul said Christ must die. Acts 17:2-3 Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, this Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ. Acts 18:28 for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

How did Paul do this, what did he concentrate on? Not only the prophecies of his coming, his life and miracles but that he would die and be raised again, the very essence of the Gospel.

Jesus continued to tell the disciples ahead of time he would die. Jn.10:18: Jesus said No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. When Jesus said He is the way he meant through the cross, by his sacrifice on it. When he said he was the truth he meant not only the words he said: but that he came to die for us because we are sinners. Again, it speaks of the cross. When He said He was the life, he meant apart from Him and what He accomplished on the cross we have no hope. This is why in Jn.14:6: Jesus said No one comes to the Father except through Me. It was through the cross.

Isa.53:10: Yet it pleased God to bruise Him. In Acts 20:28 writes the *Church of God* was purchased with His **own blood**. Rev.1:5 speaking of Christ to him who loved us and washed us from our sins in **his own blood**. Eph.5:2: Christ (the God/man) also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice **to God** for a sweet smelling aroma. Heb.2:17: that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. The Bible says this was all ordained in the scriptures In Gethsamane Jesus asked if there be any other way. The Father showed him there was not as he did the fathers will.

At his arrest Jesus said to him, put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus. In that hour Jesus said to the multitudes, have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me. but all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.? Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled. (Matt 26:52-56)

On the Emmaus Rd. after He rose from the dead He met some disciples and started to teach them the scriptures, the conversation ends up where He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:45-47).

Jesus spoke to the people (specifically the religious teachers) saying you search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. (John 5:39) These would be the scriptures that spoke of his coming and His going, His birth, death and RESURRECTION.

Acts 2:30-33 Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

Rom. 1:1-4 And declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, **by the resurrection from the dead.**?

Acts 2:22-24 Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know--Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. Though they did this they were not left guiltless even though God determined that Christ should die. The LEADERS are held guilty (not all the people) for they knew what the messiah would act like, they had greater knowledge than the people did.

This wisdom which had been hidden in a mystery from people until a certain time, was revealed by the gospel. They made known the divine wisdom which HAD BEEN hidden from the minds of all people both Jew and gentile until the preaching of it was delivered by the apostles The mystery of the gospel pertains to the person it is centered on, God becoming one of his creatures, a man

1 Cor. 2:7-8 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Which rulers? Pilate-- the Roman government and the Sanhedrin and Pharisees (and possibly principalities and powers). If they had known the ways of God and the scripture they would not have had him crucified. (Col.2:15 tells us how he humiliated them all by his death) notice it says it was ordained from ages past but hidden. Christ was appointed from the beginning to be revealed in the fullness of time born under the law to a virgin. This Gospel was announced by the prophets, such as Abraham, although he did not fully know what he spoke of when he was to sacrifice his son and God gave him a Ram instead. He prophesied God will provide himself as the sacrifice. It was prefigured by the law, as in the Passover lamb yet the Jewish rulers, scribes, priests and Pharisees, did not have understanding of it. Matt 13:35 I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world. But they needed to have faith and hear what Jesus said from the heart.

The cross stands as our personal decision between hell and heaven. It is a bridge to God not made with the hands of men. It is able to rescue all that are willing to repent. No matter what race or religion one is we can be brought to the God, the creator of us all (Acts 17:24-30). It is the rallying point of unity for all mankind as it beckons all to come to the one who hung on it. But there is an enemy who hates what it stands for, and blinds the eyes of the people that would look toward it. How? By substitutes! Making it look as foolishness to

those who seek other ways. Those who seek knowledge and wisdom, those who work for their acceptance to God as their assurance. The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing but to us who have been saved it is the power of God. It is Christ crucified. The Gospel is the *power of God to salvation (Romans 1:16)*.

Jesus cried out to his Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit and then breathed His last and died. He determined the time to dismiss his own Spirit (You try doing that, it won't happen). No mere man can have control of His Spirit and time of His own death by speaking. Only God has this ability.

Death did not linger, but its moment was chosen by the one who took upon himself all of our punishment and sins and then breathed his last saying, it is finished dismissing His own spirit. When Jesus cried out on the cross it is finished. He didn't say I finished, but the debt for sin was accomplished. The justice of God and the love of God had met and was taken care of in the person of Christ.

In this we find the love and mercy of God toward us. Rom 5:6-10 for when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

This is the essence of the good news 1 Cor. 15:3 for I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures

Philip was brought by God to meet a Ethiopian in the desert who did not understand what he was reading in a certain passage of Isaiah. The place in the Scripture which he read was this: He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He opened not His mouth. In His humiliation His justice was taken away, and who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth. Acts 8:32-33 We need to declare it to our generation

Matt 25:34-35 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. It was God's intention from the beginning to have man live in harmony with his creation and have a relationship with his maker. As Jesus prayed Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. John 17:24

1 Peter 1:18-21 Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Rev 13:8 tells us The Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world.?In other words God has a provision for Adams sin before He made Adam. He foreknew all that would take place as he knows the end from the beginning. It did not have him change his mind and scratch his creation to start over but instead He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, Eph 1:4. Those who worship the beast whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, Rev.17:8

Gal 1:6-10 Paul was angered when he had heard the Galatians were practicing parts of the law.

Paul was awe struck that the Galatian church had been removed from ?the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, by those who came in and pervert the gospel of Christ. Saying in V.8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. And he repeats it for those who were hard in understanding. V.9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

*The gospel that saves contains nothing about baptism, good works, church membership, attendance, tithing, sacraments or rituals, diet or our dress the Sabbath or tongues are included. If **we add anything to the gospel**, we have destroyed it and thus come under Paul's anathema in Galatians 1:8-9! Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin. The gospel that Paul delivered and we stand in is found in 1 Cor.15:1-4 it is centered on Christ dying for our sin and resurrecting. And Paul wrote in Eph.2:8-10 how we receive it. It comes from the heart first, (believe in the heart) and we are able to agree with the mind.*

If your faith is placed in anything else for salvation than Christ's work alone for you- then you have missed the good news.

Paul writes in verse three, For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. In other words, once the mystery was hid in God, but now the believer is hid in God. v.3 gives us the timing of the manifestation of our glory is: When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested. That will be the Second Coming. The fact is, as the verse continues: then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory. Thus, just as the mystery was glory manifested, so shall we be manifested to the world in glory, meaning in our glorified state when we return with Him. The final goal is that Christ is all, and in all (3:11).

2 Cor. 5:15 And He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

The war every Christian finds themselves in is declaring the gospel that was once hid. Eph 6:19-20 Paul states And for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel Unfortunately today we still hide it from people because we lack boldness.

We receive all God has for us through the death and resurrection of our savior. We meet God our healer Yehovah Rapha through the cross as he heals us from our life of sin. In Rom.16:20 It states The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The last enemy defeated will be

death. It was for this very reason that the Son of God appeared to destroy the devils work. (1 Jn.3:8) that by his death he might destroy him who had the power of death-that is the devil. There is soon to come a day when Jesus will judge Satan and his whole kingdom will be thrown into the lake of fire never to be heard from again.

Isa. 25:8-9 He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; the rebuke of His people he will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken. And it will be said in that day: behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.?

Rev 21:4 echoes this and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.

This is good news for those who accept the only Gospel, this is why **there must be a Gospel.**

The Nature of Man – The Nature of Gospel’s Influence

The nature of the gospel is by far the most important subject a Christian can understand for himself and others. Before one can understand why there is even a gospel, we need to comprehend what sin is, otherwise there is no need to have a gospel. This involves understanding the nature of man. The Gospel is God’s way to deal with the nature of man. When Adam and Eve Sinned by disobeying God it was a personal, individual sin but the moral consequence became communal. In other words, from their passing on their nature that had changed, the whole human race was affected drastically for the worse. Adam was an individual yet the Bible also applies the name Adam to all mankind, the whole of the human race. He became mankind’s headship and what affected him likewise affected everyone who came afterwards from his lineage. We can understand this better today by our genetic makeup. When a flaw occurs in the DNA code, it is passed down to the following generations. Adams sin was so catastrophic in changing the nature of man that not a single human being that has come from the gene pool has escaped the pollution inherited from him. We are now born with a genetic flaw and it consequentially brings death to all. Adams posterity shared in the consequences of his disobedience. Despite the fact that man was able to live in the beginning to grand old age of 900 plus years, our resilience to live tremendous long periods slowly declined in each succeeding generation. As humankind advanced, the effects of sin continued to develop further on our body.

There are numerous religions that deny the concept of original sin. The Bahais say man is born good and that we need education to reform ourselves. Likewise their predecessors Islam also teaches their is no original sin. The Mormon church also denies it by saying that Adam did not fall from his state of innocence downward but actually fell upward. That by listening to the devils lies it actually gave him the opportunity to become a God. So in essence the Devil told the truth. (Jesus said the opposite that he was a liar and a murderer from the beginning) Others like the Catholic church teach that the original is in man can be erased by baptism and that we then sin of our own choice, it is then dealt with by taking the sacraments. The International Church of Christ believes that everyone inherits the consequence of Adam's sin (physical death), and not his nature. Everyone seems to deal with this in different manners, but all in one way or another recognize man as not living to his potential.

At first glance this doesn’t seem to matter whether one believes that we all inherit a sin nature or become one by our own desires. It does matter and is extremely important to have this doctrine settled, for it can affect numerous other areas of teaching and actually affect our walk.

What does this logically mean if we are not born with a sinful nature, inclined to sin? It means that we are born sinless because there are only two categories. Biblically, God told Adam that he would die in the day that he disobeyed. Adam's death which was from sin was first spiritual, and then physical. This is the same sequence for all of humanity. We are all born with a built-in death warrant, which is our sin nature, because we have inherited this sin nature from Adam. We are already spiritually dead (separated from God).

The Psalmist says Ps.58:3: "the wicked go astray from the womb, they err from their birth speaking lies. Ps.51:5 David claimed that he was conceived in iniquity."

Job asks the question "What is man, that he could be pure? And he who is born of a woman, that he could be righteous?" (Job 15:14) Job 25:4: "How then can man be righteous before God? Or how can he be pure who is born of a woman?"

Eph. 2:3: "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and *were by nature the children of wrath*, even as others."

If there is no sin nature passed on then we have the potential to be perfect by not doing any wrong. But there is no one who can do this as Paul states

Rom 3:10: "As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one" v.12 "They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one."

If it were true that none of us are born sinful then each one of us is being tested all over again, just like Adam to see if we will fail. The Bible says that, "The wages of sin is death." Sin is first and then the consequence is the payoff. Romans 5:18 -19 says, "through one man's trespass, *judgment came to all men*, for by **one man's disobedience** all were made sinners." This Scripture clearly shows sin is inherited through his (Adam's) disobedience, not ours. The Bible says we are all under the condemnation of sin. The Bible speaks of sin not as a biological flaw but a spiritual infection that is transmitted through the reproductive cycle finding itself in all humans corrupting their nature. Romans 3:23 says, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." If one entertains the thought that they are born without sin, then they have the glory of God. The only one who has the glory of God as their nature is God.

One can be a sinner without showing any actions outwardly. Sin is being selfish, one can have a wrong attitude and desires contrary to God and not act upon it. Jesus said to have these thoughts in our heart is still sin even if not done outwardly. He stated in the sermon of the mount that one did not just break the law from their outward actions but it started on the inside. What made one a transgressor of the law is the intent of our heart. Even if one did not commit the physical act of murder, if they harbored hatred toward someone in their heart this is where sin begins. They have already broken the law and are guilty. This is why all of mankind are sinners we all fall short of God's perfect standard inside and out, in our nature and in our deeds. Unbelief is sin, to not believe in Christ is sin. Anything contrary to the nature of God to the character and conformity of his will is sin. Paul states "whatever is not of faith (trust in God) is sin." It's not just our actions that make us sinners, otherwise, Christ could have been born through two human parents and His actions would still be sinless. However, it was for this very reason because He took on human flesh that He had a virgin birth - **to bypass the sin nature of man and have sinless blood**. For the life of man is in the blood.

What the teaching of no original sin is saying is that no one dies spiritually *until they sin*. This means everyone is born innocent (perfect), just like Adam was made, just like Jesus,

without ever having a virgin birth. The root of the problem is their interpretation of sin. Sin entered the world through one man (Rom. 5:12-21). The definition of sin varies. Not only does it mean "to miss the mark" of perfection of God's goal, but it also carries the concept of separation from God, which we all share in. Paul's point is that Adam's sin was a representative act and all his posterity has reckoned to their account having sinned in him. Adam was the natural headship of the human race. From him flows man's fallen nature, passed on through the bloodline (the life is in the blood). Only Adam became a sinner by sinning. The sin nature affects the immaterial part of man, which consequently affects our outward actions. consequently affects our outward actions.

The view of man being born without original sin is not new but goes back to 400 A.D., where Pelagian taught that there was no such thing as original sin.

He taught that Adam's sin affected only himself, that every soul is created innocent and only personal sins are imputed. So it was possible, according to this view to live a life without sin. Man having absolute freedom to choose good by his will. Then it also becomes possible to be saved apart from the Gospel. Augustine challenged the view that Pelagius promoted in the 5th century. Pelagius saw sin to be basically a outward work of man, who had the freedom to choose to sin or not to sin. He stated that sin incapacitated man. Augustine appealed to the overall teaching of scripture. Stating that sin incapacitated man from doing good.

He stated that we are born sinners and actually lack the power to do good. Yet we all choose bad over good and in so doing are held accountable for our actions. Augustine gave a story of a man who abstained from food that was necessary for his health and became so weak that he could no longer eat at all. While he was a human being created in having a obligation to eat to keep himself in good health, he no longer was able to do so. So Augustine argued humanity through Adam as the federal head of the human race became incapacitated toward God unable to obey and love him which was the very purpose we created. Pelagius held the view that one could raise themselves by their own effort toward God and that grace is a reward for our own human virtue. Augustine centered his argument around the fact that the fallen race of mankind is helpless to do any good until grace falls upon him. When gods grace touches an individuals life he is then able to move toward God and do good that is required of him. The concept of Augustine became known in reform theology as total depravity. Pelagius view was rejected and called heresy then, and should certainly be rejected today, also. There is also the view of semi-pelagianism in which the fall weakened the soul and our will. Original sin means losing original righteousness. Original sin can be eliminated by water baptism and that man is not totally depraved.

The origin of the soul is an important factor in understanding the nature of sin.

Scholars have explored how and at what point in the birth process the soul comes into being of which three positions have been advocated. The first theory is that there is a **preexistence** of the soul.

Firstly, a few writers have argued that the soul pre-exists the moment of physical conception. (Origen c.185-c.254) taught a form of this and it appears in Wordsworth's Ode on Immortality. Although some claim he taught reincarnation his writings mention his not believing in re-embodiment. What he did teach was preexistence and people being born only once. This view teaches that God created all the souls in the beginning at some point in time. The soul then enters the body either at conception or at birth. The pre spirit existence theory has no basis in Scripture having no references to prove this view.

Secondly, **creationism** argues that the soul of each individual is created directly by God at some stage in the birth process. (Charles Hodge) The reasoning in this is that the soul and body have different origins. Since the nature of the soul is spiritual it must be a direct creation from god. The texts claimed in its support cannot be said to represent a clear case (Ec.12:7; Zech.12:1; Isa.42:5,57:16; Heb.12:9, as well as Gen. 2:7). The flaw with this view is how can one justify God putting a pure and innocent soul in a sinful body.

