

*Things Surely Believed*

*Addressed to Theophilus*

*(A Friend of God)*

*(Luke 1:1-4)*

*By*

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# Things Surely Believed

## **Introduction**

The title we have chosen for this work is as broad as Truth and including error. We have no investment in error, but we want to assure our readers, if they have any doubt, that our interest is only in Truth. There are those in old time who have asked, "What is Truth?" We ask it now, and then answer: It is that which comes from God alone. As we have said in the pages of *The Reminder*, If God really intended to make known His will to man, it follows that to secure knowledge on our part, He must convey His Truth to us in accordance with the well-known rules of language. He must adapt Himself to our mode of communicating thought and ideas.

*"By LITERAL, we mean the grammatical interpretation of Scriptures. Some writers, to avoid lengthy phraseology, have employed the phrase 'literal interpretation,' by which they mean, not that every word or sentence is to be taken in its rigid literalism, but that the language of the Bible is to be interpreted by the customary rules of grammar and rhetoric, which are used in determining the sense of The Iliad, Paradise Lost, or other works of human composition.*

*We are to accept a strictly literal rendering, unless we have the distinctive marks of 'figures of speech.' The tropical sense is also received, without afterward, in addition, engrafting upon it another and separate sense which is not allowed by the rules of grammar, but which (i. e., the last sense) is applied by many to the Bible, as if the language of that Book was not fairly circumscribed by, but formed an exception to, the universal laws of language."*

*"If His words are given to be understood, it follows that He must have employed 'language' to convey the sense intended, agreeable to the laws grammatically expressed, controlling all language; and that, instead of seeking a sense which the words in themselves do not contain, we are primarily to obtain the sense that the words obviously embrace, making due allowance for the*

*existence of 'figures of speech' when indicated by the context, scope or construction of the passage."*

*"Language is complicated. Even an illiterate man unconsciously uses grammar, though sometimes erroneously, for that is the only way words may be put together with sense. We insist that the Bible is written to be understood. It only seems complicated to us because it is dealing with so many things outside our experience at the moment or from the past. Spiritual things must be understood in the light of the words of the Bible, not according to what feels right to us, certainly not according to our natural thought patterns and experiences."*

*– Quoted from The Reminder*

We are saying that what is not in harmony with what men have felt or understood before seems wrong. Thus it may be labeled as heresy, ignorance, or worse.

We believe that brethren through the years have known much of what God meant for them to understand and believe, but early in the history of the churches we see ideas coming into play which were contrary to what God intended. The letters to the Seven churches of Asia (Revelation 2--3) distinctly warn us against certain doctrines and practices which were wrong. God said He hated certain of these. He named some of these ideas with a label from the Old Testament, that is, as being from Balaam or from Jezebel.

The practice of these ideas from Jezebel or Balaam became tradition, in time. Tradition, of course, is simply that which we have received from some before us. Most of its uses in the Bible relate to traditions of men, of the elders, or of the fathers. These men rejected the things of God (Matthew 15:6; Mark 7:13). On the other hand Truth given across (transmitted) by Paul or the inspired writers soon became "traditions" (2 Thessalonians 2:15) which we should hold fast.

That an idea has been around a long time is no proof that it is Truth. A wrong form for baptism (sprinkling or pouring) has been around for hundreds of years, going back to the Protestant Reformation, and thence on back into the dark ages as practiced by Romanism. A universal church, meaning "all



who are truly saved make up the church," goes back to the same sources.

Even among Baptists who are generally sound it is found in the eighteenth century, maybe further. It is seen in the minutes of the first hundred years of the old Philadelphia Association of Baptists. Also found there was a compromising attitude toward whose baptism could be accepted.

Some only insisted that the man receiving it must have been a believer before being immersed, though that immersion might be by a universalist — that is, a group who believed that ultimately all men would be saved. (See this topic in Chapter One of this book).

### **A Literal, Grammatical Understanding**

We are not advocating that everyone go to school and learn the intricacies of grammar. Use the language you use every day, in reading the newspaper or listening to the news or a documentary. Many may be embarrassed at how disinterested you were in grammar or literature when in school, so this is a handicap. But use that language. While saying this, I must say that even more important is a humble, willing heart, ready to believe what God says. Humbled before Him one's thoughts, and the consent of his heart will be toward heart of God. Being a student or a scholar is not the criterion for learning God's Word. Rules for interpretation are important, but they must not be abused to exclude the meaning of the words.

Be sure, however, that we believe what the Word says. Guard against, as the plague, any tendency to compromise because it may be misunderstood, or you may be rejected by taking what may seem like a radical stand. The Bible promises discernment to one who is obedient. But it insists one cannot walk in the flesh, using fleshly wisdom or feelings, or he will not receive this spiritual discernment.

It is surely believed that though one has a lack of grammatical education, when his heart is truly yielded to the Lord and His desire is to do the will of God as he is shown that will, he can learn the Word in its true sense and will have assurance that it

is the Truth.

Read the words of this book with your Bible before you. Check any proof texts given to evaluate statements made. It is the only safe way. Do you really want to know God's view, or would you rather stay in the favor of friends, family, preachers, and men in general?

### **A Warning You Should Hear**

There is a price to pay for having such an attitude. You must be willing to have your brethren, good men whom you trust, reject you and even ridicule you for taking positions not held by the majority, or by the leadership. This is very painful, as I can testify by experience.

One does not feel good when being put down, judged unfairly, accused of believing ideas not taught in the Bible. It may go so far as to leave one outside his own church, and certainly outside the denomination which he had esteemed and felt comfortable in for many years. But I assure you, a lot of what has been thought right may now be allowed to stand the examination for Truth which God's Word will bear.

We do not have to answer to men, though it is natural to do so. We like to have men think well of us. But having settled in our hearts that we believe what God says, and sure that it is what the Word means, as He has given us assurance, we need not feel we have to explain it to men if they appear to be only finding fault.

Of course, if they have a desire to know, and if they show a spirit of humility and patience with a willingness to learn, we are obligated to show them in the Word what our own hearts find comfort and consolation in believing and practicing.

This is our position in this book. We have no desire to debate with anyone. We certainly do not desire to put others down who do not agree with us. We only want to have fellowship with those who want to have fellowship with our Lord. Fellowship with the Father and with the Son gives us fellowship with others who enjoy the same and provides full joy to us all (1 John 1:4, 5).

### **About Fellowshiping With Others**

Does one have to subscribe to every doctrine which others believe in order to enjoy fellowship? The word *fellowship* means having things in common. Perhaps no two men have all things in common. We do not expect it in matters of everyday life. All men cannot have the same woman for a wife. All men cannot hold government jobs, though in our day that seems to be about the surest thing people can do to have what they feel is a secure future.

Not even in all doctrines are we in agreement. Just ask those in your church whether they hold certain views and there will be some division. This only demonstrates that we are fallible human beings, prone to error. Church fellowship is built around those distinct doctrines which identify the Lord's church. Sometimes those beyond our own church hold the same views we do and to this extent we can have a kind of fellowship, but only as one is a member, subject to the discipline of a particular church, is he truly in fellowship with that church as a church. Even there certain views may be endorsed by some which represent views of other churches, not Baptists. These feel they can have Christian fellowship, but they would not want to belong to such a church.

Then there is a fellowship marked by certain points of emphasis. I fellowship with a group of churches which expect the Lord to return and establish His kingdom on earth and those shall inherit a place in it who have walked in obedience before the Lord in their respective churches.

This makes an area of sweet fellowship. It extends beyond the immediate bounds of kingdom Truth, including missions, godly walk, discipline, and many other doctrines which are of great importance.

In the last analysis, our whole souls must be yielded to the Lord. This will provide us the assurance we need in determining our course and finding peace and joy in the Lord. It is my desire to find this disposition, which is the Spirit of Christ, in more and more brethren.

– The Author, November 16, 1993

## *At A Later Date*

As you could see by the Introduction, this material was begun in 1993. I have just read the chapter below and find myself still in harmony with that Introduction.

I confess, however, that in the nearly two years since that writing I have learned, or learned better, so that I have better reasons for my thinking many of the things contained in this treatise.

It is sent forth with a conscience of great weakness on the part of this writer, but with full conviction that the things set forth in these chapters are the Truth as set forth in God's Word.

I expect my brethren to challenge what is said here. This is good, but I hope they too may be challenged by what is read.

My prayer is that brethren will read with full assurance that I have their best interest at heart. My desire is to be a blessing. I feel that many things herein will be a help in the difficult days just ahead.

There is every reason to believe brethren may need these explanations in the endtime, maybe even when Antichrist is on the scene.

May our Loving Lord overrule any errors and send the book into homes and hearts ready to receive Truth.

The Editor

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

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## **Baptist Tradition**

*"Many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed" (Luke 1:1-4).*

"Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses."

None of those eyewitnesses are yet with us, as some were when Luke wrote. So Luke received the story from others who were present during the ministry of the Lord. He then traced out the elements so as to set them down in an orderly manner, tracing each part from the beginning.

When Luke says he had perfect understanding from the very first, we find a word which scholars are divided on as to a proper rendering. It means literally "from above." But this could mean "from the top, or starting at the beginning."

Most of us can logically accept the idea that his information came from above, that is, from heaven, but that is not the necessary meaning of the word among the Greeks. Their frequent usage makes the word to refer to what comes from higher authority, as one present, or an eyewitness, then what has come in an orderly fashion.

Taking the word by itself, however, and comparing all the places where it occurs one is almost certainly influenced to believe Luke's information came from heaven (See Matthew 27:31, Mark 15:38; Luke 1:3; John 3:3, 7, 31, John 19:11, 23; Acts 26:5; Galatians 4:9; James 1:17; James 3:15,17).

These are all the occurrences in the New Testament. A few of these cannot mean "from heaven." Many cannot mean anything else. I leave it to the reader to decide for himself. But Luke's having "perfect understanding" means "to follow near, or closely." Again it could be his own diligence. But the word does apply to his own careful tracing, or following, of the sense.

Whatever we conclude about the source of his information, there seems to be no question but that there were eyewitnesses, ministers of the word, who contributed to his understanding.

Then he writes Theophilus, probably a magistrate or officer with whom he had become acquainted, who also may have been a Christian brother whom Luke knew, for his name means lover of God. He was the addressee of another narrative by Luke, called the book of Acts (1:1) in which he refers to "*the former treatise.*"

We say all of this to come to a very important point in our instructions as to the Truth. We are all debtors to those who have gone before us. Parents, pastors, friends, and teachers have all contributed to our understanding.

In fact, I am quick to acknowledge that I am a debtor to teachers I have had, beginning with my own Baptist parents, specially my mother who was my first Sunday School teacher in addition to teaching me at home. What am I saying? that tradition plays a part in our coming to the knowledge of the Truth. But traditions may be from the wrong source. I think mine were from one of the best sources, though tradition today is hardly what it was when I was a boy growing up, or when I was a young preacher just starting out.

I was saved under the preaching of a state missionary, recommended by the messengers of a state association. My church where I received scriptural baptism was affiliated with a local association and I attended a church which sponsored a school which taught me much of the Word of God and which church affiliated with the American Baptist Association.

Those teachers and that school taught me truth regarding the

church, and specially regarding baptism, which has helped shape the course of my ministry greatly. I am grateful, indeed, though circumstances which I contributed to not at all, have brought about a lot of modifications in my relationships. I feel the original relationships were providential for me, in the sense that this group in those days was one of the strongest and most scriptural in the meaning of baptism. I am thankful to have been introduced to that much of God's truth.

At the first my love for the Word caused me to begin reading the Scriptures faithfully, and I formed the habit of praying regularly. My love for the Word of God has never dimmed, but over time I have learned how much more important a love for the Word is than my relationships with certain ones. Without the Christian family, even a Baptist family, I might not have had the incentives which motivated my life.

Again, I am thankful for those incentives and those relationships for what they have contributed to my zeal to learn just what the Lord says. Early I came to see that the Bereans are a great example for any Christian.

*"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).*

Many people have a readiness of mind, but they seek to other men, books, and various teachers, instead of searching the Scriptures. A lack in this area may result in one's becoming strong in error, not in Truth.

The word, *paradosis*, simply means transmission — that which is passed along. This is the sense of tradition. Truth is passed along from parents to children, but they may as readily pass along the error which they had received.

Of the thirteen uses of the word in the New Testament, the KJV translates tradition(s) all but once. Then it is "ordinances" (1 Corinthians 11:2). This and two others (2 Thessalonians 2:15; 2 Thessalonians 3:6) refer to that which is passed along to us by those holding the truth. The others

are traditions of men, mostly of the Jews, some of which might have been correct, or of other men, which often were not true.

We are admonished to be careful to hold the traditions which Paul or good men gave us, and we are warned to turn away from those traditions which do not ring true. But what is the standard?

In the last analysis it must be the inspired Word of God. Here we must use diligence (2 Timothy 2:15) and beware of those who would turn us away (2 Timothy 1:14). We must also realize that some err from the truth (James 5:19), and the way of truth is often spoken against (2 Peter 2:2). Since we are required to walk in the truth (3 John vs. 3,4) and are to be fellow-helpers to the truth (3 John vs. 8), it behooves us to become familiar with the spirit of truth (1 John 4:6). Only by the Word of truth may we recognize Him who is the Spirit of Truth. Failure to do this blinds us to making our calling and election sure.

### **Tradition Often Is Extreme**

Viewed by someone from a different tradition, any tradition is extreme. We are inclined to view any ideas or practices different from our own, as being radical, foolish, or even an evidence of ignorance. Note the expressions of teenage girls while viewing pictures of mother's or grandmother's hair or clothing. How did you react the first time you saw a baby sprinkled, if you ever did? Some of us Baptists have only seen such on TV, if at all. Our thinking may be, "Why would they do something like that?" "He surely did not find that in the Bible? Our thinking may be that the church or minister administering such an act is either very ignorant or else he is very bold to presume that he can do a thing like that when there is no Scripture for it.

Protestants who use this method speak of what is not important in our minds: convenience, safety, or even the beauty and simplicity when a cute baby is involved. Can we allow ourselves to become so crass as to judge another for his conscientious religious practices? Herein lies a factor which has



far too much weight to allow us to make a safe judgment at a distance, or without looking for the Bible's explanation.

It may be that in America, where so much is said about freedom of speech, of conscience, and of rights, that we are hung up on this factor of judging. What we have to realize is not that we are judging people. That is for God to do. But we must judge practices, circumstances, specially religious practices. We need a standard to go by. Is the opinion of the majority safe? Does God leave such matters to the opinion of mere man? We know that if it is to please Him it must have Scriptural instruction or example behind it.

This principle does not only apply to what Protestants or Catholics do. Baptists must be willing to be judged by the Word of God. Their practices must stand in the light of Scripture. If it is something which only custom has brought in, then it must not be accepted. So many things which Baptists believe are like that. If we could only know the history of practices which seem to have no scriptural precedent, then we could begin to see that we are responsible to reject such and find out the true meaning which God Himself has given for what we do. Learning just what any outward form in our religion is designed to show, is a great help in understanding the whole practice.

Sometimes a change in culture may explain the language. The Bible speaks of "the right hand of fellowship" (Galatians 2:9). It is an isolated incident, not mentioned but that one time, though there are references to "the laying on of hands."

These are both a mere symbol of the extending of acceptance or endorsement in recognition of the soundness or position of the one receiving the hand. It was a formal act, unlike our greeting with a handshake (informal). The handshake seems innocent enough, but the greeting with a "holy kiss" seems to take its place in the scriptures.

To this day a kiss on the cheek is a close greeting sign in Hawaii and many Eastern countries. That the kiss must be "holy" suggests that it might be turned into something not so innocent. The same might be true of a handshake. The matter of

our culture accounts for the change from a kiss to a handshake. Knowing the background, therefore, is a safe measure of the acceptance or rejection of such practices. Because Hollywood and the social world has made of the kiss something which goes beyond a greeting, I prefer the handshake. For family and near loved ones an embrace is appropriate, but it is not a formal greeting endorsed in the Scriptures to show Christian love.

Looking again at baptism as a sign or symbol, it is not called a washing. Hence the mere pouring of water on, or sprinkling of it does not satisfy the sense. It is a burial and a resurrection. It declares the willingness of the subject to be buried, that is, in water, as a sign that he has died to the old manner of life and is willing to bury it out of sight. Then he is raised from the watery grave as a sign that he has been raised from the dead as a new creature. Literally, this is not true of anyone still living on earth, but it was true of Jesus. By faith in Him we are "baptized into Christ" (Galatians 3:27). Thus does one voluntarily identify with Christ in his death. So by faith he is now obligated to take up the cross daily (Luke 9:23).

This faith is not faith to be saved initially, for that is already past before the baptism. It is a faith to live the crucified position. But it is more than a mere death, for he is symbolically raised, because he has by faith pledged to walk in a new kind of life (Romans 6:4). This is called a reckoning, an accounting of something (Romans 6:11).

Again, this is not done in order to become saved initially. It is a step in the walk of faith which will manifest the saving of his life. That is the logical and historical explanation of the sense of baptism. No sprinkling or pouring can possibly seek such truth as a burial and resurrection.

### **The Bible Has the Word**

As we read or watch religious men, conscientious men, we may find differing traditions. Their sincerity, their age, or their aesthetic sensibility have nothing to do with it.

It is a fact that none of us escapes the power of traditional thinking. "We have always done it that way." "That is simply

the way it is done." So men justify most any practice. We parents may say to our children, "When I was a boy, we did thus and so," pointing out that our old way is better. Indeed, it may be. Or it may not. That system will legitimize most any custom or practice. But is it the best way, or the right way for men to do? Often it is not. We like our way. Our family observes certain practices which have satisfied them for years. Now we are living in a day when young people are challenging the old ways.

Things are not good simply because they are old, nor because they have satisfied us in the past. This is more of a cultural influence than an influence of truth. If no principle of truth or righteousness is involved, then perhaps it can be continued safely. But if it is shown that the Word of God has specific instructions on the subject, we are then bound to heed and make changes accordingly.

The Bible is our authority. There is no appeal for us to any other. When I was young, even after beginning to preach, I saw little reason for questioning the language or the practices of my Baptist brethren. For the most part I still do not. "The faith which was once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3) is still the faith. It is those teachings which claim our hearts attention, our faith, our obedience.

### **Understanding Spiritual Things**

Not all answers in the Scriptures are easily understood.

*"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29).*

*"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter" (Proverbs 25:2).*

*"It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search their own glory is not glory" (Proverbs 25:27).*

*"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! (Romans 11:33).*

Some things are to be revealed in their time (2 Thessalonians 2:6). What is revealed belongs to us, but it may need searching out. Much of what God has in store for His people is to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1:5). Much is also awaiting that time when we can use it properly. This pertains to such truth as may need illuminating by the Spirit, so we may discern its meaning (1 Corinthians 2:9-16).

When the Lord saved me many years ago I had only a very slight knowledge of what the Bible has to say. I had been to church and Sunday School all of my life but, like so many others, I learned the stories, but spiritual things did not make sense to me. I did not understand that such things are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14).

My experience has led me to see that many things did not make sense to me, probably, because they dealt with matters for which I was not prepared.

My experience had not called for these things and my spiritual grasp could not have handled them anyway. As a teacher I was often asked questions concerning the meaning of certain things. Sometimes the answer was forthcoming.

At other times I might study for hours and still not grasp the sense. In such cases I learned that the thing to do is to let it alone at the moment, look to the Lord, and wait on Him. Most such things have come through clearly subsequently.

Because the pressure of the moment is upon us does not mean that we need the answer immediately. But we should not be satisfied to dismiss it entirely. We must be willing to wait upon the Lord.

The very fact that discernment is granted to some people is proof that others are not granted this. One might conclude that it is hidden to lost men, which no doubt it is. But truth is also hidden from rebellious or wayward men. Just being careless or indifferent is likely the greatest hindrance in understanding to saved men.

We must not conclude that an education is what is needed, though this may help in the meaning of words or grammar. Discernment is the supplying of the spiritual significance of a passage for those who humble themselves and wait on the Lord, studying the written Word as though it depended on their learning, but depending on God as though He alone could supply the sense.

It is a little strange that men and churches where there is more education do not necessarily have a better grasp of the Word. But it is not strange when one remembers spiritual discernment.

Church history reveals that when Baptists divided over election, or over associations, it was not intelligence or natural learning which made the difference. Why would most larger churches, city churches, with pastors better educated and better paid, often be the ones which left the ideals of Landmarkism?

Frankly, I think that *Landmarkism* is a principle supported by the Word. It is based on strict baptism (no alien immersion), a closed Lord's Supper (only for the body partaking at the moment), and restricted fellowship among pastors or teachers (pulpits were closed to other denominations).

These lines were not hard and fast, for some with Landmark principles went with the Board Baptists. This neglect of Landmark principles resulted in time in the acceptance of the Protestant doctrine of a universal church, made up of all the saved.

Before the Landmarkers began to be heard so much, churches often took the Lord's Supper in joint meetings where more than one church was present. Pulpits were exchanged between small town pastors (for example, to fill a pulpit while a local pastor was sick or away for a time). These tolerant views gradually lifted the restrictions on baptism.

Some Baptists began to accept people as members who professed faith in Christ but who only had been immersed by some other group. The Minutes of the Old Philadelphia Association reveal a number of cases like this. Custom, conven-

ience, and what was thought to be a tolerant spirit caused a rift in the restrictions which the Bible had applied.

The doctrine of *"love all men"* was made to have a meaning not found in the Bible. Many such experiences can be cited in church history. It can be justified by pointing to Corinth, a church with internal problems, which was still a church in spite of these careless, or customary, practices.

So who knows what is mere custom and what has come to us by tradition, what is revelation from the Word and what is an accommodation among men and churches?

It is a fact that those who contended for the narrower limits often were harsh, and were always branded as harsh, unloving, unprogressive. Thus are Missionary Baptists labeled today. But it is a fact of modern history that many of these churches are now becoming more and more like those who were progressive. There surely is a position where one can insist on what God's Book teaches and yet be kind, forgiving, loving, and zealous.

Beware of the man who proves his position by the traditions of the elders. It happened in the time of Christ and is still happening today (Mark 15:2,3,6; Mark 7:3, 5, 8, 9, 13).

How sad when one rejects the Bible in favor of tradition, even branding those who stand for the word with some uncomplimentary name. You may be sure that when one rejects arguments based on the Bible, in favor of a traditional position, using even the traditional arguments as his proof, he is still standing for tradition and has not given an honest look to the Word of God for his thinking.

Such teachers are no more kind nor considerate than those holding Bible principles firmly, though he often charges the contender for the truth as the one who is harsh. What will it take to open the eyes of men, saved men with Scriptural baptism, so they may begin to see how much of custom and tradition he is defending? It may take the Lord's own shaming at His return (1 John 3:29), if he is still living at that time.

Jews who rejected Jesus when He was on earth before, as a nation are still rejecting the Christian position concerning Him,

just as their forefathers did. The traditions of the elders seemed right to them at His first coming; the same traditions seem right to them now. How tragic!

## **CHAPTER TWO**

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### **Justification By Faith**

*"Blessed [is] the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." (Romans 4:8).*

Knowing how to apply a passage of scripture is one of the most important things to learn if we are to understand and profit by what is taught in the Bible. In Bible school we were taught to ask a few questions and find the answers:

1. Who is speaking?
2. To whom is he speaking?
3. About what is he speaking?
4. When?
5. Where?
6. Why
7. How?

This is determined by the context. These questions, specially the first three, are essential. Otherwise, application may be made incorrectly.

With reference to the passage quoted above, may we ask these questions and determine how to accept what is here taught.

#### *Who is speaking?*

The inspired Apostle Paul, so we recognize authority behind the statement. We are not forgetting that Paul was quoting from David (v. 6).

#### *So, to whom is he speaking?*

The quotation is taken from Psalm 32:2. Reading that passage we learn that he explains just who it is who can claim



this promise: the man "in whose spirit there is no guile."

The verse just before (Psalm 32:1) further defines the one being spoken about:

*"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,  
whose sin is covered."*

The whole passage describes one who has trusted God for salvation and has been blessed with forgiveness, with a covering for his sin, so that now he may claim an imputed righteousness on the basis of faith. The language is applicable to a man who has already come to God for salvation.

Now Paul (Romans 4) is presenting new truth regarding benefits of grace beyond that initial experience.

We must conclude that Paul is not speaking about how one who is an alien sinner can have righteousness imputed to him for his faith, for he says,

*"Now to him that worketh is the reward not  
reckoned of grace, but of debt" (Romans 4:4).*

Reward is not something we speak of to lost sinners.

*About what is he speaking?*

Reward! (Romans 4:4). We should not necessarily conclude that the word ungodly means an alien sinner.

It is in Greek a compound of *a-* (not), and *sebes*, from *sebo-mai*, to adore or worship; hence it means irreverent, impious, wicked — Anyone who has a disrespectful attitude toward God or his Word.

Such a person may recognize his sin, repent, and confess his sins, and do what God wants him to do. Such an act, done by faith, is counted to him for righteousness. Actually, it is not the act which is counted for righteousness, but the attitude, for it is faith that is reckoned for righteousness.

(Please note that the word justified and justifieth are verb forms of justification, and all are forms of the Greek word for righteousness. Note also that impute, in this context is the same word as reckon. It is a mathematical term meaning to count.)

The other questions are to be applied within the context, not just to the writer. 4) When is important in that it is of Abraham we are speaking in the illustration. When did Abraham believe, or when is it said that his believing was counted to him for righteousness? This statement is in Genesis 15:6:

*"And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness."*

The proof text is used frequently by men today as though this were the first time Abraham believed God, but this is a false application. Read the story and it will be seen that it was some time after he arrived in Canaan. He left Ur of the Chaldees, in Mesopotamia, by faith (Hebrews 11:8; Genesis 12:1,4; Acts 7:1-4).

His faith was not matured, but at least it was greater than most men's faith at that time. We do not know what age he was when Abraham first trusted God, but it must have been before he left Ur.

He was seventy-five when he left Haran where he had stayed a time due to the death of his brother Haran. It was many years later when it is said "he believed in the Lord and it was counted to him for righteousness." How many years? We cannot say, but note some of the things which had passed. He stopped first at Sichem in the plain of Moreh, the Canaanites being yet in the land (Genesis 12:6).

The Lord met him there and he built an altar to God, an act of faith. He then moved to a mountain on the west of Bethel and east of Hai, where he built another altar and prayed to the Lord. More acts of faith. He then journeyed farther south, but there was a famine in the land, so he moved on down into Egypt.

We cannot say this was a step of faith, though we would not accuse Abram of being devoid of faith, for God had told him at Bethel that he was then in the land which God was to give him. As he drew near to Egypt he did some defensive maneuvering which we would not call faith, for he got in trouble over his wife, Sarah.

Pharaoh was plagued by the Lord for Abram's sake. Is it not

good to know that when our judgment is faulty, if we have faith in God He will take care of our situation? And is it not encouraging that God graciously forgives our bad judgments, even our rebellions, when we repent?

So Abram left Egypt and went back north, not even stopping in the south but going all the way to Bethel where he had built an altar and where God had made the promise, saying this was the land He would give him. By this time Abram had gained great wealth, so we must conclude that several seasons had gone by, his wealth being in flocks and herds.

The very multiplying of flocks and herds, both to Abram and to Lot his nephew, caused a separation between the two of them. Lot was given his choice between the mountain country of Canaan and the well watered plains of the Jordan. Abram accepted the choice, though to human eyes it may have appeared he was getting the worst of the bargain. But Lot chose the land near Sodom and Gomorrah and moved to Sodom. His move was a sorry episode in the life of Lot.

After the departure of Lot Abram was visited again by the Lord and told again that he should look at the whole of the land of Canaan for God would give it all to him, and would give him a posterity as the stars of heaven and the sands of the sea.

Lot got into trouble with the kings in the plains and Abram felt he should go down and deliver Lot from their wrath. He took his trained servants, born in his house, now amounting to three hundred eighteen, and together with the king of the Amorite, brother of Eschol, and Aner, he pursued the kings who had taken Lot and his household captive. Thus he delivered his nephew and his family and all those with him, together with their goods.

On his return from that battle he met Melchisedek, priest of the most high God who blessed him, as belonging to the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth. Then Abram gave tithes to Melchisedek of all the spoils of the battles he had won. The king of Sodom was also willing to give Abram all the goods, though he had helped in the battle, claiming only the persons from Sodom who had been captured. But Abram

would only claim the food his men had eaten, and the portion of those with him, that is Eschol and Aner.

After all of this the Lord appeared again to Abram, blessing him for his faith, shown in his recognition of the priest and his willingness to give of the captured goods to others, saying "lest someone would claim he has made Abram rich."

God honors those who honor Him as their Defender and Provider. But one thing claimed Abram's heart. He knew God's promise to give him a son, and he had not yet given him one, so he mentioned this burden to the Lord, pointing out that only Eliezer his servant was an heir in his household.

At this point God pointed out that Eliezer should not be his heir, but one out of his own body. He then took him out and pointed to the stars and said, Look, now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them:... So shall thy seed be." And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:5, 6).

God then gave him a vision and a special testimony which would comfort his heart during the wait. Even after all of this Abram could not tell that God was giving the son. Sarah was getting old. He himself was getting old. Sarah suggested that he take her handmaid, Hagar, and perhaps God would give her a son by Abraham and Hagar.

Abram did this, a bit of human wisdom which has plagued Abram and his seed ever since. Ishmael was born when Abram was eighty-six. He had been in the land for eleven years. He had to wait fourteen more years before the promised son came, when he was a hundred years old and Sarah was ninety.

This story is told to illustrate the walk of faith which justifies. Our text at the head of this chapter asks if this blessedness of faith reckoned for righteousness is for Israel (the circumcised) or for Gentiles (the uncircumcised). The application is then made: Abraham "is the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised" (Romans 4:12).

Here it is plainly said that those are Abraham's children by virtue of their walking in the steps of the faith which Abraham had even before he was circumcised. The measure or determining factor of a faith which is blessed with righteousness, is the fact that he walked in the steps of that faith.

A phrase stands out with a suggestion which likely has significance in what it means, not only to Jews who believe, but to Gentiles also.

The phrase is "father of circumcision." This makes sense when applied to Jews who were circumcised and who by that faith had claimed the promise. The promise was that God would grant Abram a son who would be a blessing to all the families of the earth. The promise was meaningful to those who were natural seed and who had the sign, circumcision, as a constant reminder.

This made Abram a "father of circumcision," that is, a father of one looking for a Son who would be a blessing. How could this promise come through to uncircumcised Gentiles? Now that the Son, Christ, has come, Abraham is our Father, claiming the same promise. Abraham's circumcision testified to him and his wife. The same sign testified to his natural sons and their families.

God has updated the promise, so the sign is not the same, in the flesh, but God has given it a special form which goes on to claim the blessedness: the form now is a burial and a resurrection sign, baptism. The sign was meaningful in that it called for the putting off or cutting off of the filth of the flesh. The Seed came; we claim the blessing, and in baptism declare our confidence that He has come, is our Savior and Lord, and that He will return to bless all of Abraham's children with the inheritance of the land, the earth.

It is our inheritance, if we walk by faith, because Abraham is our Father on those terms. The sign does not merely cut off the flesh, but it reckons it dead and buries it and claims a resurrection from the dead.

See Colossians 2:11, 12 where the old (circumcision) and the new (baptism) are correlated. There it is said to be done

“through the faith of the operation of God.”

See Chapter Four for further discussion on baptism.

### **The Walk Metaphor**

When one first trusts Jesus he is hardly walking. He was backed into a corner, as it were, and found no way to get out except to trust the Lord. His concern at the moment was not what shall be tomorrow, what will God ask me to do next, but “How can I escape the damnation of hell?”

Walking by faith, on the other hand, is a process, a continuing exercise of trust. With God's will revealed in His Word, there before him, the saved man who trusted in a moment of crisis, is now privileged to step forth by faith. He can now consider what it means to live in the will of God.

Here is where the word justification comes into play. Would that saved man be justified in refusing to take a step of faith plainly set before him? I think not. But when he looks to the Lord for grace and obeys the Lord in the thing required, he is justified in his doing the Lord's will. Suppose he refuses, or rebels against God's simple requirement. We Baptists know that the new believer needs to confess Christ openly. Paul said it:

*“That if thou shalt confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9, 10).*

It is often thought that this is a description of the way initial salvation takes place. Because the word “shall be saved” is used it is assumed the subject is what happens the moment one first believes. Could this be what is meant?

Go back to the first of the chapter. The inspired writer is speaking of the nation of Israel not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God. They were endeavoring to establish their own righteousness. They were trying to do this by keeping the law.

Whether it is to be saved in the beginning, or whether it is to establish one's righteousness, that is the question. That was the big question throughout the Book of Galatians where Paul deals with men who had begun in the spirit and now thought to be made perfect by the flesh.

I think I see professing believers all the time trying to please God by going through religious motions without regard to whether they are submitting themselves to the righteousness of God.

Consequently they accept sprinkling for baptism, or they accept some immersion by a group which never represents the church as having the authority of God to make disciples for Him.

Paul here goes back to Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 30:12) to show that the requirement is not works of the flesh, human endeavor, but one word will describe it: F-A-I-T-H. Even Moses taught it. Under the law it was true. God was pleased only by deeds wrought in faith.

*"The man which doeth those things shall live by them" (Romans 10:3).*

That is, he should conduct his life by them. It does not mean, as so many think, that one gets salvation initially that way, or gets to be righteous before God that way, but he learns thereby that he is incapable of keeping the law, so he is thrown upon God for mercy

Only defeat, disappointment, and shame comes to him who feels he gains ground with God by trying hard, keeping commandments. But to him who believes from the heart and confesses with the mouth salvation of the life follows.

### **What Is This Salvation Which Follows?**

Salvation is a much larger word than is commonly allowed. Most consider it that grand and wonderful thing which happened to them when they left all else and trusted Jesus. I do not want to argue with this concept, though I question whether a passage can be found which clearly leaves it to that expe-

rience alone.

In the original language, of course, any deliverance may be called salvation. A drowning man rescued from drowning is saved, that is, saved from drowning. Much more may be necessary to preserve his life. If he has been injured in striking a rock he may be far from safe. If he has been long in very cold water, and is left to his own resources, he may die before reaching true safety.

The man who has surrendered his heart to Jesus is not any more in danger of perishing in hell, but if there is any life left for him to live it needs saving.

Great are the provisions of the New Testament for one who has come to that initial salvation (if we are allowed to call it that). God is pleased to call that which is not as though it were, for the consolation and encouragement of those of us who are weak (Romans 4:17).

So He says we "have been saved." What the new believer must learn is that God is not merely in the fire insurance business. He has been rescued as "a brand from the burning," but God saves for Himself. He has delivered one from the fear and torment of being lost; now He desires to save him for Himself.

If he is ever to be of any usefulness to the Lord he needs to confess with his mouth Jesus as Lord, believe in his heart that God has raised Him from the dead, so as to go on to maturity. What does a scared sinner know about the resurrection of Jesus? What is the need for him at that moment to believe in a resurrection of Jesus?

For us to trust Jesus as Lord requires our believing He is alive and able to rule in our lives, even live in us. The resurrection is essential for His sending the Spirit to dwell in us.

It is essential that He be our High Priest at the Father's right hand. The whole of the ministration of grace in our lives calls for His resurrection. Only so can we live the resurrection life.



## **The Faith of Jesus Christ**

It never has been possible for fallen man to live a righteous life through the strength of the flesh. We are taught that if we will trust the Lord, ask for help, pray regularly, and study the Word, we can live the Christian life. It is only a part of the Truth. It overlooks a major element of the salvation which Jesus has provided for us in His death and resurrection. Not only did He die for all of our sins committed before we first trusted Him, but there is the matter of sins of thought, word, and deed which come into our lives after we trusted Him.

The Apostle Paul has given us a revelation of Christ which was given to Him after the resurrection of Jesus, directly from the Lord Himself. He took this truth as "my gospel" and deals with it in ways the other apostles seem not to have understood. It involved, first, the perfection of His sacrifice. He had taken on Himself the flesh which we have, but without any of its sin.

He knew its weakness and helplessness, so He is able to sympathize with us, yet he obeyed the Father on our behalf as a substitute. His righteousness was perfect. If we are ever to be righteous it must be because of His perfect righteousness.

None of us has faith which is effective at every second the sin nature may divert our attention. None of us is able to walk in obedience because of our flesh. Only Jesus was able to obey perfectly.

Now as our high priest His faith is at work on our behalf, even in moments we forget.

*"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).*

*"For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour (help) them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18).*

This ministry of the Christ as our High Priest is a New Covenant benefit (see chapter ten). It was not available to those

under the Old Covenant, nor is it available to those who do not come into covenant position and become a part of God's covenant people. This is clearly evident in the fact that "the faith of Christ" was not revealed under the law, that is, before He came into the world, born under the law.

