

HOW TO  
**OBTAIN**  
AND  
**MAINTAIN**  
**ETERNAL**  
**SALVATION**

By Ron Christian

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## INTRODUCTION

The debate of the Ages continues! It is not likely to be resolved soon. I am speaking of the debate between equally sincere Christians regarding the issue of 'Eternal Security'. The 'Calvinists' and the 'Arminians' both claim to love each other as 'brothers in Christ', but they do not agree regarding important 'salvation issues'. Of course, their 'common ground' of agreement is much greater than their issues of disagreement. Both agree that Christ alone is 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life', that no one can come to the Father except through the Christ (Acts 4:12), that the blood of Jesus atones for all sin (I John 1:7,9), that there is an everlasting hell to shun and an everlasting heaven to gain through faith alone in Christ. Sincere advocates in both 'theological camps' contend that a 'holy lifestyle' characterizes the 'normal Christian life'.

But serious differences still remain. "Does God will to save all persons or does He will to save only an 'elect' group of persons?" "Did Jesus die for only a limited number of previously-elected persons, or did Jesus die for the sins of all the world (i.e., was Jesus' atonement 'limited' or 'unlimited')?" "Does God's call to repentance come only to certain people, or does that call extend to every person?" "Is it possible to resist God's call to repentance, or is God's grace-call to repentance 'resistable'?" "Are all men 'saveable' or are only certain persons 'saveable'?" "To what extent are humans 'depraved' by sin?" "Is it possible for believers ever to lose their 'relationship', as well as their 'fellowship' with God, as a result of spiritual 'backslidding'?" "From a Biblical viewpoint, what constitutes 'apostacy', and is apostacy without a 'remedy'?"

These are some of more important questions which sincere 'Calvinists' and 'Arminians' debate between themselves.

'Eternal Savlation' - how is it OBTAINED and MAINTAINED? To answer this question is doubtless to answer the most important question of life! The purpose of this book is to attempt a serious (and extended) answer to this all-important question.

This book is written, not for the 'theological specialist', but for the discerning and earnest lay person who is serious in his efforts to "work out his salvation by fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). Some of the material may be 'mind-stretching', but hopefully most of it will be 'heart-warming'.

As writer and compiler, I have intentionally encountered some of the 'controversial issues' which have divided sincere Christians for a long time. But in seeking to be 'tough-minded', I have sought more to be 'tender-hearted' and compassionate toward those with whom I strongly disagree.

The format of this book admittedly is considerably different than the 'typical' book. The length of the book is longer than I had originally planned, but perhaps the variety in format will 'compensate' for the 'length'. The first five chapters, with the 'daily devotional format', could be viewed as a 'mini-book' within the larger volume. The next 13 chapters are an expository study of the book of I John, and are treated through a 'sermonic approach'. Chapter 19 is very different from any other portion of the book, in that this chapter could easily be 'extracted' from the book and could be used as a 'salvation tract' (similar to the popular 'Four Spiritual Laws' booklet which 'Campus Crusade For Christ' has used as an effective tool for soul-winning). Chapter 20 is really an 'extensive chart', showing the relationship between 'Promises', 'Conditions', and 'Warnings' throughout the New Testament (looking at 84 different Scriptural portions). The next three chapters (chapters 21,22,23) give an 'overview of Hebrews' (not an indepth expository study), and this overview focuses upon the controversial issue of 'conditional' verses 'unconditional' eternal security. The last five chapters of the book are investigative articles (written by several authors), on the subject of 'Eternal Security' and 'Election'.

A few words now about the various ways in which this book could be used. As mentioned earlier, the first five chapters of this volume could be treated as a separate mini-book, and could be used as a 'Daily Devotional Guide' on the general theme of 'Salvation'. Each page in these first five chapters includes, along with the practical-oriented devotional reading, an appropriate Scriptural reference, a written Prayer For The Day, and a written Affirmation For The Day.

The layout of the entire book lends itself to considerable variety in usage. The various 'Parts' of the book could be studied independently, with or without reading previous or subsequent Parts of the book, or the book can be read from start to finish 'sequentially' as any 'regular' book. The book is designed in such a way that it can easily be used for an adult (six month) Sunday School course. The individual chapters contain enough content, and yet are short enough in length, that they could also well serve as material for small midweek study groups within a local church. There are thought-provoking questions listed at the end of most chapters to provide class participants an opportunity to review and to discuss the main content of the chapter under consideration.

My indebtedness is expressed to the Congregation of the Fort Collins Free Methodist Church, in Fort Collins, Colorado. I have had the privilege as Pastor to 'shepherd' the beautiful people of this congregation for over two decades. Most of the content of this book has been 'delivered', either from the pulpit or from the classroom, to my wonderful 'flock' whom I continue to serve. A word of appreciation to those lay persons - especially to Teresa Smith - who have been involved as volunteers in the typing of several chapters. As a fifth generation 'Free Methodist', I have a 'holiness' tradition of the 'Wesleyan-Arminian' theological persuasion, which I cherish. My wife, who is a 'keen thinker' and a 'stimulating debater', has allowed me to dialogue with her for years regarding the many controversial theological issues, contained in this book. Impressive would be the number of hours which I have spent during my lifetime discussing and debating the many salvation issues which is the focus of this present volume.

Hopefully the outcome of studying and discussing this content will not be mere 'intellectual titillation', but instead 'renewed devotion' to Christ and 'mature understanding' of 'this great salvation' of our wonderful God!

- Ron Christian -

CHAPTER 1

HOW DO YOU REACT TO CHRIST?

THE INDESTRUCTIBLE CHRIST!

Christ is the most beautiful person who ever lived! Christ is God's outstretched arm to save mankind from self-destruction. Christ is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But John records that He who made the world came into His own world to save His world, but that the world of His own people failed to recognize Him and refused to accept Him. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name." (John 1:12 NASB)

Christ, the ever-contemporary One, confronts every person in every age and seeks entry into every life. All today, as in the days of Christ's earthly ministry, react to Christ in one of three ways.

Herod the King represents all those who react to Christ with hatred and hostility. The Chief Priests and Scribes represent all those who react to Christ with complete indifference. The Wise Men represent all those who react to Christ with adoring worship. We must look at each of these reactions to Christ.

Think first of Herod the King. He represents those who react with hatred and hostility. Herod tried to destroy Christ, but he was unsuccessful. Men can never destroy Christ or His message! The message of the Gospel may be either accepted or rejected, but it can never be eliminated. It is like a flame that can never be extinguished or quenched! Men try to put Christ out of their minds, but their conscience betrays them and it continues to speak out for Christ and for the right! The messenger of Christ may even be eliminated, but Christ and His Gospel can never be destroyed!

Reverend Richard Wurmbbrand, who has suffered greatly for the cause of Christ, and who has often written about the heroic Underground Church, says "The secret police persecuted the Underground Church very much, because they recognized in it the only effective resistance left. And just the kind of resistance, the spiritual resistance, which, if left unhindered, would undermine their atheistic power. They recognized, as only the devil can, an immediate threat to them. They knew if a man believed in Christ he would never be a mindless, willing subject. They knew they could imprison men, but they couldn't imprison faith in God. And so they fought very hard" (Tortured For Christ, p. 17).

Men, like Herod, hate Christ because Christ is a threat to them. Christ will not let evil men have their own way.

"Christ, You and Your message are indestructible! The messenger may be imprisoned or even eliminated, but Your message can never be imprisoned or destroyed! It is an inextinguishable flame!"

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** The gates of hell cannot prevail against the Christ of God and cannot kill the God in Christ!

IS CHRISTIANITY WORTH COUNTERFEITING?

The Chief Priests and Scribes represent those who react to Christ with indifference. "They were so engrossed in their Temple ritual and their legal discussions that they simply completely disregarded Jesus. He meant nothing to them. There are still those who are so interested in their own affairs that Jesus Christ means nothing to them." (Daily Study Bible, Matthew, vol. 1, p. 21, William Barclay.)

There are various reasons why persons today are indifferent to Christ and the Gospel. Some are indifferent because they believe the Church has been a failure. As I was having my hair cut one day, a barber said to me, "My experience with church-going, professing Christians has been unpleasant, so I decided I wouldn't have anything to do with the church". A university student said to me one day: "I was once a very active member of a Protestant Church, but because I saw corruption and hypocrisy in the church, I decided church was not for me. I don't believe in any organized Church. I believe that science will probably someday have all the final answers to man's problems. It may be a thousand years from now, but nevertheless science will have the final word. Look what progress science has already made. Someday Christianity will probably look simple and be archaic. What we need in Western Civilization is a liberal religion, merely as an agent of change. If you classify me as anything, I suppose that you could classify me as an agnostic. I can't say that I believe in Christ, and I'm not sure that there is such a thing as heaven or hell". A distant relative of mine said to me, rather indifferently, "There is a lot of churches, and it doesn't make any difference to me what church one belongs to. All have to live their own lives, and therefore, I don't care what other people do. Every church has its good and its bad, and you can go to church if you want to, but you don't need to if you don't care to!"

To each of these encounters, I reacted in a similar manner. I pointed out that, while the Church is important, it is not the Church, but only Christ, that can save from sin and give eternal life. Although it must be admitted that there is the superficial and hypocritical elements at times within the organized Church, there is far more of the genuine and the noble within the Church. Ten dollar bills are counterfeited because they are worth counterfeiting. Why is Christianity counterfeited? Because it is worth counterfeiting! Did you ever see a counterfeit unbeliever? No, never. Why?

"God, help me to be honest with myself. The medical profession is not judged because of a few quack doctors. I do not condemn all lawyers simply because some are dishonest. Don't allow me to deceive myself by judging Christ because of some counterfeit Christians!"

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** Even the counterfeits of Christianity pay a great compliment to Christians, for they acknowledge that Christians are worth counterfeiting!

HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE IF WE NEGLECT?

The Chief Priests and Scribes represent those who react with indifference. They were too preoccupied with their own pursuits to pay attention to Christ. There are too many today who are indifferent to Christ because they are preoccupied with the cares of life. The wife of a university student replied to me when I asked her if she was attending church: "No, we are not attending church now. I have uncles who are Methodist ministers, but since my husband is a student, we don't have time to get involved in church now. In the future, after my husband gets out of college, we plan to begin coming to church".

Some say that they want to have their 'share of fun in life' while they are young, and that they will consider Christ and the church when they become older. What a false delusion to think that there is always plenty of time in the future to consider God! The old must die, and the young may die! No one knows the appointed hour of his death. The rich man (as recorded in our Scripture reading for today) thought he had a long time to enjoy his wealth, but God said, "You fool! This very night your soul is required of you!" (Luke 12:20).

In one of his many books, William Barclay recounts the fable which tells of three apprentice devils who were coming to this earth to finish their apprenticeship. They were talking to Satan, the chief of the devils, about their plans to tempt and to ruin men. The first said, "I will tell them that there is no God". Satan said, "That will not delude many, for they know that there is a God". The second said, "I will tell men that there is no hell". Satan answered, "You will deceive no one that way; men know even now that there is a hell for sin". The third said, "I will tell men that there is no hurry". "Go", said Satan, "and you will ruin men by the thousand". Barclay then asserts that the most dangerous of all delusions is that there is plenty of time. He notes that the most dangerous day in a man's life is when he learns that there is such a word as tomorrow.

The Bible's exhortation is wise: "For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" (Hebrews 2:2-3a NASB).

Today is the acceptable time to receive Christ. Now is the day of salvation. Tomorrow may be too late--eternally too late! Someone appropriately said: "The road to hell is paved with good intentions".

"I have a hell to shun, a heaven to gain, a soul to save, and a God to serve! O Christ, turn my good intentions into decisive commitments! Heal me of my procrastinations!"

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** Tomorrow never comes! I will choose Christ today!

NEUTRAL YOU CANNOT BE!

Some are indifferent because they attempt to be neutral to Christianity. Some consider it a great virtue to adopt a policy of neutrality, to be tolerant to every religion. However, Christ dogmatically asserted that He was the Only Way to God. Jesus is the "Way, the Truth, and the Life". Only through the name of Christ can man approach God. "There is salvation in no one else! Under all heaven there is no other name for men to call upon to save them." (Acts 4:12 Living Bible) An indecision to follow Christ and an attempted neutrality, automatically becomes a decision against Christ. Said Jesus, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad". (Matthew 12:30) He also said, "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon". (Matthew 6:24) Joshua could well have been speaking to our generation when he said, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve". Christ will not share any other allegiances; He demands all. He is dogmatic in His claims, and all-inclusive in His demands. Pilate attempted to be neutral in his reaction towards Christ, but he was unsuccessful. His cowardice was a vote against Christ, and resulted in gross injustice. The guilt that was on his hands was too great for mere water to wash it away! The blood of Christ was on his hands!

There are many nominal 'Christians' in our society and in our churches today. They are sympathetic to Christian principles, but uncommitted personally to Christ.

"Ye call me Master and obey Me not,  
 Ye call Me Light and see Me not,  
 Ye call Me Way and walk not,  
 Ye call Me Life and desire Me not,  
 Ye call Me wise and follow me not,  
 Ye call Me fair and love Me not,  
 Ye call Me rich and ask Me not,  
 Ye call Me eternal and seek Me not,  
 Ye call Me gracious and trust Me not,  
 Ye call Me noble and serve Me not,  
 Ye call Me Mighty and honor Me not,  
 If I condemn you, blame Me not."

-Anonymous-

It is not easy to make the right decision. Jesus knew that. In the light of the absolute obedience and faith which Christ demands, many will make excuses. Excuses today are still 'a dime a dozen'! Of course, if Christ could reign along with all other gods in our idolatrous hearts, the decision would be easier, but that cannot be! It is either Christ only, or Christ not at all. Christ is jealous of your total allegiance, and will accept nothing less!

"The right decision is a hard decision, for Your absolute Lordship demands my total surrender and my absolute obedience. But it all results in absolute freedom! Thank you for your total claims on my life!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Neutral I cannot be. I must make Christ the Lord of all or He will not be the Lord at all!

WISE MEN SEEK JESUS!

The Wise Men represent all who react to Christ with adoring worship. The Wise Men only found Christ after they diligently sought for Him. "Where", they asked King Herod, "is the newly born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in its rising and we have come to worship Him." (Matthew 2:2)

Centuries before, God spoke through Jeremiah and said, "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart". (Jeremiah 29:13) Our seeking must be genuine; our asking must be sincere; our knocking must be persistent. God will only be found when we seek him with our whole heart. One cannot be pretentious, proud, or half-hearted, and expect to find Christ. The Wise Men were not satisfied until they found the Christ child. Their searching was in earnest. To find the Child was their only concern.

Jesus' parable of the lost coin well illustrates the necessity for diligence in one's search for God. In another parable, the precious pearl which was found in a field caused the finder to sell all that he had in order to purchase that gem. Full surrender is essential if one is to be a disciple of Christ and in order to find peace in life.

The Wise Men offered gifts to Christ. "When they came into the house, they saw the little child with Mary, His mother, and fell down and worshipped Him; and they opened their treasures, and offered to Him gifts." (Matthew 2:11 Barclay)

The essence of true worship and adoration is self-surrender--presentation of ourselves to God.

"Who answers Christ's insistent call  
Must give himself, his life, his all,  
Without one backward look.  
Who sets his hand unto the plow,  
And glances back with anxious brow,  
His calling hath mistook.  
Christ claims him wholly for his own;  
He must be Christ's, and Christ's alone."  
-John Oxenham-

Wise men still seek Jesus!

"Jesus, if I had the whole world to give to you, that would be a present far too small! 'Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all!'"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Like the Wise Men of old, I will today bow before Christ, 'lost in wonder, love, and praise'.

JESUS' THREEFOLD WORK--KING, PRIEST, SAVIOUR

Although the New Testament nowhere says specifically that there were three wise men, we assume that there were three because of the threefold gift which they brought. The significant thing is not the number of wise men, but rather the gifts which the wise men presented.

Gold is the gift for a King. The coming of a great king was a deep-seated expectation in the hearts of all Jews throughout the centuries, since the rule of David. Jesus came to be King, but not the type of King the Jews were anticipating. The Jews looked to Jesus as God's agent through whom the Jews would conquer all their enemies and enjoy an age of peace and prosperity. Their expectation reached its height when the excited Jews shouted Hosanna to Christ as He entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. The Jews expected Jesus to soon fulfill their nationalistic dreams. Jesus, however, came not to be a conquering king over earthly kingdoms, but He came to be the King of men's hearts. He came not to shatter the Romans, but He came to die on a cross in order that the Romans might be truly transformed, as well as all other Gentiles of the world. Christ came not to destroy, but to restore. He came not to hate, but to love. Christ came to destroy man's passion and pride and then set up his rule in man's heart.

Frankincense is the gift for a Priest. It was the work of the Old Testament Priests to act as representatives of God to man, and to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. The Old Testament Priesthood was imperfect and unable to remove the guilt of sin. Christ came to be the Perfect High Priest, of which the gift of frankincense was but a symbol. In the Old Testament the common man was barred from personal access to God. It was the High Priest's responsibility to intercede in behalf of the people. On the Day of Atonement the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies, the place in the Temple where it was held that God's presence dwelt. Jesus, the Perfect High Priest, became a bridge to God by which man can personally encounter God. The veil of the Temple was rent in two, symbolizing man's personal access to God.

Myrrh is the gift for one who is to die. In the opening account of Matthew's Gospel, the purpose of Christ's coming is defined. "She (Mary) will bear a son, and you must call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21 Barclay) Our Scripture reading for today indicates that Jesus is both the Perfect High Priest and the Perfect Sacrifice for sin. The gift of myrrh symbolized Christ's death, His Saviourhood. To stop with the Babe of Bethlehem without considering the Christ of the Cross, is to miss the meaning of the Incarnation!

"Because of your threefold work as King, Priest, and Saviour, do your threefold work in my life. Rule my life, become my bridge-builder to God, forgive my sins!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Because God has given the gift of His all in the form of Christ, I will give Him the gift of my all in the form of my full surrender!

IS YOUR GOD TOO SMALL?

We have looked at three ways in which people react to Jesus. Some, like Herod, react with hostility to Christ and attempt to eliminate the truth. Others, like the Scribes, react with indifference to Christ and attempt to avoid Christ or His claims. Still others, like the Wise Men, react with adoring worship to Christ.

In His parable of the Four Soils, Jesus described four different responses to the Gospel Message.

The first soil is the wayside soil. (Matthew 13:3-4, 19) The wayside soil is hardened and unresponsive to the seed. The wayside soil represents the close-minded person who is unresponsive and indifferent to the Gospel appeal. Some are indifferent to Christianity because they do not realize the seriousness of its demands. They classify Christianity alongside politics, art, literature, music, science, etc., and consider it only with academic interest. They have a "take it or leave it" attitude. They classify Jesus alongside Plato, Aristotle, and other great teachers, even though they assert that Jesus is the greatest teacher in history. Many would be offended if it were seriously suggested to them that Jesus was God Incarnate. Many classify the Church alongside a business, a club, or a shop, thus denying its distinctive message and purpose. To them it is a place to enhance prestige or to fulfill social needs, the same functions that a club fulfills. Indifference is manifested in such expressions as this: "If I want my shoes repaired, I go to a shoe repairman. If I want a good meal, I go to a good restaurant. If I want religion, I go to some church".

Many are indifferent to Christianity because their conception of God is too small. The Modern-day shallow conceptions of God are effectively discussed in J.B. Phillips' excellent book 'Your God Is Too Small'. Notice what some of those misconceptions are. Some think of God as a policeman who is constantly seeking to punish. Some think of God as a harsh father, seeking to drain all pleasure out of life. Some think of God as the spineless, mild, and pale Galilean who lacks courage, strength, vitality and joy. Some think of God as an escapism for the weak and fearful. Some think of God as the one who is contained within the four walls of a church, unable to meet life in an every day, practical way. Others are bitter towards God because of an unexplained tragedy in their lives. All such notions of God are far from the Truth, but holding such notions has caused many to become indifferent towards Christ and Christianity. Such people have shut minds because they have never had a mature conception of God, and because they have never really considered seriously the demands of Christianity.

"O Christ, you are not one among many great teachers, to be admired. You are the son of the Living God, to be worshipped!"

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** I will shut my mind to immature caricatures of Christ and open my mind to the true character of Christ!

SHALLOW-MINDED RESPONSE TO CHRISTIANITY

In His Parable of the Four Soils, Jesus said that some seeds fell on rocky soil. Jesus gave the interpretation: "As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has not root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away". (Matthew 13:20-21)

The stony ground represents the shallow mind. Such a mind does not think deeply and seriously about Christianity. There are so many who have never really considered the cost of being a Christian. Their lives are based on a shallow sentimentality. To such people, the beauty of a church is more important than the beauty of holiness. To such people, a tear-jerking sermon is more important than a thought-provoking sermon. The stony ground represents those whose Christianity is based upon emotionality rather than upon rationality. Jesus encouraged people who were potential followers to consider seriously what it means to be a Christian. He wanted none to begin the Christian walk and then stop midway. He wanted all to seriously consider the demands of discipleship. It was Jesus who said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me". (Matthew 16:24) He also said, "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple". (Luke 14:26)

There are many who begin the Christian way, but many do not last, simply because the Word has not found deep rootage in their hearts. One famous evangelist said, "We have learned that it takes about five percent effort to win a man to Christ, and ninety-five percent to keep him in Christ and growing into maturity in the Church". Someone insightfully said: "It is not easy to be a Christian; but it is easy to start". Why is there such a mortality rate in the Church among young Christians? One reason is that many have failed to realize that "Christianity is a case of all or nothing". Too many have stopped short of total surrender to God.

Another reason why many who begin the Christian life wither instead of grow, is that they have never learned the importance of patience and perseverance. It is easy to start, but difficult to finish. Says J.B. Phillips: "Long preparation, careful planning and slow growth would seem to be leading characteristics of spiritual life". (Your God Is Too Small, p. 59)

"Lord, help me to respond fully to Christ's call in order that I may enjoy Christ fully. Help me to feel deeply, think clearly, and commit decisively!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I am willing to take the slow, but sure road to spiritual maturity!

"LOST! LOST! LOST!--MY LIFE IS LOST!"

The thorny soil represents the care-ridden mind. Said Jesus, "Other seeds fell upon thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them". (Matthew 13:7) A garden lot may be weeded, plowed, and raked and thus appear to be very clean and productive soil. However, such soil may be filled with weed seeds which may spring up and throttle the life out of the good seed. Jesus gave the interpretation to this kind of soil. "As for what was sown among thorns, this is he who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the delight in riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful." (Matthew 13:22)

It is too easy to become encumbered with the cares and concerns of making a living and in the meantime forget that we should be making a life. It is sometimes easy to become more concerned how far we made the dollar go than how far we go in living for Christ and others. In trying to maintain a material standard of living, we can easily lower our spiritual standard of service and sacrifice. Self can replace service as a standard of life. When that happens, life is literally robbed of its meaning.

"A young man, some years ago, lay dying. His mother believed him to be a Christian and was greatly surprised and distressed one day when, on passing his room, she heard him say, 'Lost! Lost! Lost!'. Immediately she opened the door and cried, 'My boy, is it possible you have lost hope in Christ, now that you are dying?'. 'No, Mother, no!' he replied, 'it is not that. I have hope beyond the grave, but I have lost my life! My life has been spent for self. I have lived for this world--and now--while dying, I have given myself to Christ--BUT MY LIFE IS LOST!'." (Shoe-Leather Faith, Merv Rosell, No. 331)

It is good for us occasionally to remind ourselves of these words: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation". (Hebrews 2:3a) How easy it is for us to neglect the most important things in life. Why? Because the intangible and invisible values of life take time and effort to cultivate. A holy life does not come automatically. It takes discipline, time and effort. A Christian must take time to pray, attend church services (Hebrews 10:25), witness, and read the Bible. The competitive loyalties of worry, riches, and pleasures can destroy spiritual life! Ask yourself: "Am I operating my life by God's agenda or by my own agenda?". Do not allow the good seed of God's Word to become choked by the weeds of worry, riches or pleasure!

"God, do not allow my heart to become overcrowded! Do not allow the 'good' to destroy the 'best' in my life! Help me to 'take time to be holy'. The 'weeds' must go in my life!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Money and pleasure will be expressions of my faith, not substitutes for my faith!

"I LIKE MY MOTHER'S TRANSLATION BEST!"

Jesus said, "Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear". (Matthew 13:8-9)

There is some soil that is rich, deep and clean of weeds. In such soil, there is a bountiful harvest. Jesus said, "As for what was sown on good soil, this is he who hears the word and understands it; he indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty". (Matthew 13:23)

The good soil represents the productive mind, the mind that listens carefully to Jesus' words, reasons them out, and considers their implications. Such a person is not quick and impulsive, but deeply contemplative and reflective.

He not only listens, but he understands. Jesus' words do not fall upon deaf ears, but Jesus' words sink deeply into his heart. He ponders them until he understands their true meaning and significance for daily living.

He not only hears, he not only understands, but he applies and practices Christ's words. He knows that ultimately Christianity is a life of action and practice, not simply theory and thought. He realizes that a man will in the last analysis be judged by his actions, not simply by his words. He knows this because he understands Christ's teachings: "There was a man with two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Go and work in my vineyard today, my son'. He said, 'All right sir'--but he never went near it. Then the father approached the second son with the same request. He said, 'I won't'. But afterward he changed his mind and went. Which of these two did what their father wanted? 'The second one', they replied". (Matthew 21:28-31a)

"There is a story about four clergymen who were discussing the merits of the various translations of the Bible. One liked the King James Version best because of its simple, beautiful English. Another liked the American Revised Version best because it is more literal and comes nearer to original Hebrew and Greek. Still another liked Moffatt's translation best because of its up-to-date vocabulary. The fourth minister was silent. When asked to express his opinion, he replied, 'I like my mother's translation best. She translated it into life, and it was the most convincing translation I ever saw'." (Shoe-Leather Faith, No. 101, Rosell)

"God, help me to be a productive-minded person, one who listens carefully, understands throughly, and applies constantly the words of Christ!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will be a doer of the Word, and not a hearer only! (James 1:22)

BUSINESS INTERESTS BEFORE KINGDOM INTERESTS

What a discourtesy to be invited to a meal; first accept it, and then later reject the invitation on some flimsy excuse. God invites you to His banquet. Will you accept it or will you, like the persons in the parable of the Great Supper (Luke 14:15-24) make flimsy excuses?

It is clear that the great Banquet stands for the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is a society of men who desire to do God's will more than they desire anything else. In mercy, God has extended His invitation to every person to be a member of His Kingdom--to come to the Banquet of God! But before a person can become a member of God's Kingdom, he must accept God's invitation, putting the priorities of the Kingdom before personal, selfish interests. Each of the excuses in the parable are the same types of excuses that are heard today.

The first man put business interests before kingdom interests. "I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused." (Luke 14:18) Many there are who put their work before their church, who are more interested in making a living than they are in making a life. The ring of the cash register is sweeter to some than the quietness of the sanctuary. The glitter of gold fascinates some more than the glory of God. Bargaining at the stock market is more important to some than bargaining for the souls of men. Missing a day's work is more disturbing to some than missing a worship service. Getting ahead of the Joneses is more important to some than staying in step with God. Investing in earth's real estate is more important to some than investing in heaven's incorruptible mansions. Earning a college degree is more important to some than earning a degree in faithfulness and service.