The third view, **traducianism**, teaches that the soul is inherited from the human progenitors along with the body, there being no further act of soul-creation by God. It is transmitted the same way as the physical body at conception. Genesis 2:21, Acts 17:26, Hebrews 7:9-18 shows us that the sons of Levi had the tithes given through the loins of Abraham. The Bible's teaching on the solidarity of the human race in sin (Rom. 5:12.) are all lined up in support of this view. Gen.46;26 the soul is in the loins of the man. The begetting process includes the image of god which is immaterial. The sin nature is present at conception and in it.(Job.14:1-4,15:14; Ps.53:3 Jn.3:6) This is related to the biblical teaching on the unity of man.

Man is has two components and is a unified being of a material nature and immaterial. Whether one believes he is a trichotomy (body , soul and Spirit) or dichotomy (body and Spirit), he consists of a body and a spiritual nature, material and immaterial.

Man is a free moral creature yet we have the inherent inability to choose contrary to our nature. This is like gravity we can only jump so high on our own. This is why before a new birth we cannot choose and practice Gods standards and ways. We do not have the ability to change our own moral state. Augustine was right, man as a free moral creature will be held accountable for our own character, conduct, and actions to ourselves and others. When we talk about total depravity it is described as man being a corpse unable to choose God. We are dead spiritually held captive by our own nature. Sin has touched every aspect of our lives and we have the capacity to be as bad as possible. While some claim this means we can do no good at all, this is not so! Yet man is still able to do good so it does not deprive us from doing any good but it does eliminate it from coming naturally. Can one tell the difference from a Buddhist doing good works and a Christian, No. If a Christian helps someone who is poor and one who is an atheist from the outside the deed can look exactly the same to man, but only God can look at the heart and see our motives. What it does mean is that we can do no spiritual good, what makes one acceptable to God and another rejected is that one is done with motivation of his standard and spirit, the other is not. Only deeds done in Christ are spiritually acceptable to God. Other deeds outside Christ are done with the works of the flesh yet they can still accomplish good. Even Paul said the gentiles without the law can obey its precepts, yet no one will be justified in the sight of god by the deeds of the law.

If we inherit our physical features and even hereditary defects from our line, then why would it be so difficult to believe that our sinful nature could be passed on as well? How else could a child's death be explained if they are truly innocent and die before they willfully have a chance to sin? Death is the consequence of sin. This is the very reason why we need to be born again. Our dead spirit needs to be regenerated (Rom. 8:1, Gal. 5:24) by the Spirit of God. One is made alive spiritually to God and is able to have a vital relationship through Jesus Christ. We need a new nature. Anything short of this cannot remedy our desperate situation. If there is no sin nature then we can by our own efforts reform ourselves to have a right standing before God. Rules and regulations only conform the outer man and we then depend on our own works to merit right standing before God. Real obedience is found in giving our control over and yielding to the Spirit of God who lives inside those born anew. God's solution is a permanent indwelling to change us by changing the source of where sin emerges. Their view of not having the sin nature goes deep into their theology. They believe that water can wash away one's sins, since there is not a need to affect the inner nature of man, but only his outward actions, because this is how they look at their disciples' obedience. The problem is that man cannot cleanse away the inner man's corruption, as Peter states, even in baptism a righteous work, "It is not the removal of the filth of the flesh" (1 Pet.3:21).

Only Christ was born without sin passed on. God went quite far in assuring this by having a miracle to make this happen. If it is not man's inner nature that needs changing, then all we are left with is rules to obey. These can never change the inside but only conform us on the outside.

The Bible says, "The heart (man's spirit) is deceitfully wicked out of which flow all kinds of evils." The only solution is God's solution - change the heart. How? By the new birth on the inside of man. To deny that the sin nature is passed on to all humanity poses many problems. The Bible says that this is the very reason Christ came to solve the predicament of sin which all humanity shares in. Those who believe on his sacrifice have his righteousness imputed to us to counter the effects of sin. Once one is born again of God's Spirit we become free from sin, it no longer has the power to rule over us and keep us in its grip. While the sin nature is not eliminated it constantly wars against the old nature that is still present. If we rely on God submit to his power and ways we can overcome all that the enemy uses to tempt us with. This becomes a new way of living a lifestyle of training and discipline in holiness. Only Christ has the solution, no other religion can deal with the fallen nature of man. Because Jesus Christ is the creator.

Theologian Louis Berkhof writes "In the sight of God his sin was the sin of all his descendants, so that they are born as sinners...Every man is guilty in Adam, and is consequently born with a depraved and corrupt nature. And this inner corruption is the unholy fountain of all actual sins" (L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, p. 251).

Knowing the dire position we are all in, God through our short history began to deal with mankind in various ways to bring us back into what He first intended for us. This has been done through what is now known as the gospel, God's declaration of good news to mankind.

The alienation of man from God through human sin necessitates a reconciliation; within the Jewish sacrificial system it had repetitive offerings that “covered” sin temporarily (the Hebrew word for atonement, kaphir, means “covering”). This made it possible for sinful man to approach a holy God and be in covenant relationship with Him. The sprinkling of blood upon the mercy seat in the tabernacle (Lev. 16:15-16) and the sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lamb (Exod. 12:7) underscored the importance of substitutionary sacrifice under the Old Covenant made between Yahweh and Israel. In the New Testament, particularly in the Book of Hebrews, the significance of such sacrifices is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is pictured as both high Priest and the atoning Sacrifice (Heb. 9:11-15; 10:10-12). And the form of that reconciliation was by the cross -- where the ultimate and final sacrifice would be made.

This is why we find the death and resurrection was the centerpiece of the apostles’ preaching through the book of Acts.

The sacrifice of Christ has a specific word used, “vicarious,” it comes from the Latin word vicar, which literally means “in place of” or “a substitute.” In Isaiah 53 we find the vicarious atonement is a man: “Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (vs. 4-6). This was His purpose of incarnating, so seek and saved those who are lost.

Mankind has a certain view of himself; we do not like to think the worst of ourselves but the best. So we find all the other religions have people do certain acts, good deeds, obeying its rules to have the favor and the blessings of what they perceive as God. This is how they relate to God. There is only one religion that does not work by this type of operation is Christianity. Instead of man’s attempt to reach up to God by his works, God came reaching down to man. Instead of man trying to earn God’s favor, God gave it freely by His “only begotten Son.” In Isaiah it says all our righteousness is like filthy rags, it is even more explicit in the Hebrew wording: used bloody rags. That is how God sees our good works. I know this doesn’t sound too promising; it isn’t if you choose to go this route. One has no choice but to embrace the gospel once they understand their unacceptable condition before God.

But it is not that easy because there is another factor in all this. Paul writes in 2 Cor. 4:4 “whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.” It is the gospel that is the light that shows one their sin so he can confess his fallen state (by agreeing with God) and come out of the darkness. But sometimes it helps us in presentation of the good news to give the bad news. This is done by using the law, showing what sin is.

Rom.6 explains that all have sinned, so we need to explain what sin actually is. Rom 3:10-12 As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one there is no-one who understands, no-one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no-one who does good, not even one.”

The Gospel of Jesus Christ reveals the most dreadful news: all have sinned, and that God judges sin. The very nature of the gospel declares we are ALL sinners, but it offers the cure giving us the best news ever heard, salvation from sin. Sometimes the gospel needs to be explained in detail over and over until the light shines through the darkness. If one rejects the gospel they are not rejecting a certain teaching, they are rejecting the person the Gospel is focused on, and are essentially rejecting the God they really want to affirm.

The distortions

Some deny original sin has affected all mankind, that we are not born with sin. If we choose to sin then we can choose to stop; it is only a matter of modifying our behavior by our own initiative. Then who needs the sacrifice to cleanse and forgive us of our sin? Some teach that that God loves our sinful part along with what is good in us. He sees also the good in us and is trying to get the good that is already in us out of us. Some Bible teachers interpret what happened in Eden, as a broken relationship, there was no total fall into sin that changed our nature. Therefore there is no sin to be forgiven of by the cross. God only wants to empower our 'good' instead of redeem us and change our fallen nature to come back in relationship to him. This type of explanation nullifies the need for Christ's sacrifice on the cross. If they would take a moment to reflect on themselves and others, they would see the need for something more than what they have in themselves. Paul who presented the gospel said there is no good that dwells in me. He looked to Christ not himself.

The only person's who has ever become a sinner because they sinned were Adam and Eve; everyone born afterwards sins because we are sinners in our nature. God knows this and this is what He needs to repair in the human species.

Those who deny original sin has affected all mankind make Christ's death a useless act. Why did He have to die if we only need to reform what we do wrong or act from our good part that is in us? To me this type of gospel nullifies the need for Christ's sacrifice on the cross. This view called Pelagianism is false because the Bible says we are desperately wicked without cure. *Jer. 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"* Those in other religions and cults who hold to this concept of mankind's goodness are wrong because the Bible says we are wicked and sinful and no solution is to be found from man who has this condition. We have proven this to be true throughout mankind's history. No society or city has ever lived peaceably or kept God's requirements right. We can see by our history and our everyday experiences which give testimony to this as fact, this system of belief is based on reality and not just a religious belief. W. E Vine says, "The sin issue must be settled for any new life to be bestowed" (W. E Vine on 1 John 4).

Oswald Chambers stated, "Never build your preaching of forgiveness on the fact that God is our Father and He will forgive us because He loves us. It is untrue to Jesus Christ's revelation of God; it makes the Cross unnecessary; and the Redemption "much ado about nothing." God could forgive men in no other way than by the death of His Son, and Jesus is exalted to be Saviour because of His death" (Oswald Chambers, My Utmost for His Highest).

Arranged by His Grace

The gospel itself is God's arrangement by His grace. We enter into covenant by His work through faith, trusting in what He has already done. The calling to faith is initiated by God and our response is our obedience, (faith is the first act of obedience), by this we are accepted by him? This is all He asks from us to receive the free gift of salvation.

Grace means its all God's work; it is His mercy given freely to us that is an expression of His love for us, we are unable to earn what He offers and we don't have to try and earn it, because He gives it to us for free. That should be good news to all.

Grace is God's Riches At Christ's Expense

This was all done by the invisible God made known in a man called Jesus (Jn.1:18), that we could come to know our creator in a greater and more intimate way then ever before revealed man. God became a man through a virgin conception by a young Jewish girl engaged to be married. Although all sinned in Adam, there is only one human that was ever born without a human father. In a miraculous way He was conceived and able to bypass the polluted gene pool and become a man without sin. Only a man without sin could be acceptable to take the place of those who had sinned.

The Gospel consists of three parts. 1) He (Jesus) died for our SINS 2) He was buried (proving He actually died), 3) He rose again, taking up the same body He was born and lived in, and still exists in today (in a glorified state). It is this gospel Paul said He delivered to them in 1 Cor.15:1-4. The Gospel concerns *God's only Son* and His work on the cross on our behalf to forgive our sin. If its focus is on something else, no matter how sacred or Biblical, then it is not the gospel of Christ. The Gospel focuses on the person of Christ the Son of God who came as the Savior from heaven (1 John 4:14). He is proclaimed by Scripture as the Lord of the universe (which also relates to the triune nature of God). We abide in our salvation by trusting in His work only. Salvation is a gift freely given, not earned. We work from our salvation, not toward it. In other words, you can knock on doors for 10,000 years and give all your money in tithing to God's work and try to keep His law but it will not earn you one iota of merit before God; it will only make you more guilty if you are doing this to gain salvation. Paul who was actually doing this said in, Romans 4:4-5 "Now to him who works, *the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.*" V. 5 "But to him who does not work *but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith* is accounted for righteousness ..." Rom. 11:6 "And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work." In the Old Testament covenant there was the working of grace but it was under the law. Because this covenant was conditional there were requirements Israel had to do to be blessed and receive the benefits. In the New Covenant grace rises above the law, it is the main operation of the new covenant. It requires faith and not works to be in right standing with God.

Charles Spurgeon spoke on the law by saying, "There is no point upon which men make greater mistakes than upon the relation which exists between the law and the gospel. Some men put the law instead of the gospel: others put the gospel instead of the law; some modify the law and the gospel, and preach neither law nor gospel: and others entirely abrogate the law, by bringing in the

gospel. Many there are who think that the law is the gospel, and who teach that men by good works of benevolence, honesty, righteousness, and sobriety, may be saved. Such men do err. On the other hand, many teach that the gospel is a law; that it has certain commands in it, by obedience to which, men are meritoriously saved, such men err from the truth, and understand it not. A certain class maintain that the law and the gospel are mixed, and that partly by observance of the law, and partly by God's grace, men are saved. These men understand not the truth, and are false teachers. ... The coming of the law is explained in regard to its objects: "Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound." Then comes the mission of the gospel: "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

The clear preaching of God's laws should cause sinners to tremble. This is the lawful use of the law (1 Tim.1:9). To show them the exceeding sinfulness of sin and that *they* are sinners. The law cannot save them, it is a teacher, it is a mirror to their sinful self! The law compares us to God's standards not our ourselves. One cannot help but see they have come short of what is expected.

Romans 3:25-28 "whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law."

No man can keep God's law the way He asks, therefore the law makes us guilty; it cannot be used to prove our goodness or make better persons out of us or make us more spiritual because it does not improve on the internal fallen nature of man. It only condemns, this is why Paul says it is used now for the ungodly sinners (1 Tim.1:9).

By believing in Jesus' work on the cross our boasting is excluded, just as Paul states in Eph.2:8-10 We are saved by His grace through faith, not of works. In other words there is absolutely nothing you or I can do to merit God's favor toward us, even if we are the most righteous pious person on earth it would not merit anymore credit than one who goes around and does the very opposite. The fact Jesus makes it clear that He came to save sinners, not to call the righteous. Why? Because if you think you are righteous then you cannot see your sin and have no need to be saved. He calls these persons blind.

H. Norman Wright says, "The Scriptures have much to say about thinking and the thought life. The words: think, thought and mind are used over three hundred times in the Bible." H. Norman Wright, The Christian Use of Emotional Power, (New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1974)p.37

We have a decision to place our hope in Christ's work on the cross after He has shown us His grace. This is in response to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the work of the Spirit is to help us come to faith in Christ. He will show the sinner this is the only way to God. As John wrote the Holy Spirit was sent to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment.

Most non-churched people do not understand the Gospel or have had it adequately explained, so they ignore the eternal ramifications of rejecting it. If they understood their position to God without the gospel they would certainly not hesitate to receive forgiveness God's way.

The one true gospel consists of God's grace, which God offers as our *only* salvation. This has three basic elements: 1) HIM- who Christ is--fully God and perfect, sinless man. If he were less, He could not be our Savior for He would have to save Himself as well. 2) US-who we are--hopelessly condemned sinners already destined to eternal separation from God (or we wouldn't need to be saved). We are all in this condition together, no one is exempt. 3) HIS WORK - Christ's willingness to die on the cross, He accomplished the full penalty for our sins (any attempt by us to accomplish this *in any way*, rejects the free gift of salvation God offers.)

Without at least a basic understanding of these essentials, there can be no true acceptance of the biblical gospel. How can one place trust regarding eternal destiny in something he doesn't understand and in someone who he doesn't really know? In parable of the seed and the sower Jesus explains the only seed that grew was because it fell on good soil, that soil that had understanding. You don't need a great deal, but a basic comprehension of what is required. God will multiply it as you receive and accept the truth. The truth on--His nature, the fall of man, sin as our present condition, the need for redemption, and the plan of salvation in the gospel as the basics.