"But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by (the) faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before (the) faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterward be revealed.... But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Galatians 3:22,23,25).

Here is the clear teaching of a certain faith not revealed while Israel was being ministered to by the law. Jesus came and demonstrated that faith in His life. More than that, through a secret purpose (mystery) He has devised a means by which we identify with Him and partake of the grace necessary to live in righteousness and true holiness. Since our flesh cannot do this, God has provided a place where we are one with Christ and His life counts in our stead. The substitutionary offering of Christ is not merely as our sin bearer, but He takes our account to himself and His righteousness is reckoned to us. (See Chapter Thirteen, What It Means To Be In Christ.)

This mystery involves our being one with Him indeed. "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones (Ephesians 5:30). (Note: This reading is from the King James Version. It is also the reading of the *Textus Receptus*, that Greek version to which the translators of our AV had access, but the words "of his flesh and of his bones" are left out of certain other ancient manuscripts. I am not an authority on textual criticism, but I believe that someone back there was anxious to preserve the reality of this business of our being one with Christ. It may have been Paul, the inspired writer.

That the Lord's church is said to be his body is a metaphor. It represents a truth which few seem to grasp or appreciate. When we take together various aspects of God's gracious provision for our being like Him, it can be easily seen that this metaphor is of great importance. And it is truly serious business that we learn what it takes to become a part of His body.

See the Table of Contents for further study on Justification, on Baptism, on the New Covenant, on the Church, on Election, on being in Christ, and on being faithful.

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## **CHAPTER THREE**

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### **Confusion: Spirit or Soul Salvation?**

*"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up His cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his own works" (Matthew 16:24-27).*

If you take a dictionary of the English language and look up the word dictionary you will find that it describes a dictionary as a list of words arranged in alphabetical order of the words in a language. But this is not definitive enough to cover words found in the English Bible. Dictionaries only report what most people think words mean.

People are influenced by their parents who taught them, by their peers, and by the other means of communication available to them. Thus the area where they live may use words in a manner inconsistent with some other part of the country.

A dictionary tries to explain further by telling you that a word is colloquial, meaning that informed speech or writing uses the word a certain way. This does not mean it is illiterate, but it may not conform to certain regions or local areas. Who sets the standard of word meanings? The people do. If they regularly use a word in a certain sense it becomes the meaning, though it may be far removed from its derived meaning in its original language and usage. This creates a problem for Bible teachers and believers, for many Bible words have taken on a meaning by usage which is not consistent with the original

sense in the Scriptures.

Baptism, for instance, means an initiation into a religious organization or church. The word from which it came, Greek, *baptizo*, meant to dip or plunge into or under water, to dip. But most professing Christians do not know this. They consider it a form for initiation. Similarly, Communion is used for the Lord's Supper and a whole group of differing circumstances (elements, subjects, purpose, time, etc.) have become a part of it.

The word 'soul' is one in which most damaged thinking comes out. Baptists are not as far removed from the sense of baptism and the Lord's Supper as most of the rest of the religious world, because they have been concerned to maintain the sense of these. But Baptists are as confused about the meaning of soul as other people. We would like to help anyone needing to know what is correct on the meaning of this word.

Where shall we look to learn the meaning of a Bible word? I suggest that we look in the Bible. Most of us do not read Greek or Hebrew, so we must depend on the translations. For a majority this means the King James Version.

It is my honest conviction that it is possible to learn the correct meaning, with the help of the Lord who gives illumination to those who seriously study to learn the truth on any subject in the Bible. I do not mean to disparage Bible Schools. Nor do I mean to disparage education. God gave His Word so that people who love Him, and are willing to learn, may come to the knowledge of the truth.

Perhaps the greatest help is derived from the immediate context when we need to know the meaning of Bible words. Remember, no passage in the Scriptures will contradict any other passage. Looking up the English word in a Greek/English Concordance will allow you to see all the places where the original word occurs and how it is translated in each place. This is an ideal way to determine the sense of a word as it is used in the Bible.

Quotations from someone in the Bible may reflect things which are wrong, but the inspired writers gave us what is right with-

out any error at all. We who preach the Word may err because of ignorance, prejudice, or factors involving lack of study, lack of experience, and lack of close fellowship with the Lord.

The translators depended on scholarship, but they may not have been free from prejudice. This is why the word baptize is found in the English Bible. Dip or immerse would have been better, but this would have jeopardized the doctrine of those Episcopal bishops who translated our English Bible, for it would have contradicted their belief regarding sprinkling or pouring.

Even so, the context will get an honest person over this weakness of their translating, as for example, "They went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him" (Acts 8:38). It would not have been necessary for both of them to go down into the water if he only needed a teacup full, or half full.

Again, "John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there" (John, 3:23).

Again, "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water" (Matthew 3:16). Take a final example: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death:...For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Romans 6:4, 5). There simply is no good reason for not understanding the form of baptism.

Having looked at the method of reading to understand, may we practice on the passage at the head of this chapter, asking ourselves some questions as we go. The speaker is Jesus; those spoken to are disciples (saved men) (Matthew 16:24). What is the subject? The same verse referenced says, "If any will come after me." He then specifies what a man will need to do to come after Jesus, that is, "follow" Him. The next verse further enlarges on this "following" Jesus: "Whosoever will save his life." Verse 24 had said he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Him.

Then He says that if a man tries to save his life he shall lose it.

The way to deny self is to lose self. Do we not see that we must lose self to save our life? Well, the word *life* is the Greek word, *soul* (*ten psuchen*). Who is willing to lose his own soul? But Jesus said that is the way to find your soul. Mark uses the word save instead of find.

Is this the way we think when we talk of saving souls? Jesus advocated our losing our souls, so we could find them, so we could save them.

The next verse (Matthew 16:26) continues, asking where is the profit if we gain the whole world and lose our soul? What could one give for his soul?

Human beings seek to gain the world, bit by bit, specially those things in it which please self. They call it really living. Jesus says it means losing your soul. Did he mean lose salvation? Did he mean one would die and go to hell if he seeks to gain the world and his own life?

The natural life is made up of the things which the world admires and desires. Jesus said if one would follow Him he must deny self, that is deny the right of self to have all these things. What we have accomplished with all our erroneous teachings about getting our soul saved is to overlook, even repudiate, this teaching of denying the world and not seeking to gain the world.

Man does not have an automatic right to all that pleases himself. A saved man, particularly, should depend on God to supply him with such things as he has need of, but not that which gratifies his flesh only.

If a man spends his time and energies to gain what pleases himself, giving little or no thought to what God desires, he loses his own soul. Having lost it there is nothing he can do to regain it.

But what is the meaning of losing it? It is wasted, used foolishly and forfeited. Had he been willing to deny himself He might have saved his life, that is, his soul.

The last verse in the quotation (Matthew 16:27), in harmony with the previous two verses, says, "*For the Son of man shall*

*come in the glory of his Father with his angels and then he shall reward every man according to his works."*

A reward suggests that the subject has to do with men who have initial salvation. The subject is not being saved, but honoring God. How do we honor Him? We give our souls up, back into His hands, to use for His glory. And we do not use them for the satisfaction of self.

All of this is evident in the context of the English translation. It may be of interest, however, that the word for life (used twice in v. 25) is the very same word as soul (also used twice in v. 26).

Why did the translators translate as soul in verse 26, but as life in verse 25? That is difficult to tell. It is obvious, however, that they could think of only one thing worth more than all the world, so they used the word soul. It is a man's spirit which they must have been thinking about. Spirit is certainly eternal and will perish in a tormenting existence unless one trusts God for salvation. Spirit was communicated to the first man in the breath of life. The body without the spirit is dead (James 2:26).

With that breath Adam became a living soul (Genesis 2:7). This suggests that while spirit from God gave the body life, something more came to him, so he became a living soul, literally, a soul of life.

A careful comparison of many passages will show that soul communicates to the body of clay intelligence, feelings, and will. A body able to breathe, with a beating heart, may be a vegetable. It is soul capacity which makes it intelligent, emotional, and volatile.

When man uses his will to take over the whole self, using his feelings and his intelligence, as well as his will, for himself instead of for God, he has lost his soul. He thought he was claiming it, but since it is God's and he is only a steward of it, he should give it all back to his Maker.

Everything that makes a human life worthwhile belongs to these three elements which comprise his soul: intelligence, feelings, and will. He associates feelings with his body, know-



ing that the body has nerves which register pain or pleasure. He associates intelligence with his brain.

He thinks of his will simply as making up his mind, that is, of gathering together his knowledge and his feelings, so as to control or regulate them. Many of the needs of his body are dealt with in a manner which satisfies or gratifies the self. The result may be a glutton, a drunkard, a fornicator, an adulterer, a miser, a thief, a bully, even a murderer.

Man is responsible to recognize his Creator and control himself (temperance) in a manner which makes him a blessing to others and gives glory to God. All of the capacities of the soul are from God, being ex-pressions of His image originally. But in the Fall these capacities were corrupted. Redemption and grace at work are means to the restoring of all these capacities to a state which honors God. At the same time the individual will find joy and comfort in giving up, losing, these, that is, in denying self. When he learns to recognize for Whom He is alive, he will be allowed to go on enjoying these capacities and exercising them or utilizing them for the glory of God.

Full salvation is attained as one grows up and matures spiritually. This aspect of God's saving grace is often ignored, even by people who have trusted God for salvation. If one feels it is accomplished, is eternal, and is all that is needed, he neglects the important element of the salvation of the soul.

For convenience in speaking of it we say that initial salvation is the salvation of the spirit of man. We know that God makes His communication with men through spirit. Spirit God can witness to spirit man. "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly" (Proverbs 20:27).

This mention of the belly is in accord with the use of various organs of the body cavity as metaphors of the various feelings. For example love and hate are associated with the heart, compassion is associated with the bowels, bitterness, grudging are associated with the gall bladder, the will is associated with the kidneys. Perhaps other associations can be pointed out.

Our conscious life is largely registered in our thinking, through the capacities of the soul. It is difficult for us to think in terms of pure spirit, for it seems we have no control of spirit. We are only in some control of that of which we are conscious. We are conscious of our feelings, both good and bad, and often associate them with the body, but some of the most exalted of feelings are not produced by the body. They come from the mind and spirit.

Before we were initially saved we thought little of spirit, if at all, but God dealt with us through our spirits. The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord by which He searches the deep recesses of our feelings, our minds, and our wills (Proverbs 20:27). Perhaps it is in our spirit that Divine things first begin to register in our thoughts and then in our feelings. Thus we recognize a clear distinction between spirit and soul, this last being where thoughts, feelings, and de-sires are. As we heed and consider Divine things the sensitivity of the spirit of man becomes greater. If we ignore, or suppress the Divine things, the spirit comes through less and less and our lives are gone in the wilderness of soulish thoughts and feelings and desires.

Since the initial reaction we feel of God's conviction is deep within, we believe that He is touching our spirit. Once we yield to Him, His Spirit can bear witness with our spirit (cf. Romans 8:16). Responsiveness to God is called spirituality (cf. Colossians 1:9; 1 Peter 2:5; Romans 8:6; 1 Corinthians 2:14).

We need to know that Satan is a spirit, as are all the angels, and he is able to wield spiritual influences contrary to the will of God. He is able to cause a man to resort to elements of his being which were corrupted in the fall, causing one to make wrong choices.

As a man gives himself up to the will of God he will be able to discern the difference between influences from Satan in distinction from those which come from God.

### **Salvation is a Process**

Since God must deal with us through the means which He has provided for such, that is through the spirit, we feel that the

changing work of salvation begins there. We have seen that man's spirit is a candle (light for searching) of the Lord (Proverbs 20:27).

But man is a complete being. Corrupted as he is by sin and the distortion of his nature with sin, he is still a complete being: spirit, soul, and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23). The letter to the Thessalonians suggests that all three of these elements need salvation, hence all should be sanctified (set apart from the world and to the Lord). And all three need to be "preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

This suggests that any part of man may be defiled by sin. Addressed as this verse is to saints of a church, they must have had faith, must have been saved, as we say, yet were in need of being preserved. That preservation is also the work of the Holy Spirit and upon the merits of the Christ in His death, resurrection, and priestly ministry. This surely tells us it is a process.

If one thinks that salvation is full and complete at the moment of his first trust, and if he assumes that the further steps will take place automatically, he has in such thinking destroyed any need for Bible study, prayer, church membership, any obedience, and of the power of God in resurrection.

We need to learn that as one felt the hand of God in his life when he came to first trust Him, surely he can see that there is a need to continue trusting Him.

The Bible is full of admonitions and warnings against the tendency of the old sin nature or natural man to lapse back into a careless condition and go on sinning (See a discussion on The Security of the Believer in Chapter Seven and on Conditional Election in Chapter Six.)

We should emphasize a man's responsibility in all of this. Salvation is of the Lord, as Jonah learned when the whale spit him out on the shore. He was not speaking of initial salvation, but his whole life's salvation.

Since all that a man can do is trust the Lord, he needs to know when and how to do this. Jesus gave Himself in payment for

all our sins, and by that one offering He perfects forever them who are sanctified. This does the alien sinner no good, for he is not sanctified. It does the careless believer no good, for he is not set apart from the world nor to the Lord. This is why baptism has such an important place in God's plan. As an act of obedience it is worthless, except as faith gives it meaning.

We may say that coming to know the Lord is the most important thing in the world, and truly it is very important. But coming to know Him better, even in fellowship with the Father and with the Son, so that the joy of the Lord may fill the heart and life, may be just as important, both to the individual and to others to whom he could minister if he allows God's grace to sanctify him and give him what it takes to enable him to obey.

**Those of us who keep putting an emphasis on obedience are not saying that salvation is by works. When we emphasize the church we are not saying that the church saves or that baptism and church membership, of themselves, will change a thing.**

But unless one has a heart to draw near to the Lord and do His will, he has not yet partaken of the sanctifying grace needed in order to help others. And without it he will not be eligible to inherit the kingdom in the age to come. He certainly will not be worthy to dwell in the Holy City, New Jerusalem.

How many times have I said it in years gone by. It is not the works, the obedience, nor any outward action which makes one eligible. It is the justifying faith which produces a walk in which God works His will in the life. The mystery of godliness is entirely different from Pharisaic righteousness.

Far too many professed believers are trying in the energy of the flesh to be righteous, to do good, to pray, to read the Bible. Faith demands a denial of self. Only so can God do for us, with us, and through us, as well as to us.

*"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:6).*

*"And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then*

*shall the Son also be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28).*

Our part in such things:

*"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12, 13).*

### **The Beginning of Salvation**

*"This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:2).*

Our tendency is to point to the day of our initial faith as the beginning. Indeed, that is the time. Yet few men truly began to serve the Lord at that time. Even though our modern practice is somewhat consistent with early practice, so that baptism is soon after our first faith, there is a weakness in our practice as individuals.

We have seen that salvation is a process. The question arises, When did it begin? Our memory says that we were under deep conviction and with a strong feeling of guilt. In our stress we were brought to trust Jesus.

Often we confuse the matter by trying to raise our hand when asked, go forward when asked, pray, ask others to pray, and strain ourselves to be better. We found, if we were honest, that none of these things helped our feelings of guilt nor relieved us of the burden of sin.

At last, whether in actual prayer, or only in searching our minds and hearts as to what we could do, we gave up and immediately the whole matter seemed to be solved. Praise God, He is faithful and He is gracious, so He does not make

matters difficult for us; He only waits until we rule out human worthiness or effort.

So what did we do to be saved initially? We finally came to do nothing except leave it to the Lord. Faith is like that. This, then, is the work of God. Jesus saw men working, striving, laboring, and told them to "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed (John 6:27).

Even in the first step of faith, then, we simply surrendered to the Lord. If we but realized it, that is a state of mind and heart needed for the rest of our natural lives on earth, and it is likely the aspect of salvation which Jesus had in mind when speaking the words in John 6:27:

*"Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."*

Allowed to follow this line we would begin to grow in grace and in knowledge. As one learns what God expects and faces it realistically, in faith, he will grow and go on toward spiritual maturity. In this way the body of Christ is edified.

Though only faith, hope, and love remain of the original spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians chapters 12 and 13), a work of ministry continues and the perfecting (maturing) of the saints takes place (Ephesians 4:11-16). The ultimate goal is our being conformed to the image of Christ (v. 13).

Lacking proper instruction as to what to expect a different state of affairs arises. A traditional idea (see Chapter One) has an effect which is very undesirable. The young believer is led to believe that in the initial step of faith he received the indwelling spirit, received the new nature (See: 2 Peter 1:3, 4), and made one eligible for a resurrection to a glorified body and a home in heaven.

Many are told in effect that they are already members of the body of Christ. All motivation is undermined, for why would

one join a church, be baptized, or act faithfully in obedience to God. Is there any wonder that so few people ever grow up spiritually?

The passage at the beginning of this subtopic (Galatians 3:2) can only be appreciated as we learn the distinction between initial salvation and the salvation of the soul. If one is truly saved, including his mind, his emotions, and his will, then why does he need further development?

Whether the "hearing of faith (Galatians 3:2) is thought to go back to initial hearing and initial faith, may be a question. I think it does. And it seems obvious to me that faith did come by hearing (Romans 10:17). Had one not heard the Word he would never have believed initially to the saving of his spirit. But only as he continues to hear and comprehend does Christ dwell in his heart by faith (Ephesians 3:17-19).

The manner in which Christ dwells in the heart is by the Holy Spirit. Old Testament believers in general did not have this promise, for it only came after the death and resurrection and Ascension of the Christ.

We do not want to complicate what seems so simple to many. God has not differentiated between an initial salvation by faith and a life of faith, yet there is a distinction. The reason he has not is that he expects that initial act of faith to be the first step in a life of walking by faith.

It is that tradition which has suggested that the first step has made real all of the promises which come as one grows in grace and knowledge. Therein lies the error of speaking of the first step as the salvation of the soul.

Over and over in the scriptures there are references to this walk. In the early experience of the church the spiritual gifts, which were only in the true church (1 Corinthians 12:28) are said to be...

*"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we*

*henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up unto him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Ephesians 4:12-15).*

This granting of spiritual gifts, even in those days, was not to everyone who trusted Jesus, but only to those who were a part of the church. Even there, it was only to those who committed themselves to follow on to know the Lord.

The three remaining spiritual gifts are still the means for one's growing up into Him in all things. In those days not all men had all gifts. Doubtless this is still true of the three.

Please note: it takes the comprehension of God's purpose. Hence Paul prayed for the Ephesian church members that they "may be able to comprehend with all saints" what is the dimensions of God's love "that they might be filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:18, 19).

This is a part of that process or progression of growth in grace which God purposes for every believer, but which so few seem to attain.

Note again: "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:3). That made perfect is that very maturity called a "perfect man" in Ephesians 4:13. God had shown the Galatians and given them the experience of receiving the Spirit through the hearing of faith (v. 2). Since this gift of the Spirit was only to those in the church (cf. Acts 1:4, 5; Acts 2:1-4; Acts 5:32; Acts 8:14-16; Acts 9:17; Acts 10:44-48; Acts 11:15-18; Acts 19:2-6), it is very wrong to claim it if one is not a part of that body. That the gift did not come simultaneously with their initial believing is evident in that the authority of an apostle was necessary through the laying on of hands to effect the promise to certain Gentiles or others.

With the growing status of the churches and the cessation of the gifts the authority lies in the hands of the church to ad-



minister baptism, the step of faith which is necessary to get into the church where this blessing of the Spirit's indwelling is found.

It should be evident that in the Old Testament men were initially saved through repentance and faith, just as today, but they did not have this "promise of the Father" which Jesus bestowed upon His church. The reason is that His sacrifice and resurrection must intervene before the coming of the Comforter (John 16:7).

Believers simply must grow, comprehend the Word, and commit their hearts before they may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:19; Ephesians 4:4-6).

This fullness dwelt first in the Christ, manifesting the faith of Christ to the world for the first time. After His resurrection He ministers that benefit to His churches. It is received individually, but only within the body to whom the gift was supplied.

Yes, I am aware that people claim many things in this regard, even as the Charismatics claim to have the baptism of the spirit, the gift of tongues, the faith to heal, and so many other things, but we should remember that Satan is able to supply an imitation of these benefits through emotions and crowd psychology. Their lack of knowledge of the Word often creates contradictory factors in their claims and results in their failure to see the fulfillment of those things they claim to provide. Other than knowledge of the Word, the only promise to those who have this gift is a foretaste of the Kingdom in the form of "righteousness peace and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17).

Briefly restating what we have seen: the spirit of man (1 Corinthians 2:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:23) is that part able to sense the presence of God and to truly know oneself, so it becomes God's candle for revealing all that is in a man (Proverbs 20-27).

When God breathed life into the body of clay He had made, Adam became a living soul. That soul included both body and spirit, so that men, living or dead, are called souls.

As a living soul a man is able to think, to feel even beyond the

senses of the nervous system, and is able to make decisions. When he is convicted by God's Spirit, through the things found in the Word, he learns from God who communicates by the spirit of the man so that the mind of the man can understand his guilt before God.

After he has yielded to God "His Spirit bears witness" to the man and he learns that he is a child of God (Romans 8:16). This witness from God is only communicated with those who are saved and yielded, even obedient in what degree they know to yield.

Those addressed in this passage were saints, members of a church in Rome. Spiritual understanding or discernment belongs to such persons (1 Corinthians 2:10-16), for these alone have the mind of Christ.

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## **CHAPTER FOUR**

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### **Salvation Is Nearer Now**

*"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." (Romans 13:11)*

"Knowing the time": Do we know the time? It seems that few stop to think what time it is in the calendar of God's purpose. The Apostle had been listing those things most important in their Christian walk. The whole of the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of Romans deals with this theme. It is to be a life of service and it deserves our careful and zealous attention. We are admonished to love our brethren without hypocrisy.

To those without (outside the church) we are to provide things honest, living peaceably as much as possible.

Toward our neighbor generally, we are to owe nothing but what love would require of us, for love works no ill to the neighbor.

Then comes this admonition regarding what time it is. The word time (Greek, *kairos*, season) means a due measure of time. God has appointed an appropriate measure for men to live in this world and, while this may be varied slightly for His purposes, it is to be used very carefully in His service and for others.

That measure can be described as opportunity while it is present. More specifically, it is said that our hour is here already, so we must wake up and take advantage of it. The word hour (Greek, *hora*) suggests the very limited reach of that time. We must not waste any of it.

In describing it so we could know it easily and certainly, he says the night is far spent and the day is at hand. The pre-

sent age is a time of darkness for men who are lost and the day, meaning the day of the Lord's return, is near.

So we must cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. We must walk honestly, as becomes the day, not in those things which evil men do in the dark. "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:14).

All of these marks of the age of darkness in which we live are qualified for us when he says "for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (v. 11). Now (Greek, nun, present, as in English). Nearer (Greek, *egguteron*, comparative of *eggus*, near by, at hand, hence closer. The important word in this context is "salvation." The sense is set in the Old Testament:

*"And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; we have waited for him, and we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isaiah 25:9).*

Anyone reading the context can see that the subject is that day when our Lord shall finish the deliverance of His people from the powers of sin and darkness. While the word is used accommodatively of phases or stages or aspects of His delivering grace, the true sense is the ultimate and final deliverance of His people. Thus the word has an apocalyptic sense. In all of its usages it must be remembered that the final or complete salvation is in view.

In the Millennium, the first thousand years of His everlasting kingdom on earth, are manifested the elements of that deliverance in their fullest sense. We know something of that deliverance and some aspects of it in this present life, but only then can we know it fully.

*"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).*

This quotation is only part of a larger sentence. The Apostle Paul is mindful of these brethren at Philippi, as of others who had begun that experience which fills the life and enlarges the

heart for eternity. Doubtless it is right to think of the initial experience of salvation, at first faith, as the beginning point of something much greater. When He says "will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" He is describing the faithfulness of our God to do that which is His purpose in any and all of us who believe.

The word perform (Gk, *epitelesei*) means will fulfill further, (or completely). The word until (Gk., *achris*) means up to (of time or place), from *akron*, a point, extremity, corner). Some translations render *achris* as at (at the day of Jesus Christ). This tends to suggest that nothing need be done until that day and then the work will be done.

But the word carries the idea of God's doing the work all along. This is exactly our position concerning God's full salvation. It began at a point in time, it continues through time, and is finished at a time yet future, at and after the resurrection. So salvation is past (when we first trusted), present (going on now and usually referred to as sanctification), and future, glorification at the Lord's return.

The passage gives great assurance, but the assurance cannot be claimed by one who has not made the start by trusting Jesus, nor by one who has not continued abiding in Him, nor at the Lord's return if He failed to continue in Him. All of this is by faith.

Salvation is nearer in the sense of our full experiencing of God's deliverance and glorification. Each passage which suggests the steps of this glorious work also includes references to the means to its accomplishment. The context of Romans 13:11 suggests this:

*"The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light" (Romans 13:12).*

The verse itself (Romans 13:11) admonishes that it is high time we awake out of sleep. How many are spiritually dull, not alert, hence easily falling victim to the works of darkness all around. If those works have already slowed our study, derailed our prayer life, and even made us succumb to evil, we

need to cast off those works.

The sluggishness of God's people is noteworthy today. How we need a revival! A genuine revival in which we come anew to the cross, confess our sins, renew our promises to God and dedicate our lives to Him, is a real part of God's salvation. It is a part of the sanctifying element of saving grace.

The passage continues (v. 13): "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying."

Some of these things seem too awful and we deny we are guilty. So we may not be drunken, stirring up a riot, but such activities are used of more than the use of liquor or drugs. The word rioting (Gk. *komos*) means carousal, revelling, letting loose. I take this to mean the removing of inhibitions, a letting down of one's hair.

God's people need to be in better control than that. We are not free to let loose, let down our hair, and "let 'er rip," as the world might.

The word for drunkenness means, as it suggests, to be intoxicated. This is bad enough in the literal sense when drugs or wine are used. It is used metaphorically of states of mind brought on by other things which have destroyed one's ability to control himself.

Drugs in the Scriptures were used for all sorts of mind altering circumstances. The word sorcery, from a word meaning drugs, involved incantations, magic, witchcraft, and fortune telling. Christians would not ordinarily become involved in these, yet some seek the thrills provided by these things.

Instead of these things, a believer is admonished: "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:14). We are to become sensitive to spiritual truth from God and avoid all contact with those substitutions, imitations, and worldly things, as magic, astrology, fortune telling, and all the cheap thrills which the world seeks after. There are many, including gambling and the various other highs provided by the god of this world, Satan.

The glorifying of youth in our times is something an old man is dared not to talk about. But the vigor, the capacity for fun, and the means for getting these things, are all abundant in our age, making it difficult for young people to give their whole hearts to the Lord. But God's salvation requires such giving up, even crucifying of self.

In my young days we found many thrills, though there was no television, no radio, no cars, no drive ins, no fast food places. Music was different, yet not always edifying. Transportation was limited, yet we found ways to go to places where we could enjoy the company of others. Just because the world was different did not mean that Satan did not attempt to put a stop to our spiritual growth.

Failing to prevent some of us from trusting Christ at least by our teen years, he saw to it that we found a lot of things to entertain. I thank God that I did not have many of the temptations that society provides today.

I admit that it is difficult to separate oneself unto the Lord. That probably explains why fewer people are being saved, fewer are hearing and heeding the Lord's call to preach, to witness, to live a godly life.

But if we would receive the fullness of God's grace and salvation which He desires us to have, we must learn to cast off these things of the world and look to Him. He says His grace is sufficient.

### **Who Needs A Salvation Now?**

Everybody needs God's salvation now. Nobody receives the fullness of what God has in store for those who love Him (1 Corinthians 2:9). It is beyond man's imagination, yet God has revealed these things to us in His Word in a manner which would captivate our souls and keep us on the straight path if we would only look there to find it (1 Corinthians 2:10). He assures us of this when He says that His Holy Spirit knows these things and is ready to communicate them to us.

But all of God's blessings are conditional. Man must desire to know. More, He must desire His will for his life. A man must

be willing for God's will to be done. He must be ready to do whatever God asks. You would think that a free salvation, or "free for nothing" as the little boy puts it, would be accepted readily by everyone as soon as he hears about it. It does not work that way because we have ideas of our own and we treasure our own understanding, our own feelings and our own wills.

We do not want the mind of God interfering with our way of thinking. We do not get over this state of mind by trusting Jesus initially. We should, but we do not. We get it in our minds that now we are saved since we trusted Jesus and felt the peace and joy of forgiveness, that now we are free to serve him according to our own minds and feelings. Just as we had to come to surrender to Him to be saved initially, we must have the same state of surrender of heart if we are to grow in grace and knowledge.

How many of us have sought to learn the Bible through long, hard, diligent study? But it did not come that way. So we prayed for understanding and much understanding came.

But God withholds His truth from those who would abuse or misuse it, so it takes a continuing surrender to Him to learn His will, and to do it. This does not mean that God holds out on us.

Eve thought as much because of Satan's information about God's not telling her everything. God will be pleased to reveal to us everything we need to know. But we must be willing to learn it for His glory.

Coming to this sort of mind, the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16), we will find that God regularly, if not continually, shows us the things we long to know. It may not be continual, and if not, it likely is because our desire to know is selfish or designed for something other than God's glory.

Many men of old spoke of seeing God's Salvation. Some were more specific. Jacob said he had waited for it (Genesis 49:18). This is much better.

It is probable that Jacob had been saved in an initial, spiritual sense long before this statement. But he realized there was



much more to come.

At the time of this statement, the first use of the word Salvation in our English Bible, he was an old man, pronouncing blessings on his many sons. Passing by the name of one who was not such a pleasant memory in his mind, he spoke these words.

How many of us with children have lived again in our memory the failings in our children and it has brought us to think: but there is a better day ahead? How hard has the road been down here! As great as has been its joys, heavy has been the burdens. When we do what we think is our best, things do not work out as we would like.

Others blame us for our failings and our hearts turn to Him. God's salvation is not merely designed to give us a pass or a ticket into heaven.

It is far more glorious, holding before us the prospect of a time and circumstances which do not get thwarted nor hindered by any of Satan's wiles. That and nothing less is God's Salvation. We are nearer than when we believed and we can now pray "Lord hasten the Day." Jesus even taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

Many times the word salvation is used of deliverances of a physical sort, involving individuals, nations, tribes, homes, families, and the like. That, of course, is for now. Thank God we have a Saving God like that. When Jonah was delivered from the belly of the fish, he said, "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9). It may take a "whale of an experience" to convince some of us that this statement is right. But how precious when we get there!

### **A Horn of Salvation**

Zacharias the priest (Luke 1:57-79) sang a song of praise for his new son who became John the Baptist. His understanding was far ahead of that of many, including preachers, today. He praised God for raising up to Israel "a horn of salvation" (v. 69). He described this salvation as being deliverance of Israel

from their enemies and from all who hated them (v. 71).

The symbolism of the ancient languages, reflecting the thought processes of those ancient peoples, is rich with meaning. A horn represents an animal's fighting strength. A king was sometimes symbolized by a horn because he became the people's strength to overcome their enemies.

Zacharias was moved by the Spirit to speak of this strength of the Savior whom God had sent to the nation. Most of the nation did not recognize it in Jesus, so they rejected and crucified Him. Zacharias did not see a great deal of physical strength in Jesus, for He did not use a sword nor did He then rule as a king, but that old priest quoted the prophets to that effect and it was good enough for him. How we need a heart like that to believe the prophets (Luke 1:70; Genesis 3:15; Genesis 12:3; Genesis 49:10; Jeremiah 23:5, 6; Daniel 9:24).

How much sweeter would be our days if we had the heart of a Jeremiah or a Zacharias, remembering when it shall be said, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jeremiah 23:6).

The old prophet, Simeon, waiting for the consolation of Israel, went into the temple and found Mary and Joseph with the baby, Jesus. Taking Him into his arms he said, "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation" (Luke 2:29,30).

How could he say such when only seeing the baby Jesus? It was because he had been told by the Holy Spirit of His coming and what this would mean to Israel and to the Gentiles. He understood all of this at once, doubtless far better than people today who read about "Jesus who came as a baby to die for us on the cross." Yes, He did that. But He came to be light to the Gentiles and the glory of the people of Israel.

How much more is this "horn of salvation" than a sacrifice to rescue us sinners! He is for salvation unto the ends of the earth, and that is far more than a means of their escaping the bondage of the law and the fires of hell.

The great revivals through the years have been glorious indeed, but the world has yet to see the glory of the Lord as it will be revealed in His Day, when He returns in power and

great glory. This, too, is that so great salvation, spoken by the writer to the Hebrews (Hebrews 2:3). He challenged them not to let slip the things concerning this. He then explained that "Unto the angels (He) hath not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak" (Hebrews 2:5). Shall I explain that? The "so great salvation" pertains to the world to come!

Shall I explain further? The salvation which is nearer is not merely our receiving a glorified body, as wonderful as that will be. It pertains to the glory of our position with Christ in the Kingdom. It is that full salvation which glorifies us with Christ, making us heirs of the Kingdom which is His and sharing the glory of rulership with Him in it.

A number of passages, which we may be able to deal with in further chapters of this book, point out how that salvation is extended into this life now, allowing us to know the righteousness, peace, and joy of the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17), and other aspects of the Christ life. It is made possible by His victorious sacrifice and resurrection from the dead.

It even involves the priesthood. Such things in this life are beyond our grasp in great measure, yet they are available to men of faith living today, surrendered to and obedient to the Lord as a part of His New Testament church.

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## **CHAPTER FIVE**

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### **A Resurrection Birth**

Most of us associate salvation with the initial experience which we call the new birth. It has become evident to me that this term is not so used in the Scriptures, but this is an idea adopted from Protestants. There is an initial experience in salvation when we first believed.

In it a change takes place of which we may have understanding and know that God has worked in our hearts. We should not think this change has finished the work which God would do upon us and through us.

It seemed strange to me that being born again was not mentioned in that way in the Old Testament. I believed then that people were saved in Old Testament days as they are saved today, that is by God's Grace, through faith. Some think they were saved differently in Old Testament days, that is, by keeping commandments.

But this is a mistake, for men were never saved by keeping commandments. Faith is held up as the commendable disposition of Old Testament men. We know they came to God by faith, just as men are to do today.

And back there it was also evident that they were expected to go on obeying God, doing those things which God asked, and always by faith. None of the ceremonies and worship features were designed to enable the performer to acquire salvation or merit before God. What men do is in the energy of the flesh, so there is no merit in it, unless done in faith. They were instructive means to help men learn that God wants men to trust Him and to walk in obedience of faith.

There is an essential reason why the New Birth does not show up in the Old Testament in the way it seems to in the New

Testament. In the paragraphs below I would like to point out just why the term "born again," or "new birth" had to wait for the crucifixion and resurrection of the Christ.

In 1957 a good brother wrote me, bringing up an issue which I had never settled in my mind. At the time I was inclined to see his suggestion (problem?), so I made a further study. It was about the spiritual birth. I had first studied this subject in 1952. I made a list of all the words in English which came to mind relative to a birth, such as born, bear, begotten, birth, travail.

With a complete concordance I found the list quite long and most of the references pertained to natural births. These I could set aside, because I was searching for some evidence of a spiritual birth. I had already questioned some of my more able brethren about the use of the expression "born again." It is found few times in the New Testament, though a list of words such as I made to search the Old Testament would make quite a lengthy study.

My problem was that I had never seen a reference in the Old Testament about one's being born again. This seemed strange. I was Baptist-minded enough in my thinking to believe that men are saved in this age just the same way as they were saved back there. I saw faith back there, but no new birth.

Nobody seemed able to give me any help along this line. I did find God as Father in the Old Testament, and Israel as His son, but nothing about men being born again. I knew about Psalm 2:7, but understood this was the Christ, and had presumed the reference pertained to the Holy Spirit's overshadowing the virgin, Mary, so that she became the human mother of Jesus, the man.

In this way He became the Son of God, according to the verse (Luke 1:35), yet, strangely, no reference Bible I ever consulted uses Luke 1:35 as a reference at Psalm 2:7. Instead they reference passages which pertain to His office as King and His Priesthood (cf. 2 Samuel 7:14; Hebrews 1:5; Hebrews 5:5.

Some also point to Matthew 3:17; Matthew 4:3). and most all

reference Acts 13:33. In the search I made in 1952 this passage was the one most surprising:

*"And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" (Acts 13:32, 33).*

We do not doubt that the Holy Spirit has said that the meaning of Psalm 2:7 is that God has raised Jesus from the dead and this is the basis for His calling Him His Son. None of us, however, became His sons by being born of a woman; Jesus is the only begotten son.