Energy and hard work are commendable, but if misdirected can result in rejection from the kingdom. Wealth is not to be despised, if it does not result in poverty of the soul. Position in business and work is honourable, if it does not crowd God from the throne room of one's heart. If a choice must be made between more money on earth or greater treasure in heaven, there is no question as to how one should choose. "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." (I John 2:17)

"Help me to set my affections on things above, not things on earth. Help me to be wise in my investments, investing in eternity as well as in time, investing in people as well as in things, seeking God's glory primarily and my own interests secondarily."

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** He who lives only for time will be frustrated in time and lost in eternity!

INTERESTS OF NOVELTY BEFORE INTERESTS OF KINGDOM

We are looking at the flimsy excuses which people give for not entering the Kingdom of God. (Parable of the Great Supper, Luke 14:15-24)

"Another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am on my way to try them out. Please have me excused'." (Luke 14:19) Sound familiar? "I have bought a new car, and I want to try it out. We are taking a trip on Sunday." "I have built a new cabin and plan to stay there over the weekends during the summer months. I'll worship God in nature." "I have bought a new camper and new fishing equipment. They say the fish are biting good. Might see you next Sunday. Depends on how the fish bite this weekend." "I have bought some new skis. The snow is just right for skiing. Got to take advantage of the snow. Besides, everyone is going to the slopes. Have me excused please." "A new TV series is starting on Wednesday night. Sorry I will miss Bible class. Have me excused." "Spring is in the air. Time to get the garden planted. Please have me excused this time."

Sad it is that the toys of sensual pleasure are more real to us than the delights of spiritual discoveries. The novelty of picking up a moon rock seems to thrill us more than picking up the Bible. Low attendance at a party is more disturbing to us than low attendance at worship services. Missing a favorite TV program disturbs us more than missing a good Bible class. The garden not growing disturbs us more than the church not growing. Learning a new recipe excites us more than learning a new verse of Scripture. Fishing for trout is more exciting than fishing for the souls of men. The excuse of the one who said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am on my way to try them out", is the same type of excuse that many give today. The interests of novelty are more important than the interests of the Kingdom. Such people are fools, for they accept the second-best or worse, when they could have the very best! These people miss out on the delights of the Kingdom Banquet!

They miss out on the mental delights. The Christian life delights the mind! While the sinner is feeding his mind on the husks of the world, the Christian is exploring new frontiers of knowledge and wisdom!

They miss out on emotional delights. There is an aesthetic heightening in Christian conversion!

They miss out on spiritual delights. There is a great contrast between the ever-dawning hope of the Christian and the ever-increasing despair of the unbeliever. Poor indeed is the man who puts the interests of novelty before the interests of the Kingdom!

"God, you are the source of all joy! You give me all things richly to enjoy! The pleasures of sin last for only 'a season', but the 'joy of the Lord' is eternal!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will gladly accept God's Invitation to His Banqueting Table where heaven's delights are lavishly served!

LOVE OF MAID MORE THAN LOVE OF MASTER

The third man in the parable (Luke 14:15-24) put good interests before the superior interests of the Kingdom. "Another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore, I cannot come'." (Luke 14:20) Loyalty to wife and family is commended, but if wife or husband or child becomes the object of one's deepest love, then a man is not worthy of God's Kingdom! Adam walked alone with God before Eve was created. A man must know his God intimately before he can enjoy his family completely. The love of the Master must come before the love of the Maid. Indeed, the love of the maid is enhanced by the love of the Master! "They live best together who live with God; they serve each other best who also serve their fellow men; the atmosphere of a home is most lovely when those who dwell within it never forget that they are also members of the great family and household of God." (Daily Study Bible, Luke, p. 201, William Barclay) Is your home open to fellow believers (Psalms 133:1)? Is your home open to strangers (Hebrews 13:1-2)? Are you willing to present your children to God as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1)?

"Two men stood on a dock in New York City. They were watching an ocean liner as it left for far-away shores. One of the men said to the other: 'That ocean liner is carrying a gift from me to the mission fields. It has on it thousands of dollars worth of supplies for a mission hospital'. The other man replied: 'That ocean liner also carries a gift from me to the mission fields. It has on it my only daughter. She is going as a missionary. I have given her to the Lord's service'. Tears came to the eyes of the first man. He said: 'My friend, you have given far more to the Lord than I have. I have given money. You have given your only daughter!'" (This Is the Will of God, by Barker, p. 57-58)

The story is told of a Sunday School class of boys who planned to have a surprise birthday for a small boy who was one of the members of the class. When the class arrived at the home, the boy's mother called in vain for her son. The class finally went ahead with the party without the guest of honor. After the party was over and the class had left, the boy came home and the mother finally got the truth out of her son. The boy had heard the mother call him, but thinking that he was being called to do some work, he ran to the barn where he hid all afternoon!

Don't run and hide from God when He calls you! Accept the invitation to the Kingdom Banquet!

"God, I have too often thought you were calling me to an unpleasant task, and I have gone to the 'barn' to hide. I have hid myself in my material pursuits, in my leisure and novelty and even in something so good as my family! Forgive me! I accept your invitation to the Kingdom Banquet!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will not allow the 'good' to destroy the 'best' in my life!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON 'HOW DO YOU REACT TO CHRIST?'

1. What three basic types of responses to Christ are represented by Herod the King, the Chief Priests and Scribes, and the Wise Men? Are these three types of responses typical of human responses to Christ today, and if so, can you give examples from your personal observations of these three different kinds of responses?
2. Illustrate from your personal experience or from your observation of other people, how it is possible to become so engrossed in one's own affairs that Jesus Christ means little or nothing to him.
3. List various reasons why persons today are indifferent to Christ and the Gospel. Which is the worse kind of reaction to give to Christ, a reaction of passive indifference or a reaction of active hostility? Why?
4. What answer would you give to a person who says that he doesn't believe in Christianity because of the superficial and hypocritical elements which he observes within the organized Church?
5. What is meant by the statement: "The road to hell is paved with good intentions". What is one of Satan's most effective weapons in fighting against mankind?
6. What is Christ's reaction to a person who seeks to be neutral in his reaction to Christ?
7. What qualities exemplified in the lives of the Wise Men must be manifest in our lives today if we are to find and to please God?
8. List the three gifts which the Wise Men presented to Jesus, and tell what each of these three gifts symbolized in terms of the threefold work of Christ.
9. In His parable of the Four Soils (Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23), Jesus describes four different responses which people manifest toward Him. List those four responses (as symbolized by the Soils), and give an illustration from your own personal life or from your observations of other people of each of these four different responses.
10. If indifference (as symbolized by the wayside soil) is one of the basic negative responses to Christ, give reasons why some people react indifferently to Christ?
11. List various manifestations of the shallow-minded response to Christ (as symbolized by the Rocky Soil).
12. What are some of the 'weeds' or 'thorns' that can easily choke out the believer's spiritual life (as taught in Jesus' parable of the Four Soils)?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON 'HOW DO YOU REACT TO CHRIST?' (continued)

13. How can the 'productive mind' (as symbolized by the good soil) be described? Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "A man will, in the last analysis, be judged by his actions, not simply by his words". (Note James 2:12-20)
14. List the three excuses given by the three men in Jesus' parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-24), and share examples of people whom you have known who have used one or more of these same excuses for not following Christ.

CHAPTER 2

WHAT IS GOD'S PURPOSE IN CREATION AND REDEMPTION?

## GOD'S GREATEST CREATIVE ACT

The greatest creation of the personal God, of whom we have been thinking in the last chapter, is Man. Man may not be the strongest animal or the fastest animal or the largest animal, but Man is the only animal who asks ultimate questions and who seeks ultimate meaning in life. Man is unique because man was uniquely created. God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness". (Genesis 1:26)

That man is a self-conscious, self-determinative creature is clearly revealed in the Biblical account of Man's creation and fall. (Genesis 1-3) The nature of man, as revealed in these chapters, can be seen from various perspectives, all of which we must examine: (1) Man's Dominance; (2) Man's Limitation; (3) Man's Freedom; (4) Man's Rebellion; (5) Man's Fall; (6) Man's Hope. The Genesis record states Man's unique creation, reveals Man's deliberate wrong choice, and unveils God's merciful provision for Man's predicament.

When Genesis uses the word 'Day' in reference to God's creation, does it literally mean 24 hour days as we know of them or does it symbolically represent eras of time? This is a question which has been unfruitfully debated for a long time. The important thing is not how or how long God actually took to create and to organize, but the important thing to realize is that God actually is the creator of all things. The orderly universe is not an accident or chance happening. It is the intelligent handiwork of God. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork." (Psalms 19:1) It is much more difficult to believe that the orderly universe is the product of accident and chance, then it is to believe that the orderly universe is the amazing product of an intelligent and personal God.

Man is different from all other creatures because he is made in God's own image. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." (Genesis 2:7) God is a Tri-une Being; Man is a Tri-une being as well. God is a Being of intelligence (Omniscience), and so man is created a rational being. God is a Being of temperament (Love), and so man is created an emotional being. God is a Being of action (Omnipotence), and so man is created a volitional being with the capacity to act. God, whose dominance is supreme, has shared that dominance with mankind.

Look first then at Man's dominance. God is creator and Lord of the earth, but God put Man in charge of the earth. Man must exercise his dominance over the earth with a constant sense of his stewardship before God. (Read Genesis 1:28) God gave man dominion over all things, not to abuse the world of nature, but to govern and creatively to use the world of nature to serve mankind and to glorify God. Man is not to use his call to domination over the world as an excuse to exploit the world's natural resources, such as lumber, coal, oil and the soil. God is the giver of all good and perfect gifts. Man is to receive those gifts gratefully and selflessly. God's creatorhood reveals His grace and love.

"Creator God, help me to be creative, not destructive, in the use of the raw materials of creation which you have put under my control."

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** God is the Giver and I am the Receiver of all good things. I will henceforth live gratefully!

FRIGHTENING FREEDOM!

We are looking at the nature of Man from various perspectives, as recorded in the early chapters of Genesis.

Second, look at Man's limitation. God placed one limitation upon Man. "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Genesis 2:16-17)

This tree represents God's sovereign knowledge which belongs to God alone. Man must depend completely upon God and not try to assert himself as God's equal. The tree reminds Man that God alone is all-knowing, and that Man must acknowledge his utter dependence on God, who as creator, is infinitely greater than the creature.

Third, look at Man's freedom. Only as man could freely choose to obey and to serve God, could man's love for God be proved and developed. A slave is forced to obey and serve his master even against his will. The attitude of the slave's resentment for his master is vastly different from the attitude of love with which a son willingly performs duties for his father. Only the son, who has the power of choice, can prove his love for the father.

Love could not be tested without the presence of a standard by which to determine obedience or disobedience. God's commandment forbidding Man to eat from the tree was the standard by which to either praise Man for his obedience or to condemn Man for his disobedience.

The fact of Man's freedom is well described by Suzanne de Dietrich: "The thing that makes us uniquely human is that, unlike the other creatures, we are able to say both 'yes' and 'no' to God. Man does not do the will of his Creator by necessity. The stars in the sky follow their prescribed orbits, the animals of the field obey their instincts, but man has this unique and frightening ability--he can refuse to be obedient to his Creator. For God does not want slaves, but sons". (God's Unfolding Purpose, pg. 36)

Obedience or disobedience means nothing if there is no objective standard by which to judge. The tree in the Garden provided that standard, making possible the exercise of Man's frightening freedom!

"Thank you for my freedom to choose. My freedom of choice allows me to ascend to the highest heights of moral development or to descend to the lowest depths of moral degeneracy. Help me to choose the Right. Amen."

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** It is both frightening and fantastic to be a creature of freedom. I will exercise this freedom responsibly!

## MAN'S LOST GREATNESS

Fourth, consider Man's rebellion. Man, possessed with the freedom to choose, determined his own destiny. Man yielded to the subtle temptation of Satan and was enticed by Satan's allurements.

Satan implanted the seeds of doubt into Eve's heart. Appealing to the gratification of Man's desire, Satan succeeded in getting Man to overstep his God-imposed limitation, and thus to challenge God's sovereignty.

Satan, whose own fall is attributed to the drunkenness of pride (Ezekiel 28:1-10), became the instigator of Man's pride, which caused Man's fall. When Man ate of the tree, he declared his independence of God and his desire to "run his own life".

When Man invaded God's territory of personal knowledge through eating from the tree, Man yielded to the temptation to play the part of God. Man's relationship to the Creator was made to be one of servant to master. Man attempted to usurp God's mastership when he yielded to Satan's evil suggestions.

Fifth, recognize Man's fall. Man's disobedience to God led to Man's fall. Man failed to stand the test and thus prove his love for the Creator. Man fell from the height of splendor to the depth of despair, from the beauty of perfection of the vileness of distortion, from the joy of fellowship to the anguish of separation, from the freedom of innocence to the bondage of guilt, from the strength of health to the weakness of disease, from the glory of life to the corruption of death, from the richness of an heir to the poorness of an outcast, from the fullness of knowledge to the shamefulness of ignorance.

Sin replaced innocency with guilt and caused man to clothe his nakedness. No longer could man reveal himself as he really was, but he was compelled to hide his true identity.

Sin also caused man to run from God's presence and hide. (Genesis 3:8) No longer could Man enjoy intimate fellowship with God, but Man instead became an alienated, estranged rebel afraid to face God.

Neither was willing to accept personal moral responsibility. The man blamed his actions on the woman and the woman, in turn, blamed her actions on the serpent. The transgressor often scapegoats, blaming his actions on his background or friends or society or heredity. Man seeks to sooth his conscience through rationalization, but God cannot be fooled.

"Legitimate physical appetites were exploited by Satan to cause Adam and Eve to sin. Help me, God, to obey you and never to allow my appetites to rule my life."

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** With every right moral choice, there are wonderful moral results!

BRILLIANT RAY OF HOPE

Sixth, see Man's hope. Immediately following Man's fall, a brilliant ray of hope shown over the horizon of Man's history, revealing God's future plan for Man's salvation. That ray of hope was found in the curse God pronounced on the serpent: "I will put enmity between you and the woman; also between your offspring and her offspring; He will crush your head and you will crush his heel". (Genesis 3:15)

This prophecy refers to Jesus who was born of the virgin Mary, a descendant of Adam and Eve. Although Satan inflicted injury on Jesus the Son of God, through crucifixion Jesus crushed and destroyed the works of Satan through His redemptive death on the cross, and proved to be victor over Satan through His glorious resurrection. (Hebrews 2:14-15) Man's bondage to Satan was broken through the conquering power of the resurrected Lord. Through the seed of Eve, Man would be reconciled or brought back to fellowship with God. Through Christ, Man would be "born again" and receive a new nature.

What general conclusions and applications can be drawn from a brief study of Genesis 1-3?

(1) God is the Creator of all of life; therefore, God has the right to rule in each man's life. Each person is responsible to use his body and soul and mind for God's glory. To abuse one's body, mind or soul is to sin against one's creator.

(2) Man's call to domination over the earth is not a call to careless exploitation, but to responsible stewardship. The God-granted power to dominate can become a temptation to 'lord over' other people and to exploit the world's resources for selfish use. Man's lordship over the earth is subject to God's lordship over all of created matter.

(3) Satan often tempts man by calling into question the truthfulness of God's Word. (Genesis 3:1)

(4) Sin can be defined as disobedience against the known laws of God and rejection of the revealed love of God. Because God, by nature is just, wrong moral choices always result in tragic moral consequences. The penalty of sin is death.

(5) Because God is a loving redeemer by nature, He has provided a redemptive plan for mankind's salvation.

"O God, because of your creative power, I was born for greatness; because of my willful disobedience, I lost my greatness; because of Christ's redemptive love, I can regain my greatness. Thank you! Amen."

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** What God has promised, He has provided, and what He has provided, I will receive--Redemption! Glory!

MAN--CREATURE OF FREEDOM OR FATE?

We said in the last devotional that, because God is a loving redeemer by nature, He has provided a redemptive plan for mankind's salvation. In seeking to understand God's redemptive plan for mankind, one of the best Biblical chapters to study is the first chapter of the book of Ephesians. Particularly in the first 14 verses of this amazing chapter, we see exposed both the positive purpose of God in redemptive provision and the positive freedom of man in personal faith and salvation.

In looking at both the free provision of God and the free appropriation of salvation by Man, some of your basic questions should be answered. "Are you a creature of freedom or a creature of fate? Are you free to determine your own eternal destiny or was your eternal destiny fixed by some divine decree before the foundation of the world? Did God only choose to save only certain human beings or did God choose to save the entire human race?"

We must spend some time seriously examining the truths of Ephesians 1. This chapter tells us that the positive purposes of God have been wonderfully revealed to mankind. The ordination of God's eternal purpose is understood in terms of sonship through Christ (verse 5). The operation of God's progressive purpose is understood in terms of unity in Christ (verse 10). The consummation of God's perfected purpose is understood in terms of total redemption through Christ (verse 14).

Think first of the ordination of God's eternal purpose. "His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by sending Jesus Christ to die for us. And he did this because he wanted to!" (Ephesians 1:5, Living Bible) Sonship through Christ is God's eternal ordained purpose. Was it God's eternal purpose only to ordain a limited, fixed number to become adopted sons or was it God's eternal purpose and intention to adopt all persons as his children? Who does 'us' refer to in Ephesians 1:5? A chosen number of individuals, determined by divine decree, or the total corporate human race? If only a select number by divine decree, then how can we say 'in love' He predestined? Is divine love consistent with a divine decree to damn those to destruction who were not chosen for adoption as sons?

From a serious study of the book of Ephesians (and all of scripture) we conclude that God predestined (or determined) that 'us' should include the entire human race. God predestined the entire human race to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will. God's will is that all persons be saved. God does not will that any should perish! (Read I Timothy 2:4; II Peter 3:9; John 3:16-17; Titus 2:11)

"O God, I am beginning to see that the entire human race is the object of your special love and that you long for all to be saved from sin. Your free gift of eternal salvation is now being offered to everyone. You favor the entire human race and never arbitrarily select to save only some. Thank you for the revelation of your saving purposes for mankind."

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** The God who wills to save all is able to save all--including me!

GOD'S POSITIVE PURPOSE REVEALED

In the last devotional we noted that the ordination of God's eternal purpose is understood in terms of sonship through Christ. We can say next that the operation of God's progressive purpose is understood in terms of unity in Christ (verse 10). "This was his purpose: that when the time is ripe he will gather us all together from wherever we are--in heaven or on earth--to be with him in Christ, forever." (Ephesians 1:10, Living Bible)

God's eternal purpose is that all persons should be adopted as spiritual sons (verse 5), but divine intention and purpose to adopt all as sons could only be made possible through the blood of Christ (verse 7), which atoning blood makes possible man's release (redemption) from sin's bondage and relief (forgiveness) from sin's guilt. God's eternal purpose to save the human race could not be realized without the atoning work of Christ on the Cross. "So overflowing is his kindness towards us that he took away all our sins through the blood of his Son, by whom we are saved." (Ephesians 1:7, Living Bible)

That which God has ordained (universal salvation) becomes possible through Christ's accomplished work on the cross (unlimited atonement). Because Christ died, God's eternal intention can be fulfilled, namely, the salvation of all mankind. Christ's atoning sacrifice places all persons in a saveable relationship.

But even though all persons are in a saveable relationship, all persons are not automatically in a saved relationship. Christ's atonement makes possible the salvation of all, but only personal faith in Christ makes actual salvation operative. Although Christ died in order to reconcile all, all are not personally reconciled to Christ. God's eternal purpose--universal salvation of mankind--only becomes God's realized purpose as persons personally receive Christ's salvation.

If Ephesians 1:5 speaks of the ordination of God's eternal purpose--sonship through Christ--then Ephesians 1:10 speaks of the operation of God's progressive purpose in time--the uniting of all persons to Christ. It is God's purpose to unite all persons in Christ. (Ephesians 2:13-18)

Ephesians 1:14 speaks of God's perfected purpose consummated--namely, the total redemption of those who are God's possession. "His presence within us is God's guarantee that he really will give us all that he promised; and the Spirit's seal upon us means that God has already purchased us and that he guarantees to bring us to himself." (Ephesians 1:14, Living Bible) Christ provided an unlimited atonement, making forgiveness and redemption possible for all (verse 7). God's grace has been lavished upon the human race (verses 7b-8a). God's objective intention is to save the human race corporately (verses 11-12).

"God, how wonderful to know that you are not vindictive in your general treatment of mankind, nor arbitrary in your specific choice of men for salvation. You have sent your Son to seek and to save the lost--and that includes all persons of all times! Thank you for the revelation of such loving purposes!"

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** God's objective intention to save all mankind marks me as a saveable person because of my human genealogy and as a saved person because of my spiritual regeneration!

I Timothy 2:4; II Peter 3:9; John 3:16-17; Titus 2:11

### A POSITIVE RESPONSE TO A POSITIVE PURPOSE

We have noted that God's objective intention is to save the human race corporately. The Bible clearly declares this truth: "God longs for all to be saved and to understand this truth". (I Timothy 2:4, Living Bible) "He isn't really being slow about his promised return, even though it sometimes seems that way. But he is waiting, for the good reason that he is not willing that any should perish, and he is giving more time for sinners to repent." (II Peter 3:9, Living Bible) "For the free gift of eternal salvation is now being offered to everyone; and along with this gift comes the realization that God wants us to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures and to live good, God-fearing lives day after day." (Titus 2:11-12, Living Bible) "For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son so that anyone who believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16, Living Bible)

But while it is God's intention to save all, it is only those who hear the Gospel ('word of truth') and who believe the message of salvation that become a part of God's new race of people (the body of Christ). Those who hear and believe (verse 13a) are those who receive God's promised Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who is responsible to fulfill God's saving purpose in the lives of those who respond to God's saving purpose.

After we personally placed our confidence in Christ and in His saving message, we were "stamped with the promised Holy Spirit as a pledge of our inheritance, until the day when God completes the redemption of what is his own; and that will again be to the praise of His glory". (Ephesians 1:14, Phillips)

So, in light of our study of Ephesians 1 thus far, we must again ask: "Is man a creature of fate or a creature of freedom"? Man is made in God's own image and as such, is free!

(1) God freely chose to save mankind corporately, even before the time when mankind (in Adam) freely chose to fall into sin!

(2) Christ freely chose to come to earth to voluntarily die for the sins of mankind, thus placing all mankind in a saveable relationship through Christ's unlimited atonement.

(3) Each person can freely choose to accept or to reject God's salvation. Man is free to accept or to reject God's salvation, but man is not free to accept or to reject the consequences or results of right or wrong moral choice. To choose positively--that is, to choose Christ--is to choose forgiveness and redemption and ultimately a heavenly inheritance which is presently guaranteed by the Holy Spirit who seals the believer's heart.

"O God, your positive purpose is salvation for every person, made possible because of the atoning blood of your Son. Help me to make a positive response of faith in Christ, in order that I may enjoy personal salvation! Thank you for your powerful provision and for the possibility of a powerful appropriation!"

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** What God has positively intended and positively provided, I will positively enjoy--salvation from all my sins!

Ephesians 1:5-8; John 1:12; Galatians 4:4-7

## FREE TO BE SONS, NOT SLAVES!

We have looked at God's positive purpose revealed: (a) God's eternal purpose ordained--sonship through Christ (Ephesians 1:5); (b) God's progressive purpose operative--unity in Christ (Ephesians 1:10); (c) God's perfected purpose consummated--total redemption through Christ (Ephesians 1:14).

In light of God's positive purpose revealed, let us now look at man's positive freedom exercised: (a) freedom to be sons, not slaves (Ephesians 1:5-8); (b) freedom to be united, but divided (Ephesians 1:9-10); (c) freedom to be confident, not fearful (Ephesians 1:11-14).

In first considering man's freedom to be sons, not slaves, we must look at three aspects of this truth: (1) adoption as sons (v.5); (2) redemption from bondage (v.7); (3) forgiveness from sins (v.7,8a).

Freedom to be sons of God speaks of spiritual adoption. Even before the foundation of the world, God determined to adopt us--the human race--as His children. The mark of God's ownership is stamped deeply on the soul of every human being. God claims the right to be our Father, and we His children. "He determined in His love before time began to adopt us to Himself through Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 1:5 Barclay's translation)

God has destined us to be sons, not slaves! To be called children of God is to be called the objects of God's special care, love, and attention! "What is man that thou art even mindful of him?" But, just think, "What is man that thou art willing to make him a son of the living God!" "We were absolutely in the power of sin and of the world; and God, through Jesus, took us out of that power into His power; and that adoption cancels and wipes out the past and we are made new. We have passed from the family of the world of evil into the family of God." (Daily Study Bible; Ephesians; Barclay; pg. 93)

Freedom to be sons speaks also of redemption from spiritual bondage. What is the relationship between redemption and adoption? Perhaps Galatians 4:4-7 best shows that relationship. "But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir." The meaning of redemption is 'to loose.' The powerful blood of Christ is the answer to the powerlessness of men who are in the grip of sin! "It is still true of Christ that by His power He can liberate men from this helpless slavery to the things which attract and disgust them at one and the same time." (Daily Study Bible; Ephesians; Barclay; pg. 94)

"O God, release me from the bondage of sin and make me a captive of your love. Free from sin, I am free to serve you. I bow low before you in order that I might stand tall before everything else. I am redeemed from being a slave of sin in order that I might be adopted as a son of God! Glory!"

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** The shame and humiliation of my sin is replaced by the dignity and status of my position as a son of God!

FORGIVENESS FROM SINS

Adoption as sons (v.5), redemption from bondage (v.7), and forgiveness from sins (v.7,8a)--all were ways of declaring the wonderful truth that man is free to be sons of God rather than slaves of sin. We have looked at adoption and redemption. Let us now look at forgiveness.

What is the relationship between redemption and forgiveness? Redemption from sin means deliverance from the slavery of sin, but there is also forgiveness of the sins themselves. Deliverance from what I am--a slave! Forgiveness for what I have done--sin!

Wrong moral choice (sin) always leads to wrong moral consequences (bondage). Christ not only releases one from the consequences of wrong moral choice, but Christ forgives one for the wrong moral choice which led to bondage in sin. Not only does Christ release the prisoner of sin, but Christ relieves the prisoner of the guilt of the crime which resulted in imprisonment. The present bondage is broken (redemption), and the past guilt is resolved! Not only are bad habits broken but a troubled conscience is cleansed! Forgiveness means relief, and redemption means release, and both are made possible through Jesus' blood. "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us." (Ephesians 1:7,8a NIV).

Why does God redeem us? Why does God forgive us? Is there something about us that makes us worthy or appealing to God? Never! God redeems and forgives because God chooses to redeem and forgive, not because we are worthy! We cannot earn or deserve or purchase God's favor. God's grace--unmerited favor--is initiated totally by God. God loves us, not because we are lovely, but because 'God is love.' The very nature of God is love, not a sentimental love, but a suffering love. We are redeemed and forgiven 'through his (Christ's) blood.' (Ephesians 1:7) Love which bleeds is love which saves!