When the Gospel in the Church is not accurately taught or explained, people end up not understanding the message of sin, repentance and saving faith. In its place is substituted a message which concentrates only on God's love. While this is true and is the very reason the Son was sent, it is only a part of the Gospel. It does not include the implications of one's sin and the punishment intended for sin. Without the Gospel's presentation of Christ as the Savior *from our sin*, and the message of forgiveness of sin, one can end up with a superficial knowledge of what the Gospel is all about. This only makes Church members, not true converts. A Gospel without repentance leaves people trapped in their sin while still believing in Christ. They can find themselves trapped in the sin they once practiced because they have not clearly seen the offense of sin. While we may not expect all the things pertaining to the Gospel to be proclaimed each time it is presented, but they certainly need to be taught afterwards. Otherwise one is left *not building* on the one sure foundation. and it is not the recipients fault but the leaders in the Church that have not presented the gospel to them fully or accurately.

We should never forget the gospel is prompted by love from God's mercy, He does not want to show anger toward us, however if the gospel is rejected He has no choice but to do so. God knows our predicament and did not sit idly by but took the initiative to bring us back into fellowship with Himself. This was done by great sacrifice and suffering on His part. While salvation from the eternal consequences of sin is free, it cost God a great deal. God does not save us by love itself; the Father saves us on the basis of His Son's sacrifice and our acceptance of the gospel.

The gospel is a present invitation, a now proclamation, not a tomorrow one (today IS THE DAY OF SALVATION the Scriptures declare). God calls us to Himself as if we are dangling from a high cliff with only two fingers ready to fall to our destruction. That is how he sees our situation in life and He wants to rescue us.

Counterfeit Gospels

Now we come to the most important issue concerning the Gospel the person of Jesus Christ in salvation. It is this teaching that can turn the Gospel into a counterfeit even if one preaches Jesus is the Son of God who died for sin. The person of Jesus in salvation is as important as what He accomplished on the cross.

There are many counterfeit gospels spread by those who believe they have justification by Scripture to approve their unique teaching positions. Many Judaizers are still with us today that insist we must keep the laws, they even go as far as the food. They mix law with grace--which annuls grace. Some say without baptism from their church group you cannot be saved; others claim one must be baptized in a certain way, such as the Oneness Pentecostals, who claim baptism saves through Jesus' name only; still others insist to seek a separate experience of the Holy Spirit (by speaking in tongues or being slain), to prove you have received the Spirit. By telling people they must obey these extra commands and distortions of Scripture, they make it impossible for true regeneration to occur.

But the most concerning is the claim that one only needs to believe in God's son dying for sin will save when they insist that He is not deity but only a man. This would include all the cults which certainly presents a greater problem than just distorting the truth but uniting the Church with those who are not the church. The Gospel concerns *God's only Son* and His work on our behalf to forgive sin, but if it is focused on something else that is not the God/man, the unique Son of God(God became flesh), no matter how sacred or Biblical it is, it is not the gospel of Christ. In Lk.2:25 Simeon was waiting for the consolation of Israel as he was promised by the Holy Spirit he would see the Messiah before he dies. Jesus as a baby is brought into the temple according to the law by Mary, Simeon led by the spirit into the temple sees him and says, "My eyes have seen your salvation." our salvation is a person, who is both God and man. The Gospel focuses on the person of Christ the Son of God who came as the Savior *from heaven* (1 John 4:14; John 6:38,8:23, 16:16,17, 28).

Michael Horton states "The Christian faith rests on the claim of its Founder that He was the Messiah, God incarnate, the Savior of the world, and the claim of its apostles that they were eyewitnesses to His resurrection" (Michael Horton, "Recovering the Plumblin," *The Coming Evangelical Crisis*, Moody, 1996, pp. 257-258).

1 Jn.4:14 "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. (referring back to 1 Jn.1:1)[And we the apostles and disciples of his time have seen]. The apostles testify to the facts concerning Him in all the gospels. They had the fullest proof of this from his doctrine and miracles, which they heard and saw during the whole time that he sojourned among earth.

Their testimony--God was manifested in the flesh; how do we know this? Because He is the savior, not just in title but by His action. "For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior" (Isa.43:11). "I, even I, am the LORD, and besides Me there is no Savior" (Isa.45:17). We find in Isa.63:8 God speaking, "so **He** became their Savior." Lk.1:46-47 Mary says "My spirit has rejoiced in **God** my Savior." She certainly understood what savior meant.

1 Jn. 5:9-12 "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." Eternal life is synonymous with the Son because He is eternal.

1 John 4:15 "whoever confesses that Jesus Christ is the son of God, God abides in him and he in God" a relationship is started. Confess means to say the same thing; i.e., agree with some authority outside of one's self. The confession is the Son of God. "This confession of the deity of Jesus Christ implies surrender and obedience also, not mere lip service" (A. T. Robertson, Word Studies in the New Testament, VI, 234).

This confession also included His humanity as well, He truly was God in the flesh because John earlier wrote of those who denied this in chapter 4 have the Spirit of anti-christ. The problem in the early church was not that Christ was God but that he was human. The Gnostics denied God became a man, these false teachers denied the reality of the incarnation; so this confession was all important because it involved the virgin birth.

This confession was not mere words as in repeating a creed it involved faith in the heart as its foundation, acknowledgment with the mouth. This means they acknowledge this by mouth and by practice; from what they teach, their profession in the life and conduct.

Just believing in Jesus doesn't save you, although you may feel good and secure in what you believe. It must be understood who he is. 1 Cor.15:47: "the first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second man is the **Lord from heaven.**" He is Lord of the universe. He must be understood as Lord, God, without this understanding you don't have the true Christ of the gospel message, nor can you practice Christianity.

To believe the biblical Gospel means to accept the apostolic teaching of justification by faith alone in Christ alone. As Christians we are to affirm that the Gospel is only the saving power of God to salvation. It becomes the only way because it is connected to the unique Son of God. Salvation is centered on the person of Christ, who He is. The deity of Jesus is entirely important, just as much as it is dependent on His work on the cross. The person cannot be separated from the gospel it is intrinsic in it. Because if we do not have the correct Jesus, the one we believe on for salvation cannot save us.

Just believing in Jesus doesn't save you unless He is understood as Lord; God. Without this position you don't have Christianity nor do you have the true Christ, the one true God who took on humanity and became man for our salvation.

Rom. 10:9: "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord" this means ones confession is to be I BELIEVE JESUS CHRIST IS WHO HE SAYS HE IS. That something is that HE IS DEITY.... God who came from heaven as the Son of God.

Scripture affirms that God HIMSELF is our savior. The whole Old Testament bears witness to this fact. If your savior you have believed in is not God then you are not saved. Romans 10:13 says, "And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD [Yahweh] will be saved." The apostle Paul is quoting Joel 2:32 ("calling upon the LORD [Yahweh] in context is being fulfilled by calling upon Jesus Christ. "Calling upon Yahweh" is "calling upon Jesus Christ," they are one and the same. Paul is identifying the messiahs identity as Yahweh to the people for salvation. This is all through the New Testament as the testimony of the Holy Spirit and God the Father.

Jesus states in John 16:28 "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father."

[I came forth from the Father] He existed from eternity in glory with Him (explaining this in Jn.17).

[Am come into the world] His incarnation by a virgin birth, passing the pollution of sin.

[I leave the world] after His death He ascends to God from where He came from.

[And go to the Father.] At His ascension He is brought back to his former and rightful place. This Scripture the person of Gospel is proclaimed as Lord. Again 1 Cor.15:47: "the second man is the **Lord from heaven.**"

What does the Son of God mean is what matters, not just the words said. There is more than one doctrine that is connected to salvation. The primary one is that Christ is God in the flesh, After asking who the the disciples think He is, when Peter confessed "thou are the Christ the Son of the living God," Jesus said the Church would be built upon this.

How can we call upon him who became man unless we are told whom we are calling on. Our faith rests in the person first, then His work on the cross. It matters "who" died for our sin as much as His dying for the sin. Romans 10:9: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus...thou shalt be saved." It is the confession of Jesus as God --having faith in the God-man that saves us from the penalty of sin.

If we reject the Bibles teaching of God in Christ--the God man have we received salvation? 1 Corinthians 12:3 "No man can say that **Jesus is Lord**, but by the Holy Ghost." Again to be called Lord is to acknowledge Jesus is indeed Yahweh. The next time someone says "I believe he is the son of God or Lord" ask them what they mean by this. If we believe in Christ but deny His deity, we are not in possession of the true faith that justifies, we will not be saved. Because any other Christ is a false one, a non-existent person. True doctrine is connected to the person of Christ who delivered His teaching to the apostles.

The Word of God, whether read or preached, it is God's means of presenting salvation found in Christ; faith is our means of receiving that salvation. Repentance is an act we do because of faith, if one truly hears the message of the gospel and obeys its requirements. God loves you enough to tell you that you are a sinner. Does it become offensive or even hateful for one to tell another the truth? Let me put it this way, what if you went to a doctor for your daily examination and he found something wrong that could kill you if you did not immediately take care of it. Would you blame your doctor for telling you this or would you thank him and take the medicine? The gospel is our medicine for sin; it is not one of many cures to take but the ONLY cure.

When people claim Christ but do not understand the uniqueness of the gospel, they eventually incorporate Christ as a teacher among the many other teachers like the Bahai religion does. Not as the way the truth the life, the only way to the Father. Maybe this is why we have many professors not many possessors. While most churches have orthodox statements of faith, many of the congregant's do not know what those statements mean; so how can they believe it? If asked questions on the central core teachings such as: what is the Gospel and how is one saved, many probably could not answer them accurately or point in Scripture where the answers could be found. They cannot explain or defend the teachings they hold, so how can they in all honesty admit to believing them? We have a problem in the Church that cannot be ignored. But it can easily be solved, by teaching apologetics, equip the people on the why the Scripture is true.

We must deal with the sin factor before His love is known to us. Jesus said to love God, your neighbors and even your enemies, He used love as the motivation of whom you will serve God or Mammon (Lk.6:32) or addressed those who loved attention and used their prayers and money in front of people to gain it (Lk.20:46). Love of God was shown in how they accepted him (Jn.5:39-42) What He did do is show love by example and drew people into a place to act in love. The reason for this is that love is an action not just a teaching or something you believe in.

Jesus often recited the law to show where one has not done what God requires. When we remove teaching the consequences of the law before the gospel is presented people will do not see their sinfulness in the way God does. This does not mean that the Holy Spirit cannot show an individual the depths of his despair. But by omitting the law and only concentrating on only love a preacher can get a lot of "decisions for Christ" but will he have true converts. The appeal of success today is to base ones ministry on decisions at the altar and not on the survival rate afterwards. It matters if they are not there the next week or month, we don't want fair weather converts but true disciples who heard and counted the cost.

Returning to the original message

So why do so many people not continue in their profession? As some have pointed out, we lack good discipleship tools in the church, so this can be one of the reasons. Statistics prove there is an 80-90% fall-away rate on new "decisions" for Christ. Of the 10 to 20% that still come to church only 3% of them are truly committed, active and faithful workers for Christ. Faithfulness is the outworking of living faith. As God builds our faith through trials, our faith grows. If we shrink back, or are mislead our faith can be shipwrecked. One of the ways to

destroy your own faith is to believe there are to be no trials or suffering for those who have faith. This is not what Jesus or the apostles taught or lived. Your either growing or shrinking there is no neutral ground in the spiritual war we are all in.

Many stop at conversion without regeneration. In other words they are convinced they need a savior, and that they need to wholeheartedly follow Christ, but when we have people years down the line of their decision saying Jesus is not God, whom then did save them? Their unwillingness to follow him shows that they do not esteem Him for who He really is.

Some things to consider

If one is not trusting continually in the cross, (the crucifixion) and affirming that it is their only hope are they saved? The gospel must elicit a response to follow not just accept its presentation. It is more than just a decision but a life change because it involves repentance. Salvation may come by a prayer but it should not be reduced to only a prayer. Some people think if I can just get this person to pray and say these words he will be saved. No, we are to produce disciples, those who follow because they believe from the gut (innermost being), not converts who only believe which does not lead to action, a changed life. Salvation is a gift not earned however we have a part in being faithful.

We just may need to re-examine what we are saying is the gospel.

Maybe we are starting on the wrong end with just saying God loves you when it should be: you have not lived up to what God's standards are and you need to repent to receive His love. Its true God loves us even while we are sinners, this is when Jesus died for us, and some people need to hear about His unconditional love more than their guilt, but this should not be the entire content of our message. How can one receive the blessing when it first involves a spotlight shown on a person's heart for them to see it being corrupt, convincing then that they need Christ desperately, not as a way, but the only way!

The gospel is not about God being our "best buddy" and He should not be offered as such, although He becomes our friend from the gospel. We should never concentrate on His humanity so much that we neglect He is GOD. We should not trivialize who He is.

What about the practice of saying accept or receive Jesus in you heart. We should be careful in how we present this because this is not the gospel but a benefit from it. This is what actually happens when someone does accept the gospel, so it really declaring what will happen when you believe the gospel. Galatians 4:6. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, John 1:12 as many as received Him to them he gave power to become children of God." God indeed comes into your life and into your heart because you believe the gospel, but saying this is not the gospel itself. It can accompany the gospel presentation to explain what will transpire, but it does not save. He came in us as the promise given to all who believe in the gospel.

We don't want to give the impression that there is nothing blocking one from God except asking him in. When in fact there is, our sin. One must deal with their sin by the cross before Jesus can take His abode in us.

We also need to be careful in saying, "God has a wonderful plan for your life" as the gospel message. Certainly God has a plan, God may have great plan for your life, but this does not save someone, nor does it help to enticed people by such statements as God's plans are big and wonderful, because we actually do not know God's plan for everyone. I have seen people get saved and in a year they died, or the heat was turned up. We don't know what God's plans are for every person. Ultimately God's plan is better than Satan's and we will all receive the benefits of his grace by entering heaven, but for the meantime we are on earth and we just don't know. Imagine a Muslim in an Islamic country having their whole family convert and become Christian and hear God has a great plan for their life and he then sees most of his family killed for their conversion. What would he think? Where is this great plan? So we have need to qualify this statement when we say it.

Is what I'm saying biblical? Look at Paul. The first thing after Jesus saves Him, He says I will show how much suffering he will have for my sake. Yes, God had big plans for Paul but he did not tell him this. How many altar calls are made with this biblical declaration to include suffering? Come to Jesus and you will suffer but you will have eternal life. But this would be more accurate as he does not promise to remove us from tribulation and we are told that we will suffer for His namesake. Peter also pointed out in 1 Peter 2:21: "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps." We cannot disregard the reality that we may experience suffering and even persecution. The fact is, the cross means suffering in this world. One will find this out later as they follow him on the narrow road He leads them on. God's plans for us are His blessings and the benefit of believing the gospel.

Its unfortunate that today's modern preaching style they promise new converts wonderful benefits: everything will be rosy -- no suffering, in its place is success, prosperity, life improvements to their marriage, business, relationships. The Bible does say that there are benefits that belong to the Godly but it also says they will be accompanied by rejection and persecution. When persecution does come and all those life improvements don't materialize as fast as they expected, or not at all, disillusionment can set in. Sooner or later the new "Christian" falls away because his faith lacks root. They fall back into having no hope, worse than if they had never heard this defective "gospel" preached in the first place. Jesus explains in Mt.13 of the seed and the four different soils it falls on. It is those who had understanding that persevered and are fruitful.

A.W. Tozer said, "The new cross does not slay the sinner, it redirects him. It gears him into a cleaner and jollier way of living and saves his self-respect. To the self-assertive it says, "Come and assert yourself for Christ." To the egotist it says, "Come and do your boasting in the Lord." To the thrillseeker it says, "Come and enjoy the thrill of Christian fellowship." The Christian message is slanted in the direction of the current vogue in order to make it acceptable to the public. (*The Old Cross and The New*, by A.W. Tozer, 1966)

The new church model is to be sensitive and inoffensive we should not speak on sin or mention the cross and suffering. What happened to speaking on hell and the eternal separation as punishment for rejecting the gospel? This new "Jesus" and "new Christianity" is made attractive so that sinners will not be offended. But more importantly, the cross has been taken out of the Christian walk so we will not be affected either.