Other quotes of the passage in the Psalms associate other things with Jesus' life than His birth of a woman. He is superior to an-gels and God is His Father (Hebrews 1:5). He is to be made higher than the kings of the earth, having been delivered as God's firstborn (from the grave, Colossians 1:15; Psalm 89:26, 27).

Even His priesthood is dependent upon this birth and sonship (Hebrews 5:5, 6). We must conclude that Christ's resurrection is the basis for His birth as the only begotten, His sonship, His priesthood, and His being the Messiah (cf. Romans 1:4).

In His birth of Mary He is the Son of David, and the suffering Servant, and was pleased to call Himself "the Son of man." In both these capacities He becomes the King upon His return, but the principle element of His being the King is the fact of His being a resur-rection Son of God.

He doubtless was aware of this during the whole of His life on earth, but it was in the lowly position of a man that He accomplished the work on earth, though, of course, He was a prophet wielding the Di-vine power in His miracles, His prophesying, and His holiness. "In Him dwelt the fullness of Godhood, in a body" (Colossians 2:9).

Be aware that Jesus was the Son of God the whole time He was on earth. He knew about this position. Even Satan knew

about it, but wanted to deny it (Matthew 4:3, 6). Demons knew it (Mark 1:24), yet there were many men who did not understand it (Matthew 11:25-27).

I feel this is a matter associated with His resurrection, yet known beforehand by Jesus and by those to whom the Father revealed it. The same holds true today.

### **The Practical About A Resurrection Life**

It likely is not practical for me to knock such facts around unless I point out what is in it for us today. I seriously question the traditional idea that a man is born again in any Bible sense when He first trusts Christ. Doubtless he could be, but if so it would be very rare because of the lack of knowledge of the meaning. But in that first trust he is given the power (authority) to become a son of God (John 1:12, 13).

If the real begetting is a matter of resurrection, as in the case with Christ, then may we expect to be reckoned sons before we are raised from the dead? To ask the question is so far removed from ordinary thinking until many will think I am surely losing my mind. If so, I lost it as far back as 1957, though I was not able to put Scriptures together to satisfy my own mind, or others.

May I ask a question? When was Abraham born again? Or Moses? Or David? Or any of those men of God in the Old Testament? If you find a passage even mentioning the new birth back there, I would like to hear about it. Yes, they were saved by grace through faith, just as we are. But this birth has to do with relationship and that upon believing and submitting to covenant.

This is why so many firstborn (naturally) back there were not counted in the inheritance later on. It took a faith to obey. The act of obedience which marked a covenant son came after he was old enough to be accountable, as it does in Israel today. It was possible to be accounted righteous before the act, but only God knows the heart and whether it has a faith which will obey.

Another question: What is "better" in the Book of Hebrews?

Why does God wait before proposing the acquisition of it? Well, I offer a suggestion: The final inheritance depends on the resurrection of the Christ. Those men of faith died without obtaining the promise, but having seen it afar off and claiming it by faith (Hebrews 11:13-16).

In this dispensation God has provided the better sacrifice, the better promises, the better hope, and a better covenant. The writer to the Hebrews brings these things out as incentive to Hebrew believers, by way of persuading them to continue in faith. How many times are disciples encouraged to continue, to abide, not to turn back? Do you not recall many in the New Testament? Since every benefit of grace is through faith, since all is ours in Christ, it is essential that we abide in Him.

*"For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Corinthians 1:20-22).*

We are told to reckon ourselves dead and alive unto God by Christ Jesus (Romans 6:11). Why the reckoning? It is our way of entering into the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection. The reality is in the future, but we can experience it now, in time, because God has given us the earnest of the Spirit. He has given His Spirit of promise as His pledge to us to keep the promise, "the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Ephesians 1:13, 14).

He is called the Spirit of sonship (KJV says "Spirit of adoption, Romans 8:15; cf. Romans 8:23; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5). The Greek word is *huiothesia*, the placing or setting of sons. It is what Isaac did for Jacob but could not do for Esau (Genesis 27). Paul extends the analogy in Galatians 4:1-5).

A believer under the bondage of law, or the bondage of sin, or the bondage of a religious system, cannot receive this setting of sonship until he comes by faith, demonstrated by obedience. Jacob became a son of the covenant when Isaac speci-



fied he should.

Jacob's life after Bethel was much different. A believer today must come to the covenant position through faith and take the mark which befits the New Covenant (baptism, Colossians 2:10-17). The body is Christ (v. 17). How can we fail to see that the Spirit of promise came to the church, not all who believe, or that the church is Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12, 13)? Please read Colossians 1:18-23, and note the conditional element in v. 23.

Even under the terms of the Old Covenant the people considered that more was necessary to be a part of the covenant people than being born as natural sons. Not only was circumcision administered as a covenant mark at eight days of age, but when the son was thirteen he celebrated with bar mitzvah, meaning a son of the covenant.

The age of thirteen was chosen because it was felt that the boy was responsible at that age, and thus eligible to become a son of the covenant. He had to be accountable personally. Under the New Covenant where saints in the church live before God today the mark of the covenant which displaces circumcision (cf. Colossians 2:11, 12) is baptism. But in order for one to be baptized he must be personally accountable to come by faith and be baptized so he can begin a life of dedication and service.

We know that many thirteen year old Jewish boys may not understand what walking by faith means, but they do understand they have become responsible as Jews to serve in the covenant of Israel.

Such knowledge and responsibility are necessary for entering into covenant relationship. This relationship is the assumption of the place of a son of the covenant. Protestant Baptists often speak of entering into the resurrection life of Christ.

This, some seem to understand, is a means of living above the flesh motive, walking in the spirit. Indeed, it is. True sonship, where responsibility is assumed by the individual, is a state of maturity beyond what the son experiences before (Galatians 4:1-5). Believers in Jesus who are living under the

bondage of the flesh are certainly not walking in the Spirit. The fact that Christ has come and provision is made for the believer to enter into a state of maturity does not mean that every individual will see the Truth and enter into the experience, that is, receive the adoption of sons, or the setting of sonship. He is not accountable, so does not enter, or is not appointed, to the position of a mature son. How many church members are like this today?

Living the resurrection life is a matter of reckoning now. We have not been actually raised from the dead, but our Mediator has. In Him we can begin to experience the benefits of the age to come: "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17). Even the powers of the kingdom, spiritual powers, may be experienced in some measure (1 Corinthians 4:20), though in the early days it included actual miracles, though not today.

It took the resurrection of Jesus in order for Him to finish the work and request the Father to send the Spirit as an earnest to us that the promises are sure. Entering into covenant relationship with Him enables us to know a fellowship, a peace, a joy, which is not available to the immature one. This is true sonship.

This is the thing referred to when the Bible speaks of being born again. "Born again" is a metaphor further describing the sonship. Can there still be doubt that this explains the numerous references to obedience and submission as being a mark of such children? (Matthew 5:44-48; Romans 8:14, 19; 2 Corinthians 6:18; Galatians 4:5, 6; Philippians 2:15; Hebrews 2:10; Hebrews 12:7, 8; 1 John 3:1, 2; Revelation 21:7).

How few are they who live the resurrection life. Reference is made to it in various ways in the Old Testament. One of them was expressed in the distinction between partaking of the manna, as they did in the wilderness, and partaking of "the old corn of the land" as they did after the Gilgal experience and the rolling away of the sins which were still upon them because of their failure to walk by faith during the wilderness wandering (Joshua 5:6-12).

I would advise a careful reading of this passage, for many, perhaps most, believers today, are still satisfied to partake of the manna, the bread from heaven, rather than the old corn which came up from the ground.

Another Old Testament illustration is seen in Israel's continuing conflict with Amalek. This is seen from the record of Exodus 17:8-16 through that of Saul in his conflict with Amalek in 1 Samuel 15:1-20.

As long as men live in compromise or complicity with the flesh he will have this conflict with Amalek, that is, the old man, or flesh nature. It takes a death to free us from sin (Romans 6:7-11). Christ has for us entered into death and come forth victorious (Hebrews 6:12-20). We only get the victory through faith, reckoning ourselves to have died and been raised in Him.

Many elements of full salvation are directly associated with the resurrection of the Christ. His dying is very important, but apart from His resurrection we could not enter into the sonship life He has made available. He himself was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4).

We, in turn, have received grace "for obedience to the faith" (v. 5). "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Romans 5:9, 10).

This is not in imitation of His life in the body, but by His resurrection life (John 14:19). Only certain ones are counted worthy (*hoi kataxiouthentes*, aorist passive participle from *kataxiioo*, to deem entirely deserving) of that age (the millennium, *tou aionou ekeinou*, of that age) and of the resurrection out from the dead ones (*tes ek nekron*) (Luke 20:35, 36). Those who suppose that all the dead are raised at once have a problem just here, and so do those who consider all the saved raised at the same time. (See: Chapter Twelve for further discussion of more than one resurrection).

Further passages identifying the birth in the Old Testament with the resurrection of the body (Isaiah 26:15-21; Isaiah 66:7-16; Micah 5:3). Associate this travail and birth with that in Isaiah 66:8 and that in Isaiah 26:18 and note the joy and peace which follows the tribulation (travail). Keep in mind that Christ has gone before and accomplished this for those willing to identify with Him in covenant. Note who is said to be "the mother of us all," that is, "Jerusalem which is above, which is free" (Galatians 4:26).

Who or what could be the metaphorical "mother" of those supposedly born without knowledge of promises or covenant? In what sense are initial believers "children of promise"? There is no possible application of these scriptures to all such who have only believed in the Savior but do not know the Lord Jesus.

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## **CHAPTER SIX**

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### **ELECTION IS CONDITIONAL**

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:10, 11).

Because a matter is conditional does not mean it is any less gracious. God is God. He has the right to determine who shall be beneficiaries of His love and mercy. Further, He has the ability to work His will out in the world, or in a particular man, without destroying that man's capacity to make decisions for himself. When we speak of a "free moral agent" we recognize that no man in a world under a curse as ours is can possibly be entirely free. He must cope with the limitations of life which enshroud him all of his days. But he is able to make decisions which will enable him to overcome many of the hindrances of the curse and of men or angels.

Man's freedom to choose his own course, then, is limited. Our decisions are necessarily within the permissive will of God. Whatever directive will we may be subject to, we want to recognize that God is able to do whatever He pleases. When He does, His actions will always be in harmony with His own nature, a nature which includes all of His attributes. Mercy, love, justice, righteousness, holiness, and many others are at work in God's actions. Thus does He work all things after the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1:11).

Sin cannot enter heaven. Those in the kingdom are restricted to the elect. Still, many unworthy men are brought into this acceptance.

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus*

*Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us (elected us) in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made know unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3-12).*

Here is summarized God's plan for the ages. Note some of the things which are included:

The elect are blessed (Gk., *eulogesas*, having blessed, an aorist active participle indicating finished action) with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies.

The word places may be misleading. In specific places or spheres. Is a man equally blessed whether he be in these heavenly places or not? No, for it is only in the heavenlies. Where is this? It must be where God wants the man to be, for we see the term repeated in this lengthy passage in different ways. Certainly it is in a church, for the mystery which is explained further (see Ephesians 3:4-6, 10), is definitely identified with the church.

These spiritual blessings are "in Christ" and therefore not to be considered outside of Him. How could an alien sinner possibly

be thought of as being chosen. Does someone say that this choosing (electing) is in Christ and was made "before the foundation of the world?" So it is, but does this mean that a man was in Christ before the foundation of the world? If so, can a man be in Christ and be lost? How could Paul say that certain of his kinsmen were "in Christ before me"? (Romans 16:7).

One is in Christ only as he submits to Christ. This is in time, during his lifetime. Why would God cause one to be in Christ before another, if there is no condition? There are conditions!

Then we are told that this choosing, so as to effect the position of being in Christ, is for men to be holy and unblamable in His sight in love. Most will admit that a Christian should be holy and blameless. Are we to conclude that this is only in God's sight? Or do we believe this condition should be brought to pass among men still on earth so that others will be influenced by their lives, and men be brought to praise Him for the glory of his grace? Again it is pointed out that this election is "in the beloved," a variant wording of "in Christ." It is next suggested that our redemption is in Him (see Chapter Seven).

If all these benefits are unconditional (as stated in the "U' of Tulip, the acrostic used to epitomize this false doctrine), why would God have to make known the mystery of His will to gather Gentiles into one body, and use the church to make known or to know the manifold wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:9, 10)?

### **The Truth of the Matter**

Since election is clearly "in Christ," in this age, we only need to determine what it takes for men to be "in Him" to know what conditions are necessary before one is elect.

Election is simply God's choice. He chose angels for certain works, so they are called elect angels (1 Timothy 5:21). God's choosing and making a covenant with His Son makes Him The Elect One (1 Peter 2:4). The Jewish rulers referred to their Messiah as "Christ, the chosen of God" (Luke 23:35).

Isaiah quotes God as calling the promised "suffering Servant," "my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth" (Isaiah 42:1). A few individuals in the Old Testament are said to be "chosen" (as David, Psalm 89:3, and Moses, Psalm 106:23).

It is not specified just when David, or Moses were chosen, but it well could have been "before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4). Most of the time an election is corporate, as God's chosen nation, Israel, sometimes referred to simply as children of Jacob (1 Chronicles 16:13; Psalm 105:6; Isaiah 45:4). Usually in the New Testament election is corporate. Where an individual is said to be elect, it is either because he is a part of a corporate election, or the term is used figuratively.

What is the reason for saying election is "in Christ" or "in the beloved"? Doubtless it is because God's choice was based on that element of His foreknowledge. Those "in Christ" were the only one's chosen. In the Old Testament the nation of Israel was chosen. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos 3:2). This had nothing to do with their being singled out to be initially saved, but He chose the nation to bring to pass His purpose. This included the bringing of the Christ into the world through that nation.

Those individuals in the nation who were not willing to conform to the conditions were left out of God's election (individually), and this was based on God's foreknowledge (1 Peter 1:2; Romans 2:28, 29). What was it that God foreknew which became the basis of His choice? It evidently had to do with each man's willingness or unwillingness to be what God purposed. He can make men obey, but He only presses upon that one who can profit by it.

We discipline our children to mold their character, but there are limitations to the amount of pressure we put on one. There is a limit to one's willingness, then of his capacity, to be molded or shaped in character. The remnant of that nation was all that was left by the time of the coming of the Christ (Romans 9:4-7).



## **A Corporate Election Today**

The existence of a remnant suggests a diminishing of the nation. At numerous times reference is made to a remnant within the larger nation. This phenomenon is little understood, so we want to consider it in relation to the nation of Israel. The nation was formed by covenant and continues according to the certainty of the covenant. (See Chapter Ten).

Men seek a time when the church was first organized. They are overlooking a very important fact regarding God's election and purpose. There was already a chosen people, God's elect. But the nation failed to carry out God's purpose for a chosen people, hence were about to be cut off from the very things which were theirs positionally (Romans 9:4, 5; Matthew 21:42-45).

The promise of a kingdom was the ultimate test for the nation. That kingdom was tendered by John the Baptist, and then by Jesus, but the nation rejected both the kingdom and the Christ. The result, the nation was pared down to a remnant who were willing to receive the kingdom even though it set forth conditions which they might not have known.

Primary among the conditions was repentance. The nation had become self-righteous. Hear the language which explains the situation:

*"Because of unbelief they were broken off..." "Be not high-minded, but fear; For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (Romans 11:20-22).*

Those addressed were Gentiles who had believed. They are now challenged to continue in God's goodness or they, like Israel, will be cut off. Cut off from what? The language employs a figure of an olive tree as representing Israel.

When God cast away some of the unfruitful branches it was that many outside of Israel might be reconciled (Romans

11:15). The firstfruits of Israel were holy, root and branch. But some of the branches were broken off and believing Gentiles, like wild olive branches, were grafted into the stock of Abraham, so they might partake of the root and the fatness of the olive tree (Romans 11:16, 17).

Those engrafted branches, contrary to nature where we graft a better variety into a wild stock, are privileged to partake of the covenant promises to Abraham. But those formerly wild olive branches must not become high-minded, as were many in Israel, lest they too might be cut off.

The cutting off of natural branches and the grafting in of unnatural branches is a way of explaining the transition to Gentiles as the components of this covenant people. God's promises must be fulfilled, that the promises according to election might stand (Romans 9:11).

**“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all” (Jews and Gentiles alike).**

But note that it is the Abraham kind of faith, which was a walking faith, not merely a one time faith. Please, may some reader not say that those broken off were false professors, never saved, hence unbelievers, and that is why they were broken off. They would never have been grafted in had they not believed. The church, that people who received the promised Spirit, is now the people who shall receive the promised blessings to Abraham (Galatians 3:14).

The passage continues (Romans 11:23) by assuring us that if the broken off branches, Israelites in the flesh, do not remain still in unbelief, they may be grafted back in. Blindness, in part, is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in (v. 25).

God reserved to Himself a remnant in Israel. It was always true. The fearful Elijah could not see them, but they were there (Romans 11:4). There were seven thousand who had

not bowed the knee to worship Baal. Likewise after the cutting off there was "a remnant according to the election of grace" (Romans 11:5). This was by grace that any were left and some chosen could not high mindedly claim it was because of their works of law keeping or righteousness of the flesh, for such would nullify grace (v. 6).

The answer to Paul's question, "Hath God cast away his people?" is answered: "Never"! (v. 1). At this point Paul locates his right to the promises on the basis of his being an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin," that is, a part of the elect remnant.

We see the grace which brought him from a violent opposer of Christ and the church to the place of an apostle and bondservant of Jesus Christ. By His labors as "the apostle to the Gentiles" He was God's instrument to cause many Gentiles to recognize God's purpose and accept the Savior.

This receiving of Christ as Savior must not be viewed simply as making Him a Savior so men could escape eternal damnation. God was furthering His purpose to raise up children to Abraham.

When Israelites would not hear the truth concerning a Messiah, and repent so as to be made heirs of the kingdom which was proffered, the language of John the Baptist became very clear. Many in Israel were getting the message and were coming in repentance "and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees, therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."

The next two verses are lengthy, but their message is weighty in this connection. (See Chapter Eight on Baptism For Remission and what it signified to Israel when John administered it.)

## **Significance of a Conditional Election**

Passages cited in this section should be observed carefully, noting that conditions were required of Israel for them to be truly Israel, not merely of Israel. Gentiles were warned lest they also fail to remain a part of the elect nation. John's baptism insisted on a quality of walk, that is a walk of faith as later explained to Gentile believers, as essential for one's continuing as seed of Abraham.

Indeed, Gentiles are made to become children of Abraham for a reason. This reason was that they might become a part of God's elect people. Though not born of Abraham in the flesh, through faith they become one with Christ (Colossians 3:10-12), and because he was elect they become elect in Him.

No formal organization of a church is mentioned, or necessary, for the chosen nation was already there. The Messiah was born under the law and lived under the law in order to meet the requirements of the law for those who would follow Him. But it was walking by a rule, that is, walking by faith, which qualified men, Jew or Gentile (Galatians 6:15, 16) :

*"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."*

Who is this Israel? It was Jews who walked by faith, became new creatures, as though having died and been raised from the dead, and Gentiles who also had come to the same position of rejecting the old man and identifying with the Christ. It is not said that this all happened at the moment men first believed, but it had to come. Those Jews whom John baptized had believed, possibly many years. But their faith had not governed their lives. That was what is necessary, for God's elective purpose, as revealed in Ephesians 1:1-6, is to raise up a people who will recognize God's worthiness and give Him glory.

We have seen an elect nation, unconditionally raised up according to God's purpose (Romans 11:2), but a number of individual Jews were cut off (Romans 11:17, 20). The true elec-

tion was the remnant which was left, following the judicial blinding of the others (Romans 9:4-9; Romans 11:7-12).

An appeal was made by John the Baptist to the nation to repent and this appeal was enhanced by the offer of the promised kingdom. Those refusing were dealt with severely (Romans 11:17, 22) because of their unbelief (v. 23). Those who humbled themselves and heeded the message were dealt with in God's goodness, but they must continue in that goodness (v.22, 23), if they were to escape the severity.

May we state the situation again very confidently: The elect nation lost its standing because of their unbelief, but this did not nullify God's election. They were the true election who sought the promise by faith (Romans 11:7), engrafted Gentiles who were added because of faith (Romans 11:20).

They must continue by faith or will lose the position, failing to have made their calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10). Faith at work will do as God has taught us. This confirms the election and blesses us on the basis of God's faithfulness, not our works (Romans 9:23, 24).

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## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

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### **The Security of the Believer**

The believer in God is certainly secure. The expression in the title above is a poor statement of the doctrine intended by its use through the years. Perhaps no one, not even a Protestant, would question that the believer is secure, as long as he believes. Baptists, on the other hand, teach that the once-believer is secure. But this expression needs some explaining.

Perhaps Baptists should speak of the security of the saved, if that is their meaning, or "once saved always saved," if that is what they mean. Actually, the idea that one is secure in his position is not always true. Having said as much, let me try to explain what is true.

When a man has been brought to realize that he is a sinner before God and accountable to God, if he has heard the Bible and believes it is God's word, he should then realize that he is lost, condemned before God, and in danger of perishing in hell. What can he do?

Actually, there is nothing righteous which he can do which would change the situation, but he can cast himself upon the mercy of a merciful God. He can repent of sin and trust Jesus. He can even cry out in prayer for mercy, not that this is a prescribed way of receiving it. Unless he is ready to admit in his heart that he is an unworthy sinner, and realizes God is a loving and merciful God, none of his crying out can help.

But when he turns himself over to the Lord without trying to "make a deal with God," he will find that God is gracious, for He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to die for the sin of the world, that "He by the grace of God should taste death for every man" ((Hebrews 2:9).

It is apparent that many passages of scripture are misapplied,

for words are used in specialized ways throughout the Bible. Much of so-called evangelistic preaching is a hodgepodge of passages, some general (applicable to the whole race), and many applicable only to men in certain positions. When one claims a promise which was never addressed to him, he will not receive that promise. God is faithful and only does what He has promised to do.

Let us illustrate: "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him" (Ecclesiastes 3:14).

These words are by the preacher, Solomon. His language deals with situations in the world and touching upon lives whether they are God's people are not. The word "men" is the clue, meaning "human beings," so that whatever God does, it is a finality of His own wisdom and might, and is designed to bring men to fear before Him. The thing God does is done. There is no escaping it. When He does something it stands done.

Men who once trusted Jesus know by their own hearts feelings that God has wrought a work upon them. God was not playing; He was serious. Therefore, I would take the language as meaning that what He did stands. This is like another verse in Ecclesiastes (11:3):

*"If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be."*

Here is a statement which is general, that is applicable to circumstances in general, yet it states that some things are certain. Clouds full of water empty themselves upon the earth. This is a dependable truth, always, wherever there are clouds full of water. A tree which falls toward the south will lie where it falls, as will the tree which falls toward the north. Neither one will stand back up and grow or move to some other location of itself. What God does is forever. Scientists, even those who argue against the existence of a God Who made the

laws of nature, inconsistently depend upon those same laws when making decisions.

The weather can be forecast, though men are not fully aware of all the circumstances which make the weather, but they use the laws of nature to do it. Men going to the moon used certain laws to plot the course of the rocket, and observing the laws of gravity, of velocity, of time, and of motion, to know how much thrust the rocket must have to arrive at its destination.

More complex calculating had to be used to plot the returning engine. They accepted the laws of God, nature's God, to do the plotting. Yet they are not willing to believe that such certainty is built into God's creation, or that it is a creation from the hand of a God who is exact in His doings.

God sets principles in His creation which are dependable. He speaks and His words are dependable. All that man has to do is depend on Him. When they have, the laws governing the certainty of His words are brought into play. They can rest assured that He will not change, even if a man changes.

So when one trusts God, depending on Him for saving grace, he may be sure that God is faithful and will do what He has promised. And when He makes a change in a heart or a life, He does not repent of making that change. So a permanent result must attach to that act of mercy. I would say, then, that a man who was genuinely saved, is always saved in the sense of what was done in that act.

The man may, because of his old sin nature, be unfaithful to God; he may forget God; but God will not forget him. He delivered him from condemnation in hell, therefore, he need have no fear of hell.

### **Further Elements of God's Saving Work**

We have seen that God is interested in something more than providing the sinner with "a fire insurance policy against the flames of hell (See Chapter Four). God accommodates to man's weakness and ignorance, giving him time to learn what God expects and to meet the conditions which will allow God



to go ahead with His purpose.

Anytime a thing is conditional, as reflected in the statement "Whosoever will...", then God accommodates to the limitations of men so they can meet the conditions. The "salvation which is nearer than when we believed" is something more than, beyond, requiring conditions to be met. It becomes binding on men to learn and to meet the condition(s).

In order for the conditions to be satisfied it is necessary for a man to humble himself, draw near to God, learn what He desires, respond to His directions, follow His teachings, and do His will, all the while showing the same spirit of faith which was effective in his entering upon God's salvation when he first trusted. Repeated references are made in the scriptures concerning this process of obedience and faith.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).

All men will limit the application of this verse to one who has believed. But it did not say "has believed"; it says "believeth." The Old English of the King James Version is rather obvious about tenses of verbs.

The sense of a present is different from the tense of a perfect. Both differ from a future. This distinction can be seen in modern English, but few people read with a sense of the grammar. Nor do we need to, if we are as familiar with our language as we should be. The tense sense will come through. Still, there is a way which we make the tense sense more obvious: "He that is hearing my word, and believing on him that sent me, has everlasting (age) life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death to life." (John 5:24). The certainty of the promise belongs to the man who goes on hearing God's Word and, consequently, goes on believing God's promises. That man can claim to be alive, having escaped the condemnation of death.

Does someone object, saying that this makes one's salvation ultimately depend on whether he continues to hear and be-

lieve God? Well, what do you want? Would you have God take over, destroy your will, and save you even if you do not heed His words, do not continue to trust Him, and live for the present world?

Now, would that not be a faulty sort of claim on God's grace? When God has supported the conditions with a "verily, verily," it certainly becomes requisite upon us that we meet the conditions of hearing and believing (continually). God would not even be true to His own nature were He to save the rebel apart from repentance and faith. He will always remain true to His own nature. We want the guarantees, but we do not feel the obligation to be faithful.

"Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Romans 8:12, 13).

Men do not want to remain in debt. Not even to God. But some of us are debtors. All men are debtors in some sense. The alien sinner is in debt, hopelessly in bondage to sin, until he surrenders Himself to God for His mercy.

Since God is not through with us and His purpose is not yet fulfilled we are still in debt. But this debt is not to the flesh. The flesh makes constant demand for payment. It wants its satisfactions. We are to deny its claims, for if we do not, it will take over our lives and there will be a constant demand for our living after the flesh. But if we go on making payment to the debt the flesh sets before us, we "shall die."

Does someone say, "Everybody has to die," passing off the reality of this thing. Well, the context will not allow it to be applied to dying physically. Everybody, including those who live after the Spirit, must die some day. But the passage is speaking of a dying which ought not to be, but which comes from living after the flesh. It is speaking of a spiritual death which one living after the spirit (mortifying the deeds of the body) shall not have to go through.

Also the language is addressed to saved, church members. We must understand our subject is the security of believers.

The man who has trusted the Lord is now a debtor to live after the spirit, mortifying the deeds of the body. This calls for following the directions of the Holy Spirit.

*"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14).*

If one claims he is a son of God from the moment of his first trusting, then there is no need for him to mortify the deeds of the body. He can go on living after the flesh and die the spiritual death which leaves him where? To answer this question we need to know what death means.

Most Bible students understand it is a separation. Physical death is a separating of the spirit and soul from the body. Death in sin is a separating of the person from God. A man who has trusted the Lord, and has begun to serve Him has a risk of dying if he lives after the flesh. This is called "fallen from grace" (in Galatians 5:4).

It is called a cutting off or severing from Christ in the same verse. It is called a cutting off from Christ, in a figure, in John 15:1-14), where Jesus says He is the vine and his disciples are the branches. Another scripture (Ephesians 5:30) speaks of certain disciples as being "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." The context clearly states that the body means the church. He then says, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:31, 32).

Those who have gone through a divorce sometimes speak of this severance as being like a death. It is a sort of whistling in the dark for one of them to say, "we are still good friends, but we have just decided we cannot get along as man and wife." If only Christians could see how serious it is for a man and wife to separate and get a divorce.

It is serious, not only because God told them it should not happen (Genesis 1:27; Genesis 2:23, 24; Matthew 19:4-6), but it is the more serious because it damages the language of God. How? He says the relationship of a man and his wife is

a figure of the relationship between Christ and His church. We are living in a day when nothing is viewed as sacred any more. The lives and actions of men make large blotches on the record of the Bible, tending to make it difficult for the children to see or heed the Truth.

Back to our question "cut off or separated from where?" We saw a passage which says "severed from Christ" (Galatians 5:4). The KJV says "Christ has become of no effect unto you" (Galatians 5:4). Please do not presume that this is addressed to a false professor, or someone who has never been saved.

The Epistle to the Galatians is dealing with a situation in which the members of the church, saved and baptized, were influenced to believe that keeping the law of Moses was the way to the maturing or perfecting of their lives. A lot of church members are still confused on this point. Their being saved means they still needed to grow to maturity as sons. But if they depend on keeping commandments, the law, which makes its appeal to the flesh, will only destroy them, for none of us can keep that standard of righteousness in our flesh, or by the flesh. We must trust Christ, depending on His perfect obedience, to satisfy for our inability. This is walking by faith. Such a walk is not dependent upon the ability of the flesh to keep commandments or produce righteousness. It could not while we were alien sinners; it cannot yet.

But by faith, we walk by the Spirit, depending on the Christ to produce in us the righteousness which God accepts. But just as surely as we resort again to keeping commandments, our flesh is called into play, we utterly fail, and therein we die, spiritually. Christ is not of further effect to us. He can only help one who ceases to do for himself in the energy of the flesh. This was true when one was an alien sinner. It still is.

This being severed from Christ must not be understood to mean that one did not trust the Lord, or that his once trusting has undone that operation. It means that he is out of touch with the source of strength; he cannot be righteous.

If one assumes that all of the reckoning of grace gave him the full measure of the work of Christ when he first trusted Him,

then he should read more carefully. He should find scripture which says one has all these by one act of faith.

To Abraham the reckoning of righteousness came after his walking by faith, taking the steps of faith (Romans 4:11, 12; see Chapter Two, this book).

### **He is None of His**

*"So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:8-11).*

Verses 12, 13 are quoted later in this chapter. Then verse 14 says

*"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."*

There is no way one can honestly deal with the scriptures and make this whole section applicable to alien sinners. I am aware that many quote verse 9 to prove that one has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him from the moment he trusted Jesus.

We do not question that the Holy Spirit is the active Agent of God in this work when one first believes, but this context is speaking of one's minding the things of the Spirit and not the things of the flesh (vv. 4-7).

It is not honest to twist this into an explanation about lost or alien sinners. We are reading about the privilege of one who has believed, one, actually, who has become a member of a church, and now allows Christ to dwell in his heart. This one mortifies the deeds of the body, allowing the Spirit to direct His life. This is the manner in which the indwelling Christ works.

Such a person, led by the Spirit, is a son of God (Romans 8:14). This is a son of God because he has received "the Spirit of adoption" (the sonship Spirit) by which one cries "Abba, Father."

I have actually felt alarm because I hear so many professing Christians praying, "O God, O Lord," and similar expressions, as though he were utterly unfamiliar with the Father. Is there any wonder one such often comes to doubt whether or not he is saved (cf. Romans 8:16). See Chapter Fifteen for further discussion of this theme.

So where is one cut off, "severed from Christ" in that sense we have discussed. To be severed from Christ he had to first be a member of Christ. This means he was a member of His body, the church.

A spiritual church, concerned about the spiritual welfare of her membership, attempts to deal with the wrong spirit in one of her members. Seeing one who is minding the flesh, either to satisfy it, or as a means of reaching a proper state of righteousness, the church body tries to get that member to understand what a spiritual walk is. Failing in this, such a church sets that member outside. He is removed from the fellowship of the church.

Please, he did not become a member of Christ merely on the vote of the body, nor does a mechanical act, as baptism, put him into Christ unless there is a proper spiritual procedure, meaning that the members must be acting in faith to be united with Christ.

The disciplining vote of the body, removing one from fellowship, is not what put him out of fellowship. It was his own carnal walk which put him out and separated him from Christ. Faith is necessary for entrance, and the vote of the church only confirms their belief that faith is there.

When one walks in sin, he is walking without faith. It may be a sudden, unexpected step he takes, but it is sin, and so he must immediately repent. If he does not, his heart is hardened and he is no longer walking in faith, so he is to be cut off.

This severing from Christ, this cutting off of a branch, this falling from grace, this failing to abide in Christ, is one of the most frequently mentioned subjects in the New Testament. Israel in the Old Testament had followed this rebellious, careless, indifferent, unbelieving way so much until God was minded to put them away. First, however, He allowed them to suffer chastening at his hands. Of course, he used the armies of others, the plagues of locusts or some such, drought and other natural means to get his attention so he would return to the Lord and live for Him as He had intended.

Their failing in this brought about more hurt and disappointment in their lives. The extreme was that they were led captive into the land of their enemies, losing their name, their reputation, their land, their temple, their homes.

These visible evidences of their sins were representative of larger loss which stands before the sinner who professes to know God. In the New Testament this comes out clearly. Israel was cut off from their covenant position as God's chosen people.

A new Testament people may be cut off from their New Covenant position, cease to be a church, as Israel ceased to be a people (see Hosea 1:9, 10; Romans 9:25, 26).

The Lord left Israel a seed, a tiny remnant (Isaiah 1:9; Romans 9:29). From that remnant God raised up a people, grafting in Gentiles and making them seed of Abraham (Romans 11:4-6). These must continue in faith or they too will be cut off (Romans 11:21, 22).

The security of the people of God is as certain as the unchanging words of the unchanging God. That person who rests on the Lord as His hope, can be sure that he will be preserved from all loss of his spiritual life. But if he turns back to the flesh and lives after the flesh, he shall die. This means he will be severed from Christ in the sense of the intimacy of being one with Him. He will miss the promises made to Abraham of a kingdom and a city. He will lose his position in the covenant.

That position is as certain as it was to Israel. Israel in the

flesh could not continue as God's special people. A remnant did, because they depended on God. God is faithful, so the one believing in Him has no need to fear. A human quality is to fear that our faith is not great enough, or our sins are too great, but our greatness in any sense is not the measure of our security. That is measured by the faithfulness of God.

We should learn what it means to believe in Him, keep on believing in Him, become confident before Him, in Him, and continue to love and serve Him. We have such confidence (1 John 3:18-24). The seal of our confidence is that we may ask what we will and it will be given to us (1 John 5:13-15).

### **The Problem of Doubt**

Doubt becomes serious. It is natural with our sin natures, for it tends to make one's position depend on self. But our position does not depend on self; it depends on God. He by His Spirit enables the one who continues to look to Him in faith.

Like all sin, doubt is sin and it tends to grow or increase if allowed or entertained. Faith can waver, become weak, and even disappear, unless it is nourished.

How many people do you know who have become doubters and who may even say, I am not saved; I never was saved; I made a mistake? Believers, even preachers, usually accept this explanation. It could be true, of course, but there is a strong likelihood that such a person was truly saved, became cold, practiced sin for a time, then decided he would not have done such had he been saved.

- *He no longer feels the joy of salvation.*
- *He knows he is out of fellowship with God's people and with God.*
- *He does not sense any love in his heart for God or His people.*

None of these prove he was never saved, or that he was saved and lost it. Much less does it prove that he was saved in the first place.



He could have been saved and is now in a position described as "hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins" (2 Peter 1:9). He "cannot see afar off." The spiritual sight which faith affords, allowing us to look to God's promises, even to an inheritance in the age to come, is missing. He lacks those things which are essential to spiritual sight, spiritual joy, and the confidence which can be his. "Faith alone" is a bad motto. Faith will not stand alone. There must be other things joining it or supplied in it. Peter taught the "elect" (1 Peter 1:2) of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (v. 1), there were some things besides a knowledge of God and of Jesus which they must give diligence to supply in their faith (cf. 2 Peter 1:2-4).

If they would do this they might obtain the great and precious promises, even becoming partakers (sharers) of the Divine nature (v. 4).