God could neither redeem man from the bondage of sin's consequences, nor forgive man for the guilt of wrong moral choices, without the atoning blood of Christ! It is not an eternal divine decree which is the instrument of man's salvation. It is instead the shed blood of Jesus Christ which is the instrument of man's salvation. The will and pleasure of God was to save humanity from sin, but this divine intention in eternity could only become realized in time if Christ should choose to consent to the Father's request that He die an atoning death on Mount Calvary! Christ had to die, not in the sense of absolute necessity, but in the sense of redemptive necessity. Only through the blood of Christ could God's holy nature be honored and man's salvation be guaranteed. Even though God the Father requested God the Son to come to earth to die for mankind, in reality, there are not three parties involved in this transaction (God, Jesus, Man), but rather there are only two parties involved in this transaction (Holy God and Sinful Man). For when Jesus died, God died!

"O God, I see now that your justice was maintained and your love was demonstrated at the same time when Jesus died, for, when Jesus' blood was shed, God's life was poured out! God, you took the penalty of sin upon yourself when Jesus died, for 'God was in Christ,' both dying for sin and at the same time reconciling sinners to Himself! Thank you! Thank you!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: 'The blood, the blood' - this is my plea, this is my salvation!

FREE TO BE UNITED, NOT DIVIDED

Christians are called to unity, for God is a unifying God. Christians are free, not to divide, but to unite men around Christ. Not free to be independent, but free to be interdependent. Not free from social concerns, but free to meet social needs. Not free from authority, but free under authority. One is free when he fulfills the purpose for which he was created. Christians are created to unite all things in Christ.

A brick is not free when it is thrown aside, never to be used in a building. It is 'free' when it finds its place and purpose in the wall of a building. A large 'work horse' is not free when it is never harnessed to work. Rather it is free when it is given opportunity to pull a load, thus fulfilling its purpose for existence.

A Christian is not free when he is given no responsibility. A Christian is truly free when he finds his purpose in creation and in the Church of Jesus Christ. When he is 'carrying his share of the load.' When he is using his spiritual gifts within the Church. When he is functioning as a healthy and cooperative member of the Body of Christ. He is free when he is in love and unity with other members of God's family. God's purpose is a corporate purpose. A Christian therefore is free when he is seeking to unite all things and all persons around the feet of Jesus. When he is involving himself in helping God to realize His ultimate purpose for His world. "For God has allowed us to know the secret of his plan, and it is this: he purposes in his sovereign will that all human history shall be consummated in Christ, that everything that exists in Heaven or earth shall find its perfection and fulfillment in him." (Ephesians 1:9,10 Phillips)

A Christian is free when he is involved in helping to fulfill God's Master Plan for the human race--"to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ." (v.10 NIV)

When a Christian involves himself in bringing God and men together and in bringing men together with men in loving understanding, then that believer is helping to fulfill God's purpose of uniting all on earth around the feet of Jesus! Christians are to put their arms around sinners and draw them to the Saviour (II Corinthians 5:2). Christians are to love one another (I John 4:7). There should be no place among Christians for the sectarian spirit--that spirit which results in dividing true Christians because of secondary issues of doctrinal distinctives. Criticism, divisions, carnal jealousy, and competition--these are the results when Christian groups elevate secondary issues rather than unite together because of their common love for Christ! Whenever Christians manifest any spirit other than love, they are hindering the cause of Christ and frustrating the purpose of God which is "to unite all things in him (Christ), things in heaven and things on earth." (Ephesians 1:10 RSV)

"O thou unifying God, help me to maintain 'the unity of the faith in the bond of peace.' Broaden the circle of my inclusion of those fellow Christians who agree with me in the essentials of the faith but who disagree with me in the secondary doctrines of the faith. Deliver me from the sectarian spirit that results in destroying fellowship among Christian people. In Jesus' charitable Name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: While I am contending for the 'essentials of the Faith,' I will not become contentious among fellow Christians who choose to differ from me in the 'secondaries of the Faith'!

FREE TO BE CONFIDENT, NOT FEARFUL

How can you have confidence that you are included in Christ? You can have confidence that you are a Christian and on your way to heaven, if you have responded in faith to the Good News of salvation (v.13). It is not enough to hear the Good News. You must also believe the Good News. That is, you must put your faith totally in God whose plan for human salvation has been revealed through Christ. Believing is trusting God, taking God at His word, transferring your trust from yourself to God alone, for God alone has a plan for human salvation.

Confidence is based not on denial of sin, not on human ability or human accomplishment. Confidence is based on human confession of personal sin, and acceptance of 'the word of truth,' the 'gospel of your salvation' (v.13). There are those who appear to be very confident, very self-reliant, and self-assured ('towering like a cedar of Lebanon' - Psalms 37:35 Living Bible). These persons seem to manifest no doubts, no fears. Often they are brash and bold and brazen. They seem to have the 'world by the tail.' They enjoy intimidating others with their confident words and actions. It seems that such people make all the right decisions. They boast that they are self-made persons.

But such confidence is an illusion! Such confidence is built on a crumbling foundation! Such confidence is the product of spiritual ignorance--a lack of understanding of God's master plan for history!

What is the basis of confidence? Understanding the "purpose of his (God's) will." (v.11) What is the purpose of God's will? That each person, as a part of the corporate human race, recognize that he is chosen and predestined in Christ to be saved from sin (v.11). That each person, as a part of the corporate human race, realize that he individually is chosen to accept God's salvation. That each person who accepts God's salvation be confident that the "best is yet to be." Why? Because heaven is the inheritance of the believers, guaranteed to believers by the promised indwelling Holy Spirit (v.14).

Ephesians 1:11,12 speak of God's objective intention to save the human race corporately. This divine intention to put the human race corporately into a saveable relationship is made possible through Christ. Ephesians 1:13a speaks of individual human response to God's plan of salvation. Those who respond to God's plan of salvation are those who first hear the word of truth (that is, after hearing the 'word of truth,' these persons believe the message of salvation which is made possible 'in Christ.' Hearing and believing the 'word of truth' results in receiving God's promised Holy Spirit who gives assurance of a future inheritance. Ephesians 1:13b,14 speaks of God's gift of assurance and confidence to the believing heart. The believer's confidence is related to the past, present, and future--in his understanding of God's past saving intention (v.11), in his relationship to God's present saving power (v.13), and in his assurance of God's future heavenly inheritance (v.14).

"O God, I see that my confidence does not originate in the fulfillment of my own self-centered will, but in the fulfillment of your eternal will--the salvation of mankind through Christ. If one is not saved through Christ, he has no basis for confidence and every reason for doubt and fear. I put my trust alone in the saving Christ!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: What God intended in eternity and what Christ provided in time, I will receive by personal faith--salvation from my sins and reconciliation to my Saviour!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON 'GOD'S PURPOSE IN CREATION AND REDEMPTION'

1. What evidence is there that man is uniquely created in God's own image?
2. Practically speaking, how is man to exercise his God-given dominance over the earth and at the same time practice his God-required stewardship in the earth? Cite practical examples of how this dual responsibility is carried out by sensitive believers.
3. Why did God place a limitation on man's freedom in the Garden of Eden, according to Genesis 2:16,17?
4. Was the exercise of man's will in the Garden of Eden an authentic exercise of freedom, or was it simply an apparent exercise of freedom which was really predetermined by a sovereign God?
5. What is the most distinctive feature of man that makes him a creature uniquely created by God, different from all other creatures of the earth?
6. What made Satan's temptation in the Garden of Eden so appealing to our first human parents, and what is there about that first temptation that is common to all subsequent temptations which all humans face?
7. What were some of the immediate consequences of the fall of Adam and Eve, and in what ways are these consequences the consequences which modern-day persons face when they sin?
8. How do you interpret Genesis 3:15, as this verse relates to God's provision for lost mankind's restoration?
9. After noting the general conclusions and applications from a study of Genesis 1-3 (which are listed in the chapter), which points (if any) revealed some new insights to you? What further additional insights and applications, from your own study of these chapters, can you share with others?
10. From a careful study of Ephesians 1 (along with the insights shared in the chapter of this devotional book), how would you answer the following questions? "Are you a creature of freedom or a creature of fate? Are you free to determine your own eternal destiny, or was your eternal destiny fixed by some divine decree before the foundation of the world? Did God choose to save only certain human beings or did God choose to save the entire human race? (Cite as many scriptures as possible to document your answers.)"
11. According to Ephesians 1:5, what has always been God's unchanging plan for 'us'? Does 'us' refer only to certain favored human beings whom God has chosen or selected, or does 'us' refer to the entire human race? Is there any solid scriptural basis for believing that God has chosen only some in the human race to be saved, and that He has condemned the rest to be eternally lost? What scriptures can you cite to show that God wants to save every human being from sin and for heaven?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON 'GOD'S PURPOSE IN CREATION AND REDEMPTION (Cont.)

12. Could God's perfect will to save the entire human race have been possible without the atoning work of Christ on the cross? Note Ephesians 1:7.
13. If it is God's perfect will that all persons come to repentance (II Peter 3:9) then why does not God exercise His sovereign power to force all humans to repent of sin? Does God have a 'permissive will' as well as a 'perfect will,' resulting in God allowing sinners to refuse to repent of sins, even though He desires that all sinners repent? Is it a demonstration of God's sovereign power that He refuses to coerce man, and instead allows each person to exercise his free will in positive acceptance of or in negative rejection to Jesus' universal provision for human salvation?
14. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Even though all persons, because of Christ's unlimited atonement, are in a save-able relationship, all persons are not automatically in a saved relationship."
15. What personal conditions must be met by the sinner in order for God's universal saving purpose to be personally realized in the individual sinner's life? Can you show from scripture that God offers the gift of saving faith to all persons, thus making possible the salvation of the entire human race?
16. What is the relationship between God's universal saving purpose, Christ's unlimited atonement, and a person's individual appropriation of salvation?
17. According to Ephesians 1:5-14, list three different ways in which man's positive freedom is exercised and demonstrated.
18. Spiritual sonship (according to Ephesians 1:5-8) is the result of what three spiritual realities?
19. According to Galatians 4:4-7, what is the relationship between redemption and adoption?
20. What is the relationship between redemption and forgiveness?
21. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Christ had to die, not in the sense of absolute necessity, but in the sense of redemptive necessity, for only through the blood of Christ could God's holy nature be honored and man's salvation be guaranteed."
22. What is a 'sectarian' spirit, and how does such a spirit violate the teachings of scripture, especially those in the book of Ephesians (Ephesians 1:10; 2:14-22)?
23. According to Ephesians 1:13, how can you be sure that you are a Christian and on your way to heaven? What does it mean 'to believe,' as used in this verse?

CHAPTER 3

WHAT IS MAN'S PROBLEM?

NEW LABELS FOR OLD SINS

What one thinks of man will largely determine one's total outlook on life and one's conception of God. For several decades there has been a prevailing belief in man's natural goodness with a subsequent denial of sin or at least a 'watered down' idea of sin. As a result of this belief in man's innate goodness and a denial of sin's seriousness, modern man's conception of God has become greatly distorted. The idea of the wrath of God has become repugnant, and a sentimental preoccupation with God's love has become popular. What has been the result of sentimentalizing God's love and denying God's wrath? A deterioration in morals. An increase in lawlessness. An outcropping of parental permissiveness in discipline. God's moral Law has been replaced with man's own standards. God has been made into the image of man!

The Biblical conception of man is seen in terms of a creature made in God's image, but a creature whose God-imprinted image has been marred by sin. The Bible says that man "is dead in trespasses and in sins". (Ephesians 2:1)

To have an appreciation for God's salvation, we must have an understanding of man's serious plight in sin. Sin produces guilt, alienation, condemnation, and eventually eternal death. During the next few days, we must look at these four consequences of sin.

Sin produces guilt. Man in the beginning overstepped his God-imposed limitation and disobeyed His Creator. Man failed to accept his created role and instead attempted to play the part of God! Attempting to usurp God's rightful place of authority, man fell into sin and became a rebel. The result of man's stubborn independence is sin, and one manifestation of sin is guilt and shame. "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons." (Genesis 3:7)

Sin is not a popular conception. Modern-man tries in vain to explain away 'Sin'. Dr. Henry Coffin once said, "Current psychology adds to these moral alibis. Men and women have themselves analyzed, and find emancipation in banishing the ugly names which vigorous religion attached to sins, where these are re-christened with labels with no suggestion of guilt".

Old sins may have new 'lables', but sin is still sin!

"God, give me the gift of honesty! Deliver me from self-deception! I am a great sinner in need of a great Saviour! I do not conceal, but confess my load of guilt! Be merciful to me, a sinner!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: If I deny my sins, I am deceived; if I confess my sins, I am delivered. I choose deliverance!

MAN'S ATTEMPTS TO EXPLAIN AWAY SIN

There are several humanistic philosophies that attempt to explain away the seriousness of sin. One philosophy of sin is that it is "a principle of necessary antagonism which seems to be a part of life. Sin can be regarded as dumb-bells which have to be lifted in order to develop the intellectual and moral muscles". (The Plight of Man and The Power of God, Llyod-Jones, p. 43) Another view of sin considers sin to be the opposition of "our lingering animal instincts against the demands made by our dawning and ever increasing moral consciousness". (Ibid, p. 44) Some say that sin is not positive evil, but merely a failure of fully developing the best in us. Some say that the failure with man lies in his lack of knowledge and education and training or bad environment. Better housing, increased education and clearance of slums will cure man's problems.

All of these views of sin obviously deny the existence of real guilt in man. In fact, those who hold these views consider themselves as liberated from their forefather's bondage, morbidity, introspection, and despair which were caused from previously holding a too serious view of sin. Those who deny that guilt is a reality, are those who say that so-called sin "is just that stage of immaturity where the child has not yet become the man or where the animal has not yet become entirely human". (Ibid, p. 45)

The old line of Freudian psychology explains away guilt through its "impulse theory". The "impulse theory" is explained (by Mowrer) like this: "As a child, the individual who is destined to be neurotic as an adult, has supposedly been so harshly and unreasonably treated by his parents that he has no alternative but to repress certain impulses, certain instincts (especially the sex impulse and the hostility impulse); and it is this act of repression or dissociation which lays the basis, according to Freud, for that special misery called neurosis". (The Crisis In Psychiatry and Religion, p. 160)

Continues Mowrer, "The alternative view here proposed is that anxiety comes, not from acts which the individual would commit but dares not, but from acts which he has committed but wishes that he had not. It is, in other words, a 'guilt theory' of anxiety rather than an 'impulse theory'". (Ibid, p. 26) "The real evil in mental disorder. . . is the fear and guilt which result from the presence in one's life of that which one is afraid to tell." (Ibid, p. 64)

"God, help me not to explain away the presence of real guilt in my life, incurred through my willful transgression against your known laws. Help me to confess all in order to be healed of all!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: To think lightly of sin is to reap heavily the judgement of God!

THE WORLD'S ANTIDOTES FOR GUILT

Man still attempts to conceal his guilt, and thus hide his spiritual nakedness from God and from his fellowman. Man seeks to escape personal moral responsibility, conveniently choosing some scapegoat in the form of society, heredity, friends or background. As Lloyd-Jones says, "The responsibility is taken from man and is placed in his economic conditions or his home life or early upbringing, and indeed at times in his physical make-up. The failure is to be pitied only. He is not to be blamed, he is not to be punished. We must speak nicely to him and encourage him to be nice and decent". (The Plight of Man and The Power of God, p. 45)

The world offers its antidotes for guilt. "In a city were two signs side by side. 'Go to Church. Find strength for your life'. Next to it was: 'Where there's life there's Budweiser'. These two signs represent two approaches to life--one is from the inward to the outward; the other is the outward to the inward. One depends on inward salvation from guilt and fear and conflict; the other depends on outward stimulants--pick-me-ups that let you down". (Conversion, E.S. Jones, p. 22)

The result of concealed guilt oftentimes is physical or mental disturbance. To suppress guilt is only to drive it into the subconscious mind which only compounds the problem. Concealed guilt can cause one to live a life of unreality and fantasy. Concealed guilt often causes one to minimize serious problems, when these problems should be squarely faced and solved.

Guilt may be hid from others, but it is never hid from God. There is an 'All-Seeing Eye' watching us at all times. The Bible says, "Be sure your sin will find you out". (Numbers 32:23b) "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him?, saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth?, saith the Lord". (Jeremiah 23:24)

Man attempts to resolve his own guilt through self-atonement, but his attempt only complicates the problems. Some feel they can out-balance their guilt by strenuously performing good deeds. Good deeds are important, but they will never resolve guilt or appease the guilty conscience. Guilt must be resolved in some other way than through self-effort.

There is only one way to deal adequately with guilt. "Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord'--and you forgave the guilt of my sin." (Psalm 32:5 NIV)

"Lord, when I keep silent about my sins, my bones 'roar' within me. When I confess aloud my sins, my heart is at peace within me. Teach me to weep now that I may rejoice then."

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** I will live responsibly by acknowledging my personal moral responsibility.

SIN PAYS TERRIBLE WAGES!

We have observed that sin produces guilt. Sin also results in alienation. Man was made to be filled with God, but sin empties one of God's inner presence, and leaves one void, estranged, and lonely. The Scriptures often talk about man being lost. The ultimate consequence of sin is hell, and hell is separation from everything that is good.

Sin drives one away from God, the very one for whom man is made and the only One who can really help man. "And they (the human couple) heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day; and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden." (Genesis 3:8)

Sin always has a way of alienating. Sin alienated the prodigal son from his father. Sin alienated the woman of Samaria from society. Sin alienated the thief from his family and friends, and nailed him to a cross. Sin alienates the spirit of man from the Spirit of God. Alienation from God destroys joy and peace and causes emptiness, misery and loneliness.

Merv Rosell vividly describes what sin did to one young girl. "It was the right side of midnight in a Midwest city where I was preaching. There she was on her knees hard against the altar of a great warm church. Beside her, Christian mothers knelt as though the sobbing girl were their own child in trouble. Look at her! How quickly the commerce of sin and Satan can write "counterfeit", "cheap" and "sham" across the beautiful face of a willful child. Lips that God had once penciled with the clean brush of purity. . .now carelessly coated with the unhappy admission of loss. Fingers now yellow with nicotine and clutching for something steadfast. Clothing studded with cheap jewelry (a cry for beauty when the precious pearl of chastity is gone), yesterday's garments of laughing abandon. Hair once brushed smoothly over unburdened childish shoulders, now in bleached disarray, faded, sheenless. A face lifted with tired eyes hungry for escape. . .for truth. . .for God's love. . .for spiritual answers and hope! Out of that tight throat one heart-rendering whisper, 'Oh God, I'm sick of it all. I've seen the seamy side of life, now is there any peace and forgiveness for me and my father-less child?'. This is one picture of the results of sin that I shall never forget. Thank God we had factual, actual answers for that life. There is no impossible case with God. Today that sin-scarred heart can sing of His complete forgiveness as she stands in the sun of HIS salvation." (Shoe-Leather Faith, Merv Rosell, No. 329)

"O God, there seems to be no limit on how far sin can go! But where sin abounds, grace superabounds! Thank you! Thank you!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: There is no stain of sin so deep, but what the blood of Jesus goes deeper yet!

RESTLESS UNTIL WE REST IN GOD!

Notes E. Stanley Jones, "In India a man spoke to Rotary for an hour on 'Nothing'. . . So the empty take refuge in emptiness, but you cannot change emptiness into fullness by capitalizing it. Emptiness has to be changed into fullness by conversion. An Indian Christian said of a certain man 'He is suffering from nothingness'. Many do". (Conversion, p. 20)

Our age can be described as an age of despair and futility. "Who then speaks most powerfully to and for the men of this generation? Those poets, artists and philosophers who preach despair and sing of bleak encounter with silence and futility and nonbeing." (Ibid, p. 23)

To seek meaning in riches is to be sadly disillusioned. In 1923, nine of the world's most successful financiers met together for a very important meeting at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago. Twenty-five years after this meeting, things had greatly changed for these nine wealthy men. Out of those nine wealthy men three died of a suicide, one was finally released from prison, one was pardoned from prison so he could die at home, one died abroad--insolvent, one died a fugitive from justice and penniless, one died bankrupt and lived on borrowed money, and one became insane.

There is a great difference in making a living and making a life! It is a tragic thing indeed to be a man without a country, but it is far more tragic to be a man without a faith! A Japanese governor once introduced the great missionary, E. Stanley Jones in this way: "I'm a man here tonight without a faith. I wish I had a faith. I envy those of you who do have a faith. But I'm a lost sheep. I've come here tonight to gain a faith if possible through the speaker. And I hope you will gain one too". This man was a trustee of a Buddhist Temple! (Conversion, p. 18)

Billy Graham shares the following: "When the governor of one of our states entertained us in his home, he asked to talk to me privately. We went into a back room, where he locked the door. I could see that he was struggling with his emotions, but finally said to me 'I am at the end of my rope. I need God. Can you tell me how to find God?'. (World Aflame, p. 147)

Sin alienates, but God's grace reconciles! It was Augustine who said: "Thou madest us for thyself, and our heart is restless until it rests in thee". We are made by God and for God and we will be restless until we know God! (I Corinthians 8:6)

"God, can a stranger become a friend? Can a 'nobody' become a 'somebody'? Can the lost be found? Can the disillusioned find meaning and purpose? Can the sinner become a saint? If the answer is 'Yes', then I am ready for a transformation!"

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** Christ has broken down the dividing walls of hostility. I am coming Home--Home to God! (Ephesians 2:14)

CONDEMNED UNTIL WE MAKE PEACE WITH GOD!

Sin causes one to live under the accusing finger of God. One of the results of sin is condemnation. Man was made to be a friend with God, but sin makes God into an enemy to be avoided. The death penalty hangs over man. "The wages of sin is death"--death to the true values to life and eternal separation from God.

The condemned human couple was driven from the Garden. "So He drove out the man; and He placed at the East of the Garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the Tree of Life." (Genesis 3:24)

Nature condemns man when man tries to ignore or resist nature's laws. For instance, nature condemns the man who jumps out of the tenth story window of a building or when one takes nicotine into his lungs. Also, the spiritual laws of nature condemn a man when he lives wild and loose morally. Even the body bears in it the marks of sin and is evidence of a violation against the physical and spiritual laws of nature.

Conscience condemns man when the moral laws of God are violated. Notes Jones: "That future world is impinging on us still and will always impinge upon us, but the bite, the sting, the pressure for conversion comes from the hell of having to live with a self you don't like and can't respect, a self which you hate, but with which you must daily and hourly live". (Conversion, p. 50)

Even breaking one of the Ten Commandments brings guilt. "For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it." (James 2:10 RSV) Wrote Paul about the Law, "Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God". (Romans 3:19 RSV) The Law shows to sinful man "the exceeding sinfulness of sin", and condemns each man before God. He who does not presently believe in the Son of God stands condemned before God. (John 3:18)

The righteous become a kind of condemnation to those who are indulging in sin. William Barclay notes in one of his books that Alcibiades, the spoilt young man of genius of Athens, was a companion of Socrates, but every now and again he used to break out: "Socrates I hate you, for every time I meet you, you let me see what I am". Some feel uneasy around God or God's children because such people realize that they are in the presence of holiness. Because they have rejected the Light, they feel the heat of God's wrath upon them.

"O God, my sin condemns me. I don't deserve the least of your favor. But you came to seek and to save the lost! You came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance! Save me, even me!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Jesus came into the world, not to condemn me, but to save me! (John 3:17)

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## II Thessalonians 1:5-10, Revelation 20:11-15

### IS YOUR NAME IN GOD'S BOOK OF LIFE?

We have noted that sin produces guilt, alienation, and condemnation. Sin ultimately produces eternal death. Eternal death is the punishment for unrepentant, rebellious sinners--those "who have refused to submit to His plan to save them through our Lord Jesus Christ. They will be punished in everlasting hell, forever shut away from the face of the Lord, never to see the glory of His power". (II Thessalonians 1:8-9)

Jesus said, "Never be afraid of those who can kill the body, but are powerless to kill the soul! Far better to stand in awe of the one who has the power to destroy body and soul in the fires of destruction". (Matthew 10:28 Phillips)

Wrote John, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. . .And whoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire". (Revelation 20:12,15)

In hell, memory is retained. Hell is stripped of all pleasant things such as beauty, family, and children. The Bible speaks of the fire of hell. Hell is described as a place of unexpected punishment, for there will be men there who were outwardly moral, cultured and even church-going, but who were unconverted.

Sir Thomas Scott, the former Lord Chancellor of England, said on his deathbed: "Until this moment I thought there was neither God nor hell. Now I know and feel there are both, and I am doomed to perdition by the just judgement of the Almighty".

Said Voltaire in his dying words, "I am abandoned by God and man! I shall go to hell! O Christ! O Jesus Christ!". (Shoe-Leather Faith, Rosell, No. 141)

Said Thomas Paine in his dying words, "I would give worlds, if I had them, if the 'Age of Reason' had never been published. O Lord, help me! Christ, help me! Stay with me! It is hell to be left alone!". (Ibid, No. 141)

Said Francis Newport in his dying words, "Oh, that I was to lie upon the fire that never is quenched a thousand years, to purchase the favor of God and be reunited to Him again! But it is a fruitless wish. Millions of millions of years will bring me no nearer to the end of torments than one poor hour. Oh, eternity, eternity! for ever and for ever! Oh, the insufferable pangs of hell!". (Ibid, No. 141)

"God, I know that hell was not prepared for me, but was prepared for the devil and his demons. Heaven is being prepared for me! Please prepare me for heaven!"

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** It is not God's will that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (II Peter 3:9)

"GOD IS TOO BIG TO BE CONCERNED IN ME"

Man is made by God and for God, thus man's greatest longing is to know God. But how can a person come to know God? A very important step in coming to know God is to face and to overcome the barriers that keep one from knowing God. We must spend some time describing the barriers that keep people--people like you and me--from really finding God.

There are many who say "God is too big to be concerned in me". This is a common barrier. William Barclay notes that in one of H.G. Wells' books there is the story of a man of affairs whose mind was so tensed and strained that he was in serious danger of a complete nervous and mental breakdown. His doctor told him that the only thing that could save him was to find the peace that fellowship with God can give. 'What!', he said, 'to think of that, up there, having fellowship with me! I would as soon think of cooling my throat with the milky way or shaking hands with the stars!'. Notes Barclay, "God, to him was the completely unfindable". (Daily Study Bible, Romans, p. 71, William Barclay)

In our human minds we sometimes become staggered at size and preoccupied with quantity. However, it is not mere size or quantity that is most important to God. It is quality that is of utmost concern to God. That means that Man, which is the highest quality in God's Creation, is most important to God.

Think of a simple illustration of this point. When a wife is watching her husband sail away to a distant land on a huge ship, is she most moved by the massive ship or is she most moved by the small figure which her eyes are fixed on as the ship sails out into the open sea? Of course, it is the small figure, for that figure is her husband! The quality of her husband is infinitely more valuable to her than the large quantity of the ship that her husband is traveling on.

We tend to be staggered by the vastness of the Universe. If we could travel at the speed of light (186,000 miles per second!), it would take approximately 100,000 years to travel the length of our Milky Way Galaxy! However, it is breath-taking to realize that the Milky Way Galaxy is only one out of billions of galaxies in the Universe! Considering the vastness of the Universe, it is no wonder that David asked, "What is man that thou are mindful of him?". Yet the marvellous thing is this: The Creator of the Universe is mindful of you and me, so much so that the Creator visited and redeemed the world!

"What a staggering thought, that the Creator of the universe became a Man, in order that man might become a son of God! And to think that God loves me as if I were the only one in the whole world to love! I give my little heart to God's Big Heart of Love!"