A gospel that does not preach the cross in its full sense is not the Gospel of Jesus. When Christ is displaced from His proper place, when He is no longer followed correctly the believer finds himself in a cross-less walk. Our means of sanctification, correction, chastisement and growth are not without suffering. Christianity is cross-centered, as it is central point to why Christ came to earth. All of God's blessings come from Him through the cross, and are delivered to believers by His Spirit and His word. We cannot disregard the reality that we may experience suffering and even persecution, the fact is--the cross means suffering. Today we can listen to most of the popular Christian TV teachers promise everything to a believer but neglect this essential ingredient to Christianity. What is being taught today is that we should not suffer or have pain or be corrected. This leads to illegitimate children, not true sons of God.

The Bible used to be accepted where it says, "All who desire to live Godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12), here's a promise you don't hear to often!

A.W. Tozer ""With perfect knowledge of all this, Christ said. `If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself; take up his cross and follow Me. ' So the cross not only brought Christ's life to an end, it also ends the first life, the old life of every one of His true followers... this and nothing less is true Christianity. We must do something about the cross, and there's only one of two things we can do--flee it or die upon it!"

"My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience" (James 5:10). For even the prophets who were types of Christ all suffered, none had an easy life for too long. Jesus did not promise Paul or any other apostle a life of ease and material riches or health? In Acts 9:16, Jesus said right after Paul was saved: "I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake," not how much he will gain.

Paul says if someone adds to the Gospel even some of the law that was required in the Old Testament, he is accursed (Galatians 1:8-9). Today all kinds of things have been added to the gospel to make the Church more appealing. These teachings can consist of additions like you are promised to be financially blessed and healed .Then there are things that are taken away, that change the Gospel itself such as following Jesus never includes loss or suffering.

We need to learn that the gospel message does not always work quickly. Many want to see immediate results or the gospel preached is considered by them to be void of the power of God. Many in Christianity have traded faith for spiritual experiences. If you felt something or saw something that convinced you God is real, this is enough. We are confronted with a new type of Gospel, one that emphasizes experiencing the supernatural. Today in many Churches miracles are preached for salvation, not Christ crucified. When we proclaim the gospel many are won by emotions or by promises to be healed or are moved by signs and wonders. All of these have nothing to do with the content and nature of the gospel. Yes we may become emotional, moved to tears although the majority of people say they felt nothing but accepted its veracity by faith. Yes someone may be healed emotionally and even physically. But to offer this as a promise to all would be unfair and misrepresent the gospel itself.

The greatest miracle is one being translated from the kingdom of darkness to light. Acts 26:18: "to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me." what a joy it brings, to know you influenced someone in such a way that their eternal destination was changed.

Biblical salvation comes through preaching the message of the cross, not by signs and wonders! Believing in Christ engages one's mind as well as one's heart. True saving faith can only come with intellectual understanding (the mind) as well as a spiritual encounter (in the heart). Both are vital to conversion. Any genuine spiritual experience leads to the mind's engagement and not disregard it.

Gresham Machen said "... The growth of ignorance in the Church is the logical and inevitable result of the false notion that Christianity is a life and not also a doctrine; if Christianity is not a doctrine then of course teaching is not necessary to Christianity. But whatever the causes for the growth of ignorance in the Church, the evil must be remedied. It must be remedied primarily by the renewal of Christian education in the family, but also by the use of whatever other educational agencies the Church can find. Christian education is the chief business of the hour for every earnest Christian man. Christianity cannot subsist unless men know what Christianity is..." (Gresham Machen Christianity & Liberalism p. 176-177)

Paul preached the cross, "Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 1:18). The Bible states it is the "preaching of the cross" that contains "the power of God" unto salvation, it is the finished work of Jesus on the cross. The content of the gospel can never change.

Rom. 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for **it is the power of God to salvation** for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."

1 Cor. 1:18 "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved **it is the power of God.**"

We don't want to honor God with our lips, and have our hearts far from Him. God's heart has always been to the lost, nothing has changed. The Church needs to stop its ride of pleasure seeking and daily positive affirmations of bless me and get down to God's business, saving the lost with the message of the gospel. The gospel needs to be preached more than ever before, but it's going to have to start with those who preach the gospel--getting it straight and stop candy coating it. Let's uphold the ancient message--Jesus the Son of God came into this world and suffered and died upon the cross for the sins of the world and rose again as the Scriptures say on the third day. This was and still is the power of God.

Maybe you are wondering if you have believed correctly or as Paul put it, believed in vain. So what are you to do? Believe the Scripture, have faith in Christ who is the Son of God and His work on the cross for your forgiveness of sin and you will receive the free gift of salvation --forgiveness of sin and God Himself, the Holy Spirit will come into your heart and change your life.

THE INFLUENCE OF GOD'S LOVE FROM HIS WORD

We all have heard and know God loves us; but how great is His love, how can we describe it? I think by looking at a panoramic view of earth's history we can get a small window into God's consistent love for mankind.

God began the creation with the earth and mankind in mind, the phrase "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" explains this. Before God created the heavens and the earth He understood His creation in a way that has not yet taken place and still is future to us. God could have scrubbed mankind as His undertaking before He created any one thing, since He knew by His foreknowledge what would take place before it actually occurred. He saw all things and knew their outcome with His providential control before He created them so they could take place.

When Adam sinned God corrected Adam by punishment not annihilation. Certainly God would have been justified to scrap man when Eve and Adam actually sinned but instead He gave Adam and Eve punishment making his agricultural work more difficult and changed their relationship to Him. Because of His foreknowledge He committed to a plan, warning them that their punishment would be death, both spiritually and physically if they ate from the tree. Why did God not start everything over? First- because we have intrinsic value, we are valuable to God no matter what we do because we retain the image of God in us, though it is corrupted. This is why He can still love us. Second- because of His foreknowledge and love a plan was implemented for what He already knew would happen. Scripture tells us Christ is the lamb slain from the foundation of the world. In other words, when God made the earth He already had a provisional plan to remedy Adam and Eve's sin that would affect all of mankind for ages to come.

Adam and Eve's temptation and fall and removal from the garden resolves a number of theological difficulties; God does allow suffering, and punishment. It is all related to His love. Have you ever had a parent punish you for doing wrong as a child and you felt it was completely unfair at the time. You were angry but now being older you look back on it and are thankful. Real love corrects those who are loved, "for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (Heb 12:6). Jesus said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Rev. 3:19). If you are going through trials, know that you are loved by God.

Although we have no sermons in the Old Testament Scripture that talk about God's love to mankind, God's love was demonstrated by His grace throughout the Old Testament as He had mercy upon mankind's rebellion and sin. He has been longsuffering and patient with us throughout history. God was saddened He even made man, as He watched the reality of sin take place, but when He judged, He also gave grace. He would destroy wickedness by the flood but not make a complete end to things, salvaging what He could with one man's family on the earth. "But Noah found grace in the Lord's eyes." God later made an unconditional covenant with Abraham to fulfill His purposes on earth that would involve all people. When He delivered Israel He gave her a conditional covenant through Moses, by the ordinances to live by. Instead of loving their God who was faithful to them, Israel turned from Him to the

idols, the false Gods of the surrounding pagan nations (Jer 2:11), forcing Him to execute judgment upon the chosen people whom He loved. Imagine the one who loved their nation being rejected time after time. God was Israel's husband "When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine," says the Lord GOD"(Ezek. 16:8).

We can see the love that was in Jesus' heart when in Matt 23:37-39 He said: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"

God mourned continually over His peoples straying, (Ps. 81:13-16; Is 48:18;1:2-3; 65:2-3; Jer. 2:32.). Ps. 81:11 "But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would have none of me." Being angered about her unfaithfulness, and sin when she disobeyed, His justice was still tempered by His love and grace. So God continued to send prophet after prophet to turn her back to Him. As He began to work His plan through time and history we see a prophecy that told of the ultimate fulfillment. Isa. 63:9 "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the messenger of His Presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old."

Even when God as love incarnated in man comes to earth Isa. 53:3-4 tells us "He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; he was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted."

Mark 8:31: "that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. Luke 20:17 "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone." John writes "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11). God's love extends even to the people who reject him, real love risks rejection, but He cannot show His favor His mercy to them if they don't repent.

Grace is giving someone something they don't deserve, mercy is withholding punishment they do deserve.

Jn.3:16 tells us "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." There 4 words for love in Greek, the word for God's **love**, in Greek is *agapao* meaning an "active devotion to the welfare and happiness of the one who is loved." This **love** GIVES and continues to give to another without any measuring or limit, it is without conditions on his giving. It asks no reward for doing so its only purpose is to give and asks nothing in return for doing it.

But to come into a relationship with this love and the giver of it there are conditions. One commentator writes, Love can offer neither grace nor mercy until the full truth concerning the evil which is to be forgiven has been laid bare. Thus the psalmist declares with joy, "*Mercy and truth* are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Ps

85:10). By this motivation and expression of love God sought us: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 Jn. 4:10). This is all settled by the gospel. Because of this, "...we love him because he first loved us" (v 19). God desires our love in return; because the nature of love is relational and reciprocal it needs to be accepted and returned to grow. While God asks nothing in return for giving love it does want a response for a relationship. God is the initiator and we need to respond.

For those who believe in evolution there can be no genuine love, because love has a purpose and commitment, it is founded in our reflection of the creators nature. Without this love is reduced to a feeling dictated by the cultures rules that can change in society.

The first time "love for God" is mentioned in the Scripture is when Yahweh addresses Israel's idolatry. Exodus 20:5-6: "For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments" (also Deuteronomy 5:10).

God gives us the goal for our love toward him by telling Israel, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!" You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" (Deut 6:4-5). We can only have this ability through the Holy Spirits indwelling.

There are two major covenants in the Bible. The Mosaic Covenant was conditional. God said do this, obey and He will bless. Failure to obey violated His conditions and punishment followed. New Covenant is based on blood of Jesus and is unconditional. Even under the law there was grace and God showed his love in wanting to bless the people. Deut. 7:9: "Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments." It is in Deut 7:12-17 that we find the mention of God loving man according to the Old covenant. "Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers. V.13" **And He will love you** and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flock, in the land of which He swore to your fathers to give you. Then they (v.14)"shall be blessed above all peoples; " no barrenness among you or among your livestock.v.15 no sickness, will afflict Israel God will lay them on all those who hate you. v.16 they will conquer all the peoples whom the LORD your God delivers over to you; v.17 they will have confidence no matter how strong the nations are

Deut 11:13' "And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the LORD your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul." If they do this they would be blessed abundantly with rain and a good harvest.

Today the church is so focused on what we get from God, the emphasis is on healing, prosperity, His blessing, our happiness without ever stopping to think what He wants from

us. We love God for what He does in all these things, but what if they were withheld for a time would we still love Him just for Who He is and the Salvation given to us. This is the real difference between a lifestyle of worshipping him surrendered to His service.

Can He accept our worship and praise when we are not walking in love shown by our obedience that this love is to produce? Worship is not just singing songs on Sunday but a lifestyle, without our participating with God's purposes and showing His love to mankind, our singing becomes reduced to ritualistic phrases. God desires truth in our innermost being.

We say to people Jesus loves you, but He asks us to love him back. The next time you say to someone Jesus loves you, tell them to love him back and see their reaction. We do this by obeying what He asks. He says if you love me you will continue in my word", this is not just reading it but living it as well. He is not looking for perfect obedience but a heart that is inclined to obey. It is not about God loving us but our response to him. John 14:15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments." "If you love me you will continue in my word" These are Jesus instructions found throughout the New Testament. Jesus said to His disciples, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (Jn. 14:23). I Jn. 2:5: "But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him."

God's love is a jealous love, He wants faithfulness and eyes only for Him. Deut. 6:14-15 "You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you (for the LORD your God is a jealous God among you)." Ex 34:14 "for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.)" James speaking about friendship with the world states "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously" (4:5) God our creator wants us to love him only as a husband would want his wife to love him alone.

Consider the love of a man to his wife, there is no love there if His wife does not exchange love--if his wife does not love him back (or vice versa). God's love is something we can be assured of if we are obedient and respond. Once we learn of His love for us we are able to fall in love with Him and trust Him with our lives, as a wife submits to the husband and trusts her life to her husband, knowing he will love and cherish her as Christ did to the church.

Throughout Scripture there are numerous descriptions of God, the term " God is," is applied to numerous characteristics and attributes "God is a consuming fire, a jealous God." [In Deut. 4:24 "God is jealous," "God is a jealous God" Deut. 6:15. In Nahum 1:2-3 it says " For our God is a consuming fire" (also Heb. 12:29).] "God is a just judge" (Psalm 7:11). Dan. 9:14 says "our God is righteous"; Psalm 99:9 "our God is holy"; Deut. 4:31"God is a merciful God"; Psalm 116:5 reaffirms "Yes, our God is merciful." 2 Chron. 30: 9 "your God is gracious and merciful." When we come to the New Testament we find some different statements about His nature 2 Cor. 1:18 "God is faithful" in John 4:24-25 God is Spirit. 1 John 1:6 "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." While all of these describe God in His essential nature and activity there is one statement that we gravitate to and hold to personally knowing what it means as Christians, that "for God is love" (1 John 4:8). God is infinite in all of His attributes of his nature. Love is the highest attribute of God, the one attribute in which all others

harmoniously blend. The love of God is more than kindness or benevolence. Some represent the God of the Old Testament as angry and vengeful and Jesus of the New Testament as loving. God is always the same in his nature...I am the Lord, I change not (Mal. 3:6). How can He who is holy, infinite in power, perfect in wisdom and knowledge love us, his creatures he made?

Christ did not die for us because we are worthy or deserve it but simply because of His love for us. We cannot think too deeply on this, the why becomes a mystery that is kept by God. It may only be fully known when we stand before Him. Our part is only that we accept it, and are brought back into a relationship with Him that was severed by Adam. People have no idea whom they are turning away. The love of God is beyond our understanding, immeasurable.

We see many of these same characteristics mentioned and demonstrated in Eph 2:4-5 "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)." This is love; to annul punishment and give favor to those who certainly don't deserve it. God's riches are given to us as believers by His showing mercy, something that flows from His nature of infinite love.

The gospel is a demonstration of God's love to all people for all time. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Jn 3:16). Jesus said, "No man takes my life I lay it down on my own accord," it is a sacrificial love. God's Love does not look for a reason to love in the one who is to respond but it is found in him who initiates the love. True love is not just toward the obedient or those who will love in return. The grace of God has appeared to all people. Christ did not die for only those who will obey him but those who may never stop rebelling and never believe. This does not mean all will be saved, but only those who receive what He has done for them will be saved. But His love is offered to all. When God starts to draw us to Himself by His grace He wants us to respond Prov. 8:17 "I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently will find me." God says, "He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb 11:6). It is our response that is important to His commencing love toward us. This is the way to enter into a relationship with Him.

Matt. 22:37-39 Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." "This is the first and great commandment." And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." so if we say we love God we will be trying to obey him. Love to God then to man, but the second part is more crucial, what is our commitment to man, especially our brethren? Because this shows that we have the love of God in us. God's love is toward people and people who have God's love will love people also.

I Jn. 3:23-24 "And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment." Christ prayed to the Father, "that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them" (Jn. 17:26). Christ himself lives in us who believe the gospel and expresses His life through us so we are able to love beyond our human capacity. Without Christ's example of sacrificial love

we would not know what true love is. But to have this love like Christ one must die to their old nature as Paul declares "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). Gal. 5:22 tells us love is the fruit of His Spirit in the Christian, we cannot present the gospel of God's love unless His love lives in us by the Holy Spirit.