I am aware that those who think with the Protestant Reformers, as Luther, feel this came by a spiritual birth analogous to the natural birth. But most believers should begin to question whether they have such a nature because they trusted Jesus once, and must realize that this comes as a process of supplying by faith other ingredients in their lives: virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, love (2 Peter 1:5, 6). With these things supplied there shall not be barrenness nor unfruitfulness in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Does one really forget that he was once purged? Can one forget the experience of deliverance by the hand of the Lord? Two things require consideration:

1. Those who first trusted Christ at a very young age did not experience a change as drastic as those of us who were in our teen years, but even these had to have some understanding of a work wrought by God in order to make a step of faith to begin to obey Him.
2. Forget does not mean it does not come to our memory at all, or that our minds are incapable of recalling the event if we try. It means that one neglects to take to heart this initial working of God in the life. It is like a

little boy's excuse for not doing what he was told: "I forgot." He is not lying, necessarily, but it was not so heavy on his heart as to interfere with his playing. Many times, specially in the Old Testament, this warning not to forget is found.

God has always wanted His people to hear and heed. A special warning is given against their saying no, or refusing to heed (Isaiah 30:15). Their trials on earth might be a threat and difficult to bear, but God assures them of His care and promises a time when they may walk in comfort and assurance (Isaiah 30:20):

*"And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (Isaiah 30:21).*

Then Jeremiah tells of a time when

*"their governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the Lord. And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God" (Jeremiah 30:21, 22).*

I see in this a promise that God should use leaders whose hearts He had touched to direct His people. But there is a prophecy even more thrilling:

*"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. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, 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" (Jeremiah 31:33, 34).*

A reader of this language in the time of Isaiah or Jeremiah

would surely consider it applied to the days of Messiah, what we call the kingdom. Now Jesus, the Messiah, has come and has brought in this promise (Hebrews 8:7-13; Hebrews 10:15-18).

The promise belongs to those under the New Covenant today, then. This means they must be in a position to partake of the blood of the New Covenant (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25), that is the church. All such are made "able ministers of the new covenant" (2 Corinthians 3:6). Jesus is the mediator of this new covenant (Hebrews 9:15, 20).

As long as we walk by faith, remember His promises, partake of the grace which this covenant provides, we may be sure we are not forgetting. It is those who forget the meaning of their baptism, forget the house of the Lord, and sin against their privileges who are severed from Christ and lose all the advantages, even as Israel of the Old Covenant.

After all, the church is "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16). One may fall, lose his standing in the covenant, and be severed from the body of Christ, the church. This is the meaning of church discipline in its last analysis. Its first application, of course, applies to an effort by the membership to save the lives of those who are seen to be "forgetting." See Chapter Fifteen of this Book.

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## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

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### **Baptism for Remission**

*"John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for remission of sins" (Mark 1:4).*

*"And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Luke 3:3).*

It may be misleading to say that baptism is for remission. Baptism is only a symbol, a figure of something which is very important. Like circumcision before it, baptism is only an outward mark of identification. But its meaning is significant and is enveloped within the figure itself so that its testimony cannot be misunderstood.

Before someone thinks I advocate some outward form as a means, may we have some understanding about the use of language which may enable my readers to avoid a presumptuous conclusion.

In the first place the language of the Scriptures, illustrated in the two verses quoted above, does not say that baptism is in order to that is "for remission" in those verses, but those very words are found in Acts 2:38. It says that John preached "the baptism of repentance for remission of sins" We know that remission means forgiveness. "Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). So far more is involved in our receiving the forgiveness of sins than our joining a church or getting someone to baptize us.

Most will agree that repentance is essential. Even for those already saved and baptized, as the "little children" in 1 John 2:1; (cf. 2:12, 13, 18, 28; 3:7, 10, 18; 4:4; 5:21), whom he calls "Beloved" (3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11), must deal with sins and

the need for forgiveness. John the Apostle said to these, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). He did not mention baptism in any of these connections, evidently because these already had baptism. But this certainly tells us that sin is a factor we have to deal with after we are saved. If this is true, then it must be for some reason involving our relationship to God who forgives sins. I fear there is entirely too much taking of God for granted and presuming that now that one is saved by the blood there is nothing which we need be concerned about from then on. I read such in the papers all the time.

I am not questioning the efficacy of the blood, for His was a "once for all" sacrifice (Hebrews 10:14, et al), but this sufficient sacrifice is of no avail to men who are unwilling to repent of sins and meet the conditions laid down for those who would walk before Him in holiness. Men like a system which is once for all, but the once for all has reference to the lasting quality of the sacrifice, not to its appropriation. It is always there, always available, not necessarily APPLIED INDISCRIMINATELY and WITHOUT CONDITION. God never leaves His people nor forsakes them (Hebrews 13:5), but His people certainly do leave and forsake Him, some for long periods, some for the rest of their lives.

When John preached the "baptism of repentance for remission," his message was addressed to the people of Israel. These were God's people of the covenant. Many of them were blinded by the religious mores of the day, not to mention the carelessness which overtakes many (most?) people who supposedly belong to the Lord. What religious activity they practiced was formal, having little significance to most of them. And the most active practitioners of the religion of Judaism were far from the standard which God had set for them by Moses and the other prophets.

Are you thinking, "Probably many (most") of them were not even saved." That could be, but what John was doing was appealing to that people to get off the careless position (or the zealous position of error), and leave the old life of self-serving and follow the Lord. He had sent His Son and men should

hear Him. If these religious people, whether zealous or indifferent, were to follow the Messiah they must repent, and they must be willing to MAKE THIS EVIDENT by submitting to John's baptism. The saved who sin must repent. Repentance is not just for lost sinners, but for saved people who sin. Repentance and confession is for them too.

"And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the bap-tism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him" (Luke 7:29, 30).

Was John's baptism a mere form? Did it make changes in the lives of people? I think it made changes. We do not claim that the act of baptism remitted (forgave) the sins of those people (Pharisees and lawyers), but the people, including the publicans, justified (vindicated) God by being baptized of John. Evidently repentance was necessary. Evidently the people had to see that they were taking steps which transformed their lives, not mere forms as they had been following before. This set of circumstances puts baptism in a setting designed to teach a willing people what they can do to vindicate God and honor Him before men.

Consider the circumstances. The people were already God's chosen nation. They were born to one of the tribes of Israel. They had God's law. They were more or less faithful to the forms taught them by the religious leaders of the day. But they were being misled. It is not said how much of their religious practice came from the heathen around them, but doubtless much of it did. To escape the bondage of such a system they needed the baptism of repentance for the remission of the sins of formalism, neglect, rebellion, indifference, or whatever may have been their particular failing. These people, at least their leaders, were satisfied with the system. They had the mark of the covenant - circumcision. Most of them likely never knew, or had forgotten that this mark meant the cutting off of the flesh with all of its ugly practices, and called for a faith to expect the Messiah to be born of a Virgin. Such details probably were not clear to many, but the promised seed had been indicated by this mark since the days of Abraham.

Now a new mark was offered, not just the cutting off of the flesh, but a dying to the old life and a burial to mark its end, and a resurrection. Did the people understand this? Few, if any, did at the moment. But all could understand that a prophet from God had given this route to justify God and submit to His counsel (Luke 7:29, 30).

Submitting to this counsel meant that there were conditions to be met if one was to receive the promises stated on condition. In our case today, since we know that saved, even baptized, people sin, they must confess the sins and repent of them in order to be cleansed (1 John 1:8, 9). If those sins are not confessed and repented of, then the individual must face the Lord without the cleansing that is promised on those conditions.

Many of the blessings of God's full salvation are promised for the future. When one first repents and trusts Jesus as Savior he is cleansed of his past sins and justified before God through Christ relative to those past sins. But if he commits sins after that, even after coming into the church, it is necessary for him to repent and confess those in order to be justified before God. It was long after initial faith that Abraham looked up at the stars and believed God's promise regarding a seed (Genesis 15:6), yet in that faith he was justified. What faith? The faith he exercised in claiming the promise of the seed.

Other promises are for the future. It behooves us to learn if there are conditions to be met, not satisfied because we trusted Jesus as Savior initially. One positive aspect of redemption is a deliverance from sin, but this is conditional. How can one be delivered from sin if he is not willing to confess the sin and repent of it? The intercessory work of Christ is for those who are peculiarly His (John 17:9, 10). These who are given to Christ are those whom the Father esteemed as willing to follow Him (cf. John 6:37-45). Many who have trusted Him as Savior fail to come to Him at every phase of life, but these special, peculiar people do. These He has promised to raise up "at the last day." This is a promise of a resurrection in which a glorified body is given (1 Thessalonians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53). This benefit is called "the adoption, the redemption of the body" (Romans 8:23). This element of sal-

vation is definitely for the future and is called a salvation by hope (Romans 8:24, 25), and requires a patient waiting, which is a walk of faith. Directly connected with this "patience of hope" is the benefit of Christ's intercessory work (Romans 8:26, 27).

Why the burden under prayer? Why the groanings, if we are already freed from every influence of sin? Our experience tells us that we labor in a world which is against us and against our Lord. We can have the victory only as we are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24), only available as that special people who are set apart and walking in Him.

Our theme is the forgiveness of sins. This is put sharply at Ephesians 1:7: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

Please understand that it is only in Christ, through His great mercy, upon His merit, that we have any aspect of salvation, past, present, or future. What we are insisting on is that this requires a walk of faith after that first step. "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). Is this automatically true of every believer? I think we know that every believer is not purified and zealous of good works. This comes about conditionally, as we avail ourselves of the intercessory work of Christ. This can only be done in the body, the church, for it is a covenant blessing. "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament (covenant), 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" (Hebrews 9:15). Note the conditional word "might." Who are the called? This is also a condition of our receiving the eternal redemption, that is, the inheritance. This is why we must make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 12:1). Israel was warned against failing to receive the promise to them (Hebrews 3:18) and we are warned, lest we fail to qualify also (Hebrews 4:11).



This becomes serious business, since we are also recipients of the promise originally made to Abraham: "Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:12-14). The conditions are stated in verse 10-12: "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Just as the law of Moses of the First Covenant dealt with the walk of God's people Israel, so He is concerned about the walk of those who trust Him and ought to be baptized and continue to put on Christ in a walk of faithfulness.

Having told us through the Apostle Paul that all things work together for our good, naming those elements of salvation which are provided for in His death, resurrection and ascension C foreknown, predestinated, sonship, called, justified, glorified C we must realize that these do not all occur in the same instant, at first faith, but proceed as we walk by faith, and as His Providence is involved. We wait for some of these (Romans 8:23). We are encouraged to keep them in mind (Luke 21:25-28).

The whole purpose of such an education in spiritual growth is that the Father and the Son may have fellowship with many brethren who have been willing to be conformed to His image.

*"Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory" (Ephesians 1:14).*

*"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30).*

This is the "sealing of the Holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:13). Do you have this insignia of the Father?

### **John's Baptism Is Yet Valid**

Added to the long list of errors espoused by Protestantism, and often adopted by Baptists, is the idea that John's Baptism is not Christian baptism. Why would they say this? Is it because it is obvious that "the Baptist," John, sent from God to baptize and make ready a people prepared for the Lord, administered the only baptism possessed by Christ or the Apostles, and by the disciples? It was the baptism which Paul espoused (Acts 19:2-5). He explained to twelve disciples at Ephesus that what John had preached was the Truth. Evidently these disciples had not been properly informed about John. They had been told by the one who baptized them, probably Apollos (Acts 18:24), that he administered John's baptism, or the same thing.

But it appears that Apollos himself needed further instruction as to the nature of John's baptism (Acts 18:26).

### **The Real Meaning of John's Baptism**

When Protestants assume that John preached a baptism of repentance only, but knew nothing about the authority or power which should accompany God's people in due time, they miss the explanation which Paul gave those twelve disciples. That key explanation was that John did preach that men should believe on Jesus who should come after John. John prepared a people for Christ because they were taught by John that they must repent and bring forth fruits evidencing that repentance (Matthew 3:5-12). That explanation did contrast John's ministry with Christ's; did it not show that Jesus would baptize in Holy Spirit and in fire? In other words, genuine repentance is necessary because the Christ who comes after John is One Who will judge and differentiate, baptizing some with Holy Spirit and others with judgment. Either one must follow Jesus willingly, turning from his sins in full confession and receiving the endowment by the Spirit so that he can serve effectively, or he will find himself judged as falling, or having fallen short and all his efforts burned up (1 Corinthians 3:14, 15). This is explained in verse 17: "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God (church) is holy, which temple ye are." I advise that you

go back and read Matthew 3:5-12, studying carefully. I believe it says that John had a proper awareness of genuine fidelity on the part of one who professed a relationship with God or Christ. Thus He preached repentance and confession of sin and the need for fruits to follow (Matthew 3:8). The picture in John's baptism was the same as that in Christ's, the baptism which the church is authorized to administer today. It prepared a people for Christ. Baptism today still calls for the same repentance, confession, and evidencing fruit. It is not different as a symbol.

True, the endowment with power did not come at the time of John's baptism, because it took the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ to enable a people to live such a resurrection life. (See Chapter Five of this book).

### **What Shall We Do?**

This question shows up in the hearts of the Jews when the Pentecost manifestation and preaching showed that God had made Jesus, whom they crucified, both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:32-36).

*"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:37, 38).*

Is this a part of the Scriptures? We know it is. Yet many Baptists bristle if someone suggests that baptism is essential in any sense. They say you are teaching that sins are washed off in the baptistry. They accuse the so-called Church of Christ of teaching that the water cleanses. I really think they do not believe such a thing, but they err in making the act of baptism a further step in a man's acquiring initial salvation. They seem to believe he is an alien sinner until he comes out of the baptismal waters. If so, they err. Baptism does not pertain to initial salvation except as it must be subsequent to it. But there is a salvation of the life and, in this, baptism is

essential.

Those of you who have been baptized by one of the Lord's churches after you trusted Jesus as Savior remember how you wanted to be baptized. You had a desire to enter into this form of worship and obedience. How do you account for that yearning? Is it not a fact that God puts into our hearts to do those things He wants us to do?

Most traditional Baptists feel that the mention of being pricked in their hearts, of those present to hear Peter preach (Acts 2) explains that these were lost sinners. Is this necessarily true? Have you never been pricked in the heart since you trusted Jesus? Do you not feel the sting of guilt when you do wrong? Is this not your conscience at work?

It may be only the conscience, but how do we account for a conscience? Surely we know, if we have been reading the Bible, that the Holy Spirit causes us to feel the shame of sins we commit, even though we have been saved. (I suppose, of course, that those who feel that all sins are already covered, gone, forgiven, from the moment they were saved, have no reason to feel guilt or shame.

So maybe this explains why they can go on in their rebellion, ignorance, and sinfulness after they are saved. I wonder if we cannot see how that wrong doctrines contribute to unspiritual practices, even among saved people.) All false doctrine causes wrong, sinful practices, just as right doctrine causes righteous lives. This means that right doctrine, if one truly believes it is from God and pleases Him, will contribute to obedience before Him.

So these Jews asked Peter and the other apostles there at Pentecost what they should do. The answer Peter gave should tell us something about the condition of those asking.

First is the word "repent." It is a word often confined by students to lost sinners, as though they were the only ones needing to repent. But saved people, even a church, may need to repent if they have left their first love, or committed any type of sin (Revelation 2:4, 5; Revelation 3:19).

A saved man, because of his nature which is a sin nature and

which was not changed when he was saved, does commit sin sometimes. One makes God a liar if he says he does not (1 John 1:10). Then there is that statement (1 John 1:8) which says that if we claim we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Is this statement different from "have not sinned" in v. 10? I think it is. One might admit that he has sinned but has no sin because the blood took care of all that the moment he was first saved. This cannot be true, though, since the sin is there and he is deceiving himself into believing that it is not there. What must he do?

He must confess that sin he has committed since he first trusted Christ and the Lord who is gracious (faithful and righteous) cleanses him. This confession undoubtedly includes the idea of repentance, a turning from the sin in genuine repentance. Simply admitting one has sinned and claiming it is already taken care of in his trusting Jesus back when he was saved, is not enough.

Now who can claim this cleansing for sin committed after one was first saved? Only the person who has put himself into the position where Christ serves as his High Priest. Thus he must openly acknowledge the Lord as Savior and submit to Him as his Intercessor.

This open confession is done in scriptural baptism. He there admits his old life was wrong and dies with Christ, figuratively, and is resurrected with Him to walk in a new life (Romans 6:3, 4). This act, which can only be done in faith if it is to be effectual, is significantly effective in the life of a believer.

This burial by baptism is a burial into Christ's death, and the resurrection in baptism is a resurrection into the life of Christ. "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Romans 6:5).

This operation is figurative, not procurative, so we must reckon it to be true, which is an act of faith. And this reckoning must be done repeatedly, as we face up to sin in our lives (Romans 6:14-23). Even after initial faith and baptism we

must go on living by faith, putting on Christ, putting off the old man (sin nature), and growing in grace.

We must not miss two considerations in this provision:

- 1) The faith which reckons the Truth to be practical produces a result in the life.
- 2) The life is changed "from grace to grace" by the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18). The turning to the Lord in this passage is that turning in repentance and faith on the part of one who may have been saved a long time ago but now needs to come near to the Lord.

### **Forgiveness Involves the Heart**

We are not saying that a spiritual walk is going to be simple or easy for the saved sinner. It will not. We are accustomed to doing things we have learned to do, whether with hands, tongue, throat, feet, or brain. But involving the heart seems to escape the area of volition. This may partly explain why it is so difficult to trust the Lord initially. We feel the shame of sin and we are moved to find an escape from the condemnation we know we deserve. But how does one do this? The easy-believism of the Roman Road method of being initially saved simply asks the individual if he believes. Well, yes, he believes in God, has believed in Him since childhood. This kind of believing may be only a matter of accepting mentally what one has been told about God. Many professing faith in childhood may not have a heart faith at all, but only an intellectual faith. Such cannot deal with the promises of God, the guilt of sin, or the Truth of the Word. So the evangelist or so-called soul winner tells the individual, "Now you believe, so you are saved; your sins are forgiven." But friends, it is not that simple. God is concerned about the heart. The heart is the center of our emotions. Yes, true salvation, even in the initial step, is heart felt. And that response of the heart will continue to insert itself into every aspect of walking by faith. That is, God moves upon the heart, communicates with the heart, comforts the heart. Or He moves upon the heart to chasten or rebuke. The word "spirit" is often used in Scripture when "heart" is meant, or the opposite may be the case

(Romans 8:16).

The language of repentance, that is, of confession, is not sufficient by itself. I fear I have seen and heard many "confessions," which should have included repentance, when it went no deeper than the spoken words. We may not be able to know when one says "I am sorry" if he truly means it. Or is he following a formula designed to get charges removed and escape the immediate pressure of those who love him and desire his repentance. Just how to tell about this comes under the same heading for the brother or sister who is reproofing or instructing as for the erring one whom he is seeking to restore. The brother who is trying to help will sense that mere words are intruding into the situation and that repentance is not in evidence. It may not be easy to deal with the matter, but of course we may have to take the man's word for "I am sorry" and allow time to bring the matter home to his heart.

### **Heart Experiences Show in the Life**

Not only must the heart be involved in initial faith, it is to be involved all of our lives. It should not be only in matters which pertain to our open practice of our faith, but it must show in every aspect of life. God does not want his business merely to fit a pigeon hole in our lives. God communicates with our spirits to let us know we are sons. This communication shows up in every decision we make, whether in business, pleasure, socializing, or deep study of the Word. But this practice needs attention like every matter which extends beyond the present moment. We must learn the steps of faith. We must recognize the voice of the Lord or the touch of His hand upon us. And we must heed and not resist.

All through the Old Testament this Truth appears, though some may read right by and fail to see it. God gave His law to His chosen people, Israel, so they would know what He expected every day, all the way. Sacrifices were to be brought on numerous occasions by all the people. Special sacrifice was to be made by one who realized he had sinned. Some may confuse these instructions with the matter of worship, supposing that under the law men were saved by outward obedience, however this is not true. But look at the law of

brotherhood (Deuteronomy 22:1-8, the law of separation (Deuteronomy 22:9-12), the law of family relationships (Deuteronomy 22:13-30), or the divers regulations (Deuteronomy 23:1; Deuteronomy 26:19). The language of the New Testament uses many of these to illustrate spiritual principles. For example, His care for the wild creatures shows that He cares for His people even more (Matthew 10:29-31; Luke 12:6, 7; 1 Corinthians 9:7-11).

### **The Tenor of the Word**

Tenor is a movement or course having a particular direction or character. As one becomes more familiar with the Word, the direction it takes becomes more and more obvious. Some of these elements are so intertwined until the direction or course escapes us.

Forgiveness would seem to be very simple, but because it involves our hearts and involves God Himself there is more and more confusion until we learn just how God works.

The law was given to mark the bounds of permissible worship, living at home, making our livelihood, sanitation, and much more. When a man became aware, because the law marked the bounds of right and wrong, a special provision was made for him to bring an offering, perform a ceremony, all which was designed to bring his mind and emotions back in line with God's requirement. Even then, because "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22) and "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4), we are left with a conclusion which most are loathe to reach. That conclusion is stated in Hebrews 9:12: "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" So why bring an offering if it could not take away sins? Because God used this method to elicit a response from the hearts of those who made the offering. This meant that the offerer had to pay a price, furnish the animal; he had to come out in the open with his handling of the matter; he had to accept the ministry of the priest. These elements were designed to bring to the surface and sink into the heart the matters of right and wrong, of relationship



to God, and the ministry of dedicated men. Doubtless the individual did feel better after this procedure, but there was no genuine forgiveness. Why do I say this? Consider Romans 2:2-4: "But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"

So we see that God's goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering were designed to bring men to repentance. Just saying "I am sorry" is not enough. The forbearance was according to the faith of the offerers, so that sins were rolled over from year to year. Because the blood of goats and bulls could not take the sin away, and because the blood of Christ came later, the word for "forgive" must carry a sense of spare, awaiting the provision of the Son when He should be offered. This truth comes out in a remarkable New Testament passage: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3:25-26). The sins which are past through the forbearance of God must be all those committed before Christ came by those who came by faith and offered as God required. The word for remission here is *paresin* (or *paresis*), meaning toleration. It is from *para*, beside and *iemi*, to go, to pass by. Our word for remission or forgiveness is *aphesin* (or *aphesis*) from *apo*, away, and *eimi*, (a variation of *iemi*), to go, hence, to send away. The matter of God's doing things before they are done is most confusing to most Bible readers. "God, ... calleth those things which be not as though they were" (Romans 4:17). He says these things prospectively, but they they become reality when we reach the point of faith which God can bless.

### **The Christ Life in the Believer**

We have been dealing with the first consideration of what faith produces in the life of one who believes, after he has trusted the Lord and been baptized. Now we need to see more of how far that practical result of walking by faith will reach. (See the reference, page 113, to these considerations.)

As long as men think of salvation as something which deals only with whether or not one goes to heaven, and not with honoring the Lord by being conformed to His image, they likely will miss this great truth. Being forgiven, and being in covenant relationship involves our being a partaker of the Christ-life. (See Chapter 18 for an explanation of Eternal Life.) Please do not think this only means that one will be given a dispensation allowing unending existence with those in heaven!

The New Testament speaks of inheriting Eternal Life (Mark 10:17) in the world to come (Mark 10:30). Jesus gave some strict requirements for receiving such an inheritance Luke 10:25-29; Luke 18:18-30). Jesus' language in John may seem to place this at the point of initial faith (John 3:16,36) but teaches also that it is a continuing thing to be reached fully later on (John 4:14, 36), and that there are conditions attached (John 5:24). It is definitely suggested that the later gaining of eternal life is connected with laboring, using the word "work," Gk., *ergazo* as a metaphor describing the likeness of putting forth diligent effort to obtain this life (John 6:27). See also John 6:40, 47,54, 68). Note that engaging in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper comes in for a metaphorical demonstration (v. 54) and how the written Word and commandments of the Lord are involved (v. 68; John 12:50). It certainly involves knowing the Lord, which a new believer can hardly know beyond the smallest idea of His manifesting delivering grace (John 17:2, 3).

A near analogy to this situation is that of one of our children. We bring them into the world by our own choice and expect nothing from the child, before he is born, or after, until he is able to learn. When he is able to understand we teach him things which he will need the rest of his life. His learning

these pleases us very much and we begin to require certain responses from him before we grant him certain privileges. Humanly speaking we can say we require the child to work to please us. This is not a toiling sort of work, but it takes attention, responsibility, and diligence to please us. God does much the same way by His children. But try to tell someone this today and he may say you are teaching salvation by works.

### **The Relation of Remission to Baptism**

It should be evident from the foregoing pages of this chapter that baptism, an external act, cannot, of itself, bring about God's forgiving our sins. What we do outwardly, or externally, may only be a function of the flesh. These actions may be good in and of themselves, but if performed with a wrong heart, a wrong motive, or a wrong understanding, they may be sin. "An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin" (Proverbs 21:4). Many other things may be added to this short list of sins: the righteousness of the Pharisees (Matthew 5:20), the giving of a hypocrite (Mark 12:41-44) or one giving as a formality, the praying of the self-righteous (Luke 18:11, 12), the good deeds of a man not truly submitted to the Lord (Luke 18:18-30). The list could be extended for many pages. When a wrong heart is behind the deed, though done in the name of the Lord, done in private or openly, the deed is sin. Who can find fault with plowing? It evidently leaves God out of consideration by many plowmen, just as God is left out of most of what the world is doing today. This makes even their "good" deeds to become sin. The word plowing gives translators some problems. The margin in your Bible may say "light." Some translate as "lamp." Some, trying to reconcile this idea with "plowing" presume that the reference is to the bright shining of damp, freshly turned soil. The word "gleam" is also used in some contexts. My own opinion is that the word is designed to say that the very best, even the highly motivated act of the wicked, the man who has left God out of his life, is sin. There is no product of the flesh which can make a man worthy when he stands before God.

All of those forms of worship, those actions which marked Is-

rael as a separated people, like the way they hitched up their oxen, or planted their fields, did not take away sins. Those done in faith, from the heart, served to roll their sins forward from year to year and thus put them into access with the cleansing blood when Jesus came. But the actions were no more than mere forms when done without right hearts. This distinction is most important! When it came from the heart, when the attitude was right toward God, when the individual had seen himself helpless, and, then, when he looked to God to show mercy, his faith was counted for righteousness. Depending on what one can do for himself is very dangerous, for it insults the offered mercy of God. This was true in Old Testament times. It is true today.

Both churches and individuals may be guilty of a wrong heart response to a need. The forms were there in the Old Covenant, under the law, but it was not the keeping of those forms as a way to forgiveness which brought it to pass. Depending on those forms as a means of righteousness did not produce righteousness. God who sees and knows the heart is looking there, not to outward performance. Baptism is His ordinance, set in the church as an outward expression of a heart of faith. Only so can that heart of faith make a proper confession to God, outwardly, that is. But he can have faith without that act, as long as he does not know about the act, or is physically hindered from engaging in the act. When he comes to know about what God expects a man of faith to do he becomes bound by a debt of love to submit himself to God and follow Him in obedience, one of the first acts to obey will be baptism into the fellowship of a Scriptural church, one which has been around all the days and will be to the end of the age.

Why should he be baptized? Remember, he is not trying to believe in God for initial salvation. He believes God is Lord and is now anxious to give Him honor and glory and continue to show this in a life (Romans 6:4). He has died to sin; he has renounced his former manner of life; he now desires to live a new kind of life, the life of Christ. This is what baptism declares. This is why baptism is into Christ. He is no longer living outside the sphere of the Christ, but "in Him." This atti-

tude of heart puts him in a position of being able to confess his sins when he is guilty and to receive forgiveness (1 John 1:9). If he refused to do this he would be cutting off his opportunity to claim the merits of the Christ to bear all of his sins committed since he first trusted Him. Making this move he can claim the "gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). This precious benefit gives him an advantage in praying, in understanding, and in serving the Lord. Old Testament believers, even in Israel, did not have this blessing (John 7:37-39). This does not mean they could not trust God and be saved. It means they did not have the Comforter Whom the Father sent in response to the prayer of the Christ (John 14:16-18).

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## **CHAPTER NINE**

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### **Reward Means Inheritance**

With a burdened heart we must admit that most believers today have a very limited idea about the meaning of Reward as it describes what one may receive after this life. The poor song books speak of A Mansion in Heaven, or A Cabin in the Corner of Gloryland. One wonders if this does not include an idea of varying real estate according to one's faithfulness. But of course it does not mean that. If so, some would be sent over to an area without golden streets and where there were no jasper walls. Such thinking betrays a woeful ignorance of the Old Testament where foundation truths are laid down.

*"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.... These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country" (Hebrews 11:8-10, 13, 14)*

Do you object, saying that this had to do with the promise of the land of Canaan? Well, it included that, for the life then present, but it obviously looked much further: *"But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city"* (Hebrews 11:16).

The land promised to Abraham was to be "an everlasting possession," indicating that the land on earth was but a type of the inheritance of a kingdom which God gave to him and his seed after him, on condition that he keep God's covenant, and their keeping that covenant, throughout their generations (Genesis 27:8-10).

We saw that they did not realize the fulfillment of this promise, but they saw it afar off. Jesus explained this to mean the Kingdom over which He and the faithful should reign when He returns. He said,

*"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56).*

As an aside, let me say, Abraham exulted, jumped for joy, when he was able to see that day. How did he see it? Evidently with an eye of faith. This was long before his death. His joy was based on God's promise and the view his eye of faith gave him of the kingdom yet future. Just seeing it by faith gave him such exhilaration that he jumped for joy.

He could have returned to the land from which he had come (Hebrews 11:15), because he desired a better country than that where he was (v. 16). He knew that he had gone to Canaan in obedience to God's instruction and he had gone by faith, so he refused to return to Ur of the Chaldees. He walked by faith through the many trials and disappointments in that land. He could do this with gladness because God had let him see the glory of that Day when the Lord shall come to the earth to rule in righteousness. He saw that day, the Millennium.

No more poachers on his land, no more grief over a nephew who left and went down to Sodom. He did feel the hurt of this upset in his family, but he was walking by faith. He looked for a city. He lived in a tent (tabernacle) of animal skins, but he looked for a city with foundations, that is, one which would not be moved because of enemy threats and encroachments. He had the blessing of confident expectation, but there awaits him the eternal joy of the Day of the Lord, the Millennium, and then the continuance beyond the one thousand years.

God had made a covenant with Abraham. He believed God and walked with the promises in view. (See this theme in Chapter Ten.) Moses, one of those seed of Abraham, was strongly influenced by the promise during a great trial in his own life.

*"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." (Hebrews 11:24-26).*

Moses was looking ahead to his reward. This is the meaning of that expression: "respect unto the recompence of the reward." We do not know how much understanding Moses had of the hope of his people Israel, but evidently it was more than many Baptists have today. It was more than some of his later brethren who had become Christians, but who were on the verge of throwing away their hope because of the persecution which Jewish brethren brought to bear upon them (cf. Hebrews 10:23-39, noting especially verse 35). *"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward."*

Israel endured much and stayed together as a separated people for centuries because they were motivated by the promises in the covenant with their father Abraham, and because God's law had reinforced these promises in a way to keep them mindful of the God who made those promises.

But in the end they forgot the promises and the God Who made them, and refused to heed the warning which God gave them. Because they had stayed together, and separate, as a people they felt they were God's favored, His covenant people, and refused to see that it takes a day to day walk of faith and obedience if one is to claim the promises.

Moses claimed the promises because he looked ahead to the reward. Just as Abraham saw Christ's day and rejoiced in the hope, so Moses *"endured, as seeing him who is invis-*



ble" (Hebrews 11:27c).

Observe how this walk of Moses with His eye of faith on the invisible God caused him to *"keep the passover, and the sprinkling of blood"* (Hebrews 11:28). These then present observances were evidences of a walk of faith on the part of the leader of the people. So did the people walk.

This is what is lacking today in the walk of many who have heard the promise of a kingdom and an inheritance, but who allow weak and compromising teachers to let them walk after Protestant compromises.

The faith of Abraham was kept alive because he saw the Day of Christ, meaning the Kingdom, specially the Millennium.

The faith of Moses was kept alive because he kept his eye of faith on the invisible God Who makes promises which can be depended on. He viewed the promise of a kingdom.

### **The Reward Is the Inheritance**

*"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons"* (Colossians 3:23-25).

This language is addressed to the saints and faithful brethren, that is, the church which was at Colosse. This demonstrates that the reward is the inheritance. This inheritance is a covenant blessing to the faithful, the seed of Abraham, whether Jews or Gentiles in the flesh. Just as the tribes of Israel did not receive the same amount of land in their inheritance in the land, so believers will not receive the same amount of reward, but each man according to his faithfulness.

It is possible to allow deception to prevent a man's receiving a reward.

*"Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels,..."* (Colossians 2:18).

The error described here may not always be the one which be-  
guiles us today.

The gnostic doctrine of esteeming emanations other than the  
Christ is named here, but whatever it is which turns one to  
honor or follow anyone but Christ, the great Head of the body,  
the church. was, or is, a special danger. Let nothing turn your  
heart away from Him. (cf. Colossians 2:19).

And it is as "head of the body," the church, which describes  
the aspect of the Christ-life which must be considered.

That kind of Christianity which fails to reckon the church as  
most important is deceptive. It is the body of Christ and He  
loves the body. The body is here to prepare a people for Him.

While this involves our reaching alien sinners, we must re-  
member that those saved need Scriptural baptism and to walk  
as He would have them. This may cost them rejection or suf-  
fering, but without suffering there is no inheriting the king-  
dom. Does someone object that this is making a savior of the  
church? Better that way than to make the church universal,  
including all the saved.

Any doctrine which offers all the blessings to men simply be-  
cause they have initial salvation, is a doctrine which supports  
a universal church.

### **"The Reward of the Inheritance"**

As though someone has failed yet to connect the reward and  
the inheritance, the Apostle Paul names them together:

*"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord,  
and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall  
receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the  
Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for  
the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect  
of persons." (Colossians 3:23-25).*

Here the inspired writer speaks of the reward or pay back for  
our doing what we do heartily to the Lord, as being the inher-  
itance.

Please do not think that a reward is due you because you have worked so many days, or have paid in so many dollars, or have preached so many sermons, or prayed so many prayers. All of these things may be no more than *"the plowing of the wicked"* (Proverbs 21:4).

As he plows, plants, cultivates, fertilizes, and harvests he is no different from the man who would tear down his barns and build bigger. He was working for himself. To have a reward one must be conscious of doing the work *"unto the Lord."* It is wicked to do otherwise.

What we are saying is that all of our work must be done in faith, looking to the Lord for the accomplishment of His will in and through us., or through others, if that is what pleases Him.

Taking this thought a little further, Such work is a kind of laying up in heaven.

*"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:19-21)*

A thief does not take something from you which you do not have in your possession, or in your account. So there is a warning to be considered in the matter of a reward or an inheritance.

This is expressed many times in several ways. The words of Jesus suggested that natural enemies (moths, rust) might destroy our reward if laid up here on earth, but that laid up in heaven is not threatened by thieves nor natural destruction.

Does this mean that it is possible to lose that which we have worked for in the Lord's service? I think so, but let us look at other references:

*"Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward" (2 John 8).*

*"Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God" (Colossians 2:18, 19)*

There is a very significant sense used in the word beguile. It is a term used of an umpire making a decision against someone in a race or contest. The word minus its prefix which gives it a reverse sense is rule, (Colossians 3:15) as an umpire makes a ruling, The umpire in this verse (Colossians 3:15) should be *"the peace of God."*

In other words, in all matters where there is a difference of opinion, or where an altered course is suggested, our course should be decided on the basis of the peace of God. This peace, which Christ left with us, is characteristic of the kingdom, the first thousand years of which is called the Millennium, but we can have it now through the Spirit (Romans 14:1).

Through the earnest of the Spirit we enjoy a number of blessed qualities of the age to come even now. But we must have our hearts set on that age, the Lord of that age, if we are to preserve our position relative to that promised kingdom.

The word "reward" sometimes refers to the prize B laurel or bay leaf wreath. At other times it is a wage or pay earned. The important thing to remember if we would receive a reward is that God is the one who pays, so our hearts must be set on His worthiness, His will. His peace must rule in our hearts and minds. He is the Head of the church.

While an inheritance is the same thing, this further limits the receiving of it to those in covenant, those who are chosen to receive the kingdom.

We must remember that one may forfeit his reward, lose the crown, fail to meet the test. The reason the word as a noun is not in the plural when applicable to those the Lord is to reward, is because it is the inheritance.

It is not an accumulation of things, but refers to an inheritance of position, of authority, of honor by those who have walked in humility and obedience before Him.

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## **CHAPTER TEN**

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### **The Inheritance Is By Covenant**

Having seen that there is a distinction between salvation and reward, and that reward is also called inheritance, we now look to see on what terms one may receive an inheritance.

It is certain that salvation is a gift received purely by grace. Reward, the same as an inheritance, comes purely on grounds of qualifying for covenant position.

We can never merit what God freely gives, so we make no claim of our being worthy of a reward nor of our deserving an inheritance.