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** To know that God is great enough to rule the Universe and yet loving enough to become a Man, will keep me from saying, "God is too big to be concerned in me".

"I AM NOT GOOD ENOUGH TO COME TO GOD"

There are many who feel that they are not worthy to come to God because of some failure, habit or sin. They feel that they must first give up something or break some habit or quit living such a wicked life before they come to God for help. However, this over-emphasis upon sinfulness has kept many from finding the very thing they need--peace and forgiveness.

Before my conversion, I thought I had to become a better person before God could accept me, but the longer I waited to come to God, the worse I became!

Notes J.B. Phillips, "The more you weep and wail over your sins, and possibly brood over them, the bigger they loom in your mind and the more hold they are likely to have over you. Suppose we take all that for granted and concentrate instead on the boundless resources which become available to us through Christ. To my mind Christians pay far too much attention to the fact of sin and far too little to the possibilities of becoming and living like sons of God, which is what the New Testament promises. When Paul spoke of being 'strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man', for example, I am perfectly certain he wasn't spinning words; he was speaking of actual and realisable experience. In dozens and dozens of places he writes of the shining possibilities of inward transformation by the Spirit of the living God. Surely it is far better to think of these and believe that they are capable of becoming true in our own lives, than to spend time mopping over our unworthiness and sinfulness. This is where the battle really lies, to believe that God is thoroughly capable of transforming and empowering us. Appearances, past failures, feelings, all sorts of things may try to deprive us of really believing in the resources of God. And this is where we must fight; and indeed as far as I can recollect the only battle we are ever told to wage in the New Testament is to fight the good fight of faith. We only tarnish the shining promises of God if we persist in dwelling on our own sinfulness". (Good News, p. 9-10)

An evangelist was speaking personally to a young man one night after the evening evangelistic meeting. This was the conversation. "This isn't your first visit to these meetings", said the evangelist. "No sir, I've been three times." "Are you a christian?" With a look of despair on his face, he replied, "No, I'm afraid I'm far too wicked to be a Christian". "Are you ever ill, Jack?" the evangelist asked. "I have been." "You don't go to a doctor, I suppose." "Of course I do." "But don't you feel too bad? Don't you wait until you feel a bit better?" "Of course not, I go to him to get cured. . .Oh, I see what you're getting at."

"Just as I am, and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blot, to thee whose blood can cleanse each spot, O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** Instead of being so overwhelmed by my nagging habits and sinful practices, I will get my eyes fixed upon Christ who can transform and empower me to live a new way of life!

"I FEEL UNEASY WHEN I THINK ABOUT GOD!"

Some don't want to think about God because this contemplation causes a sense of uneasiness. J.B. Phillips says, "I think, if the truth were told, a great many people would have to admit that they are very far from satisfied with themselves. They may still have their ideals, but it is uncomfortably true that they don't live up to them. They may know what they ought to be, but that is very different from what they actually are. Many people keep themselves very busy not only to gain money and prestige, but simply to avoid facing this unpleasant contrast. It's far easier to reflect comfortably upon all our busyness or the number of our possessions than to think honestly about what sort of people we are". (Good News, p. 3-4)

Some people can't bear to be alone, for they have too much time to think about God!

Notes E. Stanley Jones about conversion: "There is mental conflict in all conversions. Conversion demands conversion upwards. The 'ought-to-be' stands over against the 'is' and demands change. That is disturbing, for it means an alteration of life and its plans and purposes. That means emotional disturbance. It is called 'conviction'". (Conversion, p. 197)

Too many people stop at conviction without going on to conversion. Dr. Jones notes that it is at the point of conviction that there is sometimes a 'hang-up'. He gives a tragic example of this. "In a revival in Princeton University, Aaron Burr came under conviction. He went to the president who advised him to wait till the excitement died down. This was fatal advice. Burr did. Torn by this unresolved conviction, he said to Christ, 'If you let me alone, I'll let you alone'. Aaron Burr came within one vote of the presidency of the United States, but he died in disgrace, unwept and unsung. The citizens of his home town would allow no tombstone to be put up in the graveyard, but someone stole in at night and put up a single marker, 'Aaron Burr'. That was all. As I stood there beside that marker I said to myself, 'If he had only passed from conviction to conversion, what might he not have been?'. (Ibid, p. 197)

One's sense of uneasiness which he feels when he thinks of God should not be a barrier in coming to God. It is the Holy Spirit that produces this sense of need. Conviction should not be spurned but welcomed, for only when one knows that he is a great sinner is he ready to receive a great Saviour. For many weeks John Bunyan heard condemning voices before he was converted. Augustine also experienced deep conviction for weeks before he found peace. Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him". (John 6:44)

"O Christ, help me to see that conviction of sin is a prelude to conversion to God, that conviction is like spiritual fever which is meant to drive me to the Great Physician for healing."

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** My uneasiness which I feel when I think about God, is a sign that the Holy Spirit is drawing my soul to Christ. I will allow conviction to lead me to conversion!

"I HAVE TRIED TO LIVE FOR GOD BEFORE, BUT I HAVE FAILED"

Some feel that they have sinned away their day of grace and are thus incapable of coming back to God. Nothing could be further from the truth! The very fact that the backslider desires to know God again is evidence that God's Spirit is dealing with the person and desires the backslider to come to God for restoration.

Said God to backslidden Israel through His prophet Jeremiah, "Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God. . .Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings". (Jeremiah 3:12-13a,22a) God promised the same to Israel through His servant Hosea: "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him". (Hosea 14:4)

To the lukewarm Laodicean Church, Jesus spoke words of hope: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me". (Revelation 3:20) The next verse tells us that God's forgiveness to the backslider is so great that the backslider will be re-established in a position of confidence and power: "He who conquers I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne". (verse 21)

Perhaps the greatest example of all of how a backslider can come to know God again and live a life of great power, is the Apostle Peter. "The outstanding apostle Peter, was himself a backslider and a backslider of no ordinary type--he cursed and swore (thereby showing that the subconscious had not been converted) that he never knew Jesus. Did Jesus clamp down on him and say, 'Your day of grace is over'? No, He looked on him with such tender compassion that Peter went out and wept bitterly. Jesus believed in Peter so much that He said: 'When you are converted, strengthen your brethern'. He believed in Peter so much even again, and not only converted again, but would be able in spite of his fall to strengthen his brethern--his brethern who did not fall the way he fell. That was a very redemptive faith in Peter. When Jesus arose from the dead the angel said to the women: 'Go tell his disciples and Peter'--tell Peter especially, a special word of love to a heartbroken man. Peter fulfilled the faith that Jesus had in him--he did strengthen his brethern and the world. An ex-backslider pushed humanity toward Christ with a stronger push than any man who ever lived, save one--Paul". (Conversion, p. 201)

"O God, heal me of my backslidings. I turn from the error of my ways. Save me from death, and cover the multitude of my sins." (James 5:19-20)

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** A broken bone that is healed is stronger than the unbroken places. The point where film is spliced is stronger than the strength of regular film. Where I am weakest, God will make me strongest!

"IF I GET CONVERTED, I CAN'T KEEP IT UP"

Many feel that the standards of Christianity are too high and that they are too weak to attempt to become a Christian. Such people must first realize that Christianity does not involve climbing up the ladder to God, but that Christianity involves God coming down the ladder to man! God takes the initiative. God came to save, to transform, and to empower. Christianity is not a demand but it is an offer. Christ offers new life and new power to realize the standard of Christ-like living. Christianity is not a matter of dogged determination but a matter of surrender, not a matter of trying but a matter of trusting. 'Let go and let God hold you'-- that is the secret to victorious living! Christianity is not hard, it is impossible--if you try to live the Christian life by your own strength. But when you surrender and allow Christ to live His life through you, then Christ's supernatural life becomes a glorious reality in you!

Four boys from poor homes were attending a summer boys' camp and they were the only ones in the entire camp who had failed to give their lives to Christ during the camp. When the camp evangelist asked the boys why they had not received Christ, the boys were silent for a few moments, and then one of the boys spoke, "You don't know what it's like down our street, and the sort of lives we have to live. We've talked it over, sir, and we've decided that if we got converted like the others we couldn't keep it up. So you see, sir, we've decided not to be converted". The evangelist said he was completely nonplussed for a minute, but then he stretched out his hand and said to the leader, "Hold on to my hand, will you?". He put his fingers round the evangelist's wrist. "Now, don't let go." "No sir." "Promise you'll hold tight?" The boy nodded and gripped harder. The other boys watched with interest, wondering what would happen. "Now are you ready?" asked the evangelist. "Yes sir." The evangelist gave a sudden jerk and wrenched free. "Now, try again", said the evangelist. "You put out your hand this time." The boy did, and the evangelist put his big hand round the boy's all-too-skinny wrist and said to the boy, "Now, you get free". The boy pulled and twisted, losing his breath and going red in the face with the effort. He could not come unstuck. "But why not?" the evangelist asked, "we came apart the first time, now we're stuck; why is that?". "That's easy, sir; first time I had hold on you, now you've got hold on me." Said the evangelist, "That's just how it is if you come to Jesus. He is strong and He has you in His hand and says, 'None shall pluck them from my hand'". The four boys all accepted Jesus as Saviour and Lord before they went home from that boys' camp, for they knew that Jesus was able to keep them, even on the street where they lived! (Story from "His Touch Has Still Its Ancient Power, Tom Rees, p. 77-78)

"When a little child is walking across a rocky riverbed with his father and the child loses his grip on the father's hand when he slips on the rocks, does the father lose his grip on the child's hand? Never! So, you, Heavenly Father, will hold onto me when I stumble and lose my grip!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: If I follow Christ, He has promised never to leave me nor forsake me. (Hebrews 13:5)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON 'WHAT IS MAN'S PROBLEM?'

1. Why has modern-day man sentimentalized God's love and denied God's wrath, and what have been some of the negative consequences of this attitude?
2. List four consequences in the life of the person who deliberately and habitually sins against God.
3. In an attempt to explain away the reality of Sin, what have some modern-day persons done?
4. List several of the humanistic philosophies that modern-day men have taken refuge in; in an attempt to explain away the seriousness of sin?
5. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Christianity teaches that there are both real and false guilts, and that real guilt comes, not from acts which the individual would commit, but dares not (Freudian view), but from acts which he has committed, but wishes that he had not".
6. Note ways in which people today seek to conceal their real guilts, and list some of the negative consequences of concealing guilt.
7. What Scriptures can be cited to show that one's sins cannot be hid from God?
8. How do some guilt-ridden persons seek inadequately to deal with their guilt? What is the only adequate way to deal with real guilt?
9. Share examples from your own life or from your personal observations of others of how sin has resulted in alienation.
10. What evidence can you cite that shows that our present-day age is largely an age of despair and futility?
11. In what ways does Nature, and the Conscience, and the Ten Commandments, and the lives of righteous people all serve as standards by which ungodly men feel spiritually condemned?
12. List several Scriptural references that speak of the ultimate punishment of unrepentant persons in eternal hell. How can the place called "Hell" be described?.
13. What response would you give to the person who has failed to know God because he feels that God is too big to be personally concerned in him?
14. What response would you give to the person who has failed to come to God because he feels that he is too sinful to come to God?
15. What is meant by religious 'conviction', and why do some people not allow conviction of sin to lead them to conversion to God?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON 'WHAT IS MAN'S PROBLEM?'(continued)

16. What Scriptural comfort can you offer to a backslidden person who feels that his sins are too great for God to forgive? How did Jesus treat Peter when the latter failed so miserably, and how can the example of Peter serve to bring encouragement to people whose moral failures have been very great?
17. What response would you give to a person who fails to become a follower of Christ because he feels that he is too weak to live the Christian life?

CHAPTER 4

HOW DO YOU BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

STEPS IN COMING TO KNOW GOD

Notes E. Stanley Jones, "Setting up a saving relationship with Christ is not essentially different from setting up a warm human friendship. (1) The stage of drawing near. This is the tentative, explorative stage. You are not certain whether you want to give yourself inwardly to the other person. It is the stage of yes and no. (2) The stage when there is the inward decision to give yourself to the other person--the stage of decision. (3) You implement the decision--you actually make the inward surrender to the other person. (4) Having given to the other person, you are now free to take from that person. There is an exchange of selves--you belong to that person, and that person belongs to you. You are one.

There is the stage of drawing near. This is the explorative stage. This is the stage in which one has not decided to say Yes or No to God. Up until this time the person has been relatively unconcerned about God and the Church, but suddenly (or sometimes gradually) a new interest in religion and God is awakened within the person. He finds himself in the 'valley of decision'. It is not uncommon for a sense of loneliness or guilt to grip a person at this time.

A university student once called me and said something like this: "I am such-and-such. I was wondering what your church was like. I used to go to church, but I sort of drifted away. I guess I would call myself a cynic. I can't believe in the literalism of the Bible. For instance, the Tower of Babel. To think that all the languages of the world came from that! I just wondered if your church permits debate". In the very tone of this student's voice was the accent of questing and searching and hunger for Reality, and yet the student wanted to give the impression of courage, sophistication, and intellectualism.

Another came frightenly into my office to blurt out his guilt. He confessed that he was afraid he was responsible for causing his girl friend to become pregnant. Because he came from a good background he could not bear to face his parents. I turned to the Bible and prayed with him, and he found real peace with God. He later went to a Christian college, after marrying the girl. Today, he and his wife are happily married with several children.

A short time after my father's mother passed away, my father's brother and I were digging a pipe line. My uncle is a good-hearted man, but without religious knowledge or Christian experience. 'Out of the blue' he asked me, "What. . .what is the soul, and where does it go after a person dies?". My uncle was in this first stage--the stage of exploration and searching.

"You have promised that if I draw near to You, You will draw near to me. May my search end in glorious discovery!"

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** God has been seeking me long before I began seeking Him. If I take one step toward Him, He will take a thousand steps toward me!

MAKING THE DECISION TO FOLLOW CHRIST!

A woman called a pastor and said without preliminaries: "I'm a lost person and I've run smack into God. I want to talk with you". (E.S. Jones, Conversion, p. 207)

Once I spoke at length to a man who had shown considerable interest in spiritual matters. After I talked to him, I asked him if he understood. He replied, "I understand quite well". Then I asked him if he was ready to make his decision to follow Christ. He replied, "I want to give it some more thought". He was still at the first stage--the stage of drawing near. He was still counting the cost of following Christ. He was still weighing the various factors in the moral scales of decision. He wanted time to consider whether or not it was worth his effort and sacrifice to serve Christ.

The questions people ask today reveal their spiritual search: "What is man?" "What is the purpose of life?" "Where did I come from and where am I going?" "Is there a God, and if so, how can a person know God?" "What happens when I die?" "What is truth?"

Hopefully, these questions will lead many to pass from the first stage of drawing near to the second stage of decision-making. The second stage in the formation of a relationship is the stage of inward decision to give yourself to another person, in this case, to God. In the human-divine relationship there is no decision on God's part whether or not He is willing to receive you as His friend. God's arms are open, ready to receive all as His personal friends! God is actively seeking the friendship of man! It is "Whosoever will" with God! However, on man's part there must be an inner decision to give oneself to God. For many months a person may be debating whether or not to become a Christian. There may be a battle of the will that, on one hand, seeks to fulfill the lusts of the flesh, and on the other hand, seeks to care for the eternal soul. The point at which that battle of the will is over and the will has decided to follow God, is the point at which the first stage has passed to the second stage in the process of coming to know God. The second stage is the stage of inward decision. The person at this stage has resolved deep within himself to follow God, even if no other person knows of this decision at this time.

There may be a gradual progress to this point of decision, but when the decision is reached there is no doubt as to its reality. "The ugly larva in its cocoon spends months in almost unnoticable growth and change; but no matter how great that growth may be, there comes a moment when it passes through a crisis and emerges a butterfly. The weeks of silent growth are important, but they cannot take the place of that experience when the old and the ugly are left behind and the new and the beautiful come into being." (World Aflame, Billy Graham, p. 157)

"I see now that emotion is the feeling that accompanies the great decision, but the decision itself to follow Christ is an exercise of my will. Help me to choose once and for all to follow you!"

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** I only have one freedom--the freedom to choose my master. I will choose to follow Christ as my Master!

IMPLEMENTING THE DECISION TO FOLLOW CHRIST

The third stage in forming a relationship with a person is the stage of implementing the inward decision. That is, one actually makes the surrender of himself to another person. One who inwardly decides to follow God takes the necessary steps to make that decision real and visible. One who decides to give himself to God makes the giant turn of his life. He turns his back on his past and turns his present and his future over to God. This act of turning is the act of faith--faith that God forgives the past and faith that God will provide in the present and in the future. Someone said that the letters in the word 'Faith' stand for 'Forsaking All I Take Him'. Indeed so! Notes Alan Richardson on faith, "It is the act by which he lays hold on God's proffered resources, becomes obedient to what God prescribes, and abandoning all self-interest and self-reliance, trusts God completely".

Exercising faith in Christ as a result of inward decision to follow Christ, means giving one's self to Christ. "The one thing you won and the only thing you won is just yourself. It is the one and only thing you will take out of this world with you--you cannot take your money, your home or your loved ones, nothing but yourself. It is the only thing you own. Then you can decide to whom that self shall belong--to yourself? In which case you become a self-centered person, hence disrupted. To the herd? In which case you become an echo not a voice, a thing not a person, a nonentity. To money? In which case you become an insecure person with the insecurity of your money--you go up and down with it. To sex? In which case you become a sex-dominated person--a person of lust, hence disgust. Don't think that if you don't belong to Christ you are free. Nobody is free. We are free only to choose our own masters. It is Christ or something else, that will rule us. When you say deep down, 'I belong to Him', then you do." (Conversion, E.S. Jones, p. 191)

The fourth stage in a relationship is the stage of receiving from the other person. Having given oneself to Christ, now one has a right to receive all that Christ offers. Christ offers Himself as the Gift of gifts and when one has Christ, that person has all else that belongs to Christ, such as the gift of forgiveness (I John 1:9). To many people, forgiveness is the most beautiful word in the English language. Christ gives the gift of reconciliation in place of one's alienation (II Corinthians 5:18). Christ gives the gift of regeneration or new life in place of one's old life (II Corinthians 5:17). Christ gives the gift of adoption into the family of God (John 1:12), and also the gift of assurance of eternal life. (I John 5:11-12)

"Master of men, attune my inner ears to hear your call and give me faith to make an inner commitment to You. Let my inner commitment be outwardly expressed in my decisive following of You!"

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** Whoever acknowledges Christ openly before men, will be openly acknowledged before the Father in heaven! I will not be a secret disciple!

## HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

Notes C.S. Lewis, "The central Christian belief is that Christ's death has somehow put us right with God and given us a fresh start". (Mere Christianity, p. 57) By this, it is not meant that Christ's death automatically makes us right with God. That would be to exclude the subjective aspect of human appropriation of God's salvation. Preoccupation with the objective aspect of salvation--that is, Christ's work on the Cross--is to the exclusion of the subjective aspect of salvation--that is, man's appropriation of Christ's work--results in a form of universalism. The doctrine of universalism asserts that because Christ died for all men, therefore all men will ultimately be saved. But man must appropriate God's salvation.

In speaking of man's appropriation of God's salvation, it is important to distinguish between meeting conditions and earning salvation. As Stanley Walters says, "The conditions which lead into Christian conversion are necessary, but not meritorious. On one hand, you can do nothing to merit God's gift of salvation; on the other hand, God does not give it indiscriminately to everyone, but to those who want it and are willing to receive it".

For instance, a gift such as an inheritance may belong to you, but certain conditions must be met before you receive it. You did not earn the inheritance, but you must meet certain conditions to receive the inheritance. Man does not earn salvation or deserve salvation, but he must meet certain conditions to receive that salvation. It is not his automatically.

There are three conditions for salvation. There must be an awakening, which leads to genuine repentance and saving faith.

Stanley Walters notes that an awakening is a proper attitude toward yourself, repentance is a proper attitude toward your sin, and saving faith is a proper attitude toward your Redeemer. Notes Dr. Walters, "These conditions must coincide. When you meet them fully, you may be sure that God will act to justify you and make you a new creation. Confidence in God assures you of salvation (I John 1:9, 'he is faithful. . .'), although the Holy Spirit also gives assurance." (Romans 8:16)

We must carefully look at each of these three conditions for salvation. First, there must be an awakening. Before a person can be saved from sin he must acknowledge that he needs to be saved. Awakening is a collision with God, a recognition of personal, spiritual need. What causes a person who is preoccupied with worldly pursuits and pleasures to stop in his tracks and suddenly realize that he is traveling the wrong road of life? That is the awakening work of the Holy Spirit. (John 16:8)

"I cannot earn, purchase or deserve your salvation, O God, for your salvation is a gift to be received with gratitude. Help me to humble myself before you, as a little child before his father, in order that I might receive your gift."

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** Pride pays for a possession; humility accepts a free gift. God offers a gift! I will humble myself before the Giver!

"COLLISION WITH GOD"

Before a person can be saved, he must experience a spiritual awakening. He must confront God and recognize his own personal, spiritual need. This 'Collision with God' or inner awakening to personal need is the work of the Holy Spirit. "And when he has come he will convince the world of its sin, and of the availability of God's goodness, and of deliverance from judgement." (John 16:8, Living Bible)

Notes Martyn Lloyd-Jones, "Though men decide not to believe in God and to put Him and His ways out of their lives, though they ignore all consequences and in a spirit of bravado decide to follow the other life, they do not therefore finish with God and truth at that point. The truth continues to remind them of its existence and to worry them. It does so most definitely, of course, in and through the conscience. It warns, it condemns, and it prohibits. The Truth is not static and lifeless. It is actually within us--there is 'the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world'. . .The truth follows us and worries us". (The Plight of Man and The Power of God, p. 51)

It is said that one of the thousands of listeners at a Billy Graham Crusade suddenly arose from his seat and became rather indignant, because he thought Billy Graham was preaching right at him specifically. He thought the evangelist was describing his own specific sins in the presence of the large crowd, and he was embarrassed and embittered. This man felt singled out because he was convicted and enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

Coleridge said that he believed the Bible to be inspired because, as he put it, "It finds me". Mark Twain once said, "Most people are bothered by those passages in Scripture which they cannot understand; but as for me, I always noticed that the passages in Scripture which trouble me most are those which I do understand".

It was the Holy Spirit who pricked the hearts of Peter's listeners on the Day of Pentecost. "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?'" (Acts 2:37) It was the Holy Spirit who awakened Felix to his spiritual need: "And as he (Felix) reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgement to come, Felix trembled". (Acts 24:25a)

God uses the Holy Scriptures to produce a spiritual awakening: "For the Word that God speaks is alive and active; it cuts more keenly than any two-edged sword; it strikes through to the place where soul and spirit meet, to the innermost intimacies of a man's being; it exposes the very thoughts and motives of a man's heart. No creature has any cover from the sight of God; everything lies naked and exposed before the eyes of him with whom we have to do". (Hebrews 4:12-13, Phillips)

"I am naked and exposed before the eyes of Him with whom I have to do! But, God, you only reveal my sins in order to release me from my sins. You only expose my spiritual nakedness in order to clothe me with your righteousness!"

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** I am not a sinner in general; I am a sinner in specific. Christ is not a Saviour in general; He is my Saviour in specific!

A MORAL U-TURN

After God awakens a person to his true spiritual condition, he must repent of his sins. What is repentance? To understand the meaning of repentance, we must first note some of the misconceptions regarding repentance.

Repentance does not mean self-improvement. Reformation is human endeavor; transformation is divine renewal. A person may attempt to reform a pig by cleaning him up and dressing him in clean clothes. However, until the nature of the pig is changed, the pig will go back into the mud puddle. Man's nature must be changed by God. Self-improvement is not sufficient. Man must be divinely transformed.

Repentance is not merely regret or remorse. Simply to feel sorrow about events in the past is not to change things in the present or the future. Regret and remorse are both involved in repentance, but repentance is more than regret and remorse. The mourner's bench is good, but one must do more than mourn at a mourner's bench. Combined with mourning must be a genuine change of the will and of the mind.

Repentance is "a moral u-turn. A change of mind toward sin, from one of embracing to one of separation". (Stanley Walters) Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting; for you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death". (II Corinthians 7:9-10 RSV) Notes John Murray, "The change of heart and mind and will principally respect four things; it is a change of mind respecting God, respecting ourselves, respecting sin, and respecting righteousness". (Redemption Accomplished and Applied, p. 114)

The prodigal son is an example of true repentance. He changed his mind about sin. He saw the results of sin and came to despise his sinful way of life. He turned his back on his former way of life--he made a moral u-turn and went to his father. His repentance began with regret and remorse, but it ended up in action. Repentance is basically an action of the will--"I will go to my Father".

Repentance involves open confession of sin. Says Weatherhead, "Suppressed sin, like suppressed steam, is dangerous. Confession is the safety-valve". Said one psychiatrist who dealt with the disrupted of Hollywood at high fees, "All these patients of mine need is a mourner's bench".

"O God, allow my remorse over sin's consequences to turn to repentance over sin's commission. Help me to make a moral u-turn, to turn from my old life to Your new life! Through Jesus' power. Amen!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will no longer embrace sin, but I will embrace my Saviour! The Father is waiting for the prodigal to return home!

## WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

What is repentance? "Laying down your arms, surrendering, saying you are sorry, realizing that you have been on the wrong track and getting ready to start life over again from the ground floor--is what Christians call repentance." (Mere Christianity, C.S. Lewis, p. 59)

The Scriptures teach that repentance must be preached. Said Jesus, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem". (Luke 24:46-47)

Repentance is always the condition for healing and life. Repentance assumes that there is an honest recognition of sin in one's life. Sin is not simply breaking God's laws (10 Commandments), but sin is a breaking of God's heart! Sin is not only a violation of a law, but it is also the breaking of a relationship. To break laws is to break the heart of the lawgiver!

There can be no repentance without first recognizing the fact of sin and the seriousness of sin. There can be no treatment of a disease without diagnosis of the disease. There can be no healing without acknowledgement of the hurt. There is no conversion without conviction of sin. No treating of sin as a plaything, but as a serious problem.

Repentance is not only recognizing the fact of sin and the seriousness of sin, but repentance is also recognizing one's inability to save himself from the consequences of sin, in terms of both spiritual death and eternal death. The Bible talks about being "dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked". (Ephesians 2:1-2) Sin causes one to be dead to life's purpose and plan. Sin blinds one to the meaning of life. The consequences of sin is not only spiritual death, but also eternal death, which is separation from God forever.

To have a true spirit of repentance is to acknowledge ones personal helplessness, before one is ready to receive God's help, he must declare moral bankruptcy!

Next, repentance involves confession of sin to God. Confession means "agree with". One must agree with God's evaluation of sin and God's provision for sin. Repentance means rejecting man-made solutions for salvation, and acceptance of God's sole solution for salvation.

Repentance further involves a change of mind, from an attitude of embracing sin to an attitude of forsaking sin. Repentance also involves a change in actions, from a life of practicing sin to a life of practicing righteousness. Repentance does not mean, however, perfection in performance, but rather a new direction in life.

"O God, I turn my back upon my old way of life, and I turn my face towards Your beautiful face of love and mercy. I see Your outstretched arms, waiting for me. I accept Your wonderful forgiveness!"

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** I disagree with my former prideful attitudes of self-sufficiency, and I henceforth agree with God's grace-estimate of my moral condition.