I Jn. 3:14 "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death." This is proof we are saved by how we act toward one another of the faith, this means we care enough to be a help when in need, and tell the truth. In the context of the whole letter, John is warning about the false teachers among them and they are to discern the spirit. Well sometimes it's not so easy to love someone, especially if you are trying to teach them something or bring correction. Eph 4:2-3 tells us to be longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." But there is a time for everything, a time for silence and a time to speak. When we are in relationship with God we walk in His truth. To have the love of God means that someone loves the truth and is willing to stand up for it against falsehood. If they do not, they either don't have the truth in them or they have no convictions to live up to what Christ said.

One of the more neglected areas of God's love is telling people the truth. Some people practice neutrality and tolerance as Christian love. We are so careful not to *OFFEND* our neighbors, friends and family by *THE TRUTH*, so we can say we love them. But are we loving God by doing this? Are we really loving them? Are we so unwilling to endure any rejection that we have become ashamed of God's word! Is it not better to do what is right in God's eyes and suffer the consequences from man, then to do what is right in man's eyes and suffer the consequences from God! This is not a time to compromise on what is true to please people so that we don't look like we are fanatics, it is time to stand up and shine the light because the world is getting darker day by day.

I Jn. 4:8 "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. The Bible says that "God is love", what it does not mean is that all love is God, or anyone who loves is of God. This is referring to the indwelling presence of God whose fruit is the love of Christ. Scripture says that God's love was shed abroad in our hearts because of believing on Jesus Christ; we know it personally. We have His heart, a new nature that cares about things differently than before. Vv.9-11 "In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." To receive the love of God one must receive his Son (Jn.3:16).

Because God is love, we are taught to love by God (1 Thess. 4:9). Eph 5:1-2 instructs us "Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma." Sometimes we must sacrifice our relationship with people to bring truth into their lives. They may see us differently, they may even reject our friendship but if we care for them as the Bible tells us to we will share the truth of what Jesus spoke.

God's love," is exercised by the believers to the believers who identify with God in His character. Many want the power and miracles the first century Church had to prove God is real but Christ also gave us the commands for practical living, which if examined outweigh the miraculous done by the Church at least 2 to 1.

Jesus said they will know you follow me by loving one another, not by how many miracles one can produce. In Acts 2:45 they sold their possessions and goods and divided them among all to meet the needs. They continued in one accord they were united and the Church was added to daily, (not in attendance) but those being saved. They had a purpose. The new life had filled their hearts and affected the people that they met in a genuine manner. "But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth." (1 Jn.3:17-18). "But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another" (1 Thess. 4:9).

Why if God loves us does He allow bad things to happen to good people? First of there are no good people, we are sinful, second has given us ways and commands so we can avoid evil. But there are times when it comes despite everything we have done right. HE promises that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28). God can turn the worst situation around. I've seen it happen to others and in my own life, where issues were solved because of God's commitment of love in our lives, and our commitment to love each other. When His face is turned toward us and our heart is turned toward Him having faith and perseverance we find His grace.

Paul asks in Rom. 8:35-39: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? (He answers it) Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Paul goes on v. 38 "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." This personal God who created all things loves each individual He has created with a love beyond our comprehension. The love God has for His people are beyond our human capacity to fully understand. If you were able to measure the universe you still can't measure His love for you; it's too great. What is the great mystery? is that nothing can separate us from His love. Paul's prayer in Eph 3:17 explains to us "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, v:19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

God has kept His promise in these last days to Israel by bringing her back into the land as he promised to Abraham. God will keep his promise to us as well. He loves you and cares for the things you go through, be encouraged that He is watching over you. For the days to come will be like no other in the past and we will need faith and perseverance in our God to get us through victoriously. But most of all we will need love, real love. Heb 10:24-25 "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works" These works are those things acceptable to God. Any obedience that is not motivated by love is not acceptable nor is it beneficial. Paul explains that without the motivation of love *nothing* we do is of value:

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels,... have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains,...and though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and...give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing” (1 Cor. 13:1-3). Motivation is what counts even though it can be hard to accept what is being said at the time. In 1 Cor. 8:1 Paul writes ...Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies (builds up). Our knowledge needs to be used in service to our Lord or it is useless. This why it says in James 1:5: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all liberally without reproach, and it will be given to him.” Wisdom is knowledge applied. Our relationships are built on love and destroyed by conditions that limit or hinder love that brings koinonia, fellowship in the Spirit.

Love is to be the *modus operandi* of the Christian Faith; the lack of love reveals that a person either does not understand the basics of his faith or may not have genuine convictions in living it. When our obedience to the Word of God is affected, our care for each other will be as well. Love is a choice and a commitment. We are to love our neighbors (Mt. 19:18; Mk 12:31.) and even our enemies (Lk. 6:27). What I have been hearing lately is that we need to love everyone, even false teachers. Really! What kind of love are we talking about? The Scripture says we are to preach the Word, reprove, rebuke and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (2 Tim. 4). The purpose is to rescue as many as possible from a false spirituality and judgment. For those who have strayed, we are to bring them back to the truth. Our goal should be to Love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, our whole being. Jesus said in John 14:24 “He who does not love Me does not keep My words.” We should love people enough to warn of false teaching. We are not showing love by being silent and allowing them to continue listening. God’s love is not a love that ignores falsehood or harm but comes to the rescue of it by presenting the truth. Do we ignore what is destructive to be able to say we are loving them? If we truly love God and man, we will be committed in warning the lost and rebuking those who are leading multitudes astray with false doctrine both outside and inside the Church. A Christian will love and adhere to what Jesus and the apostles said before any man.

It was the Pharisees who were hard and cold and self absorbed. They did not care to speak on what was false or harmful from god's perspective but their own. They did not want to help their brethren, they did not even help their own parents. In Mark 7:11-12 Jesus addresses the Pharisees who would tell their parents who came to them for money its “corban,” I have already dedicated it to God and are unable to give to you. they found an excuse for everything that would have them do right before God. When it came down to it they were like spineless jellyfish.

What parent would not speak up if they see their child being taught incorrectly? What kind of a Christian would stand by idly watching other sheep being ravaged by wolves in sheeps clothing? We are to walk in love. Jesus said at the end of time, that because lawlessness would abound, the love of many will grow cold. What Jesus is describing is Christians will live in a time where obedience to the Word of God will be affected as well as their care for each other. Many will shrink back from telling the truth because their love is cold. They have become self absorbed living like the world. It has begun just as Jesus spoke.

Jesus always appealed to the people out of love and concern for their well-being but He did not compromise what he was to say. Jesus said to love as I loved you. How did Jesus love? Did He just accept everyone for who they were and disregard what they did? When Peter received a revelation from the Father and he proclaimed who Jesus is, he was commended. But right after this he was prompted by the Devil to prevent Jesus from accomplishing his mission. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men" (Matt. 16:22-23).

I don't think I need to belabor the point. Jesus rebuked him openly. I imagine it must have been humbling to have this occur right after everyone thought from his revelation "right on Peter" when he stated who Jesus is. We see God's love is corrective, love is looking out for others interest, It is not self centered but other centered. 1 Cor. 10:24 "Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being." Phil. 2:4-5 "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." If you have the same mind you will have concern enough to speak up when its necessary in the face of falsehood. We see even after Peter sinned by denying the Lord Jesus went to him and tried to bring him back into fellowship and restore him by asking him how much he loved him three times, Peter was unable to admit that he loved him more than like a brother. Jesus asked Peter to do what he was called to do and feed the sheep. The purpose of correction is to restore someone to the right way and not let them continue in their wrong. It is this same love Jesus had for us when he came to earth to rescue us from our sin. but he loved us enough to tell us we are sinners, so we could respond to his cure.

The nature of Jesus shows compassion and is willing to help by telling the truth even if rejection and scorn will be its end. Jesus' love is a correcting love as parent is to its child. Jesus did not overlook his error because he did something right beforehand. Nor did he say his good outweighed the bad. What was at stake was the truth. Neither did Jesus keep silent and have Peter influence the others falsely. Can you love like this? Would you rebuke, or correct a brother risking friendship for the truth? "Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." (Prov. 27:5-6)

Our love is shown by our commitment to him. If we love Jesus we should not have a lack of love for people. Are you broken over the many religions and the cults people have joined, do you care they are going to hell? Many of you have family and friends in them, are you taking steps to show them the truth that can set them free? The Bible teaches when every part of the body does its share, it causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. This should motivate us reach out to others. If you don't have this love pray that God would light it as a fire in your soul, that you would see with Jesus' eyes and have compassion that would motivate you to speak.

Paul prayed in Phil. 1:9-10 "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ." Love has certain elements, not only is it active it has wisdom and discretion. These are things that are ignored today but

this is the love we need, anything less than this will not change us, the church or affect society.

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ETERNAL ASSURANCE OF THE INFLUENCE

Jn.10:27-30: My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall *anyone* pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.

You can break your communion with God but not your spiritual union. If one truly believes and follows they are part of a living eternal organism called the body of Christ.

The believer lives under grace. This guarantees God's ability to bring to a conclusion what we cannot. We were not saved by works, so we don't undo our salvation by works. One cannot keep themselves saved since we didn't save ourselves in the first place, we remain saved by grace, by his power.

Salvation is a gift freely given apart from any human effort. It does not depend on our performance nor on a certain amount of obedience in having it be permanent in our life. If you brought someone to faith in Christ and they asked how long will I be saved for? You say as long as you obey. How long can I obey? who knows. Your eternal security is not associated with your works but to Christ's work

It is not a reward for good behavior Jn.10:28 I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.

Dennis McCallum says, "Bible teaches that God grants to every one what is called "common grace." Common grace is a gift that enables people to know God is there and he is the personal creator of the world." Dennis McCallum, Christianity: the Faith that makes sense. (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1997)p.129

There are approximately 85 passages in the New Testament by both Jesus and Paul which attest to salvation by grace and that eternal life is imparted as a gift to all those who believe in Christ.

Salvation's checklist

One of the foremost ways Satan attacks Christians is by condemning them when they sin. He makes them question or doubt their salvation. Without the helmet of salvation on our minds are open to his doubts. We are to know what we believe so we cannot be persuaded into a lie.

How does one know that they are saved. First is they will become acutely aware of their sin. They will sense a struggle of doing what was once pleasurable and be repelled of it, they will no longer practice sin as a lifestyle. They will have a battle of the indwelling of sin with his new nature, he cries out who will deliver me from this body of death. They will have the power to say no to the sins that so easily trapped him, if he so chooses. They have the witness of the Spirit, the word is now understandable and He bears witness that it is the truth. They have the peace of God where before he was wrestling against him he now enjoys

obeying God's commands where before he detested them. Their attitude toward the world will change his affections will be redirected toward the things of God. They will love Christ and be looking forward to his return having the assurance of being in his kingdom. They will also love the brethren, enjoying fellowship with them. They will provoke others to love and service unto the Lord not things contrary. They have a love for the Word which sets them apart from the world that is contrary to the things of God Jn.17:14-19. They will experience answered prayers for God's will in his life and others Jn.14,15:7. He will have the ability to discern truth from error whereas before he had no guidelines 1 Jn.2:27; Heb.5:13-14. They believe in the essential doctrines of the faith and are willing to defend them to some degree when they are challenged.

If someone leaves the Lord and goes back into a lifestyle that is lived by heathens were they saved? The parable of the seed found in Mt.13 shows how it can germinate and lose its vitality being strangled by things in the world. No plant can be firm and produce fruit without a root system that is well grounded. Jesus says He has appointed us to produce fruit in various degrees, we will all produce fruit because we are a tree the Lord planted. Trees need nourishment, they need water (the word). As Jesus said in Jn.15 we must abide in the vine, apart from him we can do nothing. He then goes on to say those who do not abide are cast out into fire. There are a number of ways to look at this; one is that it is hell, another is fiery trial that will purge or chasten the believer back into obedience. Again if we go back and take the context He is speaking about abiding in His Word, which continually cleanses us, proving one is a true disciple.

Its either eternal security or *eternal insecurity*

Jn.10:28 I give them eternal life, and *they shall never perish*, no one shall snatch them out of my hand.

Rom.6:23 I or the wages of sin is death; *but the gift of God is eternal life* through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Jn.3:18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Jn.5:24 He that hears my word, and believes on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. One is made spiritually alive by having true living faith.

The believer *has* (present tense) eternal life, he does not have judgment of his destiny but his works, as 1 Cor. 3:10-15 says all that he has done may be burned but He Himself will receive eternal life. Why? because it is a *free gift!*

The presence of sin is always with us 1 Jn.1:8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. So it is continually there as the old nature. When someone is always walking in the flesh they are condemned because they are not enjoying

the benefits of grace. This is why so many start to question their possessing salvation. 1 Jn.2:1 ἵνα write to you that you may not sin and if anyone sins we have an advocate with the father. We sin when we act upon the nature that is always present. When we give over to its desires it brings forth death Jm.1:14-15. As believers we now have a new nature dwelling inside us next to the old. This death James speaks about is not spiritual death. If that were true every time we sin we need to be reborn. Paul clarifies this by saying in Gal.6:8 For he who sows to the flesh will of the flesh reap corruption but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap eternal life.

Although sin is always with us: We have been saved from the penalty of sin by Christ's death on the cross. We are presently being saved from the power of sin that tries to dominate us. We are no longer slaves but set free. We will finally be saved from the presence of sin when we are transformed to our eternal incorruptible bodies.

The meaning of eternal life means a present possession that continues throughout eternity. It is not eternal life for a day, a month, and a year. It means what it says, it is eternal life from God, who is also eternal. If one entertains the idea that eternal life has a limit then God will also cease. Because the same word describes both God's nature and the believers standing in Christ. One cannot undo their spiritual birth anymore than they can reverse their physical birth. (2 Cor.5:17, Gal.6:15, Eph.2:10)

God is not a promise-less giver; Titus 1:2 An hope of eternal life which God who cannot lie, promised before time began. Those who believe they can lose their salvation are usually those who felt they did something to gain it, that they have to keep it by their own deeds. To claim you lost your salvation by not doing something often means they received it by doing something. If works are interjected for salvation then there is no eternal security because it is always in the future tense. If salvation is dependent on what we do to keep it, then we have no assurance, because we all fall short in many things. Eternal life is a gift not a command we keep.

We should have more confidence and faith than the Old Testament saints (Heb.11) because we have more revelation in the word to be assured of.

Rom.5:20-21...But where sin increased grace abounded all the more.

There is always more grace than there is sin, no matter what is done God is willing to cover our faults and sins. He doesn't give up on anyone.

Rom.4:8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute sin. In our forgiven position God does not charge us with what we owe. He does not count our sins against us otherwise no one would be able to stand before him.

Rom.8:30 tells us that who God justifies he will also glorify. (Rom.5:15-16 tells us justification is the free gift.) This is the future promise that he who began a good work in you will complete it Phil.1:6. In Heb12:2 it States Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. It's not dependent on us as much as it is on him. We cooperate with the work he is doing in us and through us.

Rom.8:1-9 this whole chapter is on the believers new relationship in the present and future with God. Vs.1 there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. vs.2-8 we are delivered from the law of sin and death by the death of Jesus fulfilling the spiritual obligation of the law.(Heb.7: 18 tells us the Old Testament covenant was annulled 8:13 the 1st covenant he has made obsolete) vs.9-13 we now have the presence of Gods nature dwelling inside us that helps us live the Christian life. vs.14-17 the believer is now an heir of God. vs.28-29 God has a divine purpose for each believer as he conforms each to his son. vs.30-33 he has a united purpose for all and will bring to completion, no exceptions. There is nothing that can separate us from the love of God.