### **The Inheritance Is by Covenant**

We look to that part of the Bible called the Old Testament for the answer. In fact, most every situation mentioned in the New Testament may find its counterpart in the Old. It is a necessary principle of Bible Interpretation that we realize that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Covenants were the stating of God's purposes for His people. He desired to give assurance to His people, so He used the natural circumstance of contracts among men as a pattern of things made sure.

The formality of "*cutting a covenant*," as it is said in the original language, does not appear at first, but is brought out, or developed into a formal expression of intent, just as we have in contracts today. With us, of course, a contract involves two or more parties, called "party of the first part," "parties of the second part," *et cetera*.

God may not at first name these parties, but it is apparent that they are there and may recognize themselves. When God stated His purposes regarding man it is not specifically called a

covenant, but we see God telling Adam His intent for Adam.

Thus God becomes "the party of the first part," and Adam "the party of the second part." There were no children at this point, but they became contractual parties as they came along. They would inherit the land and the responsibilities, or conditions, as they came along.

When Adam sinned, bringing death according to a condition which God had stated as a part of this contract (covenant), a new statement of the covenant was in order. We usually call the original covenant The Adamic Covenant.

The new statement we call the Edenic Covenant. It was not necessary for God to name all the conditions which might arise, for He is God and man is bound to realize that he is the beneficiary of His Creator and, therefore, ready to assent to any conditions which God might lay down —

*"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein" (Psalm 24:1)*

The situation is much like that we see today in contractual circumstances. The one seeking the benefit goes to the one in a position to grant the favor.

If one needs a house he may go to a man who owns some land and whether or not the deal goes through depends on whether or not the individual feels the price is right, or the other conditions are acceptable. If he needs money he goes to a bank or lending agency.

The individual becomes the party of the second part and the owner of land, or the bank, through its officer, becomes the party of the first part. The one granting the favor determines the conditions. Just how much one desires that which he seeks will determine whether he is willing to sign on to the contract and, thus meet the conditions.

Some years after the *Edenic Covenant*, conditions in the earth became such as called for further statements for man to hold any position in relationship with God. Man had not subdued the earth, nor even his own self, but had manifested more rebellion, such as had appeared in the first pair.

*"God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5)*

This grieved God. The way it is stated in our translation of the Bible: *"It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth"* (Gen 6:6).

I take this to mean that the emotions of God's heart, being much like our ability to regret, or to feel dissatisfaction, would have been one calling for repentance on the part of a man had he done such a thing. Since God cannot sin we do not call his emotion "repentance." But He did reverse the course of things by determining to destroy the human race, with all the living creatures which He had made.

*"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:8)*

We are then told that Noah was a righteous man, upright or sincere above all of his generation. As a result God made a covenant with Noah, allowing him to build an ark to save his household and certain of the living creatures who would repopulate the earth.

After the flood which came as a judgment against the violence in the earth, the statement of God's purpose which we call the *Noahic Covenant*, provided for restraining influences upon sin which would reduce the chances that such a condition come about again in the same degree. This covenant is the one which provides for human government, man being required to forfeit his life should his violence go so far as to take another life.

In each of these statements of God's purpose which we are calling a covenant, the Purpose or intent of God is revealed in the form of promises to man. Man's part was to claim the promise and enjoy the benefit.

In the first statement Adam became the ruler of the earth, both man and beast with every creeping thing. At first he received his food from the plants or trees of the earth. Later God added the permission for him to partake of animals as



food, after the Fall.

In the covenant with Noah there is provided instructions for this authority of man so that peace and protection could be supported in the face of the selfishness and violence which man's sin allowed.

But since man was still somewhat in control of his life his selfishness and violence increased and his rebellion against God became more obvious. As a result God made a new sphere of His dealings with human beings, reducing the promises to one man and then his seed, rather than to the whole race. Thus we see *the covenant with Abraham*.

It should be understood that the intent in the earlier statements of purpose (covenants) was not changed. Man is still responsible for his manner of life, his authority over the animal kingdom, and for maintaining peace and protection for all men (human government).

But it is obvious that all men are not fit for such activity and if right is to have a place in human life it would have to be produced in a few for the benefit of the rest.

This covenant made with Abram, whose name was changed to Abraham because of the promises of the covenant which God made with him, particularly provided for blessings upon Abram and a curse upon those who should curse him, being summarized in these words: "*And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed*" (Genesis 12:3)

The story following soon reveals the conflict and difficulties which other men created for Abraham. God encouraged Abraham in a vision, further stating the firmness of the covenant:

*"Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward"* (Genesis 15:1)

Abraham had a heart to accept God's promises, but he was human and felt the pain of disappointment, specially in the failure of his wife, who was his half sister, to bear a child.

Time was passing and if he was to be a blessing for all families of the earth he surely would not live long enough to do it, so he complained to the Lord about not having a son (Genesis

15:2, 3).

How wonderful that we can take all our burdens to the Lord. God's response was immediate. It was not that God was causing all this disappointment but He was willing to make amends. Take a look at the stars, Abraham, and grasp a fact:

*"So shall thy seed be. And he believed the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:5, 6)*

Better than a son was the blessing of reckoned righteousness, but the son was included, and the scope of the purpose (promise) extended

*"And the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land,..." (Genesis 15:18-21)*

Now we have come to a promise by covenant which obviously includes an inheritance. Men do not often think of an inheritance in terms of authority, or food, or protection by government, but in terms of lands or houses. Of course, an inheritance may include all sorts of real property, personal property, and other things passed on to heirs.

In human terms what comes to one by virtue of family relationship or by a legal will is our inheritance. These come upon the death of the one bequeathing them.

This takes "the death of the testator" (Hebrews 9:16), when the testator is human. God does not die, but the Man Christ Jesus, died in order to provide an inheritance to those who trust and obey Him.

It remains to be seen that His heirs must qualify as in covenant, that is, as recipients of the promises.

### **Who are the Heirs of the Promise?**

The covenant with Abraham came long before the law of Moses. The promises to Abraham were not made effective because of his keeping the law.

*"For the promise, that he should be the heir of the*

*world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith" (Romans 4:13)*

It should be clear that the promise is by covenant:

*"And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise" (Galatians 3:17, 18)*

It is true that the law of Moses was a covenant. There are many other covenants which God provided in the course of His efforts to bring His people to trust Him and live by faith. Every covenant is kept through the remembering of conditions.

This keeping of covenant may, indeed, involve physical actions, uses of time, energy, judgment or wisdom, and effort. Just here is a distinction which has caused many people much trouble.

When a promise is based on a condition that condition must be met. The meeting of the condition may involve a lot of doing things, even things which are inconvenient or painful. We must remember that the act of doing, or the pain, is not what makes the obedience.

We have seen that the promise was not to Abraham through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. How is it possible to produce righteousness without the keeping of commandments (law)? It is when the keeping is by faith.

The claiming of a promise in a covenant must be by faith and that claim produces "the righteousness of faith." This is *the obedience of faith* (Romans 16:26).

There is a mystery which was kept secret from the beginning of the ages but is now revealed —

*"made known to all nations for the obedience of faith" (Romans 16:15, 16)*

Even the Scofield Bible identifies this mystery as being the Lord's church (see marginal note on this verse in a Scofield Bible). The universality of the promise is evident in the preaching of the Gospel, but the church alone manifests this promise as a benefit of a covenant which God has made with her.

I am aware that many think this church is all the saved, but they lack any Scripture which plainly speaks this idea.)

### **The Covenant Promises Today**

God has dealt with people directly, and according to terms which He sets, all through the history of the human race. We have seen that at first the entire race of human beings were included. As God He had a right to limit His promises, though promises are always the core of a covenant. The sin of the first pair brought severe restrictions on the promises. The parties of the second part are always under obligation to meet the terms laid down by the Party of the First Part. God has a right to bless whom He will. We must claim His promises always if we are to receive a blessing.

Violations of the terms brought the Fall of Man. This is experienced in the limitations man feels in his life and welfare. Continued violations, after grace had produced a restatement of promises brought the Flood of Noah's Day.

Grace, as usual, comes in to find a way for the promises to be received. Noah and his family were spared, but it was not long before the descendants of Noah were going back to the ways of rebellion and violence which had been seen before. Grace found a man in an idolatrous family, the family of Terah, who would believe God. Always God searches for those who will trust Him and obey Him. Abraham believed God.

To protect Abraham from the hurt of his idolatrous family God sent him away into a land which He promised to give him for an inheritance. Many of the family tried to go along.

The father died on the way, possibly as a judgment from God, but certainly for the good of Abraham. A brother also died. Then a nephew, a son of the dead brother, must go along, as

Abraham felt a responsibility toward this kinsman.

It was largely through this very kinsman that the seeds of rebellion showed up in the seed of Abraham. In time the family, having increased over several generations; were providentially taken down into Egypt and became slaves.

The psychosocial condition of people in our day leaves us unable to appreciate the severe manner in which God dealt with His people when they sinned. The very length of this dealing seems to us too harsh.

God does not forget His promises, nor is time a hindrance to His purposes. The people were brought back to the land God promised to give them.

The journey which lasted forty years could have been finished in a few months, but the people needed the education of experience in the wilderness. A part of this education was the law which God gave them in the wilderness as a means of keeping them mindful from day to day of Him and His ways.

Men are so strong willed — stubborn — until it seems they will never learn. The long history of God's chosen nation illustrates the difficulty in getting people to believe God at all costs, and to live by faith. They prefer their own judgment and ways to God's. Priests became slack and abetted the carelessness of the people. Prophets preached and wept, but few repented.

Captivities and more slavery came to bring them back. Promise of a New Covenant was made. It took the coming to earth of the Christ to establish or confirm this New Covenant.

### **The New Covenant**

(see: Jeremiah 31:31-34)

Before such a gracious covenant could be made a final appeal must be made to those who had been under the ministrations of the Old Covenant, the Law of Moses. We marvel that men are so blind, failing to know which side their bread is buttered on, as we used to say.

The grace of the Abrahamic Covenant was passed over in fa-

vor of the rigors of the law. It gave men an opportunity to show their own wills in efforts to keep its precepts.

The law was designed to show the weakness of man's will, and the tendencies of his flesh nature. Men figured how to circumvent these strictures, but to their own hurt. The law could not make men righteous nor give life (Galatians 3:21).

*"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: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:3, 4)*

So there is a way to meet the conditions of the covenant. The very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Who does this? Those who truly die to sin and rise to walk in such a new life (Romans 6:1-10).

A careful reading of this passage shows that it is done by faith and only by those willing to identify with the Christ.

### **Elements of the New Covenant**

We are concerned about any covenant which pertains to people who live today. Think a moment! Do you know why the portion of our Bible from Matthew to Revelation is called The New Testament?

It is unfortunate that the translators used the word testament, meaning covenant, instead of the word covenant itself. The earlier portion of the Bible, called the Old Testament, deals with the old covenant, or those old covenants from the beginning up till the coming of the Christ.

We specially think of the law of Moses as The Old or First Covenant, while the second or New Covenant is dealt with in the later part of our Bible.

God does not change. He has had to change some of His statements to men to make clear to them just what His intentions are.

The theme of this chapter is that an inheritance is received by covenant. One must meet the conditions of the covenant before he may receive an inheritance. This has been true from the beginning. Our thinking of different covenants may cause some to feel that God has changed the way of salvation a number of times. I suppose a lot of people actually think that salvation comes by keeping the law, or obeying the law covenant.

Initial salvation comes through faith. So do all the blessings which God promises men. Men must be responsible to recognize Him, see their need of Him, and believe Him. It is not what man is able to do which brings any of these promises to pass. Please get this point clear.

Can you remember how important it was for you as a child to do things exactly as Dad, or Mom, said or intended, or they were not pleased? Neither is God pleased unless we believe Him, trust Him, accept His estimate of our condition and look to Him to remedy the condition.

The actual doing of things does not bring initial salvation, nor does it bring any element of the salvation of our lives. It is our trusting Him completely, committing ourselves into His hands, and allowing His grace to save us or mature us spiritually, and to supply for us the benefits which His promises (covenant intents) hold before us.

If we believe Him we will obey Him. If we disobey, it is because we do not actually believe Him. Viewed from another position, if we love Him we will do what He says. If we do not do as He says it means we do not love Him as He commanded.

We can dodge this issue, dance around the degrees of love or the thoroughness of our doing a job, but the lack of love still is the cause of disobedience.

### **A Covenant of Grace**

Every covenant is a covenant of grace. It was the grace of God which caused Him to give the law. It was never intended as a means of allowing men to try hard or perform actions in order to be saved or stay saved. It was a gracious way God

had of showing Israel the sinfulness of sin and the bounty of His grace (Read Galatians 3:19-22).

We frequently say that one cannot be in the Bride unless he is a member of the Lord's church. Do we intend to say that the act of obeying God in baptism, the ritual of church attendance, the giving of our money to support the church, the service we perform as preacher, teacher, singer, or otherwise, may merit for us the place in His Bride? No!

What we do mean is that any or all of these which God lays upon us to do, we must do if we believe Him, because if we do not, then we do not believe Him. Now one may believe in Jesus as Savior and truly be saved in the initial sense, but then he may excuse himself from teaching, or singing, or praying in public, or witnessing, or preaching, or supporting the church.

This will not undo the faith he had when he did trust the Lord Jesus as His Savior, nor void the work of Christ in saving him, but failing in any or all of these means that the saving of his life is forfeited. No reward can be forthcoming. No inheritance. He may even sever himself from Christ as Lord, while claiming Him as Savior.

On this point of forfeiting one's relationship with Christ, let me say this: When one depends on his deeds, his actions, as the way to receive the promises, he jeopardizes his position before the Lord.

*"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith" (Galatians 5:1-5)*

The two underlined phrases describe a threat to one who would practice circumcision or seek to be justified through law keeping.



Do we understand this to mean that such a person is not saved initially, or cannot be saved? No. That is not the subject. What is the subject? It is waiting for the hope of righteousness (v. 5). This can only be by faith.

What is the "hope of righteousness"? It is not that one may be initially saved. It is the righteousness for which we hope. Being saved initially is not a hope. We only hope for something we do not yet have. It can only be for a righteousness which we do not yet experience, though we may reckon it ours.

*"And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Romans 8:23-15)*

We are hoping for the adoption, the redemption of our bodies, that we may be truly righteous in daily experience, something which our sin nature prevents in us at present.

*"The law made nothing perfect" (Hebrews 7:19). This is why it is set aside and under the New Covenant a new hope is introduced "by the which we draw nigh to God" (Hebrews 7:19).*

The Galatian believers were influenced by certain Judaizers who would have them resort to the law and depend upon circumcision. Paul explains that this reinstates a bondage from which they are delivered in Christ.

There are those today who would entangle people in a similar way, making baptism a means, or an essential ingredient in the obedience which they say will save. Let me say again, "It is not by deeds, or actions, not by sincerity, nor by performing things otherwise good, that one qualifies for the blessedness of the promises of God.

The New Covenant, with its resurrected Lord, affords us a hope. Proof that we believe this will be demonstrated in our

obeying the Lord in baptism and thus declaring our relationship with Christ.

But our trust, our complete dependence is in Him. He will save our lives, make us sons, and afford the deliverance even of the body from the bondage of sin and corruption. This is the true meaning of redemption."

### **The Church Is The New Covenant People**

By church we speak of an institution, always represented by local congregations. It is not, nor can it be, all the saved. It can only be truly constituted of people who believe God, even when we say "be baptized at the hands of that church." It is a church only when so constituted and which acknowledges His Lordship as her Head and which follows His words.

References to the fruit of the vine, by the Lord (Matthew 28:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20) and by Paul (1 Corinthians 11:25, quoting Jesus), call this content of the cup, "the blood of the covenant," or "the new testament in my blood."

Remember that a testament is a covenant. Blood is always associated with covenant (cf. Hebrews 7:20). Jesus with His blood purchased His church (Acts 20:28). When we remember His body in partaking of the Lord's Supper, taking the cup, we are acknowledging a faith relationship to Him. Those thus "remembering (His) death till He comes" are said to be "in Him," "in Christ."

Being in Christ means that we are in covenant relationship. It is a mistake to claim to have this relationship merely on the grounds that we have been initially saved. Most all of the blessings afforded believers are said to be "in Christ." See a list of such blessings in Ephesians 1:3-14.

In Christ (v. 3) we are blessed with all spiritual blessings, not just a few. We are chosen (elected) in Him (v. 4) so that we may be holy and without blame. We are made accepted "in the beloved."

See all the things mentioned as desirable and provided in this context. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of daily sins (v.7).

Please note that when sins (plural) is mentioned he is speaking of the sins which come into our lives after we have been saved. If the word sin is singular it is referring to our nature to sin. We are to be gathered together as one in Him (v. 10).

This cannot apply to those so splintered, opposing one another, as we see them among churches today. In this world it can only apply within a church. In Him, our version says, "we have obtained an inheritance" (v. 11). Having learned that the inheritance is future, after the resurrection, I checked the original to see about that perfect tense "have obtained."

I was not surprised to find something different: The word is Aorist Passive Indicative of *kleroo*, from *kleros*, lot. The idea derives from the assigning of a lot or portion to someone, as was done in Israel when they entered Canaan. Since the context is discussing the benefits of God's choosing (electing) certain ones, the rendering should be. "we have been assigned a portion (or lot)," "being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

He then goes on to tell us that the Holy Spirit is given as God's pledge or earnest of our inheritance (yet future) until the redemption (yet future in experience) of those who are God's possession.

The language is filled with restrictions and assurances to those willing to relate to Jesus Christ according to His will. This is a covenant relationship, a church relationship, and should not be taken lightly by one who has claimed Jesus as Savior.

Two words may be of interest to Bible students. "Counsel" is *boule*, pronounced *boo-lay*; "will" is *thelema*, pronounced THEL-a-mah. Both mean will, but scholars agree pretty well that the first, *boule*, represents a will of deliberation and intelligence, while the second, *thelema*, refers to an inclination. We can see a distinction between deliberation and inclination.

Is it not good to believe that God purposely, carefully, makes choices. It would be difficult to think of God as merely inclined to something, yet His very disposition is toward that which accords with His nature.

A check of passages mentioning an inheritance in the New Testament will be seen to describe those who may expect an inheritance. These are forgiven of their sins (day to day), sanctified by faith, a matter which must occur subsequent to initial salvation, and many other elements showing separation and holiness.

**God's Revelation Methods Consistent:**  
**The Church A New Covenant People Today**

God's Truth is not stated always according to patterns of logic designed by men, but He is always correct, though sometimes hiding His ways from men who are not submitted to Him.

It takes a familiarity with the tenor of the Word to see His consistency sometimes. He does not always stop and explain that He is making a transition from one covenant to another, or from old ways to new ways.

But there will always be words explaining when this has been done. We saw this in Jesus' use of "the New Testament (Covenant) in my blood" relative to the cup of the Lord's Supper. God's people should know that the cup is only for the church, a local body.

The referenced statement explains that it is covenant blood, or His blood of the covenant. Paul explains that the Old Covenant (Law of Moses) which came four hundred and thirty years after the covenant with Abraham did not and could not disannul the promise to Abraham.

He then gives an involved explanation as to the true purpose of the law, designed to set forth its conditions, which if violated, became transgressions. This, he said, is not against the law, but rather confirms it. The conditions have ever been an element of God's covenants.

It is further indicated that the promises are not rescinded because men could not or would not keep the conditions.

All these commandments continued to set forth the righteousness which God required, while proving that a man in the flesh was not able to keep them, hence,

*"concluding all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe" (Galatians 3:22)*

The times before that, "the faith of Christ" was not around. It was revealed in Him, through Him, or by Him. Many of the new versions of the Bible refer to this "faith of Christ" as "faith in Christ," but this is inconsistent and tends to place our living in the hands of a human faith in Christ, rather than by His very own faith.

How can a man continue to have faith in God? Do not many circumstances challenge our weak faith and sometimes overthrow it? But there is no overthrowing the faith of Christ. It is not simple to get this thought across to some. In their mind it is always our faith in Christ, or it is simply a system of beliefs or things to believe and do. Actually, it is His faith. He was a perfect man, always believing His Father and perfectly doing His Father's will.

When we realize that our relationship to God does not hang on the fine thread of our human confidence, but upon the faith which was revealed to the world for the first time in the Person of Christ, then it becomes much easier for us to leave everything in His hands

Stepping out upon such a bold and firm platform calls for a confession of Christ as the crucified and resurrected Lord. Baptism becomes the form of expression which allows us to make this commitment of our hearts an open expression. This declares the old man (our flesh) crucified with Christ, dead and buried, and a resurrection with Christ on the basis of His certain livelihood in resurrection power.

This coming into Christ is strictly an act of faith which does not have to know all the turns, pitfalls, or mountain tops, but affords us a position in Christ which He accords a covenant relationship.

From this one may fall away, though he can never be lost in hell, but with the support of brethren in the church and by the indwelling spirit of adoption which is afforded in that position, one is less likely to fall than he would be if trying to live for Christ in one's own will and strength.

### **Walk According to This Rule**

Man's trying to live a righteous life under the law kept him a slave to commandments and challenged him to constantly cry out in repentance and confession. Many circumvented this harsh provision and became legalists, even explaining away that portion of God's law which human judgment said was unreasonable because too difficult.

The coming of Jesus as living proof that a man could live in a human body and overcome sin, living a righteous life, opened a door to men who were not strong enough to keep the commandments, but who might desire to do so.

Instead of an accusing finger always pointed at one, a man could find comfort and encouragement in a body of believers who were on his side and who, with him, sought God all the way. This method did not throw out God's requirements under law, but afforded grace to live up to such requirements by the Spirit.

Not only was a believer crucified with Christ (Galatians 6:14), but was dead to sin by crucifixion, *"that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin"* (Romans 6:6). This resurrection in Christ was a resurrection to Christ, so that commandments of the law lost their hold on one, making circumcision unavailing, and uncircumcision unavailing.

The only thing which counted was "a new creation." Christ is that New Creation and so are we, in Him. Remembering that I am crucified to the world and the world to me affords to me a rule, by which I also remember that neither the doing of legal requirements nor the leaving off of them is the way to righteousness.

Thus am I a part of the Israel of God (in contrast to Israel in the flesh). So the church is that Israel, seed of Abraham, who can claim the promises made in the Abrahamic covenant.

My effort to explain this "resurrection life" for those in Christ becomes a task I could pass over, but I know it is God's provision for those who truly want to honor God and do His will, who want to understand His purpose and desire above all

things to live the Christ life. It simply cannot be done by will power, in the flesh. It is done only by faith.

In Christ, in covenant position, I am afforded the grace to be strong and to overcome, even to refrain from practicing the tendencies of the old flesh nature.

### **The New Covenant for Us Gentiles**

Another passage which adds to this conviction of a transition in the working of God is found in Romans 11:13-36. This lengthy reading is not difficult if one becomes familiar with covenant Truth as it is taught in the Old Testament.

Paul is addressing Gentile believers. Among them are some Jews who have believed, but Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles (v. 13). Even so, he had in mind being able to help Jews who had a tendency to rest on their outward (fleshly) keeping of the commandments.

There is nothing wrong with keeping commandments, but most who try depend on the keeping instead of upon Christ. Read the answer of Jesus to the rich young ruler who came and asked him what good thing he might do to inherit eternal life (Mark 10:17; Luke 10:25; Luke 18:18)

"Keep the commandments." "Which?" and he is given a list, mostly from the Ten Commandments. This sounds like a contradiction to those who have never learned what the "obedience of faith" means, or "the righteousness of faith" (see above). Was Jesus, or the man talking about how to be initially saved? No, the man asked about how to inherit age life, that which belongs to the age to come, the kingdom. This is the life of God to be freely shared with those who lose themselves in the riches of His grace.

Back to Romans 11: The casting away of the nation in the flesh has brought about the reconciling of many in the world, including Jews' being received back (vv. 15, 24). *"And so all Israel shall be saved"* (Romans 11:26).

This evidently means "the Israel of God," including Jews who believed in Jesus and Gentiles who also believe in Him. But, remember, we do not speak merely of believing that He died

for us sinners, but that He arose from the grave that we might receive the very life of God, and that ungodliness be turned away from all such men (v. 26).

This goal is stated as God's covenant with them, that is, with whomever this Israel is, though it includes Israel as the seed of Abraham. Now that Gentiles are seed of Abraham, it is high time that they no longer live their lives as in the past (Ephesians 2:11-18), but may be reconciled in one body (the church) (v.16), "one new man." This language calls for a covenant relationship.

Just how the transition is accomplished is seen in our passage in Romans 11:16-22). May we try to identify the meanings of terms here, else the sense will not come through. The firstfruit, the lump (See: Numbers 15:17-21).

The grain made into meal produced a lump of dough. The first fruits, then, is a picture of the Patriarchs. The lump, or whole batch, represents the descendants of Israel as a whole. The firstfruits offered to the Lord served to consecrate the whole batch.

How blessed it is to be identified with that which has the approval of God, is holy. The memorial, a cake presented from the threshing floor, served to sanctify or consecrate the whole batch, the harvest.

**The root, the branches:** The root represents the patriarchs; the branches represent individual Israelites. The nation was holy because of the consecrated firstfruits, the root. Not all individual Israelites were righteous, but they held a position which marked them as set apart to the Lord.

But their seeking righteousness by "following after the law of righteousness" (Romans 9:31), resulted in their not attaining to the law of righteousness.

*"Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed" (Romans 9:32, 33)*



With their eyes on doing right by the law, they failed to see their own weakness and sin nature and stumbled over the Christ as a rock of offence. These branches of the tame olive had to be broken off.

It may not mean that they were lost in hell, but it means they did not attain to the righteousness of faith. So God found Gentiles who would believe Him and would look to Christ to make them what God desired.

These were grafted into the tame olive, though they were *wild olive branches*. Thus Gentiles became (and become yet) *partakers of the root and fatness of the olive tree*.

The olive tree, the fatness: The whole batch, the tree, is the nation, which is holy. The fatness of which the engrafted branches partake, is the benefit of the covenant, its blessings promised to the Patriarchs (Romans 11:17).

You should keep in mind that we are not reading about the plan of salvation or first becoming a believer. We are observing the working of the law of Moses and the contrast with the righteousness of faith to their legal righteousness.

### **A Warning in Due Time**

The passage in Romans 11 which we are considering is addressed to Gentile Christians, members of a church in Rome. Such a passage, then, is in order for most believers of our acquaintance today.

*"Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee" (Romans 11:18)*

Is there a flimsy tendency to blame the Jews, think of them as Pharisees, self righteous? Do we push admonitions directed to us off on the Jews? How do we respond to this warning? Is it like Paul supposed?

*"Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in" (v. 19)*

His response:

*"Well, because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith, Be not highminded but fear; For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee" (vv 20, 21)*

May we pause here to consider in what way he uses the expression "thou standest by faith." Can we not see that he is not asking them to check to be sure they had trusted Jesus as Savior? He is pointing out that their staying in the position of engrafted wild olive branches is a matter of faith.

All through the Bible this distinction is frequently made. It is faith to trust Jesus as Savior, but it is faith acting, progressing, to stand by faith, work by faith, obey by faith.

And it is failure in this type of faith which jeopardizes saved people who become proud (highminded), self satisfied, just like the Pharisee branches which were broken off.

*"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them that fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (v. 22)*

Do you recall hearing a Baptist preacher try to explain this verse. I confess that I have not heard many. What would he say that being cut off means? We know that God's severity on unbelieving Jews resulted in their being cut off from covenant relationship.

Then is it not obvious that a Gentile who is highminded, not continuing to walk by faith, is likely to be cut off in the same manner. Cut off, how?

Will he lose his initial salvation? That, we say again, is not the subject. He will lose his covenant position.

How is this demonstrated? A man who obviously is not walking by faith as church members should, must be disciplined. His brethren, one or more, should point out his failing.

If he repents they have gained their brother. If he is not willing to hear them or the church, then they are to let him be as a heathen man or a publican. Either one of these was cast out, losing his covenant standing.

A church member so dealt with does not lose his initial salvation, but he loses his covenant standing, is cut off from the promises to a covenant people, he is forfeiting his inheritance, losing his reward.

When we place this situation along side the instructions in Mathew 18:15-19, we see that such a sinning brother so dealt with may expect that it is not simply a spiteful church kicking him out, but their loving effort to restore him becomes sanctioned in heaven.

*"Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 18:19)*

In fact, the grammar of these words in the original language suggests that the action is done in heaven even before it is done by the church on earth — "shall have been bound," or "shall have been loosed," a periphrastic future perfect.

Is this grievous state irreparable? Evidently not.

*"And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be graffed in: for God is able to graff them in again." (Romans 11:23)*

Their abiding in unbelief is a reference to their not walking by faith, not necessarily their never having been initially saved. True, all the Jews, whether believers unto initial salvation or not, were a part of the covenant people, but they were not counted as Jews by the Lord (cf. Romans 2:28, 29), if they were not Jews inwardly, that is, in heart.

The logic of their being grafted back in shows in the next verse:

*"For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were graffed contrary to nature into a*

*good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?" (Romans 11:24)*

The whole process is contrary to nature and reason, that is, the taking of the wild or undeveloped branch and grafting it into the tame or developed branch. But this only shows the grace, mercy, and love of God in reversing whatever is gone wrong for those who will trust Him.

The mystery is cleared up:

*"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (v. 25)*

God did it for us Gentiles, brethren. It should make us everlastingly grateful.

### **"So All Israel Shall Be Saved"**

*"And so, all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." (vv. 26, 27)*

"Be saved" refers to that salvation described here as to "turn away ungodliness from Jacob" and also to "take away their sins." Sins in the plural refers to those which are a fruit of the sin nature, while sin in the singular refers to the sin nature itself. As pointed out (v. 27) He is describing covenant blessings, not just initial salvation.

There follows to the end of the chapter a marvelous explanation about God by His unfathomable mercy has brought Gentiles into the benefit of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, elect by Him to produce a godly seed and to make possible the turning of the Gentiles to become beneficiaries of His covenant purposes.

It might appear to a casual reader of the Old Testament that

God did not care for any but Israel, but *"who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? (v. 35).*

### **Studying A Given Subject**

Not everyone owns a complete concordance, listing every word in both the Old and the New Testaments. With a printed concordance you can make a study by choosing key words and then tracing down through the listings until you find a passage which lists the word and also lists another word which ought to be associated with it.

With a Bible program in a computer one can list two or more words which may be used in the same verse or in another verse in near proximity to it.

Or one might find a Topical Bible profitable, either in a book, or in the computer. If one will become familiar with the scriptures through frequent prayerful reading he will soon begin to recall passages in other locations which mention a matter he has read before.

In the King James Version he may find key phrases often and will want to associate them together. The modern versions obscure these associations by loose translations.

I find words associated this way. Reward is associated with inheritance; inheritance is associated with covenant.

*"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." (Hebrews 9:15)*

*"Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ." (Colossians 3:24)*

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## **CHAPTER ELEVEN**

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### **Is Heaven the Eternal Abode of the Saints?**

*"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." (Revelation 21:3)*

Does it make any difference where we dwell, if God is with us, and we are His people? Perhaps not, yet we ought to see what the Scriptures actually say.

I am from a school of thought which believes we ought to take the Bible literally, just for what it says, unless it contradicts some clear portion by doing so, or is ridiculous within itself.

I would like to point out that it does not say that we will spend eternity in heaven. At the moment of Christ's coming it says,

*"The dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16c,17)*

Perhaps this statement has left the impression that we shall dwell in heaven, though it says we meet Him "in the clouds," and "in the air." What it says is "So we shall always be with the Lord." Blessed thought! But it does not say that we shall always stay in the air or in the clouds, nor do I know anyone who says we shall.

Coupling this with the clear passages which indicate that Jesus went back to the Father in heaven when He ascended, and Paul said that dying and departing is far better, for it means to be with Christ, many conclude that heaven is the permanent abode for the saints. However, the Book of Revelation clearly says that the New Jerusalem, that holy city, came down from

God out of heaven (Revelation 21:2).

Then our text says that the tabernacle of God, His dwelling place, is with men and He will dwell with them. The holy city "descended out of heaven (Revelation 21:10). The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it (Isaiah 24:23; Revelation 22:10).

Where shall the throne of Jesus our Lord be? Premillennialists, at least, believe that it shall be on the earth. The meek shall inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5). These sing a new song of their redemption out of all the nations (Revelation 5:9), "*And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth*" (Revelation 5:10).

These are the overcomers who shall rule with Christ for one thousand years as He gives them power over the nations, "*And He shall rule them with a rod of iron.*" (Revelation 3:27, 28)

*"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."* (Revelation 11:15)

The nations and kingdoms were on this earth. By the time of the Lord's coming these were one kingdom of the antichrist. But they all were wrested from this usurper and became our Lord's kingdom.

### **The Souls of Saints Departed Now in Heaven**

When Paul, the aging Apostle and missionary, considered his lot in the flesh, he said,

*"For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart , and to be with Christ; which is far better."* (Philippians 1:23)

He then considered his calling and mission, so he said he would continue on earth because it was needful for those for whom he labored.

Since Christ went back to the Father (John 17:11), we know his departing in death would mean his going to that heaven also.

Looking at those who went out of the earth in death at the hands of the antichrist (Revelation 6:9, 10), we observe that they were "under the altar," or fallen at the feet of the Lord in heaven, praying for the avenging of their blood on those on the earth. So these souls were already in heaven.

That innumerable number which came out of the great tribulation are seen before the Presence of the Lamb (Revelation 7:9), as Christ was in heaven to which John had been translated in vision to see the things which would come to pass in the end of the age (Revelation 4:1, 2; Revelation 5:1).

The going of these souls into the presence of the Lord in heaven is clear, but this does not say they spend eternity in heaven. Rather, it is said that when Jesus comes those souls He brings with Him (1 Thessalonians 4:14) and they are reunited with their bodies now glorified which had been in the grave, or wherever, since their departing (1 Corinthians 15:51, 52).

### **Covenants Make the Earth an Inheritance**

It was easy for Jews to think of "the Land of Promise" as being the one which God promised to Abraham (Genesis 15:18-21). God had told Abram that he must leave Ur of the Chaldees (in Mesopotamia) and go to a land which He would show Him (Genesis 12:1).

They did not confuse the land with the place where the soul would be between death and the ultimate inheritance, but their hopes were set on a land. Their not finding the promised city did not discourage them. They expected the city to be built by God (Hebrews 11:10).

The delay continued for generations, yet Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob continued to look for that city. They were seeking a "country," (Gk., *patrida*, a fatherland, Hebrews 11:14).

We are not clear on how much they understood about the Fatherhood of God, but they considered themselves "pilgrims and strangers" on earth, though they had traveled to the place



which God showed them. They desired a better.

*"But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." (Hebrews 11:16)*

Perhaps those men of faith had little idea of the location of this heavenly fatherland, but they expected God to prepare it and to be there. In explaining to the Jews that Gentiles would come from the east and from the west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom, we surely get the idea that Jesus meant "on this earth" (Matthew 8:11), for that is where east and west make sense to us.

When Paul describes our sitting together in the heavenlies or heavenly places (cf. Ephesians 1:3; 2:6; Hebrews 12:22), he is not necessarily speaking of heaven itself, though the term correctly applies to such a place where Christ now is (Ephesians 1:20), but to the assembly of the church (Ephesians 3:10). Many heavenly things are mentioned which we can claim or enter into on earth.

The physical features of a meeting place, whether a church building, a dwelling, a cave, or in the woods, may be rustic, or disorganized, but the circumstances of the assembled worshipers is heavenly. The music is sweet, the Lord is present in power and glory, not visible to the eye, or not recognized, but the spirit of the assembly is sweet. It is a heavenly place.

The writer to the Hebrews says that those to whom he was writing "are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Hebrews 12:22). This is contrasted with the position of those at Mt. Sinai, "the mount that might be touched, and burned with fire" (Hebrews 12:18).

He evidently means there is a strong contrast between those who stood before the mount with Moses and those of us who stand before God today, with His voice directly to us from heaven (Hebrews 12:25, 26).

He does not mean that we are in heaven, but our contact with

heaven is clear. We need not feel the awe those felt who were stricken with fear before that voice when they stood before the mount which burned with fire..

Our position is one of indescribable peace and joy. The elements which make this possible are all there. Jesus the mediator of the new covenant stands instead of Moses. This covenant is far different from the law.

The blood of Christ by which we may stand clean before God "speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Genesis 4:10; cf. Genesis 9:5). That blood cried out to God, but He still required an accounting for it of one who would shed it. We today have one who accounts for us, for by His own blood He has entered into the holy places (Hebrews 9:12).

The reason for introducing the passage in Hebrews 12 is to show that the heavenly scene there described belongs to the church now, as it is a part of this scene.