## OBSTACLES TO REPENTANCE

The Biblical message is the message of repentance. "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." (Acts 3:19) Jesus said, "Unless you repent, ye shall all likewise perish". (Luke 13:3-5)

If repentance is so important according to Jesus, then why is it so hard for so many people to repent? One reason is that people have a wrong attitude toward sin.

There are many who will not repent because they deny the very existence of sin. Many call sinful actions or attitudes mere human weaknesses. Says Dr. Karl Menninger, "The word (sin) went away. It has almost disappeared--the word, along with the notion. Why? Doesn't anyone sin anymore? Doesn't anyone believe in sin? Congress voted some years ago to require the President to proclaim each year a national day of prayer, and Truman began it in 1952. The following year (1953) President Eisenhower made his first proclamation and in it he made a reference to SIN. He borrowed the words for his proclamation from a call issued in 1863, by Abraham Lincoln, the country's first Republican and most theological President:

"It is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in human sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon."

An article in Theology Today has this to say about Eisenhower's use of the word 'sin':

"None of Eisenhower's subsequent calls to prayer mentioned sin again. The word was not compatible with the Commander-in-Chief's vision of a proud and confident people. . . Since 1953, no President has mentioned sin as a national failing." (Whatever Became of Sin, p. 14-15)

Another wrong attitude toward sin which makes it impossible to repent is that attitude expressed in these words: "I feel stupid asking God to forgive me for what I have done, for I know I will turn around and do it again". Those were the words of a young lady with whom I talked on the phone when taking a religious survey. She felt that sin was unavoidable and necessary, and to ask God to forgive her would be hypocritical! In her conversation she revealed to me three wrong attitudes toward sin which made repentance impossible for her. (1) She talked of her pleasures while sinning, failing to realize that there is only pleasure in sin 'for a season'. (2) She had no deep regret over the consequences of her sins, failing to see that whatever a person sows, that he shall morally reap. (3) She failed to see the terribleness of sin, that it was sin which crucified the most beautiful life in the universe to a cross.

"Help me, Saviour, to deny neither the reality nor the seriousness of sin! Help me decisively to forsake sin in all forms and at all times! Save me from my sins, not in my sins!"

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** In my life, the serpent-hissing word 'Sin' must confront the irresistibly powerful word 'Saviour'. When sin abounds, the Saviour super-abounds in my life! Glory!

HALF CONVERSION OR WHOLE CONVERSION?

There are, what might be called, half-conversions. That is, there are persons who are partly or temporarily changed in their behavior, but who have never really experienced a divinely-wrought transformation. Some people save face by substituting religious activities for genuine repentance. "It is doing religious acts in order to avoid an authentic return to God. It is not outright hypocrisy; it is not a deliberate outward show to convince others of religiosity. It is primarily an effort to convince oneself that he is right with God." (The Psychology of Christian Experience, Mavis, p. 13) Some substitute membership in a church or baptism or participation in the Lord's Supper or congregational confession for personal repentance. Writes E. Stanley Jones, "Many today are converted to phenomena surrounding Christianity, the music, the architecture, the ritual, the eloquence of the preacher, the standing it gives one in a community to be a member of the church, the keeping up of mores from generation to generation--it's the thing to do--and other such phenomena surrounding the Christian movement. But there is no vital saving contact with this saving Person. It's all secondhand and marginal. It lacks luster and vitality. It's an echo instead of a voice. They have not given themselves, so no transformed self emerges. . .Half the church members are converted to phenomena and not to Christ--arrested conversions". (How To Be A Transformed Person, p. 79)

Some are half-hearted in their repentance because of the pain of facing themselves honestly. Because repentance involves honest reflection upon one's sinful nature, repentance usually is discomfiting to ones self image. It is easy to concentrate on ones good, but difficult to face the fact of ones sinful nature and sinful practices.

One who is half-hearted in his repentance is one who "seeks to make a compromised settlement of his life with God in which the Almighty receives certain areas for control while he himself retains others. . .He becomes Christian partially on the basis of a conditioned commitment. 'I will follow thee; but let me first go. . .' (Luke 9:61). . .The man with a divided heart loves God and he also resents Him. He esteems the eternal principles of righteousness, but he also has a practical regard for 'realism'. He seeks to belong to both the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world". (The Psychology of Christian Experience, Mavis, p. 16-17)

"The fear of the herd is the greatest single thing producing arrested conversions and a dead Christianity. Said a herd-bound soul to a released soul, 'Catherine, I admire your convictions, but why don't you have convictions like the rest of us?'. In other words, 'Why don't you be herd-centered instead of Christ-centered?'. " (How To Be A Transformed Person, E.S. Jones, p. 81)

"Lord, don't allow me to substitute religious ritual for real repentance! Deliver me from my tendency to rationalize my sinful behavior. Help me to confess honestly and whole-heartedly!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: 'Realism' demands that I realistically face my sins, radically forsake my sins, and readily turn to my Saviour!

IMPORTANCE OF REPENTANCE

"It is upon the rock of halfwayness that most conversions go to pieces when they fail. We don't repudiate our faith; we reduce it to conformity with the crowd. The salt loses its savor, its distinctiveness, and for that reason is cast out and trodden under the feet of men. Men despise the people who are half-and-half, and God can't tolerate them either. . .if there is no outer difference between you and the world, depend on it, there is no inner difference." (How To Be A Transformed Person, E.S. Jones, p. 82)

God's call to His people in the Old Testament was repentance: "Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 33:11)

The purpose for which Christ came (Luke 5:32), and the central message of the Gospel (Acts 3:19) is that men must repent and turn to God if they are to live. God's absolute requirement for salvation is repentance: "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent". (Acts 17:30b)

"The word (repent) originally meant an 'afterthought', a second thought. Often a second thought shows that the first thought was wrong; and so the word came to mean 'a change of mind', but if a man is an honest man, a change of mind demands 'a change of action'. Repentance must involve both change of mind and change of action. A man may change his mind and come to see that his actions were wrong, but he may be so much in love with his old ways that he does not change his ways. A man may change his ways, but his mind may remain exactly the same. He may only change because of fear or because of prudential motives; his heart still loves the old ways and, if the chance comes, he will relapse into them. True repentance involves a change of mind and a change of action." (The Daily Study Bible, Acts, William Barclay, p. 24)

Remorse is mere sorrow because of the consequences of sin. Repentance is a godly sorrow over the sin itself, with a sincere desire to change one's life. "A Negro went to Alcoholics Anonymous, and when asked, 'So you want to get rid of drink!' replied, 'Not necessarily, I want to get rid of the thing it do'. He wanted a half-conversion with a whole result." (How To Be A Transformed Person, E.S. Jones, p. 79) True repentance means hating sin, accepting full moral responsibility for one's sinful actions, and turning completely to Christ for forgiveness and new life.

Repentance and faith must work together if true conversion is to result. Repentance is the proper attitude toward your sin, and faith is the proper attitude toward your Redeemer. Faith is putting yourself in the care of Christ who is able to change your life. Faith is a transfer of trust for salvation from yourself to Christ, who alone can save you!

"I change my mind about sin. I see now that the pleasures of sin last only for 'one season'. I change my direction in life. I see now that there is a way that seems right to men, but the end of that way is death!"

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** Honesty demands that I must repent fully if I expect to be changed totally!

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAITH AND REPENTANCE

To become a Christian, one must be awakened to his true spiritual condition without Christ. Further, one must repent of his sins and exercise true saving faith.

Repentance and faith are two sides of one coin or two halves of one whole. Repentance should always be inseparably coupled with faith. Repentance is forsaking sin, and faith is turning to the Saviour. The moment one forsakes sin, he must turn to the Saviour, for sin can only lose its grip on one's life when one surrenders himself to the stronger hold of the Saviour!

One is saved by faith. Faith is a transfer of trust from one's self to one's Saviour. Saving faith is always accompanied by genuine repentance. Repentance is a change of attitude toward sin. Faith is a change of attitude toward the Saviour, from one of rejection to one of acceptance and surrender.

Says Wesley, concerning the relationship between repentance and the fruits of repentance: "God does undoubtedly command us both to repent, and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance; which if we willingly neglect, we cannot reasonably expect to be justified at all; therefore both repentance, and fruits meet for repentance, are in some sense, necessary to justification. But they are not necessary in the same sense with faith, nor in the same degree. Not in the same degree; for those fruits are only necessary conditionally; if there be time and opportunity for them. Otherwise a man may be justified without them, as was the thief upon the cross". (Wesley's Sermons, Vol. 1, p. 387)

If repentance is turning from sin, then faith is turning to God. Saving faith is "putting yourself in the care of One who can do something. It is a transfer of trust for salvation from self to Christ". (Stanley Walters)

Saving faith is more than a mere intellectual assent to the existence of God. James wrote, "You say that you believe that there is one God. Excellent! The demons also believe the same thing--and shudder in terror". (James 2:19, Barclay) The devil knows that Jesus is the Son of God, and even trembles on account of this belief, but the devil is still the devil!

Faith is the total commitment of one's total self to Christ. Faith is "not merely a speculative, rational thing, a cold, lifeless assent, a train of ideas in the head; but also a disposition of the heart". (Wesley's Sermons, Vol. 1, p. 14)

Faith is throwing yourself upon God, like a drowning man throws himself upon the strength of the lifeguard. Only when one ceases to struggle and abandons himself to the Divine Lifeguard, is he saved.

"Help me to prove to You, O God, and to myself, and to others, that I have truly repented of my sins, by doing good deeds that befit repentance!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Turning from sin, I turn to the Saviour who, in turn, leads me to service. Conviction will lead me to conversion, sadness will lead me to gladness!

## WHAT IS SAVING FAITH?

Everyone has faith. One cannot live one day without exercising faith-- faith that the driver you meet on the highway will stay on his side, faith that your employer will pay your salary at the end of the pay period, faith that your wife will not sprinkle poison on your food, faith that the sun will 'rise' in the morning, etc. Everyone has faith in someone or something. But the object of one's faith determines the value of one's faith.

The object of the sinner's faith must be Jesus Christ. Christ is perfectly trustworthy. "How did you like the airplane ride?" was asked of a nervous man who went up for the first time. "Very well," he replied, "but I never did put my whole weight down!" Faith means putting your whole weight down on God!

Says John Murray, "Faith is not the act of God; it is not God who believes in Christ for salvation; it is the sinner. It is by God's grace that a person is able to believe, but faith is an activity on the part of the person and of him alone. In faith we receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation. . . Faith is a whole-souled movement of self-commitment to Christ for salvation from sin and its consequences". (Redemption Accomplished and Applied, p. 106-107)

Some say that it makes no difference what you believe, just as long as you are sincere. But one can be sincerely wrong! To place faith in an unreliable object (regardless of your sincerity) will result in a tragic outcome!

The Scriptures make it clear that one is saved by faith, not by his own works. Notes Wesley, "Indeed, strictly speaking, the covenant of grace doth not require us to do any thing at all, as absolutely and indispensably necessary, in order to our justification; but only to believe in Him, who, for the sake of his Son, and the propitiation which he hath made, 'justifieth the ungodly, that worketh not', and imputes his faith to him for righteousness". (Wesley's Sermons, Vol. 1, p. 55)

Faith is self-abandonment to God and rejection of all attempts at works of self-righteousness. There are some who feel they must improve themselves or their actions before coming to God. Some say, "I must first do this; I must first conquer every sin; break off every evil word and work, and do all good to all men; or I must first go to church, receive the Lord's supper, hear more sermons and say more prayers". (Wesley's Sermons, Vol. 1, p. 59)

"Just as I am, and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blot, To thee whose blood can cleanse each spot, O Lamb of God, I come!"

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** I will not waste God's gift of faith to me. I will exercise it responsibly, and as a result be saved decisively! Because the object of my faith is Christ, the value of my faith is incalculable!

HOW IS MAN SAVED?

How is man saved? "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9, NASB)

Says Wesley, "If thou couldest now do all things well, if from this very hour, till thy soul should return to God, thou couldest perform perfect, uninterrupted obedience, even this would not atone for what is past . . . But suppose perfect obedience, for the time to come, could atone for the sins that are past, this would profit thee nothing; for thou art not able to perform it; no, not in any one point". (Wesley's Sermons, Vol. 1, p. 66)

The one who attempts to bargain with God and who feels that he can keep his side of the contract, soon learns how weak and corrupted he really is. He who attempts to practice the Christian virtues on his own strength, will end the experiment in despair. True faith involves a recognition of man's weak and sinful creatureship, and a resulting total dependance upon the all-together Holy Creator. "If you devoted every moment of your whole life exclusively to His service you could not give Him anything that was not in a sense His own already. So that when we talk of a man doing anything for God or giving anything to God, I will tell you what it is really like. It is like a small child going to its father and saying, 'Daddy, give me sixpence to buy you a birthday present'. Of course, the father does, and he is pleased with the child's present. It is all very nice and proper, but only an idiot would think that the father is sixpence to the good on the transaction." (Mere Christianity, C.S. Lewis, p. 125) Faith means that man cannot earn God's favor by giving God a gift. Faith is rather total abandonment to God in love, realizing that God is the total owner of all and that man is the grateful recipient of all.

John Murray says that faith is three things--knowledge, conviction, and trust. Before one puts faith in anything, he must have confidence in the character of the thing. "We must know who Christ is, what he has done, and what he is able to do. Otherwise, faith would be blind conjecture at the best and foolist mockery at the worst." (Redemption Accomplished and Applied, p. 110) We must not only know the facts about Christ, but we must truly believe the facts to be true. We must not only intellectually know the facts about the Cross, but we must volitionally commit ourselves to those facts. If we have a strong conviction that the facts are true, then we will commit our total being to Christ. It is only when this last step is taken--the step of full commitment--that we have exercised the kind of faith that saves from sin and saves for heaven! We have come to rely upon Christ alone for salvation!

"O Christ, you are together trustworthy in your character, and faithful to your promises. Abandoning all hope for salvation in myself, I cast myself helplessly and hopefully into your mighty arms!"

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** When I make a 'leap of faith', I am not leaping into the dark, but into the light of God's everlasting love!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON 'HOW DO YOU BECOME A CHRISTIAN?'

1. What are four stages that one must take in order to establish a warm human relationship, and how are each of these four stages like the stages that one takes in establishing a meaningful relationship with God?
2. Relating to one's quest for God, what is meant by the phrase "valley of decision"? What are some of the characteristics of persons who are in the "valley of decision"?
3. What does it mean "to count the cost" to determine if one wishes to follow Christ?
4. In your own personal life, what are some of the factors that influenced you (or that are now influencing you) to make a decision to follow Christ?
5. What is your definition of "Saving Faith"? How is one's inner decision to follow Christ outwardly manifested and demonstrated?
6. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Don't think that if you don't belong to Christ you are free. Nobody is free. We are free only to choose our own masters. It is Christ or something else, that will rule us".
7. When one gives himself to Christ in total surrender, what are some of the gifts and benefits that one receives from Christ?
8. What does the doctrine of universalism teach regarding salvation? What is the proper relationship between the 'subjective' and the 'objective' aspects in salvation?
9. List the three conditions that a sinner must meet in order to be converted.
10. How would you describe 'awakening' in a sinner's life, and who is the Agent of 'awakening'?
11. What are some of the misconceptions regarding repentance? What are the characteristics of true repentance? According to John Murray, repentance involves a change of mind in what four areas? Why is the Prodigal Son (as seen in Jesus' parable) such a good example of true repentance?
12. What is the relationship between repentance and confession of sin?
13. List and describe some of the various obstacles to true repentance.
14. Cite examples of people whom you have known or have observed who have denied the very existence of sin. What rationalizations have these people engaged in, to explain away sin?
15. What is generally the motivation of people who substitute religious activities for genuine repentance?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON 'HOW DO YOU BECOME A CHRISTIAN?'(continued)

16. Name some of the 'phenomena' to which people are converted as substitutes for being converted to Christ.
17. What are some other reasons why some people have stopped short of experiencing genuine repentance?
18. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "'Realism' demands that I realistically face my sins, radically forsake my sins, and readily turn to my Saviour!"
19. What are the outward evidences of an inward work of God's grace in a person's life, as a result of genuine repentance?
20. Cite Scriptural references to support the assertion that there can be no conversion without the exercise of genuine repentance.
21. Does true repentance involve both a change of mind and a change of actions? Why or why not?
22. What is the difference between repentance and remorse?
23. What is the relationship between faith and repentance?
24. Is "Saving Faith" more than an intellectual assent to the basic truths of Christianity (James 2:19)?
25. Explain what is meant by the statement: "The object of one's faith determines the value of one's faith".
26. Describe some of the indispensable characteristics of "Saving Faith".
27. Do you believe that the following is an adequate definition of "Saving Faith": "Faith is a whole-souled movement of self-commitment to Christ for salvation from sin and its consequences".
28. What is the relationship between faith and good works as these relate to conditions for salvation and evidence of salvation?
29. Is there anything that man can do to earn, purchase or deserve God's salvation? Why or why not?
30. What three things, according to John Murray, are involved in experiencing true saving faith? Show the interrelationships between these three things.

CHAPTER 5

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

JUSTIFICATION--'JUST AS IF I HAD NEVER SINNED!'

What happens when I become a Christian? This is the question we must try to answer. Among the words that described God's salvation of man, two words are prominent: Justification and Regeneration. These are the gifts of God given to the sinner who exercises saving faith in Christ. Each is given simultaneously, but each describes a definite aspect of Christ's saving work. We must spend a few days looking at these two great words.

Someone said that when God justifies the sinner, He treats the sinner just as if he had never sinned! Justification is a legal concept, concerned with the legal status of the believer. The great frequency with which the Scriptures discuss justification, show that the Scriptures put great emphasis upon the idea of 'Law'.

'Justify' in the New Testament sense of the word does not mean to prove a person righteous, but rather it means to treat, to account or to reckon a person as righteous. Justification in the New Testament means "to acquit" or "to pronounce just or righteous". There are four things which can be said about Justification.

First, in considering justification, it is important to realize the seriousness and sacredness of God's Law. God requires that man should live in accordance with His Law. "Moreover, it is part of the very nature of law as we know it that it attaches penalties to the breaking of the law, and in this respect the scriptural law is no exception. Again and again we are told that God views the breaking of the law with the gravest displeasure, that His wrath is extended towards the sinner, and that none can expect immunity, for there is no respect of persons with Him." (The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross, Leon Mooris, p. 294)

Second, God must honor His holy nature, and therefore cannot automatically and unconditionally pronounce forgiveness to all men. As P.T. Forsyth so well says, "God could not trifle with His own holiness. He could will nothing against His holy nature, and He could not abolish the judgement bound up with it. Nothing in the compass of the divine nature could enable Him to abolish a moral law, the law of holiness. That would be tampering with His own soul. It had to be dealt with. Is the law of God more loose than the law of society? Can it be taken liberties with, played with, and put aside at the impulse even of love? How little we should come to think of God's love if that were possible. . . God's holy law is His own holy nature. His love is under the condition of eternal respect. It is quite unchangeable". (Ibid, p. 294)

"O God, how can you treat me as a child to be loved when I deserve to be treated as a criminal to be obliterated? How can you save me, a sinner, and at the same time honor Your own holiness? Only one way! If You, O God, take upon yourself the punishment that a criminal and a sinner deserve! Only the perfectly just can justify the totally unjust!"

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** God respected His justice enough to punish sin, in the person of His exalted Son. God loved His mercy enough to forgive sin, in the persons of His fallen sons! I am perfectly accepted in the perfectly acceptable One!

GOD CAN DECLARE MAN RIGHTEOUS!

We are trying to understand the meaning of Justification. Third, Jesus suffered for man's sin and in turn gave man a borrowed righteousness. The substitutionary death of Christ must be taken account of, if we are properly to understand the true significance and possibility of justification. God takes into account that Christ suffered for man's sin and thus, God is able to forgive mankind of its own sin. Yet, because of Christ's substitutionary death, God is able to honor His own law of holiness. God's law must be vindicated; sin must be punished. Christ took the punishment of sin and thus the demands of God's law were satisfied. In fact, because Christ has died for man's sins, God must forgive man. God acts righteously or justly in that He honors the substitutionary death of Christ, and dealing righteously, God is therefore obligated to forgive man. God forgives and yet He maintains the integrity of His character, simply because God, as a righteous Judge, cannot overlook the work of His Son on Calvary. "Even (God's) act of forgiveness which might be thought of as an act of mercy is seen to be also an act of righteousness." (The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross, Leon Mooris, p. 273)

At the same time that God, for Christ's sake, forgives man's sins, Christ bestows upon man a borrowed righteousness. The borrowed righteousness which man enjoys is given to man by God, and is the basis of man's justification. The righteousness which man enjoys must be appropriated by faith. It is not the faith itself (the activity of man) which justifies man; it is Christ's borrowed righteousness (the activity and gift of God) that is the basis of man's justification. God looks upon the borrowed righteousness, and acquits man and judges him as righteous. God is just in justifying a sinner, on the basis of God's acceptance of Christ's atonement which makes it possible for man to enjoy a borrowed righteousness.

Fourth, the work of Christ's atonement enables God to declare man as righteous. God can declare man as righteous because God constitutes man as righteous by giving to man the righteousness of Christ. "God treats the sinner as if he had not been a sinner at all. . . That means that to be justified is to enter into a new relationship with God, a relationship of love and confidence and friendship, instead of a relationship of distance and enmity and fear. . . He is not in this right relationship because he has meticulously performed the works of the law. He is in it because in utter faith he has cast himself on this amazing mercy and love of God." (The Daily Study Bible, Romans, William Barclay, p. 13-14)

"What a sense of relief to know that I need not prove myself righteous (which I can't because of my sinful life), but that you treat me as righteous (which you can because of Christ's righteous death)! Glory!"

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** By placing faith in Christ, I become hid in Christ, and as a result, God no longer looks at my sinful life, but at Christ's perfect life. By becoming hid in Christ, I am found in God!

"A WHITE RAG ON EVERY LIMB OF THE TREE!"

We have said that when God justifies a sinner, He treats him as if he had never sinned! God is able to declare the sinner as righteous, not because the sinner is at all righteous, but because Christ is righteous and the sinner, who puts faith in Christ, is hid in Christ. We are accepted in God's beloved Son.

"At the court of kings there was an official called the prosagogeus, the introducer, the giver of access, and it was his function to decide who should be admitted to the king's presence, and who should be kept out. He, as it were, held the keys of access. That is to say, it is Jesus Christ, through what He did, who brings men into the presence of God, who gives them access to God, who opens the way to God." (The Daily Study Bible, Peter, William Barclay, p. 278)

"A minister was on a train, the only occupant of the coach except a young man who seemed very ill at ease. The young man would sit in one seat and then get up and go to another, take up a book and drop it again. The minister went over to him, sat down beside him, and asked what was the matter. The boy shut up like a clam. But at last the dam broke, and he told his story: 'I've run away from home, and I've been away a long time. I've wanted to go back, and I wrote my father asking if he would take me back. But there has been no reply. So I have written my mother and told her that I am not going to wait for a reply, that I am coming home, and that if they will take me back she must hang a white rag on the crab-apple tree, down near the railroad tracks, so that I can see it when the train goes by. If I do not see the white rag, I shall understand and go on by. We are getting near and I am afraid to look--afraid the white rag won't be there'. The minister told the lad that he needn't look, that he would look for him. The boy sat with his eyes closed, the hand of the minister on his knee. As they drew near to where the tree was, the hand of the minister closed tight on the boy's knee, and he said, 'My boy, there is a white rag on every limb of that tree!'."

The Cross upon which Jesus died is covered, as it were, with white rags --the rags of reconciliation. God accepts us as friends, not as enemies, because of what Christ has done on the Cross. "And you yourselves, who were strangers to God, and in fact, through the evil things you had done, his spiritual enemies, he has now reconciled through the death of his body on the cross, so that he might welcome you to his presence clean and pure, without blame or reproach." (Colossians 1:21-22, Phillips)

"I come to you, most holy God, with no confidence in my own righteousness, but with full confidence in the Christ of the empty cross!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I can come boldly into the presence of God for I carry on my heart the blood of the reconciling Saviour!

REGENERATION--A SENSE OF NEWNESS

What is the difference between justification and regeneration? Justification refers to a Christian's changed status with God. Regeneration refers to a Christian's changed nature. "Regeneration is an act of God in us; justification is a judgement of God with respect to us. The distinction is like that of the distinction between the act of a surgeon and the act of a judge. The surgeon, when he removes an inward cancer, does something in us. That is not what a judge does--he gives a verdict regarding our judicial status. If we are innocent he declares accordingly." (Redemption Accomplished and Applied, John Murray, p. 121)

When a person receives Christ into his life, he is made a new person. Regeneration means a sense of newness, and while the actual word is seldom used in the New Testament to denote personal salvation, the concept is implied by a variety of terms and metaphors in the New Testament. Let us look at some of those metaphors, all of which denote newness of life or regeneration.

Becoming a Christian is like passing from darkness to light. Paul received a commission from God to turn men "from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins". (Acts 26:18 RSV) One college girl expressed her experience of Christ in these words: "I felt that I had swallowed sunshine!".

Becoming a Christian is like freedom from slavery. Wrote Paul, "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship". (Romans 8:15) Wrote one man after he found Christ, "He lifted me out of the dungeon. . .I was truly free".

Becoming a Christian is like passing from death to life or like experiencing a resurrection unto life. Wrote Paul, "But God is so rich in mercy; He loved us so much that even though we were spiritually dead and doomed by our sins, He gave us back our lives again when He raised Christ from the dead--only by His undeserved favor have we ever been saved--and lifted us up from the grave into glory along with Christ, where we sit with Him in the heavenly realms--all because of what Christ Jesus did". (Ephesians 2:4-6) "You see how your old, evil nature died with Him and was buried with Him; and then you came up out of death with Him into a new life because you trusted the Word of the mighty God who raised Christ from the dead." (Colossians 2:12, Living Bible)

Justification establishes a person in a right relationship with God and regeneration gives an inward newness of life to the sinner. Both are the gifts of God and are simultaneously given when man exercises saving faith in Christ. Have you exercised saving faith in Christ? Are you enjoying these wonderful gifts of God? If not, why not?

"O God, give me light for my darkness, freedom for my slavery, hope for my despair, life for my death! Make me a new creation in Christ Jesus!"

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** God is not calling me to be a better person; He is calling me to be a new person! God's grace alone can make me new!

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A COMPLETELY NEW LIFE!

We are looking at those metaphors which describe God's gift of regeneration.

Becoming a Christian is called a New Birth. "Thank God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that in his great mercy we men have been born again in a life full of hope, through Christ's rising again from the dead!" (I Peter 1:3, Phillips) "You have been born anew, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God." (I Peter 1:23 RSV) Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Except one be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God". (John 3:5) 'Water' refers to the purification from sinful pollution, and 'Spirit' refers to inner newness of life brought about by the activity of the Holy Spirit. New Testament teaching has its counterpart in the Old Testament: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh". (Ezekiel 36:25-26)

Becoming a Christian is called a New Creation. "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come." (II Corinthians 5:17 RSV) (See Ephesians 4:21-24 in the Living Bible.)