Eph.1:13 we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (gr. aurobon- means a down payment like an engagement ring) God does not break his promises we are engaged as the bride soon to be married. He has asked for our hand in the marriage. If we accept we are in an unconditional covenant relationship, meaning it is not dependent on us but on him.

2 Cor.1:22 Let his seal of ownership on us and *put his spirit* in our hearts as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come. There are no refunds on his deposit.

Rom.8:9...If anyone does not have the spirit of Christ he does not belong to him.

1Cor. 3:16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the *Spirit of God dwells in you*. The spirit is his assurance to us we are owned by him.

Our futures so bright we need sunglasses at night!

Assurance scriptures 1 Jn.5:10: *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself*: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. V.11: *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son*. 12: *He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life*. 13: *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; **that you may know that you have eternal life**, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God.*? When we are weak in faith we will struggle with the promises.

Many say I don't feel secure-*but you are*, we can't go on feelings. I haven't done enough to deserve salvation- *but he has given it as a free gift*, so you don't have to do anymore than when you first received him. I don't feel I'm living up to his expectations- *repent and go back to your first love*. Anything we have to say that reflects our falling short, God has a solution for. The root of the problem is that we don't really know our position in Christ and live by our condition.

So assured is our eternal life that it says we are already seated in heavenly places.
(positionally)

1 Pt. 1:3-5 who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an **inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you**, who are

kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.?

This concept is further expanded by statements of being kept from falling or preserved until the day of Christ.

One cannot undo their spiritual birth anymore than they can undo their physical birth. Eph.4:30 says we are sealed until the day of redemption. The indwelling ministry of the Spirit is forever our eternal life is dependent upon him. Through the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit we are vitally joined to Christ and become part of his body. We are now citizens of heaven, a pilgrim to this world, a foreign resident just passing through. (Luke 10:20; 2 Cor. 5:20; Eph. 2:19; Phil.3:20; Heb. 12:19-20)

He is the beginner and finisher of our faith

Heb.5:9 He is the author of **eternal salvation** to ALL WHO OBEY HIM.

The first act of obedience is repentance, going from unbelief to belief, exercising faith in the Gospel. If you repent and believe this puts you in the new covenant, faith is obedience. Then one follows turning over their life daily to the Lord. As Paul said he dies daily, picking up the cross of suffering denying self and having Christ live his life through you.

Col. 1:20-23 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight-- if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard Faith equals faithfulness, it is persevering. Then he will present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight. It is not how you start the race but if you finish it.

Heb. 3:5-6 And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end. We show we are Saints by our persevering; faithfulness.

Proverbs says if a righteous man falls 7 times he will get up 7 times. Our part is to continue and God will be there for us, He will not forsake us.

There is always grace to those who are willing. 2 Tim 2:11-13. This is a faithful saying: for if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, he also will deny us. If we are faithless, he remains faithful; he cannot deny Himself. God will give his Holy Spirit to those who ask, He will always go further with us than we can with Him. Our co-operation is needed to have a victorious life of faith.

God is faithful to us.

1 Thess. 5:24 He who calls you is faithful who will also do it.

Jude 24 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

This is why Paul starts off his letters with grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus. We depend on him to do the work in us by faith.

Phil.1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Christ Jesus. vs.12...Work out your own salvation in fear and trembling for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for his good pleasure. Paul tells the church to bring to a completion what they already possess, their salvation, we cooperate for doing Gods will and having him glorified and our maturity.

While we are to continually confess our sins, it is not to obtain or keep salvation but for cleansing. Our fellowship with God and his people can be hindered and severed for a time but our union with Christ can never be taken away.

The same one who saves us is the one who keeps us. If maintaining our faith for salvation were dependent on us alone then none of us could be saved.

I Jn.5:1 gives us the promise whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves him who begot also loves him who is begotten of him vs.11 and this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son...vs.13 these things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know you have eternal life, and that you may continue in the name of the Son of God.

THE ONLY WAY ONE CAN KNOW THIS IS TO...

CONFUSING COMMANDS WITH SALVATION

The Bible gives numerous commands- it tells us to pray always, *does this mean if we fail to do this we lose our salvation.* We are told to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength, no one is able to do this all the time. Does this mean we lose our salvation? Of course not.

If we look at the examples such as Peter who denied the Lord three times and disobeyed many times afterwards. If salvation depended solely upon his obedience he never would have made it and neither would we. What of Lot? He must have lost his salvation with his compromising and what he did to his daughters. 2 Pt.2:6-9 tells us Lot died a saved man. What about Samson? If anyone should lose their salvation for compromising and sin it would be him. Yet, Heb.11:32 tells us he died a saved man. What of Moses who disobeyed God once and was not allowed into the Promised Land, did he lose his salvation? No, he was physically punished, not spiritually punished. He appears with Elijah on the Mt. of Transfiguration discussing with Jesus His coming sacrifice, something he would not be able to do if he lost his salvation. So we must not assume that every time someone is judged in the body they are also judged spiritually.

What of David and his sins of adultery and murder? Surely the Bible teaches that no adulterer or murderer will enter the kingdom of heaven, but it is talking about one who continues to practice these things as a lifestyle without repentance. These acts did not lead to a loss of salvation because David repented (Ps.51:8-12) and he was cleared of all his sins. However he did reap problems as the sword never left his household. The book of Hebrews has all these individuals and others mentioned. The Bible never hides the faults nor shines the halos over its people. It tells both sides; the good, and the bad and the ugly. They are included in the Hebrews hall of faith and they received a good testimony inheriting the promise of eternal life with us. When we come to the New Testament. All the warnings are in reference to losing ones physical life and losing our rewards.

We have the example of Annanias and Sapphira. Just as in the Old Testament they were judged in the body losing their physical life. The Bible is silent on whether or not they forfeited their spiritual life. We assume they were saved being part of the church. Lying to the Holy Spirit should not be confused as with the blasphemy of the Spirit.

Last example and not the least is Judas Iscariot. It is assumed he was saved because he traveled with the other disciples but we know he was not. Jn.13:16-21 Jesus says he was not clean, in other words he heard the word but really did not believe it or act upon it. He did not have living faith. Jn.17:12 tells us no one will be lost, but the *son of perdition*, who is Judas. He fulfilled the position by the purposes of his own heart. At the last supper we find Judas did not partake of the wine (Christ's blood) but only the bread (Jesus'flesh) Jn.13:26-30. Mt.27:3-5. Later we find Judas is for his betrayal but it was not a godly sorrow that would lead to repentance or salvation. Acts 1:24-25 states that he fell from his potential position of apostleship not from salvation since he never possessed it. He never followed by his heart but only by the outward looking for a redeemer that would be political and overthrow Rome. He of course was trapped by his own coveting as he longed for money instead of truth.

There are also numerous commands that we are to keep not for salvation but for discipleship. There are also commands that apply to both, in Mk.8:34 Jesus states, if any man would come after me, let him deny himself take up his cross and follow me. This is a requirement for both salvation and discipleship as Paul admonishes in Rom. 6:1-11 reckon yourself dead to sin but alive to God. Also in Mt.10:32-33 If you confess me before men and I will confess you before my father in heaven. Is applied to our lifestyle if we are ashamed of him then he is not really alive working in our lives. This is not to be confused with a salvation confession in Rom.10:8-11.

Sometimes people rely on their feelings. We may feel something at our new birth, we may not. As time goes on many do not feel saved, they have sinned feel ashamed and so they believe they need to ask Jesus again and again to save them, and they continue to come forward because they believe they have no assurance of salvation. This is because they do not understand what faith is and how it is placed in trusting Christ's work on the cross. Salvation is by God's grace in Christ's work and received through faith.

God saves a person based on their faith in response to the gospel message, we are justified by God (Rom. 3:24, 28), we are declared non guilty, clothed in Christ's righteousness and

now accepted as His children. We are able to stand without guilt before His law that condemns all. Paul makes it clear that once God justifies the person, he cannot be condemned or lose his salvation (Rom. 8:1, 32, 33). However our salvation is not completed until we are glorified in God's presence. And this occurs at the end of the believer's life on earth or by the rapture/resurrection, whichever comes first (1 John 3:2; John 17:24; Rev. 21:3, 4). This is why we are admonished to persevere, there must be faithfulness in our life; which is an outworking of living faith. If someone does not make it to the end in faith were they saved? This why Heb. 4:1-3 says Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word, which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: Lo I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest, although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

With all the assurance Scripture we do not neglect the part we are to do either. We are admonished to persevere, there must be faithfulness in our life, which is an outworking of living faith. If someone does not make it to the end in faith were they saved? This why Paul compares this life to a race. 1 Cor. 9:24-27: Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. We must reach the end still in the faith not dropping out along the way.

Paul twice mentions a warning about running in vain Gal. 2:2: And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain. Phil. 2:16: holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

2 Tim. 4:6-7: for I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

The writers of Hebrews adds Heb. 12:1-2: Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

To be in the faith means one will be faithful as the fruit of their trust. When one falls in sin they get right back up ask for cleansing. While we can wrestle over what the demarcation line is for losing salvation, we do know Scripture makes it clear the only unforgivable sin is the Blasphemy of the Spirit. 2 Pet. 2:20 says, For if, after they have escaped the pollution's of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. If one

is questioning where they stand, they need only to repent and be renewed. 2 Tim. 2:21
Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified
and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. Then, These things have I written
unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; **that you may know that you have
eternal life**, will be your assurance.

THE COVENANTAL INFLUENCE OF GOD'S WORD

THE NEW COVENANT

There are two major covenants in the Bible. One is the Mosaic covenant which is a covenant of law, this was conditional. God said do this, obey and he will bless, failure to obey violated his conditions and punishment followed. the New Testaments covenant is one of blood but based on grace, it is unconditional. We receive the mercy and blessings of God not because of anything we do but because of what Christ did. As believers in the New Covenant we operate under grace by which good works are a result. Under the Law (O.C.) good works were done to receive Gods favor yet there still had to be a sacrifice for sin. As it says that almost all things are cleansed by blood.

Jer.31:31:Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:32: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: 33: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34: And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (Quoted in Heb.8:7-12) This is a permanent forgiveness of sin

Heb.7:18: "For on one hand there was an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness,"

Heb.8:7- " For if the first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. "vs. 13 "In that he has said "A new covenant," he has made the first obsolete now what is obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away."

The Mosaic covenant was becoming old (in use worn out) and vanishing away in Jeremiah's time it vanished away with the death of Christ. Heb.8 So it is distinct from the Old Covenant. What it couldn't accomplish Christ did.

The New Covenant-Greek- *Karnei Diatheke* Last will an testament. an arrangement of one party made for another. to either accept or reject- If accepted one is obligated to keep its terms. there is no altering or changing it since it is God who made it and keeps it. Entering covenant with God means that he is committed to you. Jn.10:27-28 he gives us eternal life, its a gift which lasts forever.

The O.T. Covenant.- is a revelation of the holiness of god in the righteous requirement and standard of the law. Which was a conditional covenant.

The New Covenant.-A revelation of the holiness of God in a righteous son who empowers those who ,believe and receive it to become adopted children of God. was a unconditional

cov. The purpose of this new cov. is to do what the O.T. cov could not. The New Covenant is based on the shed blood which signed and sealed the cov.under the Mosaic cov. the shed blood of animals could only cover sins temporarily; Heb.8:27

Under the New Cov. he did it once for all Heb.7:27, we are fully and permanently forgiven (Eph.1:7, Col.2:13).

God gives the believer the power to live his standard by the new birth. he gives the Holy Spirit to indwell every believer.

Rom.,8:2 "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.3: For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."

4: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

When Christ died the believers position from the New Cov . Changed.

We were crucified with Christ (Gal.2:20) When he died the law died with him and so did we. (Col.2:20) we were buried with him (Rom.6:4) We were made alive with him by his resurrection (Eph.2:5, Col.3:1) we were made joint heirs with Christ and will be glorified with him (Rom.8:17)

The New covenant involves blood. It is enforced by the death of the testator and operated by grace.

Blood purchased us Rom.3:25, Eph.1:7, Bought with his blood 1Cor.6:20, 1Pt.1:18-19, Col.1:14

Heb.7:27 "Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant."

Heb9:15" And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of *eternal inheritance*. 16: For where a testament is,, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

Heb.9:12-12: "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

Rom.5:9 "Much more then having now been justified by his blood we shall be saved from wrath through him."

It was to have gentiles become partakers of the spiritual blessings Eph.3:5-6; Rom.11:16-24 In the new Cov. there is the law of Christ. While the Mosaic Cov. had many commandments the law of Christ repeats them all except one (the sabbath). There are also many changes. Ex. Under the Mosaic Cov. some meats were unclean under the New cov. all are clean.

Many of the commandments in the N.T. are intensified. In the Mosaic-Lev. 19:8: "Love your neighbor as yourself." In the New Cov. John 15:13 "Love your neighbor even as I have loved you."

Today if one obeys "you shall not steal" It's not because of the Mosaic but because Christ said it. We operate from a new law under Christ who is our instructor through the Holy Spirit.

When Christ died the law of Moses which was temporary was done away with. Rom. 10:4 "Christ is the end of the law for all who believe."

Col.2:1 "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; 15: And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. 16: Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an Holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: 17: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."

Eph.2:14-15 " Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of the two one new man'. so making peace;"

Gal 2:19-21 "For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain." Paul says when he received salvation he died through the law, the law kills. He has now been spiritually raised to new life so he can live to God. He is given life by the law of the spirit that is superior to the law that could only bring death.

Rom.8:2 "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.3: *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. 4: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

We can't reform our old nature man does not have the ability only the Holy spirit does. The Bible teaches that we must crucify the flesh the old nature and live and operate through the new nature. This comes from the inside out not from the outside in. In Rom.6:6 it states that our old man was crucified with him that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin."

Gal 3:11-13:" Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "The righteous man shall live by faith." However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "He who practices them shall live by them."¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us-- for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree."

When Christ died there were a number of things that took place.

His death was a propitiation this means the wrath of God was satisfied God the father poured out his anger and punishment against sin on his son. (Rom.3:25 | Jn.2:2; 4: 10)

We have been delivered from the kingdom of darkness into light (Col.1:13, Heb.2:14-15) it is our inheritance.

All of our sins were forgiven because when Christ died they were all in the future. The believers past, present, and future sins were totally forgiven so that there is no sin that can cause him to lose his salvation. Blasphemy of the Spirit is not done by anyone who believes so it is not relevant to those who are in Christ.

All our sins are forgiven (Eph.1:7, Col.1:14; 2:13) This means eternal life is a present possession and future possession.If it was only for now it would not be eternal. if it was future than we would not possess it now which means we d not have the Holy Spirit who instills it in us.

We are adopted (Rom.8:15, Gal.4:5 We are regenerated (Jn.3:5-6, Titus 3:5, And put in the body (1 Cor. 12:13, Rom.6:1-10) indwelt by the Spirit of God(1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19) sealed till the day he comes for us (2 Cor.1:22. Eph.1:3-14, 4:30) empowered for service Eph.5:18.

Heb 10:14,17-18 States "For by one offering he has perfected forever them that are sanctified. And their sins and iniquities I will remember no more. Heb.9:26 "He put away sin by himself.

We were given a new nature. We've gone from the nature of Adam to the nature of Christ. We now have the power by the Holy Spirit to rule over the old nature that had us sin but the choice is still up to us with every decision we make. (Rom. 12:1, Col. 1: 13)

LIVING OUT THE INFLUENCE OF GOD'S WORD

IN THIS WORLD

Everything is always being improved. What is already an improved product, becomes new and improved again given enough time. We are bombarded by improving our lives by worldly solutions. For us as Christians we are concentrate and improve our walk with the Lord so we can be of greater service to him. We are to learn of him and reach out to others. when he calls us into action we should be ready to go at the drop of a pin. Just as a soldier is in an army ready to serve his country.