*"But ye are come (Gk., have come) unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." (v. 22)*

This accords with Paul's reference to the assembly, the church, as "the heavenlies." "heavenly places." The angelic hosts are servants of the redeemed saints of the church (Hebrews 1:14).

We have no literal sight of them, nor do we trust them for the services, but we are assured that their services are there and being carried on for us. The "spirits of just men made perfect" are present in the assemblies in the same way Paul's spirit was present with the Corinthians when they were dealing with the fornicator (1 Corinthians 5:3, 4).

We are conscious of this presence of saints gone on because we remember their stand, their teaching, and its influence is thus wielded on our lives after they are gone. "Jesus the mediator of the new covenant" (Hebrews 12:24) is a part of the assembly; "God the Judge of all" (v. 23) is there before our consciences. The promises of God are brought to mind in such an assembly (v. 24, 25, 28).

The better things of Hebrews are afforded us, giving us advantage over those under the law (old covenant). The warnings are there (v. 29)) and many admonitions are afforded (see chapter 13) those who are in the assembly (the church).

Heaven has its influence, but not in the sense that we are expecting to go there for a permanent abode. To think so is to overlook the covenant promises regarding a kingdom, an inheritance, and the Day of the Lord. (Perhaps it would be to your advantage to restudy the subject of covenants (see: Chapter Ten).

A few speak of heaven as being moved to earth during the "heaven ages," and the logic of their position is evident. Where God is and where the myriad of angels are, where the spirits of just men made perfect, or glorified men are, and where the Christ is, surely is a heavenly place.

God's throne will be there, but it will be on the earth, purged and renewed, for the first earth is no longer there as it was before. It is restored to its Edenic beauty; it is a "new earth."

This does not mean it is a different earth than the one we lived on, but it is the same one made different, else the sworn oath to Abraham to give him and his seed a place there, and the promise that the meek shall inherit the earth, would be nullified (Genesis 15:18; Matthew 5:5).

*"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." (1 Corinthians 2:9)*

A man can hardly imagine what it will be like in the next age. But we do not have to depend on our imagination alone:

*"But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (1 Corinthians 2:10)*

The difficulties with this subject stem from the fact that men have heeded other men whose imaginations had been working and have not studied the Word carefully to see what should be expected.

When we allow the Scriptures of the Spirit to instruct us we learn that men of faith died without having received the promises God gave them, but having seen them afar off with an eye of faith, even as Abraham saw Christ's Day (the Kingdom), :

*"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." (John 8:56)*

He saw the Day of Christ, the millennium.

*"For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." (Hebrews 11:14 16)*

*"A city which hath foundations" was visible with an eye of faith.*

The desire for a city with foundations reflects a yearning for a permanent home, as against the moving he had to do regularly, living in a tent, searching for pasture and water for his flocks. Abraham doubtless loved his old home in the fatherland of Ur, but God had showed him where he must live.

As a man of faith he stayed in Canaan, but yearned for an inheritance as God had promised, so he would no longer have to deal with the other herdsmen and tribes who camped nearby. Not even a well for water made it home. He wanted a city with foundations. No more moving. And he desired a better country than that infested with poachers and pagan dwellers. God was not ashamed of him, because he believed God, so he prepared for him a city. Jesus has told the saints and early disciples of the church that he went to prepare for them a place.

Preachers have made this out for years to be the heaven, but heaven was already prepared and in use. Then was it the city, and if so, where is the country (fatherland) where it should be located? In conjunction with this promise to prepare a place

reference is made to (the Father's house" and its "many mansions" (John 14:2 AV).

The word translated "mansions" (v.2) is translated "abode" (v. 23). When the Father and the Son come to abide in those who love Jesus and keep His words, this is their abode. This is the church today. The church is now for those who make up the Bride, the Lamb's wife (Revelation 21:9ff).

In the Old Testament the expression "father's house" usually applied to the kinsmen or lineage of one's father. Two times in the New Testament when Jesus used it to refer to His Father, the reference was to the place where God dwelt on earth, the tabernacle or temple. This tends to make me think, when associated with John 14:23, that Jesus is referring to the place where God is pleased to dwell among men on earth. During this present age this is the church, also called, the house of God (1 Timothy 3:15).

In the age to come when God dwells among His people on earth, that will be the house of God, made up of his children, the true saints who are members of His church. When these all dwell in the holy city, new Jerusalem, reigning with Christ, the kingdom is the Father's house — the mountain of the Lord's house, that is, the government of the Lord's house (Isaiah 2:3), that house being His own true 'born ones.'

The expression "LORD'S house" often occurs in the Old Testament and always refers to the place of worship, that place where God dwelt among His people on the earth. House is not used of heaven, but always of an earthly dwelling of God

These considerations make us doubtful that heaven is to be considered as the final dwelling place for the saints. They shall inherit the earth, reign with Christ on the earth, dwell as a part of the government of the Lord's house, ruling over the nations with Christ. We are simply trying to be honest with the Word. It is not the first time this has put us in conflict with Catholic and Protestant doctrine.

The kingdom, marked off for the first thousand years as the time of Christ's rule on earth with His saints of both Old and New Testaments, is an everlasting kingdom. At the finish of

the thousand years He delivers up the kingdom to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:25-28) and submits Himself to the Father, that God may be all in all.

The record clearly tells us that "of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Isaiah 9:7; Luke 1:33). Both of these passages tell us plainly that Christ shall rule without end. Thus I conclude that the eternal abode of the saints — not all the saved — shall be on the earth, with every enemy destroyed and God's will fully done on earth as it is in heaven.

How about the saved who are not faithful and who cannot, therefore claim the promised inheritance of the earth, as the meek, and the constituents of the Lord's church? This joins an area of understanding which I am not able to supply, but I get the impression from a number of passages, that these also, ultimately, shall dwell on the earth. This is the new earth we are talking about.

Those saved who failed to follow the Lamb wherever He went, but used their own judgment and were not counted as His in that vital sense of the heirs, will have a lesser place, possibly as servants.

They must first, however, be judged by the Word which they did not allow as their final authority in this life. That judgment, in which they suffer loss (1 Corinthians 3:15), does not mean they are not saved, but they are saved as through a fire.

We should not try to study to see if their lot would be satisfactory to us, but we should love not our lives to the death here, and count all things but loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, as Paul did (Philippians 3:8).

### **Not All Saved Are Saints**

The doctrine which calls all the saved saints is false. The meaning of the word "saint" gives us the reason: (*h*)*agios*, holy. It is an adjective, but when used as a noun is often rendered saint. The same word in verb form is sanctify. Since not all who believe initially yielded themselves to the Holy Spirit, those souls, though initially saved, are not sanctified, not filled

with the Holy Spirit, hence are not holy (saints).

Does someone feel that this makes God a respecter of persons? Then you ought to think what the word respecter means (Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 3:25). He does not show any preference of "face" because of wealth, education, or position among men. He does show a consideration for faith, obedience, love, and all those graces which believers ought to manifest. In these God finds the "face" He desires to see: *prosopolepsia*, from face and receive or accept. A simple definition is discriminate.

We would warn the reader that God knows the heart. It is no good to covet that which gives one position or status, if the motive is that self may find satisfaction. We are told to covet earnestly the best gifts" (1 Corinthians 12:21). This will give God the glory as it enables the individual to grow and mature in the image of the Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16).

The early spiritual gifts were more numerous than they remain today because there was a need to provide written instructions (the New Testament) and a stage of maturity for the body, the church, as a whole to attain.

Hence the gift of Apostleship continued only a limited time until that stage could be reached by the church in which Holy Spirit leadership could direct believers into maturity. Now only three of those gifts remain, for these are essential to that maturity, even with brethren to guide us and the Holy Spirit to direct our minds and hearts:

*"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these [is] charity." (1 Corinthians 13:13)*

Charity is love. As hard as some of us worked to learn correct doctrines, not many of us soon learned that love is the greatest gift. By it one is able to work (Galatians 5:6).

How does one come to love the brethren and how does one know that He does?

*"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God (1 John 4:7).*

But not every one who has trusted Jesus, assuming one truly did, knows that he is saved. Why is this? Because there is the need for submission of the life.

Assurance came in the first moment of trusting if it was genuine. But the submission is a continuing thing, calling for obedience, specially in confessing Christ. This is not only done with the mouth, but in actions, as when one submits to Scriptural baptism and becomes a part of the church.

In that position, but not apart from it, he has the indwelling Spirit to give him understanding and maintain his assurance. (See Chapter 13.)

Paul prayed to this end on behalf of the Ephesian brethren, already baptized and church members:

*"That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; 17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what [is] the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." (Ephesians 3:16-19)*

The context goes on to identify the place where God fulfills or answers such a prayer and gets the glory:

*"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, 21 Unto him [be] glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." (Ephesians 3:20, 21)*

If you are one of those who think that preaching on love is not doctrinal preaching, just read this lengthy passage again, and then continue on into chapter four.

This is the kind of doctrine (teaching) which churches surely need. This is the burden of this writer's heart. The lack in this area explains the coldness, the ignorance, and the striving among brethren today.



So we have to admit that *"the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us"* (Romans 5:5). We must be aware that this gift is not given nor maintained in our hearts unless we consent and submit. So how do we come to do this?

It is by faith that we have access to the graces of repentance, forgiveness, obedience, and submission (Romans 5:3) and this genders the hope which gives impetus to our faith and our love (v. 4).

When the promises of God become meaningful, and our hearts begin to cry out for His will to be done in us, then we begin to search the Word to better understand and then claim those promises. This affords the "washing of the Word" spoken of in the Scriptures (Ephesians 5:26).

*"Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth" (John17:19). "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John15:3) . "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word," (Ephesians 5:26)*

Inasmuch as God's purpose for those elected or chosen, and since these only are His elect or chosen, as they are a part of His church, we could expect the grace producing election and holiness to be manifest in the church (1 Peter 1:2; Ephesians 1:4).

Those who do not enter into this sphere of God's maturing graces shall not attain the benefits designed for such as do obey and follow obediently.

Perhaps one of the most frequently committed presumptuous sins is the claiming of a position which is not according to God's promises. 'Presumptuous' is a good rendering of the word in the original Scriptures. It means bold, proud, arrogant, insolent. Its root means to seethe, boil.

We describe a high temper as hot and in such state one is likely to be presumptuous. The will is the most unruly of our members and when we reject God's words, or even question His will, we are presumptuous.

Many of the questions we ask fits this pattern. Why did it happen to me? or Why me? Is not God unfair? The very asking ought to rebuke us.

Men presume that because certain things are promised to some of God's people that all who profess to be His should have those promises. Much is promised to those in covenant position with the Lord. Those outside that position are presuming if they claim these.

One may wonder why Gentiles were not included in the promises made to Israel. Their being left out does not mean that God is a respecter of person, nor that these cannot be saved. The promises to Israel are for those who qualified for certain special benefits. Even Gentiles might claim those promises if they were willing to meet the conditions laid down, and in Old Testament times this meant he must become an Israelite.

When Gentiles were admitted to covenant position, that is, when God extended those benefits to the church, those Gentiles had to meet the conditions. It is presumptuous to assume that God was unfair in this.

When God made Adam the responsible head of his home, this set a pattern. It is presumptuous sin for a man to refuse or reject this position. It is also presumptuous sin for a woman to complain that her lot is unfair or that she should have the same leadership role as her husband. David prayed to be kept back from presumptuous sins. So would he be innocent of great transgressions. He feared such would have dominion over him. We can easily see how sin enslaves or takes over a man's life.

The word in the New Testament means *daring, to dare* (2 Peter 2:10) — the same as bold and arrogant or insolent. Those who feel themselves righteous should just consider this one word.

### **The Interdependency of Truth**

This chapter is an illustration of the manner in which a mutual dependence of any truth lies with any other truth. God's Word is written by Divine inspiration. Its wisdom is overwhelming.

No man, nor group of men, could produce such an intertwining of all truth as we see in the Bible. The mind boggles at its profound manner of meeting every objection, supplies every need, answers every objection.

This does not mean that the Bible is very difficult. Its difficulty lies in our own confusion, not in what God has said. We must remember that its truth is opened to him who has the Spirit of God in his life. Then its statements become easy, reasonable, understandable.

A promise, if claimed by one not qualified to receive it, becomes doubtful, unclear, confusing. When we try to press it into an area where it does not belong we run into obvious contradictions.

This writer believes this is one measure of what we think the Word says. It is designed to be self-confirming. If one is a saint he should be able to see that the question in the title to this chapter should be answer, No!

Comparing scripture with scripture will show that a saint is one who is holy, not merely a professor, not even one actually saved unless he takes a stand with Christ and His apostles, as a part of His church. He must be allowed to be the Head of His church, and the Controller of our lives.

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## **CHAPTER TWELVE**

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### **All Saved Resurrected Simultaneously?**

Nearly all professing Christians believe that everyone saved will be resurrected at the same time. This is because most believe in what is called a universal church, or church made up of all the saved.

In the previous chapter we saw the reason why not all saved are called saints. Of course there are shades of these views, but men must not look to history nor to church leaders to settle these vital questions.

Only in the Word of God can true answers be found. A man may have settled conviction in His heart, but if it is based on an understanding of how Christians have thought on the subject for the last one hundred years instead of on statements in the Bible, his is a false hope.

It does appear from the Scriptures that all saints will be raised at the same time, but are all saved saints? Those who sleep in Jesus will all be raised at once.

*"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." (1 Thessalonians 4:14)*

Also, the dead in Christ:

*"16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17)*

But does this mean all the saved? How about those in Old Testament times? How about those who have not been baptized into Christ?

*"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." 28 "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:27, 28)*

Believers are in Christ as they are alive in Him, in His body, walking by faith. They, then, are in covenant relationship, that is, in the New Covenant, and so are Abraham's seed (Galatians 3:29).

Read Romans 6:1-23 and note the logic of Paul's presentation. Those baptized have died to sin and the old life, and are buried as evidence of this. We know that baptism is only a figure, but it declares a real situation.

A lost sinner baptized has gained nothing. He has not put on Christ thereby, and his manner of life may be no different. But when in all faith, when he is serious and has trusted Jesus, and decides to live for Him, some drastic things begin to happen.

It could all be sham, but when it is done in faith, he is enabled by the Spirit which dwells in the church to put off the old man which is corrupt and to put on the new man, which is Christ, and to live a new kind of life — the Christ life.

And if he does not, if his old sin nature again asserts itself, and he does not repent and produce his first works — then the church deals with him as a sinner and he may lose his position in that Covenant body and be no longer a part of the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16).

When we see a good reason for God's doing a thing a certain way, our objection to His doing it that way should disappear. If He insists on a certain class of people and promises them He will raise them up at a given time, we may be sure He will do that. Others may not claim that promise. If this puts a strong motivation upon us to make certain changes in our manner of

living, we should be thankful and not judge God in His choices. To do so is presumptuous sin.

### **How About Those Not Raised Then?**

Why do we want to know? Is it we fear that we may not qualify as a saint who is called up to meet the Lord at His coming? Of course, we ought to be able to explain to those who have neglected to make right choices and may not, indeed, be raised at Christ's appearing (Revelation 20:4-6).

*"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and [I saw] the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received [his] mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This [is] the first resurrection. 6 blessed and holy [is] he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*

I have underlined the verse which is pertinent to our subject. The passage is speaking of those whom John saw sitting upon thrones. These were obviously already raised from the dead or they would not have been enthroned. He particularly noted the martyrs of the Great Tribulation among them. He notes that their position is a result of their being witnesses of Jesus and their worshipful hearts are evident.

It is also noted that the martyrs did not receive the mark which the False prophet had required those living on the earth to take in order to buy or sell (Revelation 13:15-17)

These distinctive characteristics describe believers who were devoted to Christ and were saints indeed. But "the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." These who did not put their own lives ahead of their faithfulness to Christ, come in for such a description:

*"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."*

So they remained faithful in spite of all the pressures put upon them by the Satanic Trinity, Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet. How many today can even ignore the temptations of the television,, of the culture, and the comforts afforded the flesh in this life?

What about those who give in to the flesh, or those who are not living holy lives? You know, that is a foolish question, actually, reminding us of an answer Jesus gave Peter when he asked what would happen to someone else:

*"Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what [shall] this man [do]? 22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what [is that] to thee? follow thou me." (John 21:21, 22)*

That answer should suffice us today. *"But they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise"* (2 Corinthians 10:12b). Our standard is Christ and His Word, not other people, nor circumstances around us.

Your being thus admonished as to what the standard is will not move you to righteous living. That is only accomplished by the Holy Spirit, and not even by Him until you have come to love Christ and yearn for His Words to be fulfilled in your life. There may be a short term obedience, but it will not last unless and until you have the right motivation.

*"To whom God would make known what [is] the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory": (Colossians 1:27)*

It must be Christ in you, whom you love and long to serve.

### **The Unfaithful Saved**

Not only must men be viewed as saved and lost, but of saved men we must note some are faithful, others unfaithful. Faith-

fulness does not mean sinless perfection. None of us can live that way (1 John 1:8-10). It means that even though initially saved and attempting to serve the Lord we are still sinners by nature.

We do not say those professing initial salvation are lost if they sin, and even if they remain out of the Lord's proper place of service, the church. But their lives are lost (cf. Matthew 18:11-14) —

*"For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. 12 How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? 13 And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that [sheep], than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. 14 Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."*

Read with these verses also: Matthew 16:24-27 and Matthew 19:29, 30.

How much of the Word, specially in the language of Jesus, is given over to their attaining the standard necessary to be co-heirs with Him of the kingdom, reigning with Him over the nations. So "lost" does not mean an alien sinner, but it means one who has been saved who is losing, or has lost his life.

Who are those nations? They are called "the nations of them that are saved" who "shall walk in the light" of the city (Revelation 21:24). They are not the kings (rulers) who bring their glory and honor into the city, but they are lighted by the light of the city, though in some sense outside in the darkness.

The darkness outside is a reference to the contrast to the light which is within the city of Jerusalem during the Millennium and the light of the city where the Bride dwells. In the Scriptures it is called "outer darkness" (Matthew 22:12-14; Matthew 25:29, 30)



A third reference uses the expression, "outer darkness". Each one speaks of an unprofitable servant. Such language does not apply to alien sinners, but to some who were in covenant position at one time, but whose lives were lost and they missed the inheritance or lost their reward.

So I consider that most of those passages which mention such "unfaithful" or "unprofitable" ones as going on to be seen in application by their place in the kingdom, the millennium. Doubtless there have been unprofitable or unfaithful through the centuries and some of these have died long ago.

So those passages which have unfaithful references seem limited to those who are living at the end of the age and go into the kingdom in their natural bodies and have to be judged and dealt with during the thousand years. Just how those unfaithful who died earlier are dealt with is left pretty well unmentioned, so far as I can tell.

A number of good brethren have concluded that these are raised when the saints are raised, but this seems to contradict the language which speaks of those in the First Resurrection who "sit on thrones and reign with Christ for a thousand years. They think these are raised in natural bodies because mention is made of their receiving "stripes" according to their works and stripes could not be administered unless there were physical bodies.

*"The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for [him], and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not [himself], neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many [stripes] (Luke 12:46, 47).*

Verse 46 places this language at the time of the Lord's coming and in an hour the unprofitable servant did not know, indicating his mind and interests were elsewhere.

Verse 47 suggests that this man gets his portion with unbelievers. Some explain this to mean that he was either never saved or lost his salvation and went to hell.

I rather suppose it means that he is left among those living on earth who escaped the physical death which the Antichrist poured on all those who were faithful and allowed themselves to be identified with the Lord, so he must be among those tares who were to be "gathered out of the kingdom" at the beginning and cast into judgment fire and caused to endure the "weeping and gnashing of teeth" at that time (Matthew 13:41-43).

Remember, the world kingdom of the Antichrist becomes the Lord's kingdom when He comes, so there will be many in it who are alien sinners and, doubtless, many professing Christians who may never have been saved, as well as those who had been saved who were unprofitable (Revelation 11:15).

The details of all these things doubtless are dealt with adequately in the Scriptures, but we may not yet properly understand all those details. We do need to become as familiar with the Word as time and circumstances will allow, making sure our hearts are yielded as He requires.

Then when the events of the age begin to occur we will know the meaning. This understanding may not be needful just yet. A carnal mind wants to have all the answers, but a spiritual mind will be happy with God's Truth and willing to be governed thereby.

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## **CHAPTER THIRTEEN**

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### **The Indwelling Holy Spirit**

No doctrine of the Scriptures is more perverted than this one. The doctrine of a Universal Church, that is, with all saved as members of it, even without baptism or without consideration of a standard of living, satisfies the minds of so many people. They go by their feelings. They like the idea of being able to claim all of the promises of the Word, so they say "I belong to the big church" and ignore the written Word.

Why would anyone ever become a false prophet? We find them among heathen, in the nation of Israel, and in abundance among professing Christians. The obvious reason is that people want to take God's place in wisdom and knowledge, and influence many people.

There is something in people that makes for the "bully" spirit. I suppose this spirit is just about universal. We see it even in animals. Establishing a "pecking order" is a part of every kind of living thing. Did the "Fall" produce such a result.

I doubt that God established it in men or animals, so it must be a part of the curse which came with the Fall of man. Viewed more critically we see it as a selfishness built in. We are born with it, and except for love, which has to be learned or acquired, it dominates the life.

Wanting to have one's own way at the expense of others or in complete disregard of others, doubtless is the central characteristic of selfishness. God has a cure for this condition. When a man learns that he is a sinner it is only logical for him to desire some sort of remedy or cure for that condition.

It is not a cure which removes the problem, but one he desires to relieve or excuse the penalty. The initial salvation which God supplies on the merits of Jesus Christ does not change a man's nature. It only washed away the sins of the past. Such

a sweet deliverance should be a lesson to a new believer which would interest him in learning whether he would have to face the problem again.

In Baptist ranks he is soon taught that the washing he has received is permanent, so that it is impossible for him to be lost again. But it is not always explained that sins committed today must be dealt with.

Why is there such ignorance of the church? Of the Person of the Lord? Of the meaning of the Word? Of the meaning of the signs of the times? Of the will of the Lord for our lives? Of all those things His people can know? Of the Spirit of Christ? It must certainly be because most professing Christians do not have this advantage of the indwelling Spirit.

### **Different Under the Law**

Under the law the people of God were taught that sin was a persistent matter and had to have a regular atonement. Even daily sacrifices were called for. A sinner under the law had to repent on a regular basis, confessing his sins and bringing a sacrifice. It became an expensive, a tedious business, and had to be pursued relentlessly.

That such a provision was made was an evidence of grace, but many Israelites probably never made the right associations. The presentations of the sacrifice (in type) and the forms of worship and service, with a consequent joy, should have taught him that God is gracious.

At least when his offering, or the nation's offering was accepted, he should have learned that God is gracious, forgiving, loving, and merciful. Not until Jesus came, however, did this grace appear so clearly.

In this connection came a new standard of obedience, more clearly defined. It was not the mere, dull work of sacrifices, but the privilege of loving one's neighbor.

*"Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I [am] the LORD" (Leviticus 19:18)*

This must have been one of the places it was heard when Jesus said, "Ye *have heard...*" (Matthew 5:43). But if they had heard that one must hate his enemy (Matthew 5:43), it did not come from the law.

Israel was taught that one should not imagine evil against his neighbor in his heart (Zechariah 8:17). And the law made provision for a work in the heart which would enable one to love others and even love God.

*"And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live" (Deuteronomy 30:6)*

A command to love God would have meant little without such a provision as heart circumcision. And there were such commandments (cf. Exodus 20:6; Deuteronomy 5:10; Deuteronomy 6:5; Deuteronomy 10:12). He was even to love the foreigner in his midst (Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 10:19).

Such passages show us that God desired the love of His people and wanted them to show their concern and love for each other, even for strangers. The Old Testament has this undercurrent of heart response all through it. But Israel could only sense the law's power upon their flesh and became more and more hypocritical in their dealings with right and wrong.

Is it not largely the same way today? Even professing Christians become engrossed in DOING, but without the restraint of love upon their hearts. FORMS mean more than spiritual reality, to the average professing believer.

God has a remedy for this state of affairs, but most believers miss it. What is that provision? It is the Comforter, the Indwelling Holy Spirit, sent to the church according to Jesus' promise to the disciples before His death (John 14:16-18; 16:7-15).

It is obvious that Old Testament believers as a whole did not have this blessing. It was a new provision which came with the New Covenant, being directly associated with baptism and with obedience (John 7:37-39; Acts 5:32).

A prophecy of a time when such would come is seen in Joel 2:28, 29, and the context indicates that it will be fully realized in the end of the age, specially the Millennium (Joel. 2:30-32; Isaiah 32:15; Isaiah 44:3; Isaiah 59:19-21).

In the Old Testament the indwelling was limited to specially chosen men, as Moses (Isaiah 63:10, 11), the wise (Exodus 28:3), Bezaleel (Exodus 31:3; Exodus 35:30, 31), the elders of Israel (Numbers 11:25, 26), but not all of the covenant people (Numbers 11:29).

Many received the Spirit of God for special service, but not as a regular indwelling (1 Samuel 10:10; 1 Samuel 11:6), though some did so receive him, as David (1 Samuel 16:13), but one might have this Spirit withdrawn and possibly even an evil spirit sent in His place (1 Samuel 16:23; 1 Samuel 18:10; 1 Samuel 19:9).

As many references to the Spirit as there are in the Old Testament one cannot escape the fact that God worked by His Spirit, or Spirit God wrought God's will in those days. But this new sense promised by Jesus affords benefits which they hardly realized back there.

It was mostly through prophets, priests and kings that God administered His will among men, hence these were the ones who received the Spirit as Teacher and Guide. This, however, was the comforter with men, not. in them.

Peter said that what happened on Pentecost next after Christ's resurrection was a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (Acts 2:16).

#### Two points:

- 1) The expression "last days" may (often does) apply to times beginning with the coming of Christ the first time; much of it, of course, cannot apply to any day prior to the Lord's second coming.
- 2) Joel's words, then, are only inchoate as to time, as it fits partially in Peter's time and will fit more specifically in the Millennium. Our concern is that it is for the church today.

### **An Indwelling Needed**

As we have seen, under the law men were in need of more grace to supply their lack than was provided. Rather, a bondage was ministered by the law. When instruction, leadership, or wisdom was needed it was supplied by God through the Spirit upon individuals. This is the manner in which prophets, priests and kings ministered to Israel.

The law had been added to the grace covenant made with Abraham in order to get men to see that their flesh was sinful and must be daily brought under. Even so, the sins of the flesh were only rolled forward year after year. No real experiencing of forgiveness could come by it (Romans 3:25), but rather a bondage.

The Book of Galatians points up this problem. Certain of the Galatians felt the law should still be kept, since it insists on a righteousness which God requires. But Paul showed that the law could only minister death. He said,

*"[Is] the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if here had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law" (Galatians 3:21)*

So men were without the life of God insofar as the law is concerned. And righteousness could not come by the law. Now we know that a man, even a lost sinner, can do some things right.

We teach our children right from wrong, though many today have gotten away from this important step. But the righteousness which God requires, which even the law described in its ordinances, could never be supplied by the law. It could only give the "knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20).

Knowing one was guilty of sin, even having it laid out in specific transgressions (Galatians 3:19), did not make one righteous, nor even free his conscience, but only made him aware of the bondage he was in. What good did that do. If he were conscientious, unwilling to ignore the dilemma and the pain of guilt, then he could cry out to God for mercy. Many did this,

but never could they know the liberty which we know under grace, that is, under the terms of the New Covenant.

### **"The Promise of the Father"**

This phrase stands out in the ministry of Christ. Jesus used it in admonishing the apostles (John 14:16, 17; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4, 8; Acts 2:33; Luke 11:13; John 7:39; John 14:28; John 15:26; John 16:7; John 20:22).

Other references confirm that the promise was fulfilled (see: Acts 2:32, 33). He had said that after He left He would ask the Father to send the Comforter. His coming on Pentecost testifies to the fact He arose, ascended to the Father, asked for the promise, and it was given.

Next to His giving Himself for the world and specially for the church, this gift of the Spirit looms the largest of all. By it all of the spiritual gifts are supplied. Through it, and in these spirituals, the early church was provided with the means to grow to maturity in the image of Christ. The Holy Spirit takes the things of Christ and shows them to us.

### **The Nature of the Spirit's Work**

A number of terms are used to describe what the Spirit does. We see Him as the active or performing one in the Godhead. While creation is said to be Christ, it is still a work wrought by the Spirit. After the disturbance of that creation it is the Spirit Who was brooding on the face of the waters (Genesis 1:2).

Considering the personal works are such terms as lead, revive (make alive) anoint (unction), fill, gift, regenerate, sanctify, dwell, raise up (resurrect), abide (remain), comfort (Gk., *parakletos*, from *para* — beside. and a form of *kaleo* — to call).

From this one word, first noted as Comforter, many ideas develop. One who calls on or along side may be there for various reasons: comfort, exhort, rebuke, help, instruct, renew, et cetera. Many of these services were performed by the Spirit before coming as the promise of the Father.



- **Prophets** were filled with wisdom, directed or led to speak or act, and much more.
- **Kings** were given wisdom, empowered in many ways, administered governmental matters.
- **Priests** led people in correct worship, instructing and assisting people, all under the hand of the Lord.
- **Chosen men** were given wisdom in knowledge and in skills.
- **Warriors** were granted abilities beyond the logic of what they were told to do (consider Gideon).

But all these were temporary works or functions.

### **The Holy Spirit as a Gift**

The personal work of the Holy Spirit is still being performed, but now only according to a pattern which serves the Christ and the members of His body, the church, under the New Covenant (See chapter Ten).

He was not sent as a Gift to one individual; He came, to the church, as a Gift by promise of the Father and in response to the petition of the Christ.

When Jesus was teaching the apostles or disciples we must understand that He was addressing His church. Those who say the church was not here until Pentecost after His resurrection are mistaken. The word itself occurs three times in the Gospels (Matthew 16:18; Matthew 18:17, twice).

When he said "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18), He was saying that He would build it to full growth.. Time is involved in this process. A builder takes time to get the building finished. "Will build", in English, may be an announcement of something to begin later, but the original word here does not have the idea of to found, establish.

Scholars know this but reason that it had no head or life if established before Pentecost when the Spirit came. But we remember that Christ Himself was with that church and she met every requirement for the existence of a church: saved believ-

ers, baptized, and instructed.

Yes, they were told to wait and pray until the enduing with power (Luke24:49). Was the empowering of individuals, or of an institution? If of individuals these all died. But if the institution, then it had a promise of His presence which could continue all the way to the end of the age:

*"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, [even] unto the end of the world. Amen." (Matthew 28:20)*

He said He would not leave them orphans, but would come to them (John14:18).

For any individual to partake at length of the benefits of this Gift he must be a part of the church to whom it was promised. All of the "spiritual gifts" (spirituals) were set in the church (1 Corinthians 12:28).

All were designed to produce spiritual maturity (perfection) of the saints (faithful church believers) (Ephesians 4:11-16). We do not desire to be offensive in such serious matters, but the gift is for the saints – only faithful church members. So it is not for all who have believed.

I am not saying that others are not saved. They may be. They may be sincere, though wrong, if they have chosen not to be a part of the institution which Jesus set up during His personal ministry.

This is not to say that the Holy Spirit is confined to the church and does nothing apart from it. But it has pleased God to do His work on earth in and by His church.

In the Old Testament His work was largely in and by the nation of Israel. From the beginning He had worked in the entire human race, but there was the need to concentrate His voice in a special way. He had spoken by individual men, as Adam, Enoch, and Noah, but their influence was not sufficient for the need. So the flood came and reduced the need to one family, Noah, his sons and their wives.

But soon after the flood the incident at Babel demonstrated how contrary and hard are human hearts. Idolatry became

rampant. In the midst of this God spoke to a man (Abram), in the house of Terah). There he found a faith which pleased him, so He made a covenant with him, separating him from all others, along with his seed. This gave a testimony which was more specific than that of Noah, with whom God had made a covenant touching all men.

But even Israel strayed and God allowed them to become slaves in Egypt. His deliverance of them showed His supernatural hand and produced the occasion for a form of worship (at Sinai and afterward) which gave them a more definite voice. Still they strayed.

Men in the flesh can never do the will of God (Romans 8:8). Their sin nature is such that their interest is too self-centered for them to reach out to others effectively. At length there was such darkness in their midst until He sent His son, born of a woman, born under the law (Galatians 4:4; Matthew 4:16).

This marvel of the ages, God in human flesh (John 1:1, 14) provides a testimony which goes far beyond anything which men esteem and trust. It has produced a people, but particularly, it has changed the course of humanity and put a mark upon history.

It may still be myth and fable to the wise of this world, but to him who has eyes to see and ears to hear (Matthew 13:15, 16) it is an arresting reality which reaches beyond reason and touches the heart. The ministry of that Man is still preserved in the earth in His body, the church.

### **The Church and the Indwelling**

The real mystery of the truth concerning the Indwelling Holy Spirit, stated succinctly, is the Indwelling Christ. It is a manner of preserving before the eyes of men the testimony of God in flesh. This is mysterious to our minds when we think of God in flesh, dwelling among men in His fullness (Colossians 1:19; 2:9).

This fullness of Godhood is therefore declared to now dwell in the church:

*"And hath put all [things] under his feet, and gave him [to*

*be] the head over all [things] to the church, 23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1: 22, 23)*

My heart cries out that the reader may have eyes to see and ears to hear as he looks at these words of Ephesians 1:22, 23.

### **The Life of God Manifested**

When Jesus was upon earth men were able to see Him with their eyes. Nobody dares suggest He was invisible. His apostles saw Him, but with eyes which recognized much more than others in that day.

In fact, one of the requirements for apostleship was that one must have seen the Lord (1 Corinthians 9:1). Their seeing him developed into an experience:

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen [it], and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship [is] with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full" (1 John 1:1-4)

These are more beautiful lines describing John's experience. He called it a manifesting of the life which they saw. What life? The life of God! John was writing to "dear children", evidently saints, who may not have had the same physical experience with eyes ears, hands, but an experience he believed that other saints could have. How? They had beheld the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

That manifestation is described in 2 Corinthians 4:6:

"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"

Because of the indwelling Spirit, who takes the things of Christ and shows them to us (John16:14), He, as the Comforter

"shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).

Is this limited to the apostles who saw with the physical eyes and heard with physical ears? No, for John, one of the twelve, says to saints who may never have seen the Lord in person,

*"But ye have an unction (anointing) from the Holy One, and ye know all things" (1 John 2:20).*

*"But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him" (1 John 2:27).*

### **The Essence of a Spiritual Life**

Real Joy in Fellowship is availed of in this Relationship. That is Fellowship with the Father and with the Son (John 14:21-23; 1 John 1:1-5).

This includes the spirit of Christ, that is, that sweetness of His character, plus all those elements which make Him sweet, righteous, holy, patient, long-suffering, meek, firm, and many others.

Further, in this fellowship these attributes of God are transferred to those in Him and become the characteristics of the life of each believer. When we understand the nature of God it does something for us: We see how we are naturally far short of that standard, and we begin to yearn to be like Him. We want to know Him better.

Thus are we brought to discern "the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:16). We understand why He thinks and feels as He does. We know this is right and anything less than that is wrong. We know it by the written Word of God.

The writer to the Hebrews says it a little differently, describing the blessing of the New Covenant, in the Lord's church:

*"For this [is] the covenant that I will make with the*

*house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:" (Hebrews 8:10)*

**"put"** {Greek, didomee = give}

**"in"** {Greek, epi = in or upon}

*This [is] the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them" (Hebrews 10:16).*

If one thinks of this only as learning with the mind or head, and fails to see that the anointing of the Holy Spirit is granting discernment and bringing to one's remembrance the Lord Jesus and His life, then he is overlooking a vital lesson.

Actually the anointing enables one to experience the life of God, its peace, its joy, its comfort, its assurance, its yearnings, its holiness. This is an emotional, as much as a learning experience of the mind. It teaches the heart.

These few passages tell us in effect that the church today is manifesting the fullness of Godhood to her membership, so that they may have fellowship with the early saints and others who have the same experience, and in this fellowship with the Father and the Son there is full joy.

This fellowship and its consequent joy and understanding of the life of God enables them to be a testimony to those outside the body of Christ, the church (John 16:7-11).

Such joy and fellowship stems from the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost (Romans 5:5), and that love genders hope which keeps the life bright, removing all fear. How unlike earthly hope which leaves disappointment!

Just as Jesus in the flesh manifested the life of God among men on earth, so the church today manifests the life of God to men today.

This is the stated purpose of the church, though we confess shamefully, it does not always manifest God's life; it manifests

human life, the old sin nature, as men quibble, argue, become angry, and otherwise reflect sin in themselves.