Becoming a Christian means becoming qualitatively different--becoming a real person. Says Maurice Bennett, "The basic concept is that the Christian life is a completely new life. It is as different from anything that went before as is the life of man from the life of a sponge. Our modern tendency has been to stress the fact that when a man becomes a Christian it need not make so very much difference, especially in our 'decent society'. We have presumed that because a fellow lives in a society that is flavoured with certain Christian ideals he is therefore a Christian, for after all he exhibits certain Christian tendencies. How utterly absurd. As though my liking for Chinese food makes me into a Chinaman. . .It is vitally important to announce this for. . .there are those who do not think there is much difference in these days between the decent, likeable pagan and the Christian. They should mark the difference as the New Testament writers saw it. The easiest thing to do is to dismiss the New Testament metaphors as exaggerations. The fact of the matter is we have never really discovered what is being offered. We have been content with a sham, a farce, a fake, watering down our Christianity and being content with an anemic substitute. Thus we know about Christianity, we sing about it, but plod along with religious burden often unchanged and uninfluenced, miserable because of the unreality of our dreams".

"God, give me the 'vision which transforms'--the vision of your holiness in contrast to my sinfulness, and the vision of your transforming power in contrast to my moral impotence."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will allow my potential to be determined by the possibilities of divine Grace, not by the limitations of human sinfulness!

"I FELT CLEAN INSIDE"

Out of large numbers of converts who were saved at a Billy Graham Crusade, about 2000 of these converts were asked to tell what happened when they became a Christian. The following five statements were more often given as answers to what happened when they were converted than any other answers:

First, "I felt clean inside". Sin blackens the soul morally, but Christ comes to the soul of the repentant one to cleanse from the guilt and pollution of sin. "What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus." Paul wrote to Titus, "Then He saved us--not because we were good enough to be saved, but because of His kindness and pity--by washing away our sins and giving us the new joy of the indwelling Holy Spirit". (Living Bible)

"A woman who had gone through the mazes of psychiatric analysis and had been left rather picked to pieces without a synthesis, experienced this change and described it this way: 'I feel all clean within. All the old hymns about cleansing which I had laid aside as outworn superstition have come back. I find myself singing them again'." (Abundant Living, E.S. Jones, p. 35)

Second, "I found peace of mind". Sin causes man to be at enmity with God. Christ has come to speak peace to the restless soul of man. Augustine talked about "our hearts being restless till they rest in Thee". Baron von Hugel has put it this way: "The passion and hunger for God come from God, and God answers it with Christ".

One lonely man in a hotel who was getting ready to pull the trigger of a gun to blow his brains out, reached for a radio dial and the speaker said, "Put down that gun! That is no solution for your problems". The man was shocked into reality and fell on his knees before God and found peace for his troubled soul.

One tragic result of sin is that it drives man from God into hiding. Christ has come to reconcile man to himself--to make peace with man. In one of his books, Barclay recalls the story of an architect who came to Plato and offered for a certain sum of money to build him a house into which none of the rooms would it be possible to see. Plato said, "I will give you double the money to build a house into every room of which everyone can see". (The Daily Study Bible, John, William Barclay, Vol. 1, p. 131) The peaceful mind is the transparent and integrated mind--transparent to all because it is cleansed by Christ's blood!

Paul's favorite title for God is the God of Peace. Peace is not the absence of trouble, but the presence of everything that makes for a man's highest good!

"God of peace, impart peace to my troubled mind. God of holiness, impart cleansing to my polluted soul. God of love, shed abroad your love in my loveless heart! God of the New, make me a new creation! Thank you. A thousand times, thank you!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: My passion for God is created by God and is satisfied with God!

"I AM EASIER TO LIVE WITH"

Third, "I was able to overcome vicious habits". One of the tragic characteristics of sin is that one sin leads to more sins. A practice which may appear relatively harmless can lead to a vicious habit. Sin makes a man a slave to its harsh tyranny. Christ has come to break the power of sin and to set the captive free! Christ enables a man to overcome a vicious habit!

"In London, England," writes Billy Graham, "an alcoholic was placed under the care of a psychiatrist who soon gave up because the alcoholic was getting no better. During our meetings at the Haringay Arena, the alcoholic was invited to attend. He listened in wonderment to the Gospel messages. 'Maybe there is some hope for me', he thought. One night when the invitation was given, he went forward with several others. He was converted, and new power came into his life. That night before he went to sleep, he reached as usual for the nearby bottle of liquor; but something--or rather, Someone--restrained his hand. Getting out of bed, he took the bottle and emptied it down the drain. When he awakened in the morning, through habit he reached again for his usual morning bracer. It was not there, but there was no sense of disappointment. The man called his psychiatrist and said, 'You have lost a patient. Christ has saved me from drink. I am now a new man'. The psychiatrist said: 'That sounds fine. Maybe I can find help where you found it. I am not an alcoholic, but I have my own needs and problems'. The psychiatrist began, too, to attend the meetings and he, too, accepted Christ as his Saviour." (World Aflame, p. 145-146)

Fourth, "I am easier to live with". One of the tragic results of sin is that sin not only makes the life of the transgressor miserable, but sin also makes the lives of those who are intimately associated with the transgressor miserable. The fruits of sin are hatred, fighting, jealousy, anger, complaints, criticisms, and selfishness which is the "constant effort to get the best for yourself". (Galatians 5:20, Living Bible) Christ has come to replace these evil traits with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These God-given qualities make a person much easier to live with. Christ has come to make a person winsome and gracious, He has come to build strong and lasting relationships.

"The biggest grouch of a certain city called up a friend over the long distance telephone and said, 'Everybody is changed in \_\_\_\_\_ after that meeting in the high school with Stanley Jones last night. Everybody is different this morning. Of course, it may be that only I am different, but everybody seems different'." (Abundant Living, E.S. Jones, p. 35)

"O God, because I am powerless to break my unholy habits, I come to you for deliverance from sin's power. Heal my will that I may develop holy habits! In Jesus' powerful name!"

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** The way of the transgressor is hard, for Man is not made to transgress! I am made for holy living!

"I AM HAPPY FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE"

Fifth, "I am happy for the first time in my life". Sin brings misery and despair. "The way of transgressors is hard." (Proverbs 13:15b) Christ has come to give real joy and happiness to man. Jesus said to his disciples, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full". (John 15:11)

Christ has come to the human race to change the long face and to remove the depressed outlook on life. Christ has come to give us Life--Abundant Life! One man called a Negro man to a train window and said, "Uncle, is there anybody in this town enjoying religion?". The old Negro replied, "Them's that's got it is". (Abundant Living, E.S. Jones, p. 35) Those who genuinely have Christ have genuine joy! "Whosoever trusteth in the Lord, happy is he." (Proverbs 16:20b)

"In the third century, Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage, wrote to his friend Donatus: 'It is a bad world, Donatus, an incredibly bad world. But I have discovered in the midst of it a quiet and holy people who have learned a great secret. They have found a joy which is a thousand times better than any of the pleasures of our sinful life. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They are masters of their souls. They have overcome the world. These people Donatus, are Christians. . .and I am one of them'." (Quoted in World Aflame, Billy Graham, p. 139)

Once when I was travelling to an annual Bible Camp meeting, I visited with a man--a simple and uneducated man--who was all aglow with the joy of God. This man told me of his former and miserable life of drunkenness. His wife had left him and he went through several struggles. But God had transformed him and his testimony rang with certainty and joy. He bubbled over with enthusiasm as we rode together to camp. The joy and happiness that he found in Christ was indescribable. He was experiencing the joy of the Lord--joy that was 'unspeakable and full of glory'!

The joy that Christ gives is not dependent upon one's external circumstances. A young woman who became a Christian, lost her husband in an accident, and yet this did not rob her of her joy. Writing about a spiritually needy friend, she said, "I do wish I could share all the joy in my heart with her. She deserves it, and I have enough for ten people!". (Prayer and Life's Highest, Paul Rees, p. 79)

In the journal of a young convert of thirteen were found these words: "Oh, that I had a voice that would reach all the world. I would tell them how happy I am". (Living In Two Worlds, Mary Alice Tenney, p. 72)

"O God, your holiness is my happiness, your presence is my power, your glory is my goal! When your smile of approval rests upon me, I laugh with a holy joy!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: God wills that I be truly happy; therefore, I will "rejoice evermore with joy unspeakable".

MOUNTAIN PEAKS OF SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

Have you ever got so excited about something as you were relating your experience to someone else, that your mind got ahead of your tongue? There was so much to tell and you could not find the words to communicate your excitement!

That is what often happened to the apostle Paul. Paul was so full of Christ and the riches of Christ that he could not contain himself. Paul's letters to the Churches were love letters to dear friends. Paul was so enraptured with the riches of spiritual blessings that, in his attempt to communicate these blessings, he piled descriptive phrase upon descriptive phrase. From verse 3 through verse 14 of Ephesians 1, there is no period in the original Greek language. It is one sentence! Paul's mind races from one spiritual truth to another, as he becomes lost in 'Wonder, love, and praise'. It is not a logical statement, but a lyrical song of praise.

During the next few days I would like for us to imagine that we are aboard a spiritual airplane. There is a mighty range of spiritual mountains, with towering mountain peaks of various heights to look upon as we fly above the range. Just as a plane flies quickly over a number of mountain peaks in a relatively short time, so I would like for us to get an airplane view of some of the great mountain peaks of spiritual blessing which Paul puts before our view in Ephesians, chapter one.

To glance at the mountain peaks of spiritual blessings is to break out into a shout with Paul, and declare: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places". (verse 3)

As we 'fly' above the mountain peaks of spiritual blessings, get all excited about your spiritual heritage as a believer!

During the next few days, we will learn anew how blessed it is to be God's people. How does Ephesians One describe God's people? They are (1) Chosen People, (2) Destined People, (3) Redeemed People, (4) Forgiven People, (5) Enlightened People, (6) Enlivened People, (7) Hopeful People, (8) Empowered People.

As one who has repented of your sins and transferred your faith from yourself to Jesus Christ as your saviour, you have a right to claim your spiritual heritage! Your aspirations toward effective living are fulfilled through the 'working of God's great might'. You are a child of the King, so learn to enjoy your privileges of royalty!

"O God, open my eyes that I may see the unspeakably wonderful blessings which you wish to share with me! I am rich in Christ!"

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** The bitter experience of repentance leads me to the blessed experience of enjoying heavenly blessings!

CHOSEN TO BE HOLY AND BLAMELESS!

Writes Paul, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him". (Ephesians 1:3-4) Wonder of it all is that God would choose sinful man! The Infinite choosing of the finite; the all-powerful choosing the very weak! The righteous choosing the sinful! God took the initiative to choose to save humanity. Said Jesus, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you". (John 15:16)

It has been said, "Many are called but few are chosen, because few are choice". That is, God chose to save the entire human race, but only those who accept God's universal offer of salvation, become members of the choice (or elect) group.

We are chosen to be 'holy'. Chosen for the purpose of separation from the world's values and standards. Believers are to stand out as different --with values of God controlling their behavior. This means that, as believers, we are never to look at people as means to our own selfish ends. We are never to look at people as things to be used, but instead as eternal beings to be served. The 'thingification' of persons is always the tragic result in a society that considers gadgets more important than God! Christians are chosen by God to restore compassion to relationships and value to persons! As God's chosen people, we are not chosen to be separated from sinners, but instead, separated from sin.

A chosen people must be a 'select' people, that is, a 'blameless' people. This term refers to the Old Testament animal sacrifice which could only be offered to God if no blemishes were found in it. The animal must be perfectly formed and healthy before it could be used to offer to God. The offering of our lives--be it our home life, our personal life, our recreational life or our work life--must be the best possible. A chosen person must be a person who is willing to undergo the very scrutiny of God! Perfection in love and blamelessness in behavior is the high goal of Chosen People. It is a great blessing to be a chosen person, but with that privilege comes a great responsibility to be holy and blameless.

So the first description of a Christian's spiritual heritage is given in Ephesians 1:3-4. A Christian is a chosen person. Not only chosen, but also destined (verses 5-6). To this we must next turn.

"O God, like you, enable me to be separate from sin, but never separated from sinners. I cannot be faultless in behavior, but enable me to be blameless in love. For Jesus' sake! Amen."

**AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY:** The God who chooses me to be holy will cleanse me to live a holy life!

DESTINED TO BE SONS!

Secondly, Christians are Destined People. "He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved." (Ephesians 1:5-6) Even before the foundation of the world, God determined to adopt us as His children! The mark of God's ownership is stamped deeply on the soul of every person! God claims the right to be our Father, and we as His children! God has destined us to be sons, not slaves! To be called children of God is to be called the objects of God's special care, love, and attention! David asked in wonderment, "What is man that thou art even mindful of him, O God?". But we can ask with equal wonderment, "What is man that thou, O God, art willing to make him a son of the living God, through special adoption? Through that adoption, our sins are cancelled out and we are made a part of God's wonderful family!

Third, Christians are Redeemed People. "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us. (Ephesians 1:7-8) The meaning of redemption is 'to loose'. Man is in bondage to sin by reason of his own sinful nature and by reason of his own willful choice. Man is unable to free himself from the terrible bondage of sin. The man without Christ feels like crying out, "Oh, what a terrible predicament I'm in! Who will free me from my slavery to this deadly lower nature?" (Romans 7:24) It is Christ's death that loosed men from the bondage to sin. Christ's death appeased the wrath of God, and at the same time, demonstrated the love of God for sinners. Christ's resurrection revealed God's power--a power so great that sin's chains could be broken! Christ's death was the substitutionary price of redemption, and Christ's resurrection was the availing power to set the sinner free!

Fourth, Christians are Forgiven People. "We have forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us." Guilt drains away vitality, causes mental and physical distress, marks the face, and scars the soul. Shakespeare described the terrible plague of a guilty conscience:

"My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,  
And every tongue brings in a several tale,  
And every tale condemns me for a villian."

But "as far as the east is from the west, so far hath God removed our transgressions from us".

"Dare to believe that I am a redeemed and forgiven soul, a soul whose sins are buried in the sea of God's forgetfulness, never to be remembered against me again! In Christ, my dreams become realities! Glory!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Loosed from the chains of sin, I shall forever be chained to the heart of God!

ENLIGHTENED AND ENLIVENED PEOPLE

Fifth, Christians are Enlightened People. "For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth." (Ephesians 1:9-10) The mystery or secret of God has been gloriously revealed to Christians. What is that secret? Very simply, yet profoundly, the secret is this: All of nature and all of humanity will be unified and redeemed in Christ! God is sovereign and He will make even the wrath of men to praise Him! Evil will not triumph! Rather, good and justice will have the final word! Right will be rewarded; evil will be punished! The godly will be saved; the ungodly shall perish! God both wills and desires that all men come to repentance, but those who won't repent will be punished. All of nature and all of mankind will either willingly or unwillingly bow the knee to Christ and proclaim that He is Lord of lords!

"In olden times God did not share this plan with his people, but now he has revealed it by the Holy Spirit to his apostles and prophets. And this is the secret: that the Gentiles will have their full share with the Jews in all the riches inherited by God's sons; both are invited to belong to his church, and all of God's promises of mighty blessings through Christ apply to them both when they accept the Good News about Christ and what He has done for them." (Ephesians 3:6, Living Bible)

Sixth, Christians are Enlivened People. "In him, according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will, we who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory." (Ephesians 1:11-12) The life that is fitting into God's master plan for history is the life that brings praise and honor and glory to the Saviour. What is God's master plan for history? To bring all things and all people into unity and fellowship around the feet of Jesus! Enlivened people are reconciling people. "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God." Christian people should, of all people, be the most alive, for they are people of destiny, purpose. They know where history is going! "Stanley Jones said the awful events of earth did not disturb him because he knew 'how it will all come out'. Yes, of course. This is the secret of serenity in our work. The genuine Christian, in his depths, is not at sixes and sevens, for he knows that history has a goal divinely determined and that, whatever happens, Almighty God is moving redemptively to that great and grand goal." (The Minister's Ministries, Don Demaray, p. 20)

"O God, your perfect will is to save all humanity in Christ! Your permissive will is to allow those who reject Christ to live a Christless eternity! What you perfectly will--my total salvation--help me perfectly to realize! Amen."

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: God's revealed plan gives me power to realize life's purpose--to be united in Christ!

EMPOWERED BY THE POWERFUL HOLY SPIRIT!

Seventh, Christians are Hopeful People. "In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory." (Ephesians 1:14-15)

We have already seen that past mysteries are revealed and present life is enjoyed in Christ. Now we see that future riches are assured. The future for the Christian is as bright as the promises of God, and to guarantee that the Christian's hope for future riches is not merely an illusion of the mind, God has given us the promised Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit "is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it". (verse 14)

On October 23, 1975, Merlin Adamson, missionary to Africa for nearly 20 years, died at the young age of 48. He died at the height of his missionary career, a victim of cancer. He was my wife's cousin. Shortly after he died, my wife and I received a small note from his wife: "Of course, we miss Merlin so very much, but it is comforting to know that he is with the One who loves him even more than we do. Heaven seems so much closer now that he is there". It is the Holy Spirit who makes heaven's future treasures real to us now, giving us a foundation for our hope. The Holy Spirit is God's promise to us that "the best is yet to be".

Eighth, Christians are Empowered People. You must read Ephesians 1:18-23 to better appreciate this. A group of students were asked if they thought Christianity was essentially a demand or an offer. How would you answer that question? After considerable thought, they realized that Christianity is an offer! God has promised that His grace is sufficient for every problem of life. God said that His strength is made perfect in our weakness. Paul affirmatively met life with a resounding 'Yes' when he shouted, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me". Christ offers adequate resources to meet every crisis of life. Paul declared that we are 'more than conquerors' through Christ. Paul prayed for all believers that their spiritual eyes might be enlightened that they might see "the immeasurable greatness of God's power in us who believe". The power that works in the life of the believer, is the same power that was best demonstrated in God's workings with Christ. God's power toward Christ resulted in (1) Christ's resurrection, (2) Christ's ascension, (3) Christ's dominion (militant victory), (4) Christ's headship over the church. That same mighty power works in you!

"God, send your hopeful Holy Spirit to inspire hope in my despairing soul. Send your powerful Holy Spirit to impart power to my weakened spirit. Send your inspiring Holy Spirit to cleanse my cloudy vision from earth's trivia, in order that I may see heaven's treasures alone!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: What God demands, He always provides. What God provides, I will receive--today!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON 'WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I BECOME A CHRISTIAN?'

1. What does 'Justification', as used in the New Testament, basically mean?
2. How does God view the breaking of His holy law by mankind?
3. Why cannot God, out of the motivation of His eternal love, easily and quickly forgive mankind for breaking His holy law?
4. How can the just character of God be maintained and, at the same time, unjust men be saved from the eternal damnation which their sins deserve? How is the substitutionary death of Christ an answer both to maintaining God's justice and demonstrating God's mercy? Why is God 'obligated' to forgive the sins of the genuinely repentant sinner?
5. Discuss your understanding of the following statement: "God is just in justifying a sinner, on the basis of God's acceptance of Christ's atonement which makes it possible for man to enjoy Christ's borrowed righteousness".
6. On what basis can God declare and treat a sinner righteous? Because a repentant sinner enjoys the 'borrowed righteousness' of Christ, what privilege does such a person enjoy? (Note Colossians 1:21-22)
7. What is the difference between justification and regeneration?
8. List and describe some of the metaphors which are used in the New Testament to describe the concept of Regeneration.
9. What is the difference between becoming a better person (human reformation), and becoming a new person (divinely-wrought transformation), as these concepts relate to motivation for change and quality of change in a human life? (What is the difference between being tolerant toward Christianity as a religion and being personally transformed by Christ as a Person?)
10. Cite Biblical references that describe divinely-wrought transformation of a sinner in terms of 'cleansing'.
11. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Peace, according to the Biblical understanding, is not the mere absence of trouble, but it is the presence of everything that makes for a man's highest good".
12. What evidence, both from Scripture and from your own personal experience and observation, can you cite to demonstrate Christianity's claim that Christ is able to break bad habits and to make bad men good?
13. What evidence is there that a person who is converted to Christ is easier to live with and easier to get along with?
14. On what basis can a Christian be filled with joy, in spite of the changes and chances of life's circumstances?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON 'WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I BECOME A CHRISTIAN?'  
(continued)

15. God's people can be described in eight different ways, according to the first chapter of the Book of Ephesians. List those eight descriptions.
16. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "God chose to save the entire human race, but only those who accept God's universal offer of salvation, become members of the choice (or elect) group". (Note Ephesians 1:3-4)
17. For what purpose are persons chosen by God?
18. To what are Christians destined (according to Ephesians 1:5-6), and why is such a destiny so amazing?
19. What is the Biblical definition of 'Redemption' and how does this concept relate to God's people (according to Ephesians 1:7-8)? Why is an understanding of the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection essential to a proper understanding of the meaning of 'Redemption'?
20. What are the consequences of Guilt, and what does God offer the guilt-ridden sinner?
21. What is the 'secret' or 'mystery' of God which has now been revealed to God's enlightened people, according to Ephesians 1:9-10?
22. What revealed knowledge is given to God's people that motivates them to be the most enlivened people on earth?
23. What is the guarantee that the Christian's hope for future riches is not merely an 'illusion of the mind'? (Note Ephesians 1:14-15)
24. Is Christianity essentially a demand or an offer? Explain your answer, and share Scriptural references to document your answer.
25. The power that God demonstrated in Christ, is the same power that God makes available to believers. According to Ephesians 1:18-23, in what four ways was God's power demonstrated in His relationship to Christ?

CHAPTER 6

SYNTHETIC OVERVIEW OF THE EPISTLE OF I JOHN

## SYNTHETIC OUTLINE FOR I JOHN

The Book of I John is a Book of contrasts. Contrasting words or concepts appear throughout the entire book (light and darkness, love and hate, truth and falsehood, life and death, sin and righteousness, Spirit of God and Spirit of anti-christ, love of world and love of God, etc.).

The basis and source of fellowship is described, interrelating the three main strands of arguments in various ways. Three main tests for authentic Christian experience are applied and interrelated: (1) The Doctrinal Test (Propositional belief in the Incarnation of Jesus), (2) the Moral Test (Ethical practice in terms of obedience to God's commands), (3) the Social Test (Relational life in terms of genuine love of the brethren). Like a rope with three strands, these three tests for Christian fellowship are carefully and uniquely interwoven. Nearly all, if not all, paragraphs (or divisions) in the Book can be related to one or more of these tests, i.e., the doctrinal test, the social test, or the moral test.

One might look at the Book of I John as a 'circling ascending staircase', with the three tests forming the cyclic motion and the study of these three tests in various interrelated ways as the 'progressive ascension' in the total arguments of the Book.

### I John 1:1-4 Doctrinal foundation for fellowship

(Doctrinal test; Propositional truth regarding Jesus; Accepting the true person of Jesus)

Who is Jesus Christ? Did Jesus live before ~~Heroes~~ <sup>He was</sup> born in Bethlehem?  
Was Jesus really a human being, or did He just appear human? Probably

against the background of the subtle Gnostic heresy, John immediately finds it necessary to establish the true person and nature of Jesus, both as to His pre-existence and as to His true humanity.

Basic to all true fellowship with the Father is acceptance of Jesus as the true God-Man that Jesus claimed Himself to be. All claims to fellowship with the Father, apart from experiential knowledge of the Son, are invalid and fallacious.

"That which was from the beginning" (v1) (reminiscent of John 1:1) speaks of Jesus' pre-existence, and thus his deity. Jesus existed consciously, personally, continuously, and intimately in communion with the Father before all time. Jesus, then, is eternal.

The basis and source of fellowship is not only an acceptance of Jesus' deity (the Gnostics entertained a mystical view of Jesus which in some ways accepted his deity, but they denied his true humanity; therefore John must take great pains to establish the true humanity of Jesus, using a series of four verbs - Heard, Seen, Beheld, Handled).

John asserts that the basis of fellowship with the Father (and subsequent joy) is acceptance of the Incarnation. Human flesh (considered evil by the Gnostics) is what Jesus took upon himself when He became a man. Jesus did not merely 'Seem' to be human (as some Gnostics declared) but He was fully human. Jesus was not a purely spiritual being, but He had a flesh and blood, physical, human body. Jesus - the pre-existent, eternal one - became a human and, while remaining a true human throughout his entire earthly existence, died as a true human. John makes it very clear that Jesus was truly human and that Jesus was one and the same as Christ, existing with God eternally,

John's use of the four verbs (Heard, Seen, Beheld, Handled) shows a progression in thought in demonstrating the concreteness of Jesus' humanity

(the acceptance of which proves the Incarnation and provides the basis for true fellowship with the Father).

The four verbs that John uses to establish the fact of Jesus' humanity are interesting:

(1) Heard - (perfect tense). I would translate the phrase as follows: "What we heard from the very human lips of Jesus in the past is continuing to have a profound affect on us."

(2) Seen - (Perfect tense). Hearing is good, but seeing is better. I would translate this phrase as: "That which we have seen as we looked at Jesus has never been forgotten but it stills abides in our memory, for what one sees can never be unseen."

(3) Beheld (aorist tense). This Greek word does not mean merely to look at Jesus, but rather to gaze at Jesus. Gazing and closely observing Jesus made the disciples even more certain that Jesus was truly human.

(4) Handled - (aorist tense). To make no mistake that Jesus was human, the disciples actually felt, touched, and handled Jesus. This was conclusive proof of material reality. Jesus was truly human, with human flesh and bones.

The last two verbs are in the aorist tense, and therefore the words refer to a particular past time, perhaps after the Resurrection when the disciples had opportunity both to gaze at and to handle the Lord Jesus. These two verbs (behold and handle) express a definite and careful investigation by the observer.

I John 1:5 - 2:2 Ethical purity as a basis for true fellowship

(Moral (ethical) test)

Not only is doctrinal soundness regarding the person Jesus a foundation for fellowship, but ethical purity regarding one's attitude toward and experience of sin is a foundation for fellowship with the Father. John moves from the doctrinal (propositional argument) to the ethical (personal and behavioral argument). Not only must one think right doctrinally regarding the person of Jesus, but one must live right ethically regarding one's behavior.

tion.

There is no sin or darkness (ethically-speaking) in God, but only Light (1:5). There is no sin in God's character or nature. Therefore, those who claim to have fellowship with God (as the Gnostic heretics were claiming to have) must reflect the same type of behavior as God reflects, namely holy and righteous and pure behavior.

Living in sin destroys all fellowship with God (1:6). Because they are walking in ethical darkness John is bold enough to call the false teachers liars. Because the Gnostics believed that they could indulge the flesh without morally polluting the spirit, their daily walk was characterized by gross sinning. Because they were habitually ordering their behavior in a life of unrighteousness, their claim to intimate fellowship and special knowledge of the Father was totally invalidated. He who claims to have fellowship with the Father must live like the Father!

It is the physical shed blood of Jesus (1:7) (a reference to Jesus' genuine humanity; another way of refuting the dangerous Gnostic heresy which stated that all physical matter, including a physical body, was inherently evil) which is the basis for atonement of sin and which forms the basis for fellowship with the Father! Not only does God forgive sins, but He erases the very stains of sin - a thorough description of the ethical affects of the atoning work of Christ. Far from practicing sin (as the Gnostics were doing), Jesus' blood not only pardons from sin but also cleanses from the pollution of sin!