To do so means we have been walking in the Spirit. Too many times we are shy from speaking about the lord because we have not been walking right in certain areas and are condemned. Are you living in the compromise zone- if your not striving to go forward, then you are probably falling backwards. If we put no effort in our walk can we expect to get Gods results?

Jesus asked the people to follow him when he was physically here. Today he asks the same as we walk with him by his Holy Spirit, who is another like himself. We are saved for a purpose. It is his work to conform us to be in the image of the Son. We were left as lights in the world. But a light needs to continually be fed with oil, and it needed its wick trimmed so it won't smoke, and give a pure light. We have got to focus on the Lord and our relationship to him, lest we become smoke in peoples eyes and not light.

In Jn.3:3-5 it tells us we must be born again or we cannot see the kingdom of God. It is a second birth, a spiritual regeneration of our dead spirit to life, a birth from above by the Holy Spirit. This is where it starts, where one begins there personal walk in a relationship with Christ. No child at 2 months is expected to walk well nor is an 8 year old expected to be in the marathon or triathlon, this would be very unusual. But we are to have continual growth to find our potential in ministry. In fact we should actively be seeking it.

Col. 3:10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

When we received Christ and were forgiven by his work on Calvary and our destiny changed. We became new creatures with a purpose that was ordained by God. He will use our natural talents as well as implant spiritual ones by the gift of the Holy Spirit. We are to use all that we have to glorify him. Eph. 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

The word poema (WORKMANSHIP) means his poem, his writing, we are as Paul states living epistles. To God we are his trophies of grace shown off to the world. If we are all these things and more, it should sober us up to want to do what is right and pleasing in his sight. Not only for our benefit, but for others around us who do not know him.

Paul writes how we can accomplish this in Eph.4:22 "that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness." We are under

construction but one day it will be completed. Phil 1:6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;"

In the meantime, practicing Gods way which was formerly foreign to us becomes natural, as we discipline ourselves to Godliness, to his word, we are changed. Old habits need to be replaced with spiritual ones. We need to consistently train ourselves in spiritual matters. If not we will have stunted growth. Consider ourselves like a tree that needs the water of the word to grow or we will shrivel up and die.

A yoke in the OT could mean bondage, enslavement or servitude to another leader other than God.

Deut. 28:48, Jer. 28:2; Isa. 10:27 It shall come to pass in that day that his burden will be taken away from your shoulder, and his yoke from your neck, and the yoke will be destroyed because of the anointing oil." Jer. 30:8-9 'For it shall come to pass in that day,' says the LORD of hosts, 'That I will break his yoke from your neck, and will burst your bonds; foreigners shall no more enslave them. But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.'" God breaks the yoke of bondage from the enemy so we can be yoked to him.

In the pursuit of being holy and walking correctly we can burden ourselves to be more spiritual with fruitless cares or extra laws that will weigh us down. Often times the Pharisees went for the letter of the law, Jesus went for the spirit, the intent of the words. The Rabbis used the term yoke for school, as many pupils find it now a yoke. A yoke was a curved piece of wood called an 'ol. It was custom made to be fitted on the neck of two oxen yoked or coupled together for the purpose of drawing the plough as a pair. They shared in the labor. The lighter and the better fitting the yoke was, the more comfortable it would be for their work.

In the New Testament the word "yoke" is also used to denote servitude (Matt. 11:29, 30; Acts 15:10; Gal. 5:1). Jesus offered refreshment in his school compared to the Pharisee's and promised to make the burden light, unlike the Pharisees he is a meek and humble teacher In Mt. 11:28-30 Jesus beckons "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

In coming to him we take his yoke on us, and submit to his authority. It is a custom made yoke perfectly fit for each of us. We learn of him in all things, and it is a comfort in our obedience. He accepts us all as willing servants, along with our imperfect service. Here we find rest for our souls being yoked to love. The way of service will not become burdensome or make us weary. It is the way of rest because being yoked to him we do not do all the work, as he working alongside us.

Paul writes in Gal. 5:1 "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage." We are set free to do the will of God, not our will, nor go back to our old lifestyle. We are free in him. Outside of him is only

bondage, the rule of Satan that captures people to do sin. So we need to abide in him to be free and fruitful.

We are yoked to do work, we are called to be servants. Every 7th year a servant in the household of Israel would have a choice if they would want to stay or leave. If they liked their master they would have an awl pierce their ear and put a personal earring in it showing who they serve. It was a promise for a lifetime. If we commit our lives to the Lord we should consider the cost. This is not to be a flippant thing or to be used as a free card for fire insurance. It means a change of life that will affect us now, not just later in eternity. So many make a decision at the moment of need only to waffle on it later.

As Bob Dylans song went, your gonna serve somebody, it may be God, it may be the Devil but your gonna serve somebody. We are made to serve. And we should not be afraid to speak about whom we serve. Its been said When the time comes to speak if you don't stand up for God you will sit down with the devil. If we deny him before man he will deny us before the father. But to be able to have this boldness we need pure unadulterated loyalty. This means we need to know who we are devoted to. Josh.24:15 says if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord choose you this day whom you will serve. We become a slave (doulos) by choice, and we work in the household of God with other servants.

Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to be our helper, we are not left with only written instructions, but are Given God himself as a gift, the very one who inspired the Scriptures. He is one who comes alongside us and guides us in them. The Helper is God correcting the believer when they are going off course. His part is to convict and correct to bring us back on course, this is done through the comforter and his word.

It is by Gods grace that we are continually changed through the work of the Spirit. Paul states 1 Corinthians 15:10 -- "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." Jesus said we can do nothing apart from him and we abide by the Holy Spirit who baptized us into Christ.

2 Corinthians 9:8 -- "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." The Holy Spirit is called the spirit of Grace that imparts Christ's nature to the believer. As we submit to his instruction we are changed into what he sees for us. He has predestined us to be formed to his plan and his will to be lived out in our lives. It is by his grace we are changed and grow.

If we are faithful in the little things we will be given more (Mt.12:18) this is the biblical principle and there is no quick way to holiness or greatness. Jesus said we must become servants. We are not given the title of king or rulers but servant and friend if we serve him. Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Daniel David all served and were called servants. Even Jesus was called a servant before he was called the apostle (Heb.3:1) as he came to earth to do the fathers will as a servant. (Isa.52:13;Mt.12:18) Rev.22:3 states that in the new Jerusalem we will be servants to him.

Paul said to the Galatians (Gal 5:7) You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? The Galatians had tried to improve their relationship with the Lord by the law and removed themselves from his grace.

He later says in Gal.5:16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the desires of the flesh. Better translated" walk **by the spirit**, "in other words by his power given to us. To walk means a habitual behavior, a manner of life, walking in the spirit diminishes the fallen nature's appetite.

Our flesh craves the flesh and sin but to walk in the spirit these have to be denied. This is an ongoing battle, but victory comes when the Holy Spirit rules over the fallen nature. We need to restrain our passions and desires that come to life. But this can't be done by law. The Judaizers solution was the restraining influence of the law to hold their sin nature in check. Paul's argument for the solution was the very opposite. Gal.5:18 We are Not under the law, he gave Himself, instead of rules. The law does not correct behavior only shows it, it is the spirit that has the power. Whatever we let rule us and live out we will have fruit from. if it's the Spirit it will be fruit unto eternal life.

The overcoming through the law is not the solution but by God himself through the grace that comes through him . Its either from self effort of trying to keep obedient to his laws or God living his life through us. This is the secret of the Christian life that is no secret if one reads the Scriptures. It is to yield, to surrender continually.

Human nature is frail in the flesh. When Jesus was on the cross they mocked him to come down, instead he used his power to restrain himself for our sake he surrendered completely to the fathers will. Meekness is strength under control. He reserved his power and did not use it showing he was superior. The life Jesus lived is transferred, deposited into us so its not that we lack the strength.

Paul again writes those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. if we live in the spirit (Gal 5:23-25) "Let us also go on walking by the Spirit." Let us make our steps by the help and guidance of the Spirit. It is surrendering to do his will, his way daily, in and by the Spirit. [Gal 5:25 pneumatikoi (NT:4151) kai (NT:2532) stoichoumenoi](Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament,) Self control means to master your passions 1 Cor.9:25. We have to look at sin inside us as an enemy just as the devil is.

The New Testament Epistles speak of the 'perfect law of liberty' (Jas. 1:25), it is called the 'royal law' (Jas. 2:8), and the 'law of Christ' (Gal. 6:2), and the 'law of the spirit of life' (Rom. 8:2). It is not to be confused with the OT law or the 10 commandments. It is the commands contained in the Epistles which compose the law of Christ, and instruct the believer in right doctrine and behavior. This consists of hundreds of commands covering every area of Christian living. they are all instructions and guidance in the law of Christ. Lewis Sperry Chafer wrote, "These teachings surpass the standards of the Law of Moses in the measure in which infinity surpasses the finite. (Systematic Theology. Dallas:, 1948, Vol. 4, "pg .187)

Walking in the Spirit means real change in our old nature 1 Pt.1:2 our sanctification is brought about by the Spirit. We are positionally righteous not fully yet in nature, although we are in the process of being changed to be that. No one will be near perfect this side of Heaven. Yet we are to practice the truth that will transform us.

1 Cor.2:10 we are led to understand the words of Jesus and have the ability to put into action what is necessary by the power of the Spirit. Through the Spirit (*dia tou pneumatos*). The Holy Spirit is the agent of the revelation of grace, part of the mystery of the Gospel that was hidden in ages past.

1 Cor.2:13 We are taught Not in words which man's wisdom Literally, "not in words taught by human wisdom." But by the words, "which the Spirit teacheth (*en didaktois pneumatos*), by the help of the Holy Spirit the revelation of the word is revealed. After nearly nineteen centuries the Scriptures still contain the power of the Spirit of God, able to dynamically transform ones life. And they need to be proclaimed in the pulpits more than ever before.

When we Walk in the spirit it will lead one into the truth of Scripture not apart from it 2 John 1:2 John 17:17"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

We are set apart in truth, to walk in it and 1 John 2:6 for abiding in Christ. John writes in 1 Jn 1:6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. This the truth, is revealed by the Christ, gradually unfolds by the Spirit, who is "truth" Which abides in us. Later in 2 Jn 1:4 John comments, "I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, Still later he wrote in 3 Jn :4 "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." John was concerned for the believers knowing that if they walked in the truth of the word they would have true fellowship with God and each other.

Because Jesus love us first and died for us we should be willing servants To walk in the Spirit means servanthood. Peter writes 1 Pet 1:22 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, Paul writes Gal.5:13 through love we serve one another.

Many want to be filled first by the Spirit before they take on a task, but the Bible teaches that we go in faith to do the work and God will meet us there to empower us by his Spirit. We shouldn't necessarily be waiting to be zapped to be endowed with power so we can do his work. We should already be led in doing his work and continually be filled for service.

Jesus said in John 12:26 "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor." By doing Gods will he will meet us and give us the power, so it will not be our own strength. We are to ask to be filled with his Spirit, but it is not for self enjoyment but for service.

Walking in the spirit does not always mean a blessing, it can mean testing. We find "Jesus was led up into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil." Mark 1:12 puts it more strongly, that the Spirit "drove him" into the wilderness. Meaning a strong impulsion to the area of testing. God was glorified in Christ by his choosing what is right, even at a

weak moment. It is at these times our faith is tested, and we are refreshed that we are filled to do his work. As Luke writes (4:14) after the testing Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee.

1 TIM 3:15 WE ARE " THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD, THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF THE TRUTH."We are to proclaim his word of truth. It becomes more believable when the world sees us walk in it.

We have an empty pulpits, the voices have stopped warning about the consequences of sin. That what we sow we will reap. With little guidance or instruction in this, is it any wonder that the people in the pughs are unaffected and cannot affect society. One famous preacher has said, Without fire in the pulpit the ice in the pughs won't melt.

If we want to have an affect on society, our friends and family there are certain qualifications needed to see this change. We are to live a holy life. Those who are pure, who are living in an unclean land should bring conviction of sin to the people around them. Instead today the world looks at the church and excuses their sin because there is no salt for conviction. Salt is a preservative to foods that rot. We need to turn the salt shaker upside down today because things have become extremely rotten, even putrid all around us.

We need to be inclined to obedience. You can't claim the promises without doing his commandments. Obedience will bring a personal ongoing revival, and stop one from becoming dry. Jesus promised living waters would flow from inside us and out to others if we believe in him as the Scriptures have said. To do so one must continually be in the Scriptures not reading it as a chore or duty but wanting to hear from God and willing to do what he says. We are to choose the better of being a Mary and sit at his feet before, lest we become a Martha so busy unable to stay still and spend time with him. God misses his time with us more than we do, yet we are the ones affected by not taking the effort of spending time in his word.

For the church and the individual to have power like in ancient days I find there are few things we must do. We are not to have an independent spirit, but a dependant Spirit. Not like the world has with co-dependency in programs and people, but dependent on God. We can do nothing without Christ that would be lasting and effective for furtherance of his kingdom. Prayerlessness means one is depending on there own self to do his work, a spiritual impossibility. We are to pray in faith seeking the will of God. We seek his kingdom and his righteousness first because we have none of our own.

2nd we are to Die to self. The power of God is in the cross, the cross we carry is a crucified life. When the church picks up her cross, real revival will come naturally, Christ's life by the holy Spirit will manifest. There is nothing man can do or invent that will ever give this new life. No methodology or program will suffice. We must die first to be resurrected in newness of life, then the real power will come.

Paul writes in Gal 6:14 "But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Paul's world view is being dead to what the world offers so he can be alive to Christ. You can't be alive to

both. Jesus died for us, but we must consider ourselves, our old life dead as well, otherwise how can he fill us with his spirit.

3rd we must be willing to suffer for his name sake. Phil 3:10 "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death," suffering is foreign to the Christian lifestyle today, but it was a way of life to the early Church. Without it we can't know him in his death and we certainly can't possess resurrection power. We are to have this power to change us first so we can effectively change others and show the reality that Christ is indeed alive. Where's the power of the Spirit today? Its still available, God has not changed. When we realize we are empty only then can we seek him to fill us. He can't breathe new life in us until we commit the old to be dead. Bonhoffer said when Christ calls someone to come he calls them to die (to self). Then we will rediscover the source of Gods power, and we can draw from it. We are able and willing to die to self When we see Jesus for who he is. Want to see change, die to self, God promises to do the rest.

We can't be filled when have cluttered up the temple with so much stuff. Lets remove the weights that so easily stumble us. Ask for God to search our hearts. Then we can run the race with endurance and with joy and be effective for Gods kingdom.

BIBLE'S LASTING INFLUENCE IN OUR LIFE

As we read the Bible or hear sermons that are biblically based we are instructed to live the Christian life and do good works.

Christianity can be much like eating food for our nourishment. Without a well balanced diet, a good attitude and exercise one can become sick and anemic very quickly. With our physical food we can see the affects easily on our body but this is not always so Spiritually. Our growth should be bringing us forward to finding our calling in Christ to know his specific will for our lives

Today it is a rare person that pursues more education pushing out into the waters of ministry on their own. It's not easy to sail in uncharted waters or where few want to go, especially with so much resistance today. It's even more rare for someone to be prepared to go out into the battlefield to head off the enemy and save souls. Whether we go off into the mission field or stay here and work through the Church, we should always be ready to give an answer for the faith we possess.