Why is the church shrinking, becoming weaker, no longer showing the power of the Spirit of God in revivals among themselves?

It is not because they do not know much about the Scriptures. Perhaps preachers are better Bible scholars than some who lived a hundred years ago. But this knowledge is a learning with the head, not of the heart.

The life which Jesus manifested (1 John 1:2) was the fullness of Godhood (Colossians 1:19; Colossians 2:9), and reflected the knowledge of the glory of God. What is God's glory? Is it not the beauties of holiness, the power of righteousness, the love of others? These are only a few of God's attributes. His fullness must embrace all that it takes for Him to be God. The flesh of the Son of God, though it was without sin, still veiled these attributes, not to mention the blindness of men and the deafness of men to sense them.

Their language could only sound defensive. This man spoke as never man spoke. They were astonished at his teaching, for He spoke as one who had authority and not as the scribes (Matthew 7:28, 29; Mark 1:22).

*"And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out" (Luke 4:36)*

They recognized the authority he held over men and demons and they recognized his power of soul, the moral power, the dynamic of his teaching and preaching. Perhaps few would have been able to explain what they were seeing, but they knew there was more in evidence than intelligence among men. It was the fullness of Godhood.

Can we grasp the idea that all this can be evident in the church, the body of Christ. True, there will not be quite the power or the authority, but there can be much more there than is usually seen in our day.

All of the thinking and teaching about the mystical body of Christ, made up of all the saved all over the world, is supposed to command the respect of men and cause them to shut their eyes to all of the contradicting and confusing practices and fasten their minds on the significance of the large numbers of the group, the scope of Christianity. But no such church is mentioned in the Bible.

On the contrary, what the world needs to see, and what the church itself needs to experience, is the life of God which was manifest in Christ. He promised not to leave the church as orphans but that He would come.

Do you think he meant to leave a 2,000 year gap between His going away and that coming? I think not. There were only some forty-seven days between his resurrection to that life He had laid down and His coming back to dwell in the church. He came on the first Pentecost after His resurrection. He has dwelt in the church ever since. Whereas He was with them before, now He is in them.

The church, then, must be visible if it is to fulfil the purpose of God in showing forth His life which had been manifested in Jesus. How does life manifest itself?

Do you only think of one's eating, drinking, breathing, moving, as the evidences of life? How about kindness, love, laughter, and peace? How about righteousness, meekness, goodness, firmness, perseverance? How about steadfastness, dependability, knowledge? Christ could be seen. All of these can be seen. And in some measure they can be recognized, even by those who do not know God. This is what the Indwelling Spirit means in the church.

Have you seen and felt the spirit of Christ? What was it like? Is it not in His sweetness? Yes, in His love, but what of His justice, His righteousness, His perseverance? These can be and ought to be seen in the church. Immaturity is evident to a child, though he might have no word to describe it. Foolishness can be recognized too, but a child's recognition of it might not be as repugnant as an adult's.

If the fullness of God is to be seen in the church it must be



because her members are filled with the Spirit. This is a command to individual members to participate in His fullness (Ephesians 5:18-21).

The possibility is stated in Ephesians 1:22, 23. The progress is described in Ephesians 4:11-16. The method is described in Ephesians 5:18-20). Paul describes his desire for the Ephesians in a prayer to God (Ephesians 3:14-21).

In verse 19 he states the matter of their being filled with all the fullness of God. Its being a prayer indicates that it is a possibility but is not automatic to every saved person, nor even to every church member.

In his admonition to these brethren (Ephesians 5:18-21) he indicates it comes by their being filled with the Spirit. In this they should be speaking to one another in joy and gladness, songs and hymns, making melody in their hearts, giving thanks to God, even the Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and submitting themselves to one another in the fear of God.

It is not surprising that he speaks of the "riches of his grace" and "the riches of Christ" (Ephesians 2:7; Ephesians 3:8, 16). It comes through very clearly in Colossians 3:12-17, a passage parallel to the one in Ephesians 5. In both places there follows an analogy taken from the normal relationships of life, illustrating how that in all these we have a picture of what can and should exist between us and the Christ and between us and one another.

### **Who Is Led by the Spirit?**

*"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14)*

Two things come out in the verse. Since we have seen that the Spirit was given to the church and there is where He fills men and does all those things necessary to filling them with God's fullness, we see here 1) these are led by the Spirit, and 2) they are the sons of God. The assumption that everyone who is saved is a son of God and a member of the family of God, needs to be adjusted. The church is the family

(Ephesians 3:14, 15).

The sonship/Fatherhood is a relationship, not merely a performance once and over with. Christ is the eternal Son. In Him men become also sons. He was born from the dead, fully manifesting His Sonship (Romans 1:3, 4).

Our going with Him through death and the grave (manifested in baptism), we are raised up with Him to a sonship in His family. It is by His resurrection that we become "born" to a relationship with Him and the Father (Romans 6:1-10).

By faith we reckon this to be our position and faith produces the results in our lives (Romans 6:11-17). It should be obvious that our responsibility is to be willing and to submit. The work will be done by Him. Without our surrender we cannot be qualified by Him for sonship, election, nor bridehood.

### **The Sealing By the Spirit**

The sealing of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:21, 22) is a means of identifying His own. The Lord knows them who are His (2 Timothy 2:19). The other side to this seal is "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity," and this is the earnest we have as to our relationship. The Holy Spirit does the sealing (Ephesians 4:30). By this are the saints made holy (sanctified). It is first an imputing, which always is to be our view of it; then it is a growth or development. This sanctifying is through the truth (John 17:17, 19) — that abiding in the Word which cleanses our lives (John 15:3; Ephesians 5:26). This Word is that seed which remains in one to prevent his practicing sin ( 1 John 3:9).

These elements of church life are so closely entwined that we feel it good to mention here that "born of God" (1 John 3:9) is described as manifesting the children of God (v. 10) and with this is the doing (practicing) of righteousness. This is a mark of one born, that is, the children. The Word remains in them. It is not called "the Word" in this text, but that is the seed according to the metaphor found in other places (Matthew 13:19, 20, 22, 23; Luke 8:11; 1 Peter 1:23).

Associated with the fullness of life which is in the church we

see the word quicken in many of its forms. You may be surprised to see that it applies to that spiritual life afforded by the indwelling Spirit to those who are believers.

Seldom, if ever, is it applied to initial faith, though we must admit that such could take place at that time, depending on whether or not such a person would go on to know the Lord. Even today we speak of a deadness, a coldness among God's people, which does not manifest God's life. In that case they need reviving, which is a renewing of the life which should be evident all the time.

To be alive from the dead calls for a quickening, a resurrection. This is what is testified to in baptism, so it should come soon after one first trusts the Lord, and if it is neglected, there is great danger of one's dying spiritually. This would not mean he loses the initial salvation, but he is not active or able to manifest the qualities of spiritual life – God's life.

If we be led by the Spirit then we are not under the law (Galatians 5:18). Realizing this we are freed from the bondage of the law (Romans 6:14), and are under grace. This does not set us free in the sense of having a license to sin because we are not under law. But we are freed from its bondage because its requirements have been satisfied by Christ (Romans 6:15).

This system is entirely different and far better than the Old Covenant system where law came down on the flesh. Grace has met the laws demands in Christ and we have the liberty of grace. We are admonished, however, not to use this liberty for an occasion to the flesh but by love serve one another (Galatians 5:13).

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## **CHAPTER FOURTEEN**

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### **Who Constitute the Membership of the Church — The Lord's Body?**

This matter has been touched on several times in other chapters. We feel, however, that the importance of the subject requires further brief mention here.

Familiarity with the original language requires that we be conscious of the fact that the word church, in our Authorized Version is *ekklesia*, from *ek* and *kaleo*, out and called, an assembly.

The use in Greek tradition can be seen in the language of Acts 19:32, 39, 41, where it is translated assembly each time. True it does not mean a church, as we know the term, but it is correctly translated.

A certain silversmith called together the members of his craft to discuss what to do about the loss of their business if the message of the missionaries caused people to quit buying the little silver images of the Goddess Diana. This gathering was an assembly, called out from the citizens of the city of Ephesus.

Another word, *hierosulos*, is translated robbers of churches. This is another wrong rendering by the King James translators. The word combines *hieron*, temple, with a form which means a robber, so the word has nothing to do with churches, the temple being any temple, including a heathen temple. The verb form means to commit sacrilege. The analogy is good. A group is called out from their home or their activities) into an assembly which was to consider a problem of mutual interest. Theirs had nothing to do with Christ or God, but with their jobs. Men do usually get more heated up over their jobs or their wages than over a house of brethren called out by the Holy Spirit for worship and praise.

We must see in this use of the root meaning of the term a called out people, called together into an assembly where mutual interests are shared. *Young's Analytical Concordance* lists 115 uses of the word, *ekklesia*, of which 112 are translated church in the A.V. and three as assembly, all three in the story in Acts 19.

But where did they get the word church? Any English dictionary will show that it passed through several languages into English, tracing back through kirk, *chirche*, and other forms to *Kuriake*, from *kurios* (Lord), pertaining to the Lord. So a church does pertain to Him, but this word in no way is used with the meaning of assembly, which is what the 115 uses mean.

It is used a few times with reference to the institution, as when Jesus said "my church" in Matthew 16:18, or when Paul said, "glory in the church" (Ephesians 3:21). The execution of any privilege or task so used necessarily has to be applied to a local assembly. Commands, as to "the church of God at Corinth" obviously apply to the local congregation at Corinth.

That usage coming from later writings where all the saved, or all the saved since Pentecost, are meant, is a perversion of the idea in the Word. No commission is given to call the saved as though that were a church. No command to baptize could be executed by "all the saved." The Lord's dwelling in His church in the Person of the Holy Spirit necessarily finds its realization in a single, local congregation. There is no other kind of church in the New Testament.

### **Why Is This Important?**

Such a universal church changes the whole Bible into confusion. For one example, it makes two church ideas: the church at Jerusalem, the churches of Judea, being one idea; the church of all the saved another. It makes it impossible for the brethren to watch over one another in brotherly love, dealing with the one who has sinned (Matthew 18:17).

"*Tell it unto the church*" and "*hear the church*" become impossible instructions. By confusing a local church with an imagined universal church, room is left for local people to assume

the message is not for them, or to assume that "hear the church" is to heed an imagined voice from the universal church when their obligation is to a local assembly.

Perhaps worst of all is the fact that there is no "one accord in one place" for God's people (Acts 2:1). There can be no "one accord" at all (Acts 1:14; Acts 2:46; Acts 4:24). All these references apply to the church at Jerusalem.

It makes a mockery of the doctrines of the Bible by accepting the contradictory and confusing ideas of "authorities" in many places.

It negates the provisions which Jesus made for His covenant people by which it may be determined whether one is a proper member of the body of Christ or not.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are designed to preserve the purity and the sincerity of all the members of a local body, giving it authenticity. The mishmash of doctrines and practices in Christendom has found a home in an imagined "universal church," reducing God's visible testimony of the life of God to a ridiculous state.

History gives us reasons why this situation ever came to exist among Baptists, but the real reason is that they departed from the words of the Scripture to conform to the approval of men.

### **Requirements for Membership**

In the Lord's churches there is only one way to become a member. One must witness to the fact that he has trusted Jesus as His Savior and express his desire to follow Him obediently. The church will then do a business action, usually by motion and second, though this is inconvenient for some and the leader may just say, All in favor of receiving this brother/sister as a candidate for baptism and after baptism into full fellowship of the church."

The vote is in any way that a church can vote, by raised hand, by standing, or by saying aye. This expresses a willingness to fellowship such a saved brother or sister and most of the time a handshake will be extended as "the right hand of fellowship."

As soon as it is convenient such a person is buried in baptism, the only kind of water baptism men mentioned in the Bible. This attests that the person has died to sin and has been raised to walk in a new life. This walking is a contribution to the faith and fellowship of the body, but it also is an extension of the faith and fellowship in the church as they watch over such a person in brotherly love. Baptism in Holy Spirit will be mentioned later.

As set forth in Chapter Thirteen the life of God is not something merely known by the one claiming it, but when united with the body, it is a mutual manifestation of the life of God in human flesh.

It takes a conscientious person to make himself available to God the Holy Spirit to show forth the elements of the God life which were manifested in their fullness in the Christ.

To manifest the life of Christ in our bodies requires that the old man be counted dead. The Bible teaches that we died with Christ and in water baptism we publicly say that the old life is now past.

Also, we declared in baptism that we have been raised with Christ in a new life (cf. Romans 6 for this teaching). None of us is able by willpower, by resolution, or by human effort to live such a changed life.

Actually, it must be an exchanged life, one in which our old life is exchanged for the life of Christ who lives within us. It must not be assumed that He is able to live within us if there is any conscious rebellion in our hearts to laying down the old man and putting on Christ.

In describing this new life I am keenly aware that new believers, though now baptized and on the church roll, may not be fully aware of just what is required in one's life. I did not. But I truly believe if someone had explained it to me as I now explain it after more than sixty years since I united with the church, that I would have gladly accepted it. I was told the passages about being buried in the likeness of His death and raised in the likeness of His resurrection.

But I confess that the sense of such language did not come

through to me at that time. In other words, we must grow in grace and knowledge. Such growth is not possible outside the church, for only there is the body of Christ in evidence and only there does the Holy Spirit take the things of Christ and show them to us. That promise from Christ regarding the promise of the Father is strictly to the church.

### **Maintaining Growth in Grace**

We never have it made as a believer or member of the church. Secure as being initially saved, yes, but our position in Christ is a relationship which must be pursued. Read Romans, Ephesians, Colossians, and even Philipians or 2 Peter, and there is much language about continuing in the faith, practicing the grace of life, putting off the old man, putting on Christ, remaining in Him, in the Word, in the truth, and on and on.

So what if we grow careless? The professing Christian world explains this as a danger of losing one's initial salvation and going to hell at death. But if one reads the Word with an open heart he will see that the relationship may be jeopardized, not one's salvation. (See: *Why Remain Faithful* later in this chapter.)

As a member of the church one is expected to be present in all the services when it is possible. In this day of cold hearts and careless living we do not think it serious to miss church often, even if no hindrance more than a ball game on TV is in the way. Visiting relatives on the weekend is a regular cause for being absent.

Certain shows, as a singing concert, will draw some people away. A revival at another church will take some people away, and they feel justified in missing the services of their own church. Ministers, of course, are sometimes called away for emergency meetings or for important services. But it should never become a habit of our lives. If it does there is a real jeopardy.

### **The Lord's Supper**

This pictorial ordinance of the church is a further means of maintaining the status of membership and encouraging a con-



tinuing in the Word. There is absolutely no merit in the taking of the ordinance as long as one is untouched by its sense. Like baptism, it can be a mere form.

Forms of religion are never worth anything, as long as they are only forms to be observed. One must realize the meaning of the act for it to have a true meaning. This requires a proper study and understanding of the written Word of God.

Baptism prevented the entrance of one into the membership until He was willing to make a confession of Christ before the church and express a desire to become a part of the fellowship of believers. He may not understand the full sense of what being buried in the water of baptism means, but he should at least be told that it speaks of a death which has occurred to the old life.

After becoming a member the new believer learns that he is never to forget that his salvation is fully dependent upon the death of Christ for his sins. Then he should learn that his walking as a Christian is dependent upon the life of Christ.

*"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Romans 5:10)*

What can this mean? Surely it is not that we are to look at Christ's example and find out just how to live or act, for this would put our flesh to rigor to try to live as Jesus did.

A book some years ago came to my attention which emphasized *"In His Steps"* (1 Peter 2:21). This seemed to teach that we should follow His example, as though we should be loving, patient, kind, forgiving, and longsuffering. But this did not mean it is possible for us to take thought and be or do all these things. As men in the flesh we are incapable of any of these things.

The verse in question says that *"He suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps."* This is different in that it says that the example of His suffering for us is the example we should follow. How many of us are willing to suffer for our brethren? Many are willing, but all must become

willing. It may not mean physical death, but at least a willingness to suffer, if necessary, in order to be a blessing to others. In fact, our hearts ought to join that of our suffering brethren even when we are not in the same physical pain as he is. The name for such suffering is sympathy, a sympathy which may move us to lend a hand, pay an expense, comfort in any way we can. That is the example which Jesus left us. Being willing to suffer for others is not something that our flesh can take on either.

Here we see why the indwelling Spirit, in the church, is such a better provision for God's people in this day. But it is available only to the members in the church where the Spirit dwells. By that indwelling the Christ has come to prevent our being left as orphans B comfortless (John14:18). It is the life of God in its fullness that the church is to manifest, having received the Christ in the capacity of the Holy Spirit.

*"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the [same] night in which he was betrayed took bread: 24 "And when he had given thanks, he brake [it], and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. 25 "After the same manner also [he took] the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink [it], in remembrance of me. 26 "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." 27 "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink [this] cup of the Lord, un-worthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28 "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of [that] bread, and drink of [that] cup. 29 "For he that eateth and drinketh un-worthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 "For this cause many [are] weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. 31 "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Corinthians 11:23-31)*

This lengthy passage requires special attention to several

things:

1. It is an inspired explanation of the meaning of the Lord's Supper as given to a church.
2. Jesus gave the original pattern and instructions to the first church.
3. He blessed the elements and thanked the Father for them, meaning their sense to the church.
4. Each of the elements is explained:
  - A. The bread was His broken body.
  - B. The cup was his shed blood.
5. He took of the elements Himself, indicating He is joined with His people..
6. He explained when He came to the cup that it was the blood of the New Covenant. (See Chapter Ten for discussion of the covenants.)
7. "This do" in remembrance of me. " "Ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (v. 26). It is a continuing fact, but so are all facts.

I think this is different in that it is to be a continuing experience. A form would become nothing in time.

But there is more here. Why should disciples know or remember "covenant blood"? Evidently because they are a part of that covenant.

8. There is a special warning. We must not take the bread or specially the cup "unworthily," that is, in an unworthy manner. What can this mean?

Since it requires that one "examine himself" it must have to do with a possibility of taking it in an unworthy manner. What would make the taking an unworthy manner of taking?

The grammar helps here. It is not a matter of our being worthy to take it. In fact, none of us is worthy. It has to do with our "discerning the Lord's body." Just

remembering that Jesus died on the cross for our sins seems not so difficult of discernment.

Anyone familiar with the inspired record can understand that fact. Discernment calls for the Spirit to provide a Truth concerning the Christ which is hardly evident on the surface of the language.

9. The Lord's body is that virgin born body of Christ, the beginning of the creation of God (Revelation 3:14).

Please read Colossians 1:15-19 at this point, not only noting Who is the Creator, but that He is the firstborn, that is, the first one alive from the dead, in glory.

Note also that the whole creation is sustained by Him, but His special position to us is as Head of the church. Then note that it pleases the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.

10. This resurrected Lord, Head of the church, in Whom dwells the whole fulness of God, is what we ought to discern.

To say, simplistically, as I have many times, that the body here is the church body, is not enough.

But the discernment must recognize the vital connection of the Christ to the body, the church, and then we may be in a position to determine whether we are partaking unworthily.

The church now are the firstborn ones (Hebrews 12:23). The warning is not that we should avoid partaking in order to avoid this sin, but that we must partake in faith, conscious that as we are united with Him we are alive in Him, partaker of His grace, His holiness, even of the life of God.

Is this not a challenge to holy, godly, righteous living? Not because the flesh can possibly be holy, godly, or righteous, but that our whole dependence is upon Him for these elements of Christ-likeness, just in the same way we were utterly dependent upon Him when we first trusted Him to save us from our past sins and take care of our sin nature.

11. Failure to examine and judge one's self in the light of this relationship brings condemnation upon the one so guilty.

Such condemnation, or judgment upon one, is not to produce a lost condition of the spirit, but shows up the lost life, a life which one has not been willing to give up to Christ, so it is lost even to himself.

12. Many church members back then, and doubtless many today, are "weak and sickly" and some sleep (have died?), because of this sin of not recognizing a proper relationship to Christ.

It is true that sleep is a euphemism for death, but the word is also used of being spiritually numb, or insensitive (Romans 13:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:6). I fear for many like this today.

### **Another View of Becoming a Member**

*"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also [is] Christ. 13 "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether [we be] Jews or Gentiles, whether [we be] bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. 14 "For the body is not one member, but many." (1 Corinthians 12:12-14)*

This remarkable passage is little understood, even by Baptist preachers. Please note that it is in a context dealing with the spirituals, called "spiritual gifts" in the Authorized Version (1 Corinthians 12:1). The use and abuse of these spirituals grows out of a misunderstanding about the Holy Spirit's work.

A point is being made that not all the members have the same gift or gifts, but everyone is necessary and important. This was true from the beginning and continues true at the time of this letter to the Corinthians, though only three of those spirituals remain in the body today (1 Corinthians 13:13).

There are many members in the body but all do not have the same gift, yet all comprise one body. Young's Literal Translation of the Bible gives verse 13 thus: "for also in one Spirit we all to one body were baptized, whether Jews or Greeks,

whether servants or freemen, and all into one Spirit were made to drink,"

In one Spirit is not the same as by one Spirit. The agent for baptizing in Spirit is Christ, not the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist explained that God who commissioned him to baptize had explained at the same time that the One on Whom he should see the Spirit descending and remaining would be the one who baptizes in Holy Spirit (John 1:33).

Thus we know it is Christ who did that. Since it is *in* one spirit, not *by* Him, and since it is to or into one body, we must conclude that this text says that all the members of a church, any individual church, are baptized in water into the body, the church. It was the church which Christ baptized in Holy Spirit on that Pentecost next after His death, not individuals.

Then when we come to observe, every member has the same benefit, whether he is a Jew or a Gentile, a slave or a free-man, and all alike drink of one Spirit.

The word "drink" here is a metaphor meaning to imbue, satiate, satisfy. We are all told to desire the sincere milk of the word (1 Peter 2:2). The water of life" is a familiar metaphor, so drink becomes an appropriate way of speaking of it (John 4:14). Being made to drink of one spirit is surely the satisfying of our hearts with Christ. Jesus had promised that to drink of the water which He should give would produce an artesian well flowing up unto everlasting life (John 4:14).

So the statement in 1 Corinthians 12:13 surely says that the place to expect this springing water of life is from the Christ who dwells in the church. Every member is offered this benefit, but he may partake only as he thirsts, and then he will never thirst again, not because he does not desire this blessing, but because it is always sufficient and continuous.

Then Jesus explained (John 7:37-39) that this springing water is a reference to the Holy Spirit which was not given until He Himself was glorified. That is, only after He was raised, became the firstborn from the dead, and besought the Father to send the promise to His church.

Why did not Paul tell the Corinthians that this benefit extended

to all who would trust the Savior, not just to those baptized into one body? It seems that brethren could get things in their proper relationship.

When Jesus was teaching His disciples, as in John 7:37-39, His language should not be extended to those outside, **except** as the meaning of words require.

For example, "believeth on me" describes more than one act of faith, but a continuing believing. Further, his coming and his thirsting are steps in growth in grace, and cannot apply to one who has only just trusted the Savior, has not come or thirsted. The flow of rivers of this benefit surely is to be realized in the Lord's churches, not in those who confuse or rebel at portions of His Word.

It certainly was not a benefit to all men before Jesus was glorified (John 7:39), nor should it be expected today except where He dwells as the Head of His body, the church. Remember, the drinking is within the body where only saved and baptized people dwell.

Trusting Jesus gains a benefit of the Spirit's power which is extended to the world outside (John 16:7-11, but this is not the same sense as "drinking." In fact, the world cannot receive this indwelling (John 14:16,17).

Thus far we should have seen that church members must first trust Christ as Savior. Then they must make a public acknowledgment of Christ as Savior, beginning with confessing Him with the mouth, though any other manner of communicating would do if physical limitations cause other means to be necessary (Romans 10).

May we ask that students study this chapter again and see if it is designed to tell one how to be initially saved. This was dealt with back in the early chapters, but for the most part the rest of the book of Romans is dealing with the salvation of the life (Romans 5:8-11).

In Romans 5:1 the challenge is to that one who has come to believe, but has realized that God requires more, so he has begun to make that progress toward living in peace with God, never forgetting, of course, that Christ's death has brought

him to this blessed estate.

Then he is to constantly overcome by the sufficient grace of God (Romans 5:12-21). Here baptism becomes a reinforcing means of confessing Christ (Romans 6:1-18).

Still, there is the weakness of the flesh which may become a problem, usually does, for every believer (Romans 6:19-21), but there ought to be holy fruits. It cannot happen, though, by striving to keep commandments (Romans 7:1-14). For Paul, the writer, this posed a special challenge, for he had been a good lawkeeper. Hear His struggle in Romans 7:15-25.

From that point of seeing it is only through Christ (Romans 7:25) he goes on to expand the subject in chapter 8. A conflict between flesh and spirit may always continue, but victory is sure as long as one keeps His eyes on the Lord. This produces a maturity which gives certain victory, for one learns of His relationship as a son through the "Spirit of adoption" ("Spirit of sonship" Romans 8:14-17).

This is such a marvelous new experience until the inspired writer deals with it at length. Sufficient grace extends even to the creation (Romans 8:18-25), but is not stymied by our flesh because Christ is the one who strives against the flesh (Romans 8:26-39) and because the Father has purposed a complete deliverance.

Are you persuaded of this as Paul was (v. 39), or have you been deceived into thinking this only means you cannot lose first step salvation and die and go to hell?. There is security in the first step, and always, but the sufficient grace is to the salvation of the life, and that is the theme here.

To explain how large this grace is and how far it extends, in chapter 9 it is not only to Jews, but to Gentiles. The matter of mature sonship (adoption in the AV, Romans 9:4) had from the far past come to Israel by a faith which would walk in obedience before the Lord, but is now deliberately declared to reach to Gentiles whom God says He has grafted in according to His sovereign will (Romans 9:8-33).

This salvation book (Romans) is not dealing merely with initial



or first faith salvation, but with a salvation which touches and includes the life. Life covers not only the spirit, but the soul and the body (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Deliverance from the bondage of sin begins with our spirits. It must continue in our souls (that is, our minds, emotions, and wills). Ultimately it will include our bodies, in the resurrection.

### **Eligibility for Membership**

How does this fit into a discussion of who are eligible for church membership? Church membership, being the present manifestation of New Covenant Relationship, is not guaranteed to every one who has come to initial faith.

We Gentile believers who have come to trust the Savior and then followed on to serve Him must not forget that God cast away some of those who had been His covenant people (Romans 9:6). They were cut off from the chosen nation (Israel from Abraham) and Gentiles who believe were grafted in.

Jews were cut off, not because they were such vile sinners as Gentiles, but because they did not trust the Christ, did not believe God, and did not live by faith. This does not prove they were all alien sinners, but it certainly proves that one's attitude toward the Christ is all-important. Gentiles must learn this lesson (Romans 11:20, 21).

### **Why Must One Be Faithful to Christ?**

*"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? 46 "Blessed [is] that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. 47 "Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods." (Matthew 24:45-47)*

The benefits are set forth: he is blessed, and God shall make him ruler over all His goods. The verses following warn of what happens to the one not faithful: God will sever him from among the faithful and his portion is with hypocrites, including anguish (Matthew 24:50, 51).

So there is reward for doing certain things (v. 46). Initial salvation is not by doing, but the salvation of the life comes from a faith which works. The same principles are set forth in the judgment of the nations (Matthew 25:31-46). It is wrong to apply this passage to alien sinners. We can do so only if we believe that initial salvation is by works (cf. Titus 3:5).

Inheriting the kingdom is by doing, that is working by faith, but being very zealous for good actions is not enough; one must walk by faith and esteem Christ above all the world's goods (Matthew 19:16; Mark 10:17; Luke 18:18).

The subject is an inheritance. This word describes reward, not initial salvation. The actions called for are very repugnant to the flesh, but are a joy to the man living by faith who loves His Lord.

Over and over in the New Testament this theme is dealt with. If the good works called for were only that one might keep his initial salvation, then that salvation would be by good works. If it can be done by one who is initially saved, but who does not put his life on the candlestick, does not follow the lamb wheresoever He goeth, does not walk by love, it is all in vain. Only "in Christ" are any of the things we are to do worthwhile.

### **Is Every Saved Person a Disciple?**

It should be obvious to Baptists that one must be saved before church membership. He is saved outside the church. So why have a church?

*"If any [man] come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. 27 "And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26, 27).*

One gets the impression that being a Christian merely calls for trusting Jesus and maybe joining the church, but fails to understand how serious the business is.

Here it is seen that Jesus made disciples, and if one is not a disciple he cannot be a part of His church. But being a disci-

ple calls for some very serious responses to the Lord. Hate is a strong word, but in contradistinction to loving the world we are required to hate out dearest relatives.

No, we do not hate them in the sense of cutting them off from our lives, but in comparison to what we are expected to do and feel toward Christ we are to hate them. Only so can we take up the cross and follow Him. Only such feelings describe a disciple. Christ is to be first of all in our lives.

We hear it said that we work because of our love for Christ and our appreciation for his having saved us from sin. This is true, to a degree, but if we truly love Him we want His will done in our lives to the fullest.

If we do not, are we even disciples? I think not.

*"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death (Revelation 12:11)*

The overcoming mentioned here is the victory of saints over Satan. It will work in any and all of Satan's temptations. There is no better way; there is no other way. If we would get the victory it must be through the blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony. Whether or not we avail ourselves of these guarantees is determined by whether or not we love not our lives to the death. In other words, we do not back off because the pain increases, nor because it gets more difficult, nor because we may feel it is too hard.

We read of the martyrs and I wonder if we are even impressed by what they had to go through. If God observes and keeps a record of every drop of blood which cries from the ground (Genesis 4:10; Matthew 23:35) and keeps a bottle for the tears which have been shed (Psalm 56:8) in our pain, then He sees and understands and reciprocates with the grace necessary for us to overcome.

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## **CHAPTER FIFTEEN**

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### **Who Constitute the Bride of Christ?**

*All Saved? All Saints? All Believers?*

(John 3:29; Revelation 21:2; Psalm 45:1, 9-11, 14,15)

*"He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled." (John 3:29)*

*"And there came to me one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God," (Revelation 21:9,10)*

*"Kings' daughters [were] among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand stood the queen in gold of Ophir. Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thy own people, and thy father's house; So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he [is] thy Lord; and worship thou him." (Psalm 45:9-11)*

Missionary Baptists are not alone in preaching about the Bride, but few others recognize this Truth. Why? I think it is because men do not care to make distinctions lest they offend those who might not agree, or else they are afraid of excluding themselves from this position.

It is not a difficult idea to accept when one believes the Bible is true and God makes no mistakes. Also, if one has been able to see that God has a covenant people distinct, not only

from the alien sinners, but distinct from those who are initially saved who have not understood or come to accept such a distinction.

We have seen that covenant position describes a relationship, a position which is entered through faith and obedience, or through the obedience of faith. Now it can be seen that the relationship is analogous to that of a bride and a bridegroom.

This is not just a special position for the church of the New Covenant, but it also applies to God's covenant people of Old Testament times. In other words, those who meet the standards of obedient faith in the Old Testament will qualify for the bride position in the age to come just as those in this age, under the New Covenant.

### **John the Baptist on the Bride**

In making his own position clear John insisted that He was not the Messiah and indicated that He could be recognized by the fact that disciples were going to Jesus. He must decrease while Christ increased (John 3:30).

This was his answer to those who said all men were coming to Jesus (John 3:26). There was no jealousy in John's heart for his own position. He wanted Christ to have the glory.

It should be apparent that those following Jesus were becoming His disciples, not John's. These John called "the Bride." Not many today are willing for the Christ to have all the honor and the glory.

### **Paul on the Bride**

To the church at Corinth Paul said,

*"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present [you as] a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:2, 3).*

By the Truth he preached he was bringing these disciples to

feel a love for and an allegiance to the Christ. He describes the position of a congregation called a church as like that between a man and his wife —

*"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." (Ephesians 5:32)*

His calling it a mystery does not mean that it is mysterious, but it is a part of God's secret purpose to bring men into an intimate relationship with Himself. It is a love relationship. Knowing the sweet spirit of Christ makes this a most desirable relationship. The fact that it reaches into the age to come makes it all the more mandatory that every disciple come to this position.

Those portions of the New Testament dealing with godliness, devotion, love, holiness, and such like are all based on this bride/bridegroom relationship, though it is not always named as such each time. But as Paul said it in Ephesians 5, the whole essence of that truth is embodied in the family. A husband who is the head of his house and loves his wife and a wife who is submitted to her husband, provide a pattern for picturing Christ and His church.

*"For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Ephesians 5:30).*

A man loving his wife is loving himself. It is that close we are to Him who is our Bridegroom..

Those with the carnal ideas of family, and those with distorted ideas about what is Christ's body or church, can hardly appreciate what is meant by this love relationship, particularly if they think of all the saved as being the church or body of Christ.

### **The Apostle John on the Bride**

Toward the end of the age, as holy men and angels anticipate the Lord's return, we see them calling for the manifestation of His holiness and love in the bridal relationship (Revelation 19:8 9). He then was invited to see the Bride city descend out of heaven to the new earth (Revelation 21:2).

Almost at the very end of the Revelation he speaks of the blessedness of those who identify with the Christ, emphasizing their doing His commandments, and quoting the Bride as saying she, along with the Spirit, invites all men to come and partake of the water of life (Revelation 22:17).

The entire book of Revelation is addressed to the churches, particularly the seven named in Asia, those evidently being representative of all churches of the Lord everywhere on earth (Revelation 22:16).

It seems there should be no question in identifying the bride as of those churches. But one was told she was about to lose her candlestick, indicating that she was about to forfeit her bridal relationship by having the light of truth once for all committed to the churches withdrawn in her case.

One wonders how many churches left in the world today have so far departed from their commission as to have lost their candlestick. This was spoken to Ephesus, one of the churches commended for their sound doctrine and careful discipline, yet they are told they had left their first love.

While most think this is a love for lost sinners, I think a Christian's first love, and particularly that of a church, is for the Christ Himself. When He ceases to be first in the life of a church it loses its candlestick (her light bearing ability).

### **The Bridal Relationship in the Old Testament**

Many pastors, and hence many churches, speak of the church, as an institution, being the Bride. This is true, but not the whole truth, for it overlooks the place the prophets gave to bridal relationship in the Old Testament. There are numerous references which teach it, but many have thought it there applied to God the Father and His relationship to Israel.

It seems to me this overlooks the fact that the Christ is one with His Father and that faithfulness or devotion to Him is called for all through the Old Testament: Evidently those faithful in covenant relationship are to be a part of Christ's bride the same as faithful covenant members, church saints, in the New Testament.

*"Kings' daughters [were] among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand stood the queen in gold of Ophir. 10 "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thy own people, and thy father's house; 11 So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he [is] thy Lord; and worship thou him. 12 And the daughter of Tyre [shall be there] with a gift; [even] the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour 13 The king's daughter [is] all glorious within: her clothing [is] of wrought gold. 14 She shall be brought to the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought to thee. 15 With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace." (Psalm 45:9-15).*

Can we not see in this passage, this whole Psalm, that the sweet singer of Israel is anticipating the beauties of the bridal relationship as he speaks of the queen and her relationship to the King, Jesus"

*"If thou knowest not, O thou fairest among women, go forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents." (Song of Solomon 1:8.)*

*"For thy Maker [is] thy husband; the LORD of hosts [is] his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called." (Isaiah 54:5)*

*"Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. 5 For [as] a young man marrieth a virgin, [so] shall thy sons marry thee: and [as] the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, [so] shall thy God rejoice over thee." (Isaiah 62:4, 5)*

*{Hephzibah: that is, My delight is in her} {Beulah: that is, Married}*



Again, the bridal relationship is obvious (See: Jeremiah 3:14, 15; Ezekiel 16:8; Isaiah 62:3-5) — noting in Ezekiel the covenant idea (Also see: Hosea 2:19, 20). Also, it is obvious in other New Testament passages, as Romans 7:4.

### **God Does Not Change**

When we ask who shall be in the Bride the principle is no different than when we ask who can be saved. Being in the Bride and being saved initially are not the same thing, but God is the same. God deals by the same principles which govern His actions in any age.

*"For I [am] the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." (Malachi 3:6)*

*"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." (Hebrews 13:8)*

What we are saying is that God is God all the time and He is fair all the time. He is righteous all the time. He stands for the same things all the time. If He desires a people of righteousness, then He always desires it.

If He wants to live in an intimate relationship with that people, He does this all the time. He is consistent. He tells the truth. He is not facetious. The reason we can afford to trust Him is that He is always consistent. Though we change, He does not.

It is true that it is said that grace becomes more evident in Jesus than was manifest in the Old Testament.