Apparently the Gnostics were denying the existence of sin. Their attitude towards the human body (that it is inherently evil) resulted in them disregarding ethical commands. If the spirit is pure and the body is evil, these same Gnostics concluded that the body's passions could be indulged (1 John 2:15-17 is an exposition of the passions of the 'flesh') without affecting the purity of the spirit. Thus, if the body's actions (behavior) had no affect on

the spirit's spiritual condition, the Gnostics could claim to have intimate fellowship with the Father at the same time as their bodies were being indulged (from the Christian viewpoint) in all kinds of sin. If such (unrighteous ) behavior was morally and ethically irrelevant, then practically speaking, sin did not even exist for the Gnostics.

But John contends that ethical behavior is the evidence of spiritual fellowship with the Father. Therefore, the denial of the existence of sin is evidence of self-deception, and results in calling God a liar! (1:8,10)

Sin is a reality. Sin destroys one's fellowship with the Father. The atonement of Christ is the basis of establishing fellowship with the Father.

To practice sin is to lose all fellowship (and relationship) with the Father. To deny the existence of sin is to call God a liar, is to deny the Truth, is to be self-deceived.

So, while sin is not to be practiced (as the Gnostics were doing even though they denied the existence of sin, 1:8,10), the possibility of sinning is not to be denied by the true believer whose doctrine (1:1-4) is sound and whose ethical practice is basically righteous (1:5-7).

What is the solution to the problem of sin in the life of a true believer? Confess your sins and God will forgive and cleanse from all sin (1:9). Recognizing that the Christian norm is to live without any willful sinning (2:1), the reality of the situation is that believers do sin (aorist tense indicates occasional acts of sin instead of habitual sinning, 1 John 3:4-10). It is possible for a Christian to sin, but if a Christian falls into an act of sin, God (because of Christ's atonement) will forgive and restore a believer to fellowship. (Fellowship with the Father is the continuing theme, described in various ways, throughout the entire book of 1 John). This is possible because Jesus is both advocate and propitiation (2:1,2).



John affirms those in the Christian fellowship whose lives evidence that they pass all three tests.

Children experience forgiveness through the name of Jesus. This means that the reality of sin has not been denied (1:8,10). This means that the blood of Jesus has been applied in the personal atoning of sin (1:7,9,2:1-2).

Young men have overcome the evil one. This means that the real presence of sin, the power of Satan, and the provision of Christ have all been acknowledged (all facts that the Gnostics denied).

Fathers have known him that is from the beginning. This knowledge is a true experiential knowledge (in contrast to the false claims of knowledge and fellowship of the Gnostics). The father's knowledge of God has come because of accepting the person of Jesus (1:1-4), because of experiencing the forgiveness and cleansing of sin (1:5-2:2), and because of being in loving relationships with their fellowmen (2:7-11).

The practical application of the doctrinal, moral, and social tests to the family of believers (2:12-14) is very positive and edifying. After John affirms the family of believers in this section and commends them for application of the tests in their lives, John moves into a section of warning (2:15-17).

Probably the Gnostics (whose lives demonstrated unethical and disobedient behavior and whose evil influence was being felt in the Christian fellowship) were in mind when John wrote 2:15-17 (a description of worldliness and its consequences).

The Gnostics were practicing worldliness (lusts of flesh, lusts of eyes, pride of life - reminiscent of both the original fall and the threefold temptations of Jesus in Matthew 4). Because the Gnostics had denied sin, the result was a practice of gross sinning in their daily lives. Even though they claimed to be in intimate fellowship with the Father through their system

of special revelation and knowledge, John declares that they are in reality far from God. To live a lifestyle of sinning (the same subject that will later be reiterated in the 'revolving staircase' of truth, in I John 3:4-10) is to perish eternally. Only those who do the will of God (moral obedience) will abide forever (2:17)!

#### I John 2:18-27 Doctrinal soundness is the basis for true fellowship

Those who claim (like the Gnostics) to have fellowship with the Father (to abide) and yet who deny the person of Jesus (that He is the divine Christ) are called antichrists. As the letter moves from descriptions of the doctrinal, moral, and social tests (1:1-2:11), to positive and negative applications of the tests (2:12-17), to refined expositions and emphasis of the tests (2:18-5:21), an intensification in the argument for authentic Christian experience is felt.

John increasingly becomes bold and daring in the pictures he gives of the false professors (2:18-25) of truth, and of the true possessors of truth (3:1-3). In the former case, he boldly asserts that they are (antichrists 2:22). In the latter case, he dares to call them children of God (3:1) whose destiny is gloriously wonderful (3:2,3)!

As the letter progresses, the description of both the true believer and the false professor becomes more intense and focused. In I John 2:18-27, by way of contrast, John identifies the true Christian. A true Christian believes in and experiences the Holy Spirit's anointing (2:20,21). A true Christian believes in the Incarnation. To deny the incarnation is to be diabolical (antichrist). He who denies the incarnation denies "the Father and the Son." (Again, the recurring theme of fellowship with the Father is stated). A true Christian is one who believes and knows by experience that

there is no way to truly know God except through the Son. A true Christian is one who does not accept new doctrines, ideas, and traditions of men, but rather he adheres to and practices the authoritative message of the early church, as recorded in Scripture. The Word of Jesus which is the Word of truth is the objective safeguard against falsehood. The subjective safeguard against falsehood is the indwelling Holy Spirit (2:20).

#### I John 2:28-3:10 Character of the Christian ethically described

(Positively and negatively)

With a progressively greater intensity, John applies the tests for authentic Christian experience. He applies (both positively and negatively) the ethical (moral) test, and he then applies in greater detail the social (love) test (3:11-24).

The application of the moral test, positively, is found in 2:28-3:3, and the application of the moral (ethical) test, negatively, is found in 3:4-10.

Note the positive application of the moral test (2:28-3:3).

An added dimension to the moral test (not yet mentioned in the letter), as regards motivation for righteous living, is found in 2:28. John says that a spur to righteous living and faithful service is the knowledge that Christ is coming to earth again (v.28). Living righteously will give confidence when Jesus returns. Those whose lives are characterized by righteousness are called children of God, because the righteous ones reflect the character of the Righteous One.

The character of the Christian is ethically described, negatively, in 3:4-10. The begotten one (wonderfully described in 3:1-3) does not practice sinning (3:4-10). John has already refuted the heretics who claimed to be beyond the possibility of sinning (1:8,10). While they denied the existence

of sin, they were in reality ordering their behavior in sinful ways. But true believers, while they never deny the reality of sin doctrinally and ethically speaking, and while they must acknowledge the possibility (and probability?) of actual cases of sinful acts in their lives (2:1-2), must nevertheless realize that an habitual lifestyle of sinning is totally incompatible and contradictory to authentic Christian experience (3:4-10).

Sin is described as lawlessness (3:4), and the very purpose for Christ's first coming was to take away sins (3:5). The way to keep from habitually sinning is to constantly abide in Christ (3:6,7). The Gnostics claimed to abide in God (to have special 'inside' knowledge of God and intimate fellowship with God), but their evil moral behavior (practicing sin) was such that all their high claims must be repudiated on the basis of their low moral performance! In other words, a person is known and best described by his character. The one who habitually practices righteousness (in spite of occasional sin which is immediately atoned for because of the propitiatory work of Christ, 1 John 2:2) is of God; the one who habitually sins is of the Devil. As long as one appropriates the nature and benefits of Christ, it is impossible to 'be' righteous (as the Gnostics claimed) without bothering to practice righteousness. (Note: There is a popular, perverted doctrine today that claims that one is saved 'in' his sins, not 'from' his sins, that he can be 'imputed' righteous without any evidence of actual change of behavior. This doctrine is an application of the Gnostic heresy that one can be considered righteous in God's sight apart from an habitual practice of righteous deeds. The Bible teaches that justification - i.e., being reckoned righteous - is inseparably connected with regeneration - i.e., being made righteous through God's divine empowering.) "If even isolated sins are so incongruous, what is utterly impossible is persistence in sin, 'a character, a prevailing habit, and not

primarily an act.'" (Westcott).

### 1 John 3:11-24 Character of the Christian relationally described (self-giving love)

John proceeds to describe in considerable detail the dynamics of love as the authenticating and climaxing test for true Christian profession. With increasing emphasis in the latter half of the letter, John dwells upon the greatest of the three main tests for authentic Christian experience. The refrain of Christian love is repeated in 4:7-21. So in two long passages (3:11-24 and 4:7-21) John emphasizes the dynamics and the application of Christian love. The abstract and doctrinal (belief in the incarnation) becomes more concrete in the moral (obedience to God's commands), and the concrete could not become more concrete than in that which John emphasizes at great lengths - the practical expressions of love in human relationships (3:11-24), a love patterned after the very love of God Himself (4:7-21).

Between the two long passages on love is inserted a concise application of the moral test (as it is applied to testing the spirits, 1 John 4:1-6)

Self-giving love (the social test for authentic Christian experience) is described in the following ways (3:11-24):

(1) Personal love (3:11-15) - this love is not abstract, general love for all the world, but it is personal, individual love for specific persons. This personal love will produce righteous works (the social test and the moral test are interwoven here) which will be a silent rebuke to the ungodly, even incurring the murderous wrath of the ungodly (3:12-15)

(2) Perfect love (3:16a) This love is perfect for several reasons:  
(a) Perfect because this love is God's love (agape love), (b) Perfect because this love cannot be purchased or achieved on the basis of human effort, (c) Perfect because growth in this love is without limitations, from God's

perspective. (Note: although this love is perfect in source and quality, it is not perfect in expression, for this love is contained in and expressed through 'earthen vessels' - subject to human frailties.

(3) Practical love (3:16b-18) - A Christian must possess self-sacrificing love, patterned after Christ's self-giving love.

(4) Productive love (3:19-24) - The one who experiences the divinely-imparted love can be assured that he is of the Truth, and therefore he can have a tranquil heart. Whatever the source of condemnation - be it false or true - God is greater than the condemnation and can restore the believer to true confidence.

The love - filled, confident Christian constantly and habitually keeps God's commandments (3:22-24) - (this is another instance of John interweaving the social and the moral tests for authentic Christian experience).

The product of love is confidence - confidence in fearlessly facing God the Father, and confidence in expecting and receiving answers to prayer.

#### 1 John 4:1-6 Application of the moral test in 'testing spirits'

Before John continues with a further discussion of the Social test (the dynamics of brotherly love, 1 John 4:7-21), John makes another cycle (in the 'circling, ascending staircase' of truth) as he inserts a concise description of the practical application of the doctrinal test. In the opening verses of the letter (1 John 1:1-4), John gave a concrete affirmation of Jesus' true humanity (which is the doctrinal foundation for fellowship with the Father). John has already shown that denial that Jesus is the Christ is evidence that one is an antichrist. John will later return to the doctrinal test when he declares that confession of Jesus' divine Sonship is evidence of God's indwelling (4:14,15), evidence of spiritual birth (5:1a), and the objective

basis for belief (5:6-10). In this section, the need for testing the spirits is assumed (4:1) and then the method for testing spirits is described (4:2,3,5,6).

The Christian faith is not an indiscriminate faith. "True faith examines its object before reposing confidence in it." (Stott) The value of one's faith is determined by the object of one's faith.

I John 4:2,3 notes that if a teaching or a teacher confesses and adheres to the Incarnation, the teaching and teacher are of God. I John 4:5,6 describes another way the moral test can be applied in the 'testing of spirits'. Is the message accepted by Christians and rejected by non-Christians?

Not only are the need and the method for testing spirits described, but the wonderful results of successful application of the doctrinal test to heretics is described. "Little children, you are of God, and have overcome them; for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." (I John 4:4).

"Have overcome" - i.e., stand presently victorious (perfect tense) because of the exceeding power of Christ which works within.

The doctrinal test has not only intellectual significance, but it has personal significance. The believer's personal, spiritual existence depends upon the successful application of the doctrinal test in the face of fierce Satanic opposition. The many antichrists in the world (2:18) are described (4:3) and defeated (4:4), because He (God) who makes His residence in the Body of the Church is greater than the Evil One who expresses himself in the world (2:15-17) and through the activities of the many antichrists in the world (2:18).

#### I John 4:7-21 The operation of agape love

After spending a short time on the Doctrinal test, John returns to his favorite theme - the expression of agape love as the greatest evidence that

one has true fellowship with the Father.

(1) Motivation for brotherly love (why love?)

(a) God's very nature is love and the origin of all true love is God.

(b) God manifested His love perfectly by sending His Son to die for mankind. This portion of Scripture indicates that two great things were accomplished through Christ's coming to earth: The saving work of redemption was accomplished (v.9,10,14) and an example of concrete loving in terms of active self-giving was given to man (v.11).

(2) Meaning of brotherly love (what is love?) The meaning of love is seen in three statements: (a) The practice of love is evidence that one is born of God and knows God (4:7b,8); (b) Loving one another is evidence of God's indwelling and wonderful presence (4:12); (c) God's love in us is brought to completion, or as Stott says, "God's love for us is perfected only when it is reproduced in us."

(3) Method of brotherly love (How to realize love?) (a) Conversion to Christ and abiding in Christ is made possible through God's gift of the Holy Spirit. (4:13) (b) "The only way to love (v.16), as the only way to believe (v.15), is by dwelling in God and God in us." (Stott)

(4) Measure of brotherly love (How much love?) Love must be perfected. "John is not suggesting that any Christian's love could in this life be flawlessly perfect. but rather developed and mature, set fixedly upon God." (Stott)

#### I John 5:1-12 Basis for the victorious life

John combines all three tests in his argument for authentic Christian experience in I John 5:1-2. Doctrinal test ("believeth that Jesus is the Christ"), Social test ("everyone that loveth him"), Moral test ("and keep his commandments").

After expounding in detail the various tests (the Doctrinal, 1:1-4; 2:18-23; the Social, 3:11-24; 4:7-21; the Moral, 1:5-2:2; 2:28-3:10), John combines the arguments in a concise statement (1 John 5:1-2). He says that love for God is evidenced by love of the brethren (v.2). He says that belief that Jesus is the Christ is the basis for the new birth. (v.1). He says that we may know that we love the brethren when we are keeping God's commandments. The latter is both interesting and significant. Ethical obedience to God's commandments is the source of our confidence that we are indeed realizing agape love in our relationships with others. We may know that we possess love for others, whether or not we 'feel' love for others. Love is not a mere feeling; love is an ethical commitment to another. Ethical obedience to God's commands and relational commitment in love expressions are inseparable connected.

1 John 5:1-3 outlines the evidence of spiritual victory: (a) the new birth, (b) Love for God and love for other Christian.

1 John 5:4-12 outlines the pathway to victory. The victory that overcomes the world is faith (v.4), or, to put it more concretely, 'belief that Jesus is the Son of God' (v.5). That is, to overcome all the inner and outer powers that are opposed to God (the meaning of 'world'), one must believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

The one who is born of God finds that God's commandments are not burdensome. Why is this? Because his new birth gives him a new nature. (The laws of God are written no longer on tablets of stone but on the tablet of his heart, Hebrews 8:10).

Why should one commit his life to Jesus? What is the objective basis for believing in Jesus? While there are various interpretations given for 1 John 5:6-8, the latter passage appears to mean that the Spirit witnesses to the Divine - human personhood of Jesus, that is, that Jesus was divine not

only between His Baptism and Crucifixion, but that He was divine before and during His Baptism ("water") and during and after His Crucifixion ("blood"). These verses (v.6-8) contend that a total incarnation is vital to a total redemption. (A recurrence of the doctrinal test; a refutation of the Gnostic heresy which taught that the Divine 'Christ' entered the earthly Jesus at the Baptism and left the earthly Jesus before his Crucifixion).

Added to the three - fold witness (Spirit, water, and blood) is the witness of God Himself who also witnesses to the Divine - Human person of Jesus. (Added to the witness of the disciples to the Divine- Human person of Jesus in 1:1-4, is the three-fold witness in 5:8 and the witness of God Himself in 5:9). The witness of God to Jesus has abiding validity in the present and future (note the use of the Greek perfect tense).

What is the result when one denies God's witness to the Divine - Human person of Jesus? (1) "He who does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne to His Son" (v.12b).

What is the result when one accepts God's witness to the Divine - Human person of Jesus? (1:) "He who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself." (v.10a) "That is (the believer) is given a yet deeper assurance by the inward witness of the Spirit that he was right to trust in Christ." (Stott) (2) "And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life." (v.11-12a)

### I John 5:9-21 The Christian's Assurance

Perhaps the most appropriate way for John to climax his letter is with an affirmation of Christian assurance. The Gnostic heretics prided themselves in claiming 'to know' God. John declares that personal, experiential knowledge is a reality, but he has taken pains to make clear the conditions for such fellowship. After discussing (in a recurring, repetitious manner)

the three main tests for authentic experience, he wraps up his letter with words of certitude for those who have met the tests!

1 John 5:13 speaks of assurance of eternal life. 'Know' is in the present tense - i.e., a possession here and now of a present certainty of received life in Christ. 'Have' is in the present tense - i.e., eternal life is not only a future anticipation but a present reality! 'Eternal life' is the 'life of God', for God alone inherently possesses and inhabits eternity! "What we are promised is that here and now there can be given to us a share in the very life of God" (Barclay).

The condition for maintaining present assurance of eternal life is described in the phrase 'to the ones believing' - i.e., a continuing commitment to Jesus Christ.

The subject of assurance is extended to that of answered prayer. Assurance is given to the believer that God is waiting lovingly and expectantly for the believer to come to Him to ask for good things. All requests must be made earnestly, persistently, and in accord with God's will. Such petitions are immediately granted, although many times the results of the granting are perceived in the future. (5:14,15)

After speaking of assurance of eternal life (v.13), assurance of answered prayer (v.14,15), John turns to another illustration of assurance. John assures the Christian that if a brother Christian sins, the faithful Christian should pray for the restoration of the fallen one "and God will give him life for those whose sin is not mortal" (v.16).

Assurance of God's fellowship is a key theme of John in his letter. John wants his readers to guard against sinning (1 John 2:1 3:6-10) and live a regenerated life, looking forward to future glory (3:1-3). Such a person is protected against Satan (5:18), as contrasted to the world which is in the grasp of the Evil One (5:19). He who accepts the Son is living according to truth and reality, and keeps himself from the false

idols of the world (5:20-21). Such a person is truly alive!

## CONTRASTS IN THE BOOK OF I JOHN

Light - 1:5,7; 2:8,9,10

Darkness - 1:5,6; 2:8,9,11

Love - 2:5; 2:9,10; 3:14,16,17,18; 4:7,18

Hate - 2:9,11; 3:14,15; 4:7,19

Truth - 1:8; 2:8; 2:20,27; 3:19; 4:19

Falsehood (Liar) - 1:6,8,10; 2:4,21; 2:22,23,27

Life - 1:2; 2:17; 2:25; 3:14

Death - 2:17; 3:14

Sin (Guilt) - 1:8; 2:1; 3:9,12,20; 2:12; 3:6,8

Righteousness (Forgiveness, confidence) -  
1:9; 2:2; 2:12; 3:6,7,12,20,21

Spirit of God - 4:2,4,6

Spirit of Anti-Christ - 4:3,4,6

Love of World - 2:15,16

Love of God - 2:15

Spiritual Group (God's children) - 2:19,27; 3:10; 4:6; 5:10

Deceptive Group (Satan's children) - 2:19,26; 3:10; 4:5,6  
5:10

Courage - 2:28

Shame - 2:28

Work of Son - 3:8

Work of Satan - 3:8

By R. Christian

## Evidences of Conversion (Book of I John)

### I Doctrinal Test - Belief in Incarnation and Uniqueness of Jesus (Intellectual approach - "Mind" - "Knowing")

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- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Experimental knowledge of Jesus           | = Evidence of Jesus' Diety (1:1-4)  |
| 2 | Denial that Jesus is Christ               | = Identification of antichrists (2:18; 4:1-6)   |
| 3 | Maintenance of "anointed" spiritual truth | = Condition for spiritual abiding (2:24-27)<br>confidence for Christ's coming (2:28)                                  |
| 4 | Confession of Jesus' Divine Sonship       | = Evidence of God's indwelling (4:14,15)<br>Evidence of Spiritual Birth (5:1a)<br>Objective Basis for Belief (5:6-10) |
- 

### II Social Test - Love of the Brethren (Emotional approach - "Emotions", "Feeling")

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- |   |                             |   |
|---|-----------------------------|---|
| 1 | Hatred of Brethren          | = Evidence of Spiritual darkness (2:9) and blindness (2:11)   |
| 2 | Love of Brethren            | = Evidence of Spiritual abiding (2:10)<br>Evidence of Love's perfection (4:12,16)<br>Evidence of Spiritual Birth (3:10b-15; 4:7-12; 5:1b) |
| 3 | Perversion of Human Desires | = Evidence of Worldliness (2:15,17)   |
| 4 | Actions of Sacrificial Love | = Evidence of authentic profession (3:16-18)  |
| 5 | Indwelling of Holy Spirit   | = Witness of Spiritual Sonship (4:13)   |
| 6 | Perfection of Love          | = Confidence for Christ's coming (4:17)<br>Casteth out fear (4:18)  |
| 7 | Love for God                | = Evidenced by love for Brethren (4:19-21)<br>Evidence for love of the Brethren (5:2)<br>Evidenced by obedience to commandments (5:3)     |
-

III Moral Test - Obedience to Commandments of God  
(volitional response - "will", "doing")

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- |    |  |  |
|----|--|--|
| 1  | Walking in Light                       | = Condition for Fellowship<br>(1:5-7)  |
| 2  | Confession of Sinful Actions           | = Condition for forgiveness<br>(1:8-10)  |
| 3  | Appeal to Christ's Advocacy            | = Condition for Restoration<br>(2:1-2)   |
| 4  | Obedience to Commandments              | = Condition for Experimental<br>Knowledge (2:3-4; 7-8; 3:24)<br>Condition for Confidence<br>(3:19-24)<br>Condition for Answered<br>Prayer (3:22)<br>Evidence of Love for<br>Brethren (5:2) |
| 5  | Imitation of Christ                    | = Condition for Spiritual<br>Abiding (2:6)   |
| 6  | Personal Volitional<br>Response to God | = Condition for Vital<br>victorious living<br>(2:12-14; 3:1-3; 5:18-21)  |
| 7  | "Doing" will of God                    | = Evidence of Spiritual Birth<br>(2:29)<br>Condition for Eternal Abiding<br>in God (2:17)  |
| 8  | Habitual Practice of Sin               | = Evidence of Spiritual Death<br>(3:4-10)  |
| 9  | Overcome the World                     | = Accomplished by Faith of<br>Believer (5:4)<br>Accomplished by Belief in<br>Jesus' diety (5:5)  |
| 10 | Ask in Faith                           | = Leads to Confidence in God<br>(5:14)<br>Prayer answer conditioned by<br>God's will (5:15)<br>Results in restoring fallen<br>brother (5:16,17)  |
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by R. Christian

CHAPTER 7

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL

SUBJECT: PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL

SCRIPTURE: I John 1:1-4

TEXT: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." (I John 1:3)

INTRODUCTION:

"Who is Jesus Christ?" "Did Jesus live before He was born in Bethlehem?" "Was Jesus really a human being, or did He just appear human?" "What was the purpose for Jesus' life?" "How is Christianity different from any other religion of the world?" "What is the responsibility of a person who follows the ways of Jesus?" "What happens if a person really accepts the ways and teachings of Jesus?"

These are the questions which many people are asking. The New Testament gives the answers to these questions. The N.T. is the record of God's Word and message. God's message is a true message. Titus 1:2 says, "God cannot lie." II Timothy 3:16 says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

PROPOSITION:

What is the "unchanged, original content of the Gospel over against novel forms of doctrine?" (The Epistles of John, Stott; pg. 58) The Gospel is good news - good news about Jesus Christ, and man's reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ. Because the Gospel is Good News, the Gospel must be proclaimed!

I. CONTENT OF THE PROCLAMATION

What is the basic content of the Gospel of Christ?

A. PRE-EXISTENCE OF JESUS

John writes in his letter: "That which was from the beginning." (v. 1) Basic to the proclamation of the message about Jesus, is a recognition of the pre-existence of Jesus. Jesus existed before the beginning of all material things. Jesus existed consciously, personally, continuously, and intimately in communion with the Father before all time. Jesus, then, is eternal. His birth in the Bethlehem stable was merely His beginning in the dimensions of earth's time.

B. REAL HUMANITY OF JESUS

Basic to the proclamation of the message of Jesus is an understanding of Jesus' relationship to humanity and to deity. Was Jesus really a human being or did He just seem human?

John would leave us in no doubt as to Jesus' humanity. Wrote John concerning Jesus: "That...which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled." (I Jn. 1:1)

John says that Jesus' humanity is made certain by four facts: The disciples of Jesus have heard Jesus' voice, they have seen Him with their own eyes, they have carefully observed Jesus, they have actually handled Jesus to make certain that He is really flesh and bones. Why did John think it was so important to establish the fact of Jesus' humanity? It was very important for John to declare Jesus' humanity for there were many false teachers and prophets (many even in the Christian Church) who taught very strange ideas about Jesus.

"All throughout the Greek world there was an ever-developing tendency of thought to which the general name of Gnosticism is given. The basic belief of all Gnostic thought is that only spirit is good, and that matter is essentially evil. If this be so, the Gnostic inevitably despises the world, for the world is matter, and all things created out of matter are essentially evil. In particular the Gnostic despises the body. The body is matter, and therefore the body is evil....Given that point of view any real incarnation is impossible. Given that point of view, it is impossible that God should ever take human flesh upon Himself....In the early Church this refusal to admit the reality of the incarnation took, broadly speaking, two forms. (1) In its most radical and wholesale form it is called Docetism, which Goodspeed suggests might be translated Seemism. The Greek verb *dokein* means to seem; and the Decetists taught that Jesus only seemed to have a body. They declared that His body was an unsubstantial phantasm. They insisted that He never had a flesh and blood, physical, human body; but that He was a purely spiritual being, who had nothing but the appearance of having a body...(2) There was a more subtle, and perhaps even more dangerous, variant of this theory connected with the name of Cerinthus....Cerinthus drew a definite distinction between the human Jesus and the divine Christ. He said that Jesus was a man, born in a perfectly natural way. He lived in special obedience to God, and after His baptism, the Christ in the shape of a dove descended upon Him, from that power which is above all powers, and then Jesus brought to men news of the Father who had been as yet unknown. Nor did Cerinthus stop there. He said that at the end of Jesus' life, the Christ again withdrew from Him, and that the Christ never suffered at all, but that it was the human Jesus who suffered, died, and rose again, while the divine Christ remained absolutely incapable of suffering, and in purely spiritual existence." (Barclay's I John; pg. 7-9)

John made it very clear that Jesus was truly human and that Jesus was one and the same as Christ, existing with God eternally. Jesus then is perfectly human and perfectly divine.

The four verbs that John uses to establish the fact of Jesus' humanity are interesting:

1. Heard (*ἀκηκόημεν*) - This word is a verb in the perfect tense and can be translated, 'We are in a condition resulting from having heard'. That is, "What we heard from the lips of Jesus in the past is still having a profound affect on us." However, "to have heard was not enough; men 'heard' God's voice in the Old Testament. To have seen was more compelling." (Stott; 59)

2. Seen (*ἑώρακάμεν*) with our eyes (perfect tense). This phrase can be translated: "That which we are in a condition resulting from having seen with our own eyes," or "That which we have seen as we looked at Jesus has never been forgotten, but still abides in our memory." What one sees can never be unseen.