Today life just isn't the same anymore. What was once simple has become complicated. We once had more time to choose what we want to do in our day now we barely have time to get what is necessary done. Despite our circumstances we have to find time to be with the Lord, to be instructed by the word, pray and exhibit our good works. I don't think anyone would question that this needs to be seen in society now more than ever before.

There are so many issues today. Feeding the hungry, helping the homeless, euthanasia, abortion, suicide, divorce, cults. We are surrounded by a flood of anti-Christian teachings and world views competing, battling for the hearts and minds of everyone on planet earth. At the same time there has not been more opportunity to be part of a ministry and be useful in helping to spread the message of Christ. We have no excuse, as we see the lateness of the hour and the people that we are surrounded with that will die and go to an eternity without God.

Its unfortunate but what had started as a good idea for Christian TV has become church for many people. Instead of becoming involved and being personally used of the Lord, they watch the preachers and give their money and that's their service done to the Lord. Promises of Prosperity, success, breakthrough turnarounds for the family that is split. You just need to receive them, put your hand out and touch your TV, etc.. It's all done to be received from your living room, so don't have to move. From what we see and hear on Christian TV one would think the church has never been in better shape, were fit ready to roll anywhere as evangelistic servants, right? Not quite, the church has never wobbled more than she is today and its all because we've bought into the false advertising of the Christian vendors. The church is getting ripped off because huge amounts of money that should go to the local congregations and the local ministries and being sent to TV evangelists who live extravagant lifestyles and have to pay enormous amounts to air time and satellites.

Those who are supposedly gifted do all the work and the audience supports them. And why not with the promised blessing of gain they can give to their hearts content and sit at home

and be blessed. But this is not the way the Lord would have it, he wants everyone to be involved. He gave every believer the Holy Spirit, and with him comes gifts and talents that we are responsible to find and use. If this was done the Church would have the power, the needs would be met and we would not be so anemic in society and the religious world. How do I know this? Its been said the cults are the unpaid bill of the church. If they are growing then we are not doing our job spiritually. If we were doing our job, and had more watchmen euthanasia bills would not be passed. Abortion would not have killed off the next generation. But this is the price we pay when a few do the job of the many. With a war of values broken out on all fronts who can watch and do everything, some things have to slip by.

Jesus' prayer of sending workers into the harvest field is more needed today than ever. The fact is that there are less people hearing the gospel message than a few years ago because of the population growth and anti Christian sentiment. Despite all the efforts of TV Christianity.

Organizing efforts to reach the people masses of the world have been successful in some ways but I don't think this is what Jesus had in mind when he said as you go make disciples from all nations. Many efforts have broken ground where there was no mention of the gospel previously, but there is still the teaching element that has been neglected. If the Church at home is not taught correctly to know the scriptures, they will not be effective to others.

When we look at the sermons that brought thousands into the church in the book of acts they cut, they convicted, and they convinced people to be committed.

Revivals, like those of Charles Finney, Jonathan Edwards, D. L. Moody, even the famous Pentecostal Revival at Azusa Street at the turn of the century, resulted from the powerful preaching of God's truth, a crushing awareness of sin resulting in true repentance and growing obedience to God's Word. Even one does not agree with some of these names one cannot help but see the results were from hands on ministry, people with people.

Jesus made Christianity a hands on experience for all to participate in. He didn't have a certain group of people as priests as in Judaism. Because we have been reconciled to Christ we now are ambassadors to reconcile others we are all automatically put in a priesthood. In the OT. The priest came from a specific tribe Levi, not so in the NT

1 Pet. 2:5 "you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. All Christians are part of the priesthood we all offer up sacrifices to God which is our service to him, Heb.13:15. As the priests in the Old Testament offered incense and offerings each morning and evening to God on the altar of incense as believers we offer the incense of praise, prayer and thanksgiving to God. We become a living sacrifice in service to our God.

1 Pet. 2:9-10 Peter finishes by explaining the result of God's making all believers priests. " But ye are a chosen generation, a Royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his

marvelous light; Who in time past were not a people but are now the people of God; who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

All believers are Holy to God, set apart for his service. As Israel is God's chosen people according to His covenant made to Abraham in the OT. So New Covenant believers are chosen in Jesus Christ.

Paul writes of his ministry to the believers in Rome, Rom. 15:15-16 " That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit." Here Paul describes himself as a priest (a minister) who serves through the preaching of the gospel. This is the calling of all believers to affect those around them with the gospel message.

Today we have a Nicolaity meaning those put in authority to rule. That a certain individual or group is given greater prominence over others. Many want preeminence they want you to be there disciple, to depend on them for teaching, and to give to them.

Jesus states "Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate" (Rev 2:15 and Rev 2:6). Nicolaitan is composed of *two words* Nico means Victor or Conqueror and Laos (from which we get the word "Laity") is the people. So a Nicolaitan is one who rules over the common people, a Dominionist, a cult leader who wants control and make disciples after himself.

2 Jn.4 nothing please John more, as well as the Lord, than to see his children walk in the truth. That is when we are effective. If one does not practice their Christian life their testimony suffers whether someone knows it or not. Theology should turn into practice or it has not affected the heart. How can we have convictions without our whole being involved. Our goal should be that we are to Love the lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, our whole being. Anything less than this can mean that we are loving something else in his place.

The basics of Christianity means their are core beliefs that unite us in Christ. God the uncreated, Christ the eternal God there is one God and 3 distinct persons who exist simultaneously as the One God. the virgin conception , the incarnation, the sinfulness of man and the need of a savior, the new birth, the Gospel death burial and physical resurrection, the 2nd coming, baptism, Christ the eternal mediator and priest, the infallibility and inerrancy of scripture, the giftings, judgment and rewards to the believers. These are a few of the essentials that are clarified in the Scriptures that all should be consistently taught in church so we are prepared and can teach others.

The NT exhorts people to right doctrine twice as much as right conduct, because if you have right doctrine you will have correct practice. Right doctrine means you will practice your Christianity in a practical way. When the gifts are practiced and used correctly you will have true prophecy. There will be order in the Church and people will be built up for the work of the ministry. Disorder in using the gifts results in teaching people contrary to sound doctrine.

Many want the gifts of miracles healing, tongues and prophecy which can bring attention to oneself. The gift of teaching is mentioned and practiced more than any other but is more neglected. The practical gifts are the ones that really bring compassion and order. Such as helps, mercy, encouragement, administration are the least desired but the most needed. But gifts themselves are not the answer, Jesus is.

When leaders in the church teach wrong and the other leaders allow it, the sheep will follow. Whole sections of the church have left what they once practiced as Biblical doctrines for something new and improved. The same is offered in the world for advertising their products, that was last years now this is the improved updated version. Buy it, its on sale now!

We are not to be following a man. If we do we will end up like every cult in history We are to be followers of Christ and his revealed word, not what he has not revealed. If God is silent on an issue we should not be listening to people speaking sermons or writing books on this. Gnostics have always been inside the church and today we have more than our share of Gnostic revelators who have influenced whole segments of the Church into fantasy revelations.

Didn't Jesus say In John 14:12," you will do even greater works than these, because I am going to the Father." We can do greater works, as in more abundance, because the ministry of the Spirit is not limited to one only, but now has many. Greater is in reference to number not in quality. The apostles nor we can never do a greater work (miracle) than the resurrection or make the blind see. Notice he does not say greater miracles but works. What is greater is the ability to bring someone in a direct contact with Christ and have the holy Spirit live in them, something that was not offered at the time he said this. Can you think of a greater miracle for someone than to bring them into relationship with the Lords and have the assurance of eternal life? I can't.

Many want bigger-bigger is better, isn't it? Every time the Lord started to do a work he used a few, not the many. Noah, Abraham, Gideon, the prophets were always the minority. He looked for quality not quantity the increase was left to him. He didn't look for the hidden potential in people, but looked for those who would be willing to learn, willing to die to their old life and yield to his Lordship so he could bring to birth something that wasn't there. God is still the creator but in order to bring new life to something the old must die. We want the numbers in the church and numbers are good. But Jesus is more concerned about quality not quantity.

Sometimes we as believers are impressed by looking at what we call 'results,' and saying, 'God is blessing that ministry. Look at what is happening! People are getting saved, healed! Needs are met! How can you find fault with that?' Sometimes we hear this report from the very people that are doing the ministry who want peoples contributions. So they boast, exaggerate, and promise them what Scripture does not to receive the offering for their ministry. We can be so na?e to what is operating, we need to look beyond the surface and what is often an infomercial to solicit our support.

It's not just the results that God's looking at. He wants it to be done His Way so he receives the glory. The issue is not whether people get saved or not. The issue is: Is it done God's way, is it his plan? The ends does not justify the means, it may be that way in the world, but not with Christ. Take for example Jeremiah who had very little results as we would measure it. But he followed the commands of the Lord to preach repentance, he had a heart for the people. Look at Jonah who finally did obey but his heart wasn't in it, and he had the greatest revival in biblical history. God doesn't need man to accomplish his purposes, but he wants to use us for his glory and have us share in it by knowing him through the sufferings and trials.

Look at Moses who was asked to strike the Rock and water flowed out, a second time in Num.20 he is to speak to the rock and instead he strikes it twice in anger. He violated God's command and misrepresented him to the people .In Ex.17 he struck it and is not reprimanded. Water was supernaturally supplied twice, the first time he struck the rock he did in obedience, and the time 2nd in disobedience because he was only to speak to it. Despite his disobedience God gave the water to the people, It was supernaturally supplied! What difference did it make to Israel, whether Moses *struck* the rock or *spoke* to the rock? They got what they needed! But it made a difference to Moses. He was kept out of the promised land because he did not do what was asked by God, he misrepresented him. There are many ministries today that get results, what they do it works. But the question that needs to be asked is it God's way, are the people being manipulated and who really gets the blessing or the glory. Who is paying the price?

Not all that glitters is diamonds and gold. So many think that if they Follow the yellow brick road of a famous evangelist, their is a pot of Gold containing success and prosperity waiting for them at the end of the road. What ever happened to the promise of suffering for his namesake or being persecuted. I'm not saying we should be looking forward to this, but I see the very opposite being taught in some churches and on TV. That we are to be blessed and prosperous and everything should be smooth. This is a slippery slope downward to coach potato Christianity. What are we being prepared for peace and safety or the battle that rages for souls.

Jesus said to be witnesses of him to the ends of the earth. This meant martyrs, no one at the time understood the sacrifice of what this calling meant. To take up ones cross not only meant suffering but could very well have meant death. To not love ones life more than the calling of Christ was reality. We can look back and see what it meant to the ancient saints from the history of the church.

Stephen the first martyr reminds the Pharisees of Jesus words in Mt. 23 in his discourse in Acts 7:52"Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers. He said they were stiff necked just as their forefathers in the wilderness." Is it any wonder they killed him on the spot!

James 5:10-11: "My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord-- that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful." We are very unfamiliar with suffering for our faith. We

cringe when we speak to someone about Christ and we are mocked. People say, 'Well look, I don't want to have conflict, and I don't want to have division. But this is how the first church grew by being bold and presenting the truth. They grew through conflicts with both the religious leaders and the Roman society. What some are looking for is a nice warm feelings where people will feel good about themselves and will throw teaching doctrine out the door. And all that matters is that we come together and have love. But you take Bible doctrine out of love and what do you have? What is love without the truth? There is no real love apart from truth! Biblical love only functions in the context of truth. To operate like this inside the Church is to throw in the towel and be just as the world.

What we need is some Holy Ghost boldness. All the apostles except one died out on the mission field, they were dedicated and the disciples they trained were just as dedicated. God asks His priests to be dedicated. In the OT when they served in the tabernacle they had written on their foreheads holiness to the Lord. They were separated to do his work, today it doesn't seem to matter.

It is from the writings of the church fathers that we know the history of the early church. Eusebius wrote of their history. This statement has echoed over the centuries of time "the seed of the church is built on the blood of the martyrs." Death was such a common way to go that it was called a baptism of blood. Christians were called atheists because they wouldn't recognize Caesar as God. They didn't need to have Caesar as their only God, but only add him to Jesus and they would be spared. Many did not compromise, yet many did. Phil 1:29-30 "For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me."

John the Apostle was the last to survive being banished on the Isle of Patmos. Rev. 1:9 "I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ," Of the many disciples he had one called Polycarp who lived from 69-155 A.D.. He became the chief presbyter over the church at Smyrna and taught Irenaeus of Lyons. Polycarp joined 11 others who were scourged and beheaded, he was burned at the stake by Antoninus Pius. "So it befell the blessed Polycarp, who having with those from Philadelphia suffered martyrdom in Smyrna--twelve in all--is especially remembered more than the others by all men, so that he is talked of even by the heathen in every place: for he showed himself not only a notable teacher, but also a distinguished martyr, whose martyrdom all desire to imitate, seeing that it was after the pattern of the Gospel of Christ." Ignatius who was also a friend of Polycarp became bishop at Antioch, he was fed to the lions at the Coliseum of Rome under Trajan in 117 A.D.. Irenaeus succeeded bishop Pothirus when he died in the persecutions. Justin Martyr was so bold he wrote a defense of Christianity addressed to the emperor. He confronted Marcion who rejected the OT. and issued his own version of the NT. in which consisted part of the Gospel of Luke and 10 of Paul's epistles only. Justin also died a martyr beheaded at Rome in 167 AD. Justin Martyr wrote-To the Emperor Augustus Caesar "You can kill us. But you cannot hurt us." Athanasius defending the deity and tri-unity of God's nature was almost killed within the church as disputes of doctrine became overheated. He was chased out of Rome hiding out in the hills for years. He felt that doctrine was important enough to defend.

These men and many others lived out the declaration of Paul who said “For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

Because of pressure from the world and the new age of tolerance we are unwilling to speak out against those who misrepresent Christ or hate him. Unlike the early Church, they grew from contending openly. It was from being out in the open having friction that the people were convinced of the truth, not by any miracle crusades. Few do this any longer and we are certainly less unwilling to die for him. It has become the silence of the Lambs. The path of least resistance is chosen, we have become as tolerant as some liberals. We may be forced one day soon to have the courage the first century Church had, or go out with a whimper. The power and grace is there, we just need to step out in faith.

In countries that are communist and Muslim and anti Christian, many still face the same choice in the early Church, reject Jesus or die. In 1997-98 there were 160,000 Christians each year in about 60 different countries that we know of that gave their lives for the faith. In 98-99 Persecution of Christians is now on the upswing and reports of enormous amount of people that have died, because their faith is hated. 2 Thess. 3:1-3:” Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one. Pray for those in countries that are being persecuted, it is our duty and privilege to pray for our brethren.

II Thess. 1:4-5: “so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; “ go look up how many of the letters are written about suffering or written in suffering and not blessing, you’ll be surprised. Contrary to the leaders that promise blessings for those who are in the covenant it was the very opposite for those who lived in the power of God.

The purpose for our sufferings is to know him. Phil 3:10: “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, “suffering is mostly foreign to the Christian lifestyle today in America, but it was a way of life to the early Church. The phrase “fellowship of his sufferings” may sound strange. How can one have an intimate relationship around suffering? It means to partner together with him, we can receive strength now and the outcome of the resurrection later. Without it we can’t know him, and we certainly can’t possess resurrection power. The resurrection was their hope, just as Abraham knew when he offered his son Isaac, that God’s promise would be fulfilled.

They didn’t look to the here and now for there reward but they looked toward heaven where their treasure would be stored up. Where is your heart today, is it for those who don’t know Christ who are deceived into another gospel. Are you willing to do for the truth what the cults do for a lie? It only took a few to turn the world upside down in the first century. Pray for the Lord to use you for his namesake. There is no time like the present. We can’t change the past but God can use us to be part of changing the future.