*"For the law was given by Moses, [but] grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John 1:17)*

This does not mean there was no grace and no truth in the law. It means that God reveals all about Himself progressively. Progressive revelation is a principle of His dealings with men.

So it is said that the new covenant which Jesus mediated speaks better things than the blood of sprinkling under the law (Hebrews 12:24). There are better promises coming from a better covenant (Hebrews 8:6).

These two illustrate that God has many better things in store for men of faith who will submit to Him (Hebrews 11:40), so that a better thing is provided for us, all of us, both from Old Testament times and New Testament times, than has been received thus far. They died in faith not having received the promise (Hebrews, 11:39).

Some in this age have received promises which extend beyond anything which they under the Old Covenant received. This does not mean that God is a respecter of persons, for this is denied in the Word. It simply means that God reveals and does all things according to a pattern consistent with His own nature and purpose.

It appears from the Old Testament that Abraham and Israel were only promised a land and prosperity -- good crops, increase in cattle and harvests. Later, however, Israel was told of the better country (fatherland), better government, better living conditions.

So some of these things seem only to apply to this earth, which they do. Even men of faith in this age are promised the earth for an inheritance. But there were hints in the Old Testament of glory, honor, peace, and prosperity beyond anything which they could imagine (Isaiah 64:4).

Then the New Testament begins to explain many of these things (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:9, where Paul calls this "secret wisdom" -- a mystery -- claiming it is now revealed.

*"The secret [things belong] to the LORD our God: but those [things which are] revealed [belong] to us and to our children for ever, that [we] may do all the words of this law." (Deuteronomy 29:29)*

So, brethren, we should take advantage of what is revealed.

There seems to be no doubt that God desires the bridal relationship for all of His people. We must face it: many in Israel did not qualify; many today will not either. But it is a promise held out to both. Sitting down in the kingdom with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is a prospect held before us (Matthew 8:11). The faithful of all ages shall reign with Christ in His kingdom.

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## **CHAPTER SIXTEEN**

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### **Is The Coming of Antichrist Before the Coming of Christ?**

(2 Thessalonians 2:1-4)

*"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 25:13)*

*"But of that day and hour knoweth no [man], no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matthew 24:36)*

It can surely be seen that this information is pretty well reserved to the mind of God. Date setters are off their beat. God keeps this information hidden for reasons best known to Himself. It is information which is not conducive to faith, but influences men to walk by sight, which is something God is not pleased for any of us to do.

Certain disciples at Thessalonica had thought that the Lord had come and they had missed it.

*"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and [by] our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of the Lord at hand.*

*"Let no man deceive you by any means: for [that day shall not come], except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is*

*called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4).*

Here we find the coming of the "day of the Lord" and the revealing of the man of sin each dealt with in one passage. It should be clear to the honest reader that the day of the Lord is not to come until there come a falling away first and a revealing of the man of sin take place.

Someone may feel that he knows that the falling away has already occurred. The word means a turning from what one was or believed, a standing off from the position formerly held, or revealed. The Gk., *apostasia*, from *apo*, from, or away, and *stasis*, a standing.

The thing must refer to people who knew certain truth, who profess an allegiance to the Word of God or to God, and then turn from that. But it is not just a matter of backsliding. It is more than coldness or blindness to information. One must know a position to take a stand against it.

Such a falling away seems already evident in the churches today, in that there is a coldness, a lack of zeal for truth or right — but you should know that it is a "departing from the faith" we are to expect among those who were in the faith ;

*"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons; (1 Timothy 4:1)*

It shall become much worse than it is now, as bad as it is. It is a sign of the end of the age and the coming of the Lord.

Next comes the revealing of the man of sin. What is it for him to be revealed? He comes in slyly, so as to deceive. He comes in peaceably and obtains the kingdom by flatteries (Daniel 11:21). His causing craft (deceit) to prosper shall so deceive people until the world fast begins to accept and follow him (Daniel 8:25).

At first it is a following of a king. Then it becomes a following as a god. He shows himself that he is god, even using mira-

cles as proof (Revelation 13:14).

Those expecting overt miracles today will be easily led astray by this means. It seems that those of us who know what he is like, and much that he will do, will recognize him early, certainly by the time he makes a covenant with Israel for seven years (under the first seal of Revelation 6). If that is not publicized, then we surely will know him when he breaks his covenant with Israel, at the breaking of Seal Two, and all sorts of war, bloodshed, and the like follow.

The Day of the Lord must come after this, making the coming of Antichrist before the return of Christ. This will be one of the causes of greatest confusion imaginable at that time. And there is no use why this should be so. We are told plainly that His coming will be afterward.

*"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken; And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matthew 24:29-31)*

If there is a question about what tribulation is meant, just look back to verse 21. There is no question as to what tribulation is meant. This tribulation has been prophesied at least as far back as Isaiah's time (Isaiah 26:15-21).

In this passage the tribulation is described as a woman's travail (vv. 17, 18) and as "indignation" (v. 20). We must not allow the traditions of past years which we have heard to influence us against the plain language of the Bible.

Jesus had warned the men of Israel that one would come in his own name whom they would receive, though they had rejected Himself when He came in His Father's name (John 5:43).

Antichrist will seek to destroy Israel in the end of the age, so that many have to flee from Satan to the wilderness (Revelation 12:13-17). They will find refuge as "outcasts" whom God calls "mine outcasts" (Isaiah 16:1-5).

As unlikely as it sounds, the Moabites shall provide them refuge in those days. Again and again in the prophets is the tribulation of the endtime described and in the end the coming of the Lord gives deliverance (cf. Isaiah 24:13-23).

The fact that the saints are given into the hands of the Antichrist to wear them out, even to kill many of them, is evidence that he is on the scene before the Christ comes to take out His own (cf. Daniel 7:21, 22; Revelation 13:7).

Is the reader aware that this situation is to occur after Satan is cast out of heaven and comes down to the earth having great wrath, knowing his time is short (Revelation 12:7-12)? If you can see that this is coming to pass there surely is great cause for getting our priorities straight so that we may be able to withstand such pressure. If we are alive until Jesus comes we must face these things which are to come upon the earth.

The disciples were told to "Watch," as though the Lord might come at an unexpected hour.

*"My soul [waiteth] for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: [I say, more than] they that watch for the morning." (Psalm 130:6)*

All eight verses of this one hundred thirtieth Psalm describe the meaning of watchfulness. Whether the sweet singer had any thought of the coming of Messiah to the earth is doubtful at the moment, though He had certainly been promised this seed to come. But the thought is that he cried from the depth of a great burden, or desire, or despair.

The next two verses suggest that his own unworthiness had come before the eyes of his heart. In such a need he thought that His Lord would be his only hope and deliverer, so that he said, "In his word do I hope" (v. 5).

Thus waiting with God's promise before his heart, he stayed in "the patience of hope" (1 Thessalonians 1:3). This is the cor-

rect attitude for a believer in any age. The actual, visual appearance of Him when "every eye shall see him" (Revelation 1:7) does not have to be the thought at the moment.

### **An Imminent Coming?**

For several years after I was first saved I was taught that Jesus could appear any day, at any hour. Even before my salvation I had a problem with a song often sung at church: "On that bright and cloudless morning when the dead in Christ shall rise,..." It is the second stanza of "When the Roll Is called Up Yonder."

I already knew that he was coming in clouds. So to me there was a contradiction. I thank God as I remember it that I had been taught to believe what the Bible says. I have since learned that a good many things must be understood as figures but at the time I took it literally. It was easy to believe that Jesus could appear at any time.

It is safest to take all language literally unless it does produce a ridiculous conclusion, or contradict some other plain statement. We are not at liberty to say a part of the Bible is a figure, and does not mean what it says, until we have compared scripture with scripture and come to a considered understanding of any portion which may be a metaphor or some form of symbol.

I believe yet that Jesus is coming back literally, just as those men saw Him go into heaven (Acts 1:11). They were told that they need not stand there and keep watching up toward heaven, for He would so come in like manner as they had seen him go into heaven, At the same time I have come to believe that many things on earth shall occur before that time and some of those we ought to expect before that literal coming appears.

The *"falling away first"* is one, and that is fast coming to pass. Another is the revealing of the man of sin. Surely we can now see that the circumstances are ripening for such an appearing.

Perhaps it will be another year, or ten years. Possibly I shall not be around long enough to see it in this natural body. But

I expect to see it. So it is not imminent! The watching is with an eye of faith, not with heads bent back, looking up into the sky. (Cf. Mark 13:32-35; Luke 21:34,36; 1 Thessalonians 5:4, 5; 2 Timothy 4:5, 8).

We must train our hearts to watch for the Lord all the time. We know He sees all that we do, that He cares what we say or do, even what we think. We need to be alert to what He thinks. This we do by becoming familiar with His Word, as the psalmist did (Psalm 130:5). So, we watch with our souls and become sensitive to His view in all things. Watching calls for praying and praying calls for watching (Matthew 26:41; Mark 13:33; Mark 14:38; Luke 21:36).

### **Does It Make Any Difference?**

An attitude often found among believers today is that one does not know, cannot likely know, so it does not make a difference to them. I expect many, maybe most, believers today who have been taught that there is to be an imminent coming, are better satisfied with such an idea and would rather not be told that this is not true.

A few may be so indifferent as to what the Bible actually says, they may say, "It does not make any difference." But, brethren, it makes a difference. If you are willing to wait and see, just not caring which way it may be, you may find yourself left among those unbelievers who will certainly be left on earth when Christ comes.

You believe He will take all at once? Then how will you feel when those in Christ are gone and you are still here. Will you decide that you were not saved? If so, will you then begin to try to be saved?

It will be too late after Christ has come. Even before, during the tribulation, men are not willing to repent (Revelation 9:20,21; Revelation 16:8,9). If one has been so indifferent before, why do you feel you will repent later?

Far too many professing believers, even members of churches, are willing to leave all these details to the preachers, assuming they cannot understand and do not need to know. The



truth is (Romans 14:12) *"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."*

The Bible is designed to be understood. Men face the hard words, mostly names of people they do not know, and decide they cannot understand it. So study it. It will begin to make good sense. But until you are disposed to obey it, it will always seem difficult. For him who has a heart to obey the Holy Spirit will grant discernment and it will be clear, if you need to know. If it is something you do not need to know yet, then you must be willing to wait on the Lord.

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## **CHAPTER SEVENTEEN**

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### **What Is the Meaning of Eternal Life?**

*Who Has It, and When Did They Get It?*

*"These things have I written to you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:13)*

Does it not seem strange that this language states such a marvelous truth, yet repeats the condition for it as it does? These brethren are described as "you that believe" and then goes on so say "that ye may believe." By believing they may know they have eternal life, and by that knowing they are encouraged to go on believing.

We need to know, first, what life is being discussed and then what is meant by "eternal." We let John himself explain as he was writing by inspiration:

*"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was revealed, and we have seen [it], and bear witness, and show to you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was revealed to us)" (1 John 1:1, 2)*

In His Gospel he had said of Jesus

*"In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4)*

This is what John had seen, heard, and handled. These simple words tell me that John knew this manifestation of life, the life revealed, firsthand. It became an experience. It was very

real, so real that he felt he must repeat the words to emphasize that he had experienced the sense of the life, the light, which Jesus revealed. Now he desires that those believers whom he affectionately calls "little children" should become aware by the same experience so they could appreciate it in fellowship with him and with each other.

If it is not yet clear what this life looks like, sounds like, feels like, let me suggest that it shows up in the deportment and disposition of the one who has it.

It may appear as joy, as love, as sweetness of disposition, as kindness, as tenderness', as patience, as righteousness, as goodness, as meekness. It includes all of the characteristics of the life of God Himself. It was a light; it was seen in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6).

These are qualities of life, all good qualities. These were manifested in Jesus in the fullness of Godhood. Would these not show if they were evident in our own lives?

Thus we hear that life was revealed; it was seen; it was heard; it was handled with the hands. Do you suppose he meant only that he had touched Jesus physically, even leaning upon His bosom? No! He knew the joy of fellowship with Him, a commonness which included the life which Jesus came to show to men. Light disperses darkness; it removes doubts; it causes hope to spring up by virtue of what it makes to appear.

When John wrote the Gospel of John the time must have been long after Jesus had gone to the tomb, had arisen, had been seen of the disciples, and had gone back to the Father. For a man in flesh to come out of the tomb was a marvel. For Him to fellowship with them for a number of days must have been sweet. But for Him to ascend before their sight surely spoke of life beyond human life. The Father had been pleased that His own fullness should dwell in Jesus bodily in order to reveal His own life, God's life which has neither beginning nor any ending. Manifested also was His "eternal power" (Romans 1:20).

This word for **eternal** occurs only here and in Jude 6. In Jude it describes "everlasting chains" that bind the fallen angels.

These two usages and they alone in the Greek New Testament, use the word which the Greeks normally used to describe that which was without end, also without beginning.

Broken down, this word, *aīdios*, means not perceived, from the particle *a*, meaning not, and *eidios*, a form from *aei*. The *ei* is a conditional word, like our "if", hence, not seen nor understood.

Thus this word was a manner of speaking of that which was not seen, either backward or forward. Eternal is about as close as one can say it in English.

Another word used many times in the New Testament and most often translated eternal or everlasting is *aiōnios*. This is an adjective form of *aiōn*, equivalent to our word eon or aeon, but in Greek always an age. Its length is not an element in its sense. We more often use the English word "day" to describe it, as in "Every dog has his day."

Or I might speak of my dad's day in contradistinction to our day. It measures a lifetime, or an unspecified period of time. Jesus said,

*"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56)*

What day did He mean? Doubtless it was "the day of the Lord," which we call the Millennium.

But it may well extend to include eternity. This day of the Lord so often referred to in the Bible (cf. Jeremiah 46:10; Acts 2:20; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2), certainly extends for the thousand years, but may well go much further.

Usually when the extended time is meant the construction is "the ages of the ages," (in AV "forever and ever." But the adjective (*aiōnios*) by itself simply means age-like. If we speak of yesteryear we are not talking about a time on the calendar, but we refer to conditions belonging to the past. Likewise, we often speak of the future as "tomorrow."

In this construction we are not speaking of the day following today on the calendar; we speak of circumstances or condi-

tions which we trust, or fear, will prevail in the future.

Such language is ordinary and should not disturb our thinking at all. The days to come, in time to come, there is held out to natural men a prospect of pleasing circumstances, or, it may be, a warning of things we possibly could forestall by taking proper steps today.

For the believer hope becomes the encouragement for today. "The world (age) to come will show God's grace in ways we have never imagined, and can only know about as God has revealed it to us in His Word (1 Corinthians 2:9, 10).

The question for men lacking faith is, "How can we know what will be after this life?" Paul said, *"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable"* (1 Corinthians 15:19). Why so?

Men of the world seek their reward in this life. While they are often disappointed, there is no hope beyond. But for the man of faith, we know that this life does not hold our reward. In fact, we feel we must deny any benefits which the world itself seems to bestow, looking to the Lord for our portion.

Further, we are enabled to see the hurt, the misery, the disappointment, and the futility of this life. If there is no tomorrow for us, then we are more miserable, even, than the man of the world (cf. Psalm 17:14).

In view of this situation, and with man's limited ideas and expectation for the life after this, it behooves us to learn what God has in store. We truly need to know what the future holds if we are to know the peace and the joy which the Word holds out to us. Our joy for today lies in our understanding the "blessed hope" (Titus 2:14).

### **God Labels What Is Not True As Being True**

*"(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, [even] God, who giveth life to the dead, and calleth those things which are not as though they were" (Romans 4:17)*

This parenthetic statement is designed to explain and reinforce

a phrase in verse 15: *"To the end the promise might be sure to all the seed."*

God is anxious for us to have assurance concerning His promises, so he expresses them as though they were already a fact, so that we can know that in His time they will be fact. God had made Abraham a Father of many nations when he did not even have a son. Impossible? Not for God.

God tells the believer that He has everlasting life, shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life. (John 5:24). This believer is described as one who is hearing God's Words and is believing the Father Who sent Jesus. Do we believe that God sent Jesus? Some of us claim to believe it, but we live as though He had not come. Looking at what His coming means, would be an eye-opener for our hearts.

Jesus came to reveal "eternal life" (1 John 1:1, 2, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, and also dealt with in Chapter Thirteen.).

*"In Him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4)*

Have you not seen this life? Or are you objecting that you were not there when Jesus was on earth, so you did not see it? But wait! Did you have a sweet Christian mother? Or a humble Christian father?

Do you know a godly man, or woman? What makes him (or her) godly? Godly means godlike. We understand this, do we not? We mean a life which is somewhat like God. Righteousness, peace, patience, firmness, we feel, are elements of godliness.

It pleased the Father that in Jesus should all fulness of godhood dwell in a body of flesh (Colossians 1:19: Colossians 2:9). Jesus was fully like His Father in all those elements of His life. This made him a light to men.

Now God tells men that He will reproduce this life in the Body of Christ, the church, if allowed to do so (Ephesians 1:22, 23)

Without repeating many things we have said in earlier chapters, we want to insist that God revealed His life to men so

they may know what He is like. His law did it in a lesser degree (Romans 8:3, 4).

Its problem was that it appealed to man's flesh and it was not possible for his flesh to live up to this standard (Romans 8:7, 8). Therefore God has come in human flesh to show us that it is possible for men to manifest the elements of His life. Then to His church the Spirit came so we could drink of His power and wisdom (1 Corinthians 12:13) and be able to allow that life in us as Christ *IN* us manifests it again.

It is by this means that elements of God's life, which shall be fully manifested in the age to come, become operative in us even while we yet live in the flesh. Please see this in a few of many texts which declare it:

I asked my computer Bible Program to locate passages mentioning everlasting or eternal life. In less than 11 seconds it came up with forty-six passages using these words.

The first was Daniel 12:2 where this life is placed after the resurrection. The next two (Matthew 18:8; Matthew 19:16) do the same

So do two more references in Matthew (Matthew 19:29; Matthew 25:46). Both of these put this life in the next age, one calling it an inheritance.

The first reference in Mark (Mark 10:17) mentions a young ruler who wanted to know what he could do to inherit eternal life.

The next reference (Mark 10:30) quotes Jesus as promising many good things to the man with certain good qualities in his life as becoming eligible for eternal life in the next age.

In several of these passages it is clear that if one values God's Word and will in this life he will receive much more in this than if he did not, and in the age to come he is to receive everlasting life.

All of these references tell us that eternal life belongs to the time after the resurrection. So do all of the references in Luke (Luke 10:25; Luke 18:18,30). John's listing agrees (John

3:15,16) until we come to John 3:36. There this life is listed as a present possession of the one believing — "hath everlasting life" — "hath" a present active indicative verb.

The next references in John (John 4:14; 36) begin to point out present life circumstances which weigh upon whether or not there will be an inheritance in the age to come.

Then John 5:24 again emphasizes the present possession of this life. The next (John 5:39) says that generation searched the Scriptures thinking to find eternal life there, but Jesus made the essential point that the Scriptures speak of Him, thus indicating that this life was to be had only in Him.

*"But whoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."* (John 4:14 — see also: John 6:54)

Here is strong evidence that life in the next age stems from one's drinking of the water of life again and again. This will appear presently. It is foolish to labor (spend time and effort) for meat (food for body or mind) which will perish (John 6:27).

When one lays up in heaven, the work is not wasted, but will show or accumulate unto life everlasting for one's self Matthew 6:19, 20). The promise of this life is enhanced (John 6:40) by the fact it is a gift to everyone seeing the Son and believing on Him, and, further, by an assurance of a resurrection at the last day.

*"Verily, verily, I say to you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life" (John 6:47)*

Here we have a plain statement that this everlasting life is experienced, at least in some degree, now. Does God extend the qualities of the coming age into this age? Yes! A parallel statement is seen in Romans 14:17.

*"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost."*

The kingdom was a covenant promise to Abraham. He died in



faith without having obtained this promise (Hebrews 11:39, 40), but by that faith he was able to see that day from afar (John 8:56). He had God's word that the kingdom would come as an inheritance, but he did not receive it in his earthly lifetime, but God raises such men from the dead so that He can keep His promises. *"For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power (1 Corinthians 4:20).*

*Righteousness, peace, joy, and power* are qualities of the age to come. By the Holy Spirit these are provided in this life for those who have the indwelling Spirit. Such are they as have eternal life now, for they are the one's hearing His Words and believing Him.

I regret that space prevents my dealing with every reference using the words eternal or everlasting life, but I list the rest of them here: John 6:54, 68; 10:28; 12:25, 50; 17:2, 3; Acts 13:46, 48; Romans 2:7; 5:21; 6:22, 23; Galatians 6:8; 1 Timothy 1:16; 1 Timothy 6:12, 19; Titus 1:2; 3:7; 1 John 1:2; 1 John 2:25; 1 John 3:15; 1 John 5:11, 13, 20; Jude 21.

The passage I have underlined in this list says we should "lay hold on eternal life." This joins with "fight the good fight of faith." We are called to eternal life, so now get hold of eternal life. Take possession of this gift.

*"In your patience possess ye your souls." (Luke 21:19)*

In the patience of unswerving faith, obtain for yourself your own soul.

*"For whoever will save his life shall lose it: and whoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:25, 26)*

Here it is said that one gains his life by losing it and that there is no exchange he can make for it after he has lost it. It should be noted that in this passage the word for "life" is not the one we have been studying as modified by the word "eternal." Rather, the word in verse 25 (twice) is found also

(twice) in verse 26 and there rendered "soul."

The soul has these elements of a man's conscious life — mind emotions, and will. Our effort to use these for our exclusive satisfaction means we lose them. Losing them by surrendering them to the Lord gains them for ourselves in the world to come. Thus does one get possession of his own soul (Gk., *psyche*). Do not most of us spend our waking hours working to save these: intelligence (education), emotions (feelings), and will (what we want in this world)?

If we are to have eternal life, that is, the life after God's pattern, we must surrender our whole selves to Him in this present time. He will in turn give them back and much more in this lifetime and in the age to come give us the full measure of eternal life.

### **The Answer to Our Title Questions**

What is Eternal Life? It is that age-life which shall be fully enjoyed in the age to come. It is the life of God, the one fully revealed to us in Jesus.

Surely no one has any question as to what His life was like, even before the cross. It included perfection in the sense of maturity. He was holy, harmless, undefiled.

*"For such an high priest was fitting for us, [who is] holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26)*

Qualified to be a High Priest, but much more. Was His life important? It was His death which we so often look to as our remedy. Yes, But we are saved by His life.

*"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Romans 5:10)*

When do we get eternal life? During this life, when we surrender our hearts and lives to Him? This is such a transaction as always faces probation.

We can know that it is ours the moment we trust Him. Only

God knows whether this has reached the depths of our being so that we will continue to hold onto it. A man of faith, as David, realized that he could lose the Holy Spirit from His life (Psalm 51:11). This was a great concern to Him. Since losing this means we are no longer Christ's as a part of His covenant people, it behooves us to make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10, 11).

As we live by faith, heeding the Word all the way, the blessed hope (Titus 2:13) enriches our live with joy and peace, and we actually experience the joy of fellowship with the Father and the Son. These benefits of the age to come are brought to us in the present age through the indwelling Christ, by the Spirit.

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## **CHAPTER EIGHTEEN**

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### **Thinking As A Saint**

*"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31)*

Do all to the glory of God! If we are to do this willingly and correctly we must know something of what His will is. This is learned from the Word.

A saint is one who is sanctified, that is, has been set apart as special, belonging to the Lord. He has entered into a relationship with Christ, choosing to do so, and now has His presence in his life. He is holy because of that relationship. He is in Christ.

Please do not suppose one has come to this point merely because he is saved. The Roman road plan of salvation, as referred to many times (Romans 10), deals with the salvation of the life which takes place as one has consciously chosen to walk with the Lord, obedient to His revealed will. This means he comes for baptism and church membership. He has become conscious that his own deliverance from sin was by the grace of God and He is not finished. He should learn that God saved him initially so that He could become a saint. He may not feel holy at first, though doubtless he will feel clean. He will have peace and great joy, but soon he will realize that old habits are bothering him.

Old language slips onto his tongue. Old prejudices still rise up in his heart. Each time there will be a realization that this is wrong, but this makes him wonder if he has had the experience he thought he had. He could even begin to doubt his salvation. Such disturbing thoughts and tendencies should let

him know that God is not through with him.

The salvation he has is not enough, as perfect as it is. It is even forever (Ecclesiastes 3:14), but it is only just begun. The new believer should realize that whatever else he lacks can be received in the same manner as he was first saved.

*"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, [so] walk ye in him" (Colossians 2:5)*

On the other hand, if one has been told by someone, or if he has gotten the idea that in that one act of faith he has been put into full place or position for all spiritual blessings, then he must learn that this is a misunderstanding.

### **What Is He to Do?**

Traditionally Baptist churches hear a confession of faith in Christ and immediately press the individual to unite with the church. This is all right, but the person should know that the reason for doing this is so that the benefits of church membership may be attained one by one.

The church does not save an alien sinner; he must receive initial salvation before he is eligible to become a church member. While God is the Savior, whatever sense that word is being used, the church is an instrument which He uses for the saving of the life. To her was committed the oracles of God, as they were to Israel earlier (Romans 3:2; cf. Hebrews 5:12; 1 Peter 4:11).

She is "the pillar and ground of the truth" in this present age (1 Timothy 3:15). She is the institution for teaching disciples who are baptized all things which Jesus taught the original disciples (Matthew 28:20). This is not only so new believers can know what He taught, but they are to observe those things.

The church is not only told to do these things but she is imminently qualified in two ways (1 Timothy 3:15): 1) She was given that word in trust, and 2) She has been empowered by the indwelling Spirit so she can do it (Acts 1:8).

She may fail to do it through carelessness, through neglect of study, or through failure to walk close to the Lord. We see

this in some of the seven churches of Asia (Revelation 2 -- 3).

### **Hearing One Word and Forgetting the Rest**

Many times a child will hear a series of instructions and only remember one, probably the first. Adults still retain this characteristic.

The Great Commission stands out in the minds of most church saints. It is quoted by pastors and Sunday School teachers again and again. It should be emphasized, but the whole series should be heeded.. Jesus was giving His last orders to that first church.

1. As you go into all the world.

This certainly provides the authority for world wide missions. Our field is the world.

2. Make disciples of all the nations.

This is the church's business. None is more important. How is this understood? It is usually explained to mean that we have the business of getting people to trust the Lord. We find no fault with this, but we fault ourselves in our lack of zeal to see that every man, in all the nations, has an opportunity to trust Jesus as Savior.

The Authorized Version which many of us use says "teach all nations." The word for teach in the original language is *matheteusate*, a verb in the imperative mode, a completed action tense, and a plural number, that being the usual number used to describe a church (Matthew 28:19).

In other words, it is a command to be performed, now, by the whole church. This word has a meaning of causing one to learn, make learners. True, one learns he is lost, helpless, sure for judgment, unworthy, and then at the last he learns that God is willing and able to save him "free for nothing", as the little boy said.

There is a price, but Jesus paid it, not the sinner. This explains the meaning of grace, a favor undeserved and unmerited. It is true that this initial experience of grace puts one in a

position of knowing that God is gracious, that we are in His debt , and that we now want His will done in our lives.

### 3. Baptizing them.

This is a present participle. Any participle is relative in tense sense to the tense of the principle verb, so the discipling must be a finished operation in its initial sense before one is to be baptized. As soon as one has come up out of the water of baptism he should know, or soon see, that he has buried the old man, renounced the old lifestyle, and is in position to live a holy life.

I fear that in the midst of this third requirement the church's duty to disciple breaks down. It is a part of discipling to cause one to become a learner. How many of those baptized, though, are caused to see what was buried and what sort of man is now alive from the dead? And how many of those baptized ever get very far in the teaching to observe all things which Jesus had taught the original disciples.

### 4. Teaching them to observe all things which I have commanded you.

The word for *teach* here is a different word. Its being a participle makes it a prolonged or causative usage, the teaching to continue. It goes on throughout the lifetime of a church member. Note also that it is "to observe" This means to guard, to keep. It is much more than to have knowledge of certain religious things. Observing, or guarding, the teachings of the Bible becomes a lifetime privilege.

We must not be like the preacher said of the young wasp, first hatched and out of the cocoon, as larger than he will ever be again. How many professing Christians does this describe? A man has learned that he is a sinner; he knows that God for Christ's sake has forgiven him for his sins, but he seems not concerned to learn more of such a wonderful Savior.

It is easy for us to say, when one makes no further spiritual progress, that person was never saved. This may be true, but not necessarily so. He may, indeed, have trusted Jesus as His Savior, and if he did, he is saved forever, for God did it and

nothing can be put to it and nothing taken from it (Ecclesiastes 3:14).

God does such a work that men may know that God is God and to be feared, while we are but men and utterly helpless by ourselves. The rest of us may look at that man who has made no progress in learning spiritual things and say that he must not have been saved, but we are in no position to judge such things.

When I look at one who is satisfied with doctrines which I know are false, then I know he is judging by carnal reasoning, not by the Word, but this does not say he is lost, for saved men have the same mind as before and the same nature. Only one who has put on Christ and has the Spirit of God has the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:16).

This will not mean that they are always correct, for the heart must learn and obey. The very next verse (1 Corinthians 3:1) says that these Corinthians who had the mind of Christ were carnal, even babes in Christ. But they were in Christ, which means they were saved, scripturally baptized, and members of the church. They needed to grow up in Him (Ephesians 4:15)

It is sad, not to say disheartening, to see people who made a profession of faith, seemingly sincere and real, and who united with the church, maybe have even attended more or less faithfully over the years, but have not learned much about God's ways, His people, His purposes, His covenant or kingdom, His coming, or His fellowship. There are reasons why this happens, not all of them the fault of the individual.

Preachers go Sunday after Sunday talking about how to be saved, as though the house had one, two, or a number of lost sinners present, when most of those present are professing Christians and members of the church. This surely is the preachers error. Or the impression may have been given that one needs to know Greek and Hebrew to learn the Bible. Again, the preacher is at fault for not explaining that the Bible is written to be understood. God gave it so that it is self confirming.

If your car stops in the road without your using the brake or making a stopping effort, you know something is wrong. You check to see if the gas tank is empty. Or if it is too hot to run;



you let it cool and fill the radiator. If it had been jerking and acting as though it could hardly run you may call a mechanic, knowing something is wrong. The fact it does not perform satisfactorily lets you know that it is giving you a message to get it fixed.

That is what the lights and gauges on the dash are for. Likewise, in your own life you realize that you are thinking about other things during church, considering your job, your income, your recreation, or some other distraction. This is a sign that you are not in shape to perform.

So what do you do? You ask your pastor what your problem is, or you get your Bible out and read it a while. Or you get on your knees and confess that you have not been a good servant to the Lord and ask His direction as to how to make changes which might please Him.

You really should look inside (under the hood) to see why you are not interested when the preacher is speaking. You do not care much for church. You know it is a duty and you want to be honest and do your job, but you seem so useless.

Any of these symptoms call for seeking the Lord's face, learning His will, humbling your own heart. You do not know what to do? You can know, and you likely do know, that you are not what you would like to be.

The Lord makes our hearts understand such things, but we must go to the Bible and learn of Him. We need to know His ways. Observe how He dealt with characters in the Scriptures. Sad to say, you cannot always look at the brethren and learn what you should be like. And you might not approve if you saw one who was most like Christ, for you have not humbled your own heart to learn what a saint should be like.

You are uneasy? Then quit taking things so easy, taking them for granted. Do not assume that because you are not called to preach there is not much you can do. A man willing to obey will soon find something he can do and, likely, can do better than others. You surely know that Bible reading is edifying. If you do not, then confess this as sin to God and try again.

### **Living a Secretive Life**

A lot of things in our lives are nobody's business, to be sure, but the way we honor God and serve Him is every brother's business if you belong to the same church. Our business is to honor Him and serve Him and love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

This makes the Christian life a sort of open book. So do not treat it as though it were your paycheck, or your bank account. *"Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things [are] naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do"* (Hebrews 4:13).

Yes, you know that God knows all about you. Does this make you ashamed, or are you glad? We should be glad because then He will be there when we truly need Him. So will many of the brethren. This does not mean that we have to hint around, or frankly confess, that we have need, but our brethren love us and we ought to trust them and love them in turn.

*"For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself" (Romans 14:7)*

This says that our lives invariably touch the lives of others, either for good or evil. So we ought to be more devoted to our church, our brethren, and specially to the Lord.

There is an opposite extreme which is maybe even worse sin: the effort to create an impression, to always be up front. Some woman may call you a show off. The humble, sweet spirit in our Lord is our example.

We cannot show it to others by taking thought, lest we show our own flesh and crudeness. Some qualities which are good will show themselves: consistency, willingness, humility, gentleness, tenderness, faith, patience, love, meekness -- an inspired list is found in Galatians 5:22, 23 (see also: Ephesians 5:9).

When the spirit of Christ dwells within He will make His presence known to you and to others. It is called the spirit of Christ, because it is His disposition which comes through.

But any effort we make to show that we are good or right-

eous, or wise will come through only as the flesh. Even preachers make this mistake. When they use human wisdom to explain Divine Truth it will not please the Lord. The people may even recognize that He has not prepared His heart to honor the Lord.

The Scriptural way for the spirit of Christ to show is often seen in the expressions, "Let this mind be in you" (Philippians 2:5); "let all bitterness..., be put away from you" (Ephesians 4:31); "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom" (Colossians 3:16), and similar wording. Just allow it, let it be done, allow Him to Have His way. This overcomes the flesh effort to produce what we think is a right attitude.

### **The Most Important Thing for Us**

*"He hath shewed thee, O man, what [is] good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8)*

*"Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way: Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great [things] he hath done for you" (1 Samuel 12:23, 24)*

*"But [it is] good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works" (Psalm 73:28)*

*"[It is] good that [a man] should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD" (Lam. 3:26)*

*"But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42)*

*"And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God*

*with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? (Deuteronomy 10:12, 13)*

*"And Samuel said, Hath the LORD [as great] delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey [is] better than sacrifice, [and] to hearken than the fat of rams (1 Samuel 15:22)*

*"To do justice and judgment [is] more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice (Proverbs 21:3)*

*"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this [is] the whole [duty] of man (Ecclesiastes 12:13)*

*"Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually" Hosea 12:6)*

*"But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream (Amos 5:24)*

*"Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger (Zephaniah 2:3)*

All of the above passages are from the Old Testament, except one, and emphasize the duty of an individual who desired to do the right thing. Even in the New Testament individuals are responsible in the same way. So are they able to contribute to the corporate people of God, Israel in the Old Testament, the church today, since it is now the Israel of God. Individuals are able to be responsible as they are identified with the corporate people, as the following illustrate.

*"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32)*

*"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;" (Colossians 3:12)*

*"Finally, [be ye] all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, [be] pitiful, [be] courteous" (1 Peter 3:8)*

It is often said that the most important thing for an individual or a church to do is to win souls, reach the lost, tell them about Jesus as Savior. This is important, but, as so often happens, people are in darkness here many times also.

*"The fruit of the righteous [is] a tree of life; and he that winneth souls [is] wise" (Proverbs 11:30)*

*"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3)*

The righteous man bears fruit because it is a tree of life. He bears the fruit of life. That is the man who wins souls. He is a wise man. What does he do as a wise man? He wins souls.

As a result of winning men he shall shine as the brightness of the heavens, because he is turning many to righteousness. A man is turned to righteousness when he is won to the Lord, not just caused to believe for his own salvation, but has been won to walk in obedience of service.

Real soul winning is a labor of bringing men to love and serve the Lord. So many are left with the impression that their own spirit is the important thing, so to bring him to trust Jesus as Savior is what truly counts. But winning a man to live a godly life, to serve the Lord in humility, this is a man whose soul is won.

May we overcome this wrong emphasis on getting people initially saved. The true labor of love is to turn men to righteousness, that is, to live a righteous life. Can we not see that this is the most important work we can do?

Just getting people to profess faith in Christ is not enough. A

man must be led to commit himself, his whole life to the Lord. The real problem is not some of us who preach the value of the church and obedience to what the Bible teaches, but those who think all that is important is getting alien sinners to profess faith in Christ.

Those making the profession must do so before they can become soul winners themselves. It is an essential ministry. The neglect of the ministry of turning men's lives to righteousness is part of the problem with the churches today.

Churches filled with untaught members who may have been saved, are never strong for the Lord. They need to learn the meaning of "the beauties of holiness" and to worship in the "beauty of holiness" (Psalm 96:9; Psalm 110:3; 1 Chronicles 16:29; Psalm 29:2; cf. Ephesians 1:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:7).

Holy living has the right appeal. If men are to be won to our Holy Lord they must see the beauty of holiness in those witnessing to them.

Is your Lord worthy of your living a holy life?