3. Beheld and Gazed at - The Greek word here does not mean merely look at Jesus, but rather gaze at Jesus. The idea behind the word (*εἰδέναι*) "is not that of a passing glance, and a quick look, but of a steadfast searching gaze, which seeks to discover something of the meaning of the mystery of Christ....It means to gaze at someone, or at something, until a long look has grasped something of the meaning and the significance of that person or thing." (Bar. pg. 27)

Gazing and closely observing Jesus made the disciples even more certain that Jesus was truly human.

4. Handled (*ἑψηλάφησαν*) - To make no mistake that Jesus was human, the disciples actually felt, touched, and handled Jesus. This was the conclusive proof of material reality, Jesus was truly human - with human flesh and bones.

The last two verbs are in the aorist (or past) tense, and therefore the words refer to a particular past time, perhaps after the Resurrection when the disciples had

opportunity both to gaze at and handle the Lord Jesus. These two verbs (gaze and handle) express a definite and careful investigation by the observer.

It is interesting that the word 'manifested' appears twice in the second verse - "was manifested.....was manifested unto us." The verse begins and ends with the idea of God's manifestation to man. "First it occurs absolutely; and then 'unto us' is added. We could not have seen the One Himself. Men can apprehend only what God is pleased to make known." (Stott; pg. 61)

Thus, we see that the proclamation of the historical Incarnation is basic to the Gospel Message. Any so-called 'Gospel' today which denies the incarnation is not the N.T. message. There are still those today who don't believe that Jesus was really a man, with human needs, human feelings, human sorrow, human desires and human temptations.

On the other hand, there are other people who say that Jesus really was not God but only influenced and empowered by God to do good works and mighty acts. Such people do not believe that when Jesus died that actually God died. They rob Jesus of His inherent deity, they rob Him of His pre-existence with God the Father, and they rob Him of His redemptive death as the true God.

The proclamation of the Gospel is the proclamation that Jesus was the pre-existent, divine Son of God who came to earth to become a true man and who lived and died as true God. In other words, Jesus is the perfect God-Man. He is true and perfect humanity and also true deity. The historical and the eternal are one.

### C. WORD OF LIFE

Basic to the proclamation of the message of Jesus is the message or word of life. The pre-existent, incarnate Jesus is the word of life. Jesus brings new life and can change mere existence into real life. Jesus' message is not merely a message of moralism, philosophy, or ethics, but Jesus' message is a message of life. Jesus is the message and to take Jesus is to take life - a new quality of life which is the life of God Himself.

Other religions teach the word become word - moralism, philosophy, ethics - but Christianity points to a God who actually identified Himself with humanity. God became a man! Perfect identification with humanity! "Christianity has its doctrines but it is not a doctrine; has its creeds but it is not a creed; has its rites and ceremonies but it is not a rite or ceremony; has its institutions but it is not an institution. Christianity is Christ....The words of William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, sum up the Christian position; 'The supreme revelation is given in the life and person of Jesus. The revelation is not His teaching or His acts but Himself ...Christianity is not a dedication to a system of rules or of thought, but a dedication to a Person. This is unique among the religions of the world.'" (Word Became Flesh; E. S. Jones; pg. 30)

## II. COMPULSION OF THE PROCLAMATION

This Gospel message (of God becoming a man to give a new quality of life to humanity) is to be shared with others. The manifestation "unto us" (v. 2) becomes a proclamation "to you". "John desires his readers to enjoy 'the same advantageous position which he himself and his fellow-apostles enjoyed as regards the knowledge of God in Christ'." (pg. 6 Stott)

Have you been given special privileges? Then you have special responsibility! The Gospel of God becoming a man to redeem humanity is not to be hid under a bushel; rather the light of this Gospel is meant to shine unto all men. It is manifested unto you in order to proclaim it unto someone else. That which is given to us by God (special privileges or special revelation) is meant to be passed on to someone else. Nothing remains my own unless I pass it on to someone less privileged.

### III. AUTHORITY BEHIND THE PROCLAMATION

What is the motivation and authority for proclaiming the message of the Gospel?

#### A. "WE BEAR WITNESS" (μαρτυρούμεν) (v. 2) - Authority of Experience.

The apostles could not proclaim something which they had not experienced personally. "The true witness speaks not of what he has gathered second-hand from others, but of what he has himself personally seen and heard." (pg. 62 Stott)

Application: One cannot properly proclaim the Gospel of Christ (His redemptive death in the flesh) without a personal saving experience of Christ. "It is told of Alexander Whyte, the Great preacher, that, after a great sermon, someone once said to him, 'You preached today as if you had come straight from the presence.' And Whyte answered, 'Perhaps I did'. It is quite true that we cannot see Christ in the flesh as John saw Him; but we can still see Him with the eye of faith." (Barclay's I John.; pg.27)

#### B. "WE DECLARE" (ἀπαγγέλλομεν) (v.2) - Authority of Commission.

This commission comes from Jesus Christ, therefore, John the writer, is doubly bold and can speak pointedly, authoritatively and even dogmatically concerning the message of The Gospel. These two verbs establish John's authority to speak and to write concerning the Gospel message and to condemn the heretics within the Church whose message was false.

### IV. PURPOSE OF THE PROCLAMATION

#### A. FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRISTIANS

The purpose of our proclamation is in order that there may be more Christians who fellowship one with another. The Church, properly understood, is a fellowship of believers. The proclamation of the Gospel is to result in an increase of fellowshipping Christians. This forever rules out the exclusive, ingrown, cliqueish spirit that sometimes exists among Christians within the church. Christians who are living according to the true spirit of the Gospel are believers who have an open heart and out-stretched arms, and who experience great joy in finding new and expanding relationships with new Christians.

Fellowship one with another comes because of a mutual sharing and "common participation in the grace of God, the salvation of Christ and the indwelling Spirit which is the spiritual birthright of all Christian believers." (pg. 63; Stott) Thus, the power to experience fellowship one with another comes from "fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

This fellowship is equally real with the Son and with the Father (v. 3) "The phrase 'marks emphatically the distinction and equality between the Son and the Father' (pg. 64; Stott) (John said this to assert Jesus' deity and equality with God.)

Acceptance of the message of Jesus Christ always creates true fellowship and oneness of spirit in the church. All other attempts at creating fellowship in the church other than common participation in the fellowship of Christ, are futile. Mutual love for Christ creates a deep unity amidst the diversity of people, the diversity of ideas, diversity of programs.

#### B. FULLNESS OF JOY

Fullness of joy is a result of fellowship with God and others. It is the ultimate or at least a longer range result of the message or proclamation of the Gospel. Fellowship comes when the proclamation of the Gospel is accepted, and this fellowship (mutual sharing and mutual participation in the life and fellowship of Christ) issues in fullness of joy. It is an abiding joy, and a full joy, but this joy is an increasing joy - a joy that increases as the fellowship deepens, and a joy that shall be consummated beyond this life in the life of heaven. The fullness of joy is possible on this earth,

(fullness of one's capacity based on deepening fellowship with God and one's fellow Christians), but complete and perfect joy is a quality of heaven alone. So the joy that is a product of Christian fellowship is a progressive joy. Fellowship that issues forth in joy is the purpose of the proclamation of the Gospel.

Thus, "the ultimate note of the Christian message is joy." (Barclay; pg. 26)

#### CONCLUSION:

What is the "unchanged, original content of the Gospel over against novel forms of doctrine?" Jesus is the divine, pre-existent Son of God who lived on earth as a true perfect man and as the perfect and focused God in human flesh. Jesus, the divine Son, died and therefore God died. God's death results in the impartation of a new quality of life. This is the content of the proclamation. God's Good News is to be shared with all mankind, for Christ died for all mankind. There are no favorites and none are to be excluded from knowing about the Good News. The purposes of the proclamation of the message is to bring reconciliation between God and man, and consequent fellowship and joy to all men. The Christian message is a message of joy.

## Chapter 7

### Proclamation of the Gospel (1:1-4)

#### Discussion:

1. Cite scriptural support to document the truth of the following statement: "Jesus existed consciously, personally, continuously, and intimately in communion with the Father before all time." (Note John 1:1,2; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3-12)
2. What four facts does John note as evidence of Jesus' true humanity in I John 1:1?
3. Discuss some of the main doctrinal tenets which the heretic teachers called the "Gnostics" taught in the early days of the Christian church.
4. Comment on the significance of the four verbs - "heard", "seen", "beheld", "handled" - which John uses to establish the fact of Jesus' humanity.
5. Do you believe the following statement accurately reflects the truth regarding the proper identity of Jesus' personhood, as it relates to the Gospel Proclamation? - "The proclamation of the Gospel is the proclamation that Jesus was the pre-existent, divine Son of God who came to Earth to become a true man and who lived and died as true God."
6. What is the difference between "the word became word" and "the word became flesh"? Why can it be said that "Christianity is Christ"?
7. According to I John 1:2, what responsibility does a Christian have to a non-Christian?
8. What twofold authority do believers have for proclaiming the message of the Gospel?
9. Why is there no justification for professing believers to engage in an exclusive, ingrown, cliquish spirit within the church?
10. Tell what is meant by the following statement: "The joy that is a product of Christian fellowship is a progressive joy."
11. What is the unchanged, original content of the Gospel over against novel forms of doctrine?

CHAPTER 8

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF SIN

Scripture: I John 1:5-2:2

SUBJECT: THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF SIN

TEXT: "My little children, I write unto you that ye sin not." (I Jn. 2:1a)

INTRODUCTION:

How can a person come into a meaningful relationship with God? It is a fact that sin is a barrier to such fellowship. What is sin and how can man get rid of it? Is sin compatible with fellowship? What is the method whereby God's wrath is appeased toward the sinner? How can a believer maintain a meaningful and cleansed relationship with God? What happens if a Christian commits an act of sin? What should be the attitude of a Christian toward sin?

PROPOSITION:

These questions are answered by John in our Scripture lesson for today. One's attitude and understanding of sin largely determines the quality of one's life. Let us then seek to understand the Christian attitude toward sin.

1. There Is No Sin or Darkness In God But Only Light. (v. 5)

There is no sin in God's character or nature. Therefore, those who are the worshippers of God must reflect the same type of nature as the nature of God - sinless.

When the Scripture states that God is light, several ideas emerge concerning God (as pointed out well by Barclay): (1) Light speaks of God's splendor and glory; (2) Light is self-revealing, showing that there is nothing secretive or concealed about God; (3) Radiant purity is symbolized by light; thus, light speaks of God's holiness and purity; (4) Light guides one on a pathway; thus, God guides the footsteps of man; (5) Light reveals soilings, stains, and imperfections, so God, as the Light, reveals the true character of things.

2. Living In Sin Destroys All Fellowship With God (v.6).

Phillips translates verse 6 this way: "If we were to say that we enjoyed fellowship with him and still went on living in darkness, we should be both telling and living a lie." The fuller translation would be like this: "If we say that things in common we are having with Him, and thus fellowship, and in the sphere of the aforementioned darkness are habitually ordering our behavior, we are lying, and we are not doing the truth." (V. 6 by Wuest)

"The Gnostic is the wise man, the man who has gnosis, knowledge, the man who knows. Now certain Gnostics held that the real Gnostic must, therefore, know the best as well as the worst; he must know the depths as well as the heights; he must enter into every experience of life at its highest or at its deepest level, as the case may be. It might almost be said that such men held that it was an obligation to sin. The idea is something like the idea that it is good for a young man 'to sow his wild oats.' Only the Gnostics, who held this view, went further, and looked on sin as a kind of religious duty." (Barclay; pg. 12)

John made it very clear that he who sins is going against the nature of God and cannot claim to be God's child. Darkness is opposed to light; sin is opposed to righteousness. Therefore, he who claims to be God's child must live like God - must live a life of righteousness.

"Here John is laying down the blunt truth that the man whose practice does not fit his profession is in fact a liar. The man who says one thing with his lips and entirely another thing with his life is a liar. The man who contradicts his claims by his living is a liar." (Barclay's I Jn. 37)

3. If One Walks In The Light As God Is In The Light, Then The Blood Of Jesus Cleanses From All Sin. (7)

Note carefully the verb tenses in a more expanded translation of this verse: "But if within the sphere of the light we are habitually ordering our behavior as He himself is in the light, things in common and thus fellowship we (the believer and God) are having with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son keeps continually cleansing us from every sin." (v. 7 by Wuest).

There is a condition that the Christian must meet if he is to expect continually walks with God (in other words, habitually patterns his behavior after the behavior of God), then God will continually cleanse from all sin. As long as man continues, God will continue to do His work.

There is need in the Christian for constant cleansing. A past cleansing is not sufficient. There is need in a Christian for constant shaping of his behavior, patterned after the behavior of Christ. A past religious experience is not sufficient for the present. There must be a constant shaping and molding of one's life, for a Christian is only "a Christian in the making."

"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. The verb suggests that God does more than forgive; He erases the stain of sin. And the present tense shows that it is a continuous process. But what sin needs to be cleansed if we walk in the light?...If 'light' signifies holiness as well as revelation, to walk in it is to live not only in honesty, but, at least to some degree, in purity also. So the reference here must be to cleansing not from deliberate sins but either from 'every sin' (NEB), even those committed unconsciously, or, as may be suggested by the use of the singular sin, from the defilement of our fallen nature. What is clear is that if we walk in the light, God has made provision to cleanse us from whatever sin would otherwise mar our fellowship with Him or each other." (Stott, 75,76)

4. Denial Of The Existence Of Sin Is Evidence Of Self-deception, And A Voidness To The Truth, And Results In Calling God A Liar. (v. 8,10)

"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us...If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." (v. 8,10)

"Clearly the true Gnostic would regard himself as an altogether spiritual man; he would regard himself as having shed all the material things of life, and as having released his spirit from the bondage of matter. Such Gnostics held that they were completely above sin; that sin for them had ceased to exist; that they were so spiritual that they were above and beyond sin, and that they had reached spiritual perfection. It is to them that John refers when he speaks of those who deceive themselves by saying that they have no sin (I Jn. 1:8-10)" (Bar. 12)

There are those who don't want to take any responsibility for sin. Such people blame their behavior on their environment, or heredity, or friends, or family, or circumstance, instead of taking personal responsibility for their own behavior.

Man tends to minimize sin, and explain it away. Says Paul Rees, "Someone ought to set up a 'Bureau of Mission Words'. If we had such an institution, somewhere on the dust-laden shelves would be found the word 'sin'. It is the forgotten word of proud twentieth-century man. We are so sure we have outgrown

it that we would rather go to hell than to admit we are plagued with it. There is simply no end to the lengths we will go in building a silky vocabulary that leaves out the serpent-hissing word - sin. The quack religionists are ready to lend a hand: they smilingly remind us that sin is merely a 'delusion of mortal mind'. The high-browed sociologists offer their assistance: they would sum up all that ails under the innocent-sounding phrase 'the cultural lag'. The super-patriots have a neat little suggestion too: they rise up self-righteously to declare that one or two madmen, like Hitler or Mussolini or Khrushchev are to blame for all this devilishness that has loosed itself upon the world. The one thing that most of us are stubbornly unwilling to do is to locate the troubles of human society where they really are - inside our own prideful, peevish, perverse hearts, with their subtly persistent unbelief that turns away from God's Christ and serves other gods instead." (Stand Up In Praise To God; pg. 70, 71)

He who denies the reality of sin is only deceiving himself and is void of the truth. God says that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. To deny God's estimate of man is to call God a liar. (How Freud Explained away Sin)

5. If Man Confesses His Sins, God Will Forgive And Cleanse From All Sin. (v. 9)

The translation could properly be as follows: "If we continue to confess our sins (continue to agree with God regarding God's estimate of our sinful nature and practices), then God is faithful and just to completely forgive our sins and to thoroughly cleanse from all unrighteousness." As Stott says, "If we confess our sins, acknowledging before God that we are sinners not only by nature (sin) but by practice also (our sins), God will both forgive us our sins and...cleanse us from all unrighteousness. In the first phrase sin is a debt which he remits and in the second a stain which He removes." (pg. 77)

A man needs not only forgiveness for what he has done, but also deliverance from what he is. Man is not a sinner because he sins; rather, man sins because he is a sinner. The remedy for sin, as provided by Christ, goes beyond the realm of inner cleansing from the stain of sin.

Jesus is faithful to forgive, that is, Jesus is faithful to His promise and covenant (Jer. 31:34). Jesus is just to forgive sins, and that justice is based on Christ's death on the Cross for our sins. If Jesus is just, he must forgive, because of what He has done on the cross for man's sins.

6. The Christian Norm Is To Live Without Willful Sin (2:1).

One of the main purposes for writing the letter is to prevent Christians from sinning: "My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin." (2:1a) John has already made it clear (1:7) that the Christian is one who is habitually shaping his life after the pattern of Christ (walking in the light as God is in the light). Therefore, living a life patterned after darkness and willful sin is completely out of the question, for the genuine Christian. John makes it clear later in the letter that he who practices sin as a way of life is of the devil (I Jn. 3:3-9). What John is saying in this verse is this: "My little children (born ones), these things I am writing to you in order that you may not commit an act of sin." (Wuest) It is John's firm belief that the blood of Jesus is powerful enough to keep one from even committing an occasional act of sin. It is possible - indeed it is expected of the Christian - to live a life of constant, consistent, and uninterrupted righteousness. There need be no break in a Christian's relationship with God. A Christian can live an absolutely pure life. All men 'miss the mark' of God's absolute and perfect law, and thus all men are in need of God's daily forgiveness and constant cleansing - I Jn. 1:7,9) The norm of the Christian life is to live without committing sin. (Sin, by definition, is breaking God's law, and this implies a willful breaking of God's law - I Jn. 3:4)

"John lays down his two great ethical principles; knowledge involves obedience, and union involves imitation; and, therefore, in the Christian life there can never be any inducement to think lightly of sin." (Barclay, pg. 42)

7. It Is Possible For A Christian To Sin, But If A Christian Falls Into An Act of Sin, God, Because of Christ's Atonement, Will Forgive And Restore To Fellowship. (2:1,2)

If a Christian should find himself with guilt as a result of an act of sin, "we (Christians) have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

A. Jesus Is Advocate.

Jesus pleads our case before God the Father. "An advocate is a helper, a supporter of someone's cause, an advocate in someone's defense." (Barclay) Jesus is the one who intercedes on man's behalf before God the Father. Jesus alone is worthy to be an advocate before the Father, because Jesus alone is ~~innocently~~ <sup>absolutely</sup> righteous.

B. Jesus Christ the Propitiation.

To show the relationship between Advocate and Propitiation, Stott quotes Smith as saying, "Our Advocate does not plead that we are innocent, or adduce extenuating circumstances. He acknowledges our guilt and presents His vicarious work as the ground of our acquittal." (pg. 82)

"The great basic truth behind this word is that it is through Jesus Christ that man's fellowship with God is first restored, and then maintained." (Barclay; 47)

To put it more clearly, the idea behind the word is this: God is wrathful toward man's sin and God's wrath toward the sinner must be averted or appeased if man is to be forgiven. God's judgment does rest upon man, but God's wrath is appeased since God has let the penalty for sin (which man deserved to receive) to be inflicted upon Himself.

A simple human analogy would be that of a parent who is wrathful because of his child's disobedience. The child deserves punishment, but the parent takes the punishment for the child and thus releases the child from the punishment, and at the same time appeases the wrath of himself - the parent.

As Stott so clearly states: "It is an appeasement of the wrath of God by the love of God through the gift of God. The initiative is not taken by man, nor even by Christ, but by God Himself in sheer unmerited love. His wrath is not averted by any external gift, but by His own self-giving to die the death of sinners. This is the means He has Himself contrived by which to turn His own wrath away." (pg 88)

Jesus' propitiation (or Jesus' death on the cross for man's sins which has become the means of appeasing God's wrath against the sinner) is for the whole world. The offer of salvation is universal (Jn. 3:16; Jn. 12:32; I Tim. 2:4).

Advocacy is only for believers - that is, for those who have accepted the objective work of Jesus' propitiation.

Conclusion:

The important question that must be pondered by all is this: 'Have you personally accepted the work of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, as a personal atonement for your own sins?' If you have not accepted Jesus as your personal Savior, then the 'wrath of God abides on you' (Jn. 3:36) However, if you confess your sins (that, is, agree with God's estimate of your sinful nature and practices), and continue to confess, then God is faithful and just to completely forgive your sins and to thoroughly cleanse you from your sin nature. Christ's atonement is sufficient for both your sin (Nature) and your sins (Practices). (1:9). As long as you habitually pattern your life after the life of God (walk in the light), you may be assured that God will continually cleanse you from all unrighteousness and keep you in close fellowship with Christ (1:7). The Christian life is the life that is lived in the Light - the very Light of God (1:5).

## Chapter 8

### The Christian View of Sin (1:5-2:2)

#### Discussion:

1. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "One's attitude and one's understanding of sin largely determines the quality of one's life"?
2. When God is called "Light" (I John 1:5) what ideas regarding the person and the work of God come to your mind?
3. According to I John 1:6, how would you refute the argument of a person who claims that personal and experiential knowledge of sin is helpful or even virtuous? Is it possible to enjoy fellowship with God and at the same time, be involved in a lifestyle of sinning?
4. Do you have a right, as a conscientious believer, to call a man a "liar" if his righteous profession is not supported by a righteous lifestyle? Is there a difference between being a "fruit inspector" (Matthew 7:15-20) and a "judge" (Matthew 7:12; I John 4:1-3)?
5. Is there evidence, from a careful study of I John 1:7, that God is able and willing, not only to forgive deliberate sins but also to cleanse one from the moral defilement in his fallen nature?
6. According to I John 1:8,10, how would you refute the argument of the one who denies the existence of sin or who rationalizes away his sinful behavior and attitudes?
7. Give your comments on the following statements: "Real guilt comes, not from acts which the individual would commit but dares not because of social restraints (Freudian psychology), but from acts which he has committed but wishes that he had not committed (Christian view). Therefore, confession of sin to God is the only way to find deliverance from real guilt!"
8. Tell how I John 1:9 teaches the twofold nature of sin, and God's twofold provision for the problem of sin. What is the difference between "sins" as moral transgressions, and "sin" as moral pollution? Do you agree with the following statement: "Man is not a sinner because he sins; rather, man sins because he is a sinner."
9. According to I John 2:1 and I John 3:3-9, is it possible for a true Christian to think lightly of sin? Why or why not? According to I John 3:4, would you agree that the following definition of "sin" is an accurate

definition: "Sin is a willful transgression against a known law of God"? (Note: John's definition of "sin" refers to "sins of commission." James' definition of sin - James 4:17 - probably refers to "sins of omission". How would you define "sins of omission"? Do all believers sin every day "in word, or in thought, or in deed", failing to do all the good they ought to do each day? When John wrote (I John 2:1) that Christians are not to sin at all, was he thinking of "sins of commission" or of "sins of omission"?

10. What provision has God provided for a believer who sins by breaking God's known laws, thus incurring guilt and/or condemnation? (Note I John 2:1,2) In what way is Jesus God's answer to appeasing God's wrath against sin? What has Jesus done to make it possible for God's love to be demonstrated for the sinner and, at the same time, to make it possible for God's justice to be satisfied against sin?

CHAPTER 9

DOES YOUR PROFESSION AGREE WITH YOUR POSSESSION?

SUBJECT: "DOES YOUR PROFESSION AGREE WITH YOUR POSSESSION?"

SCRIPTURE: I John 2:3-11

TEXT: "He that sayeth he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." (I John 2:6)

INTRODUCTION:

What is the criteria to determine whether a person is really a Christian? Is a person's profession of Christianity judged on the basis of belief or on the basis of behavior, or on the basis of both belief and behavior? Is there some standard that I can use to evaluate a person's claims, without standing in God's place of ultimate judgment?

PROPOSITION:

Who is a Christian and who is not a Christian? That is the question that is clearly answered in our Scripture lesson today. John gives several tests to determine whether a person is really a Christian or not. Two of those tests are (1) The Moral Test, and (2) The Social Test.

I. THE MORAL TEST (OBEDIENCE AND IMITATION) - (2:3-6)

One very important test of whether a person is genuinely a Christian or not is found in obedience or lack of obedience to God's commandments. There were those in the ancient world and there are still those in the modern world who claim that knowledge of God is attained merely through an intellectual process. However, accumulating information and facts about God does not necessarily have any ethical affects. Many of the greatest of Greek minds in the ancient world who developed a philosophy about God, were not specially good men. It was John's firm conviction that anyone who claimed to know God must obey God's commandment. "He who keeps on saying, I have come to know Him experientially and as a present result am in that state, and His precepts is not habitually safeguarding with solicitous care, is a liar, and in this one the truth does not exist." (Wuest) "To know God is to experience His love in Christ, and to return that love in obedience." (C.H. Dodd, quoted by Barclay; 50)

There are those who claim to have fellowship and union with God, but whose lives have no resemblance to the character of God. The true test of fellowship and union with God is imitation of God's Character. One's claim of having fellowship and union with God must be backed with a life which imitates the life of God. Just as knowledge of God involves obedience, so union with God involves imitation.

If one's character and behavior is unlike the character and behavior of Christ, then, regardless of one's profession and claim, such a person is a liar and the truth of God does not exist in him. One's high profession must be matched with a genuine possession.

To apply the moral test to one's profession of Christianity, involves asking these questions: (1) Am I carefully obeying God's commandments? (2) Am I truly Christlike in behavior, conducting myself after the pattern of Christ?

There are a number of people who say in essence that one's behavior is really not a gauge to determine if one is a Christian or not. Such individuals argue that what is important is not man's righteousness, but Christ's righteousness which is imputed or attributed to man. Belief in Christ becomes the sole standard for judging if one is a Christian or not. John would agree that faith in Christ

is the sole means whereby one can come to truly and experientially know God, but John makes it very clear that such belief (I Jn. 3:23) always results in Christ-likeness in behavior (I Jn. 2:6). So the ultimate test is not merely belief, but behavior. John "insists that no religious experience is valid if it does not have moral consequences...Only if we obey Him can we claim to know Him, not to have accurate information about Him merely, but to have become personally acquainted with him... A man's words must be tested by his works." (Stott; 90)

## II. THE SOCIAL TEST (LOVE) - (2:7-11)

In I John 2:3-6, the commandment is love, and the imitation is also love. In John 13:34 Jesus says, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

Note verse 7. Love was as old as the Old Testament itself. It says in Lev. 19:18: "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the Lord." In Deut. 6:5 it says: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." The message of love was no innovation such as heretics taught; the message which they had heard from the beginning.

Note verse 8. As Stott so ably clarifies, the commandment of love is new because it is the all-encompassing commandment of the age of grace or the age of light, which Jesus inaugurated by His coming to the world. Jesus has ushered in the real as opposed to the unreal. With Christ's coming has come the dawning of reality; and living according to reality is living the life of divine love.

This love is new in at least three ways: (1) New in Quality - The love which Jesus taught and exemplified is a selfless, self-sacrificing love - a love that lays down its life for another. That kind of love goes beyond the conception of the Old Testament (Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18) (2) New in Extent - This divine love is not exclusive (for only Jews or for only the moral), but this love is all-inclusive (irrespective of race and rank and moral fitness). (3) New in Fresh Apprehension - Love as a doctrine or a principle is as old as the Old Testament, but love as a personal experience is constantly new.

The light is identified with God and God is love, so evidence that one abides in the light is the practice of love in one's life. In such a person there is no stumbling block. That is, "it is love which sees straight, thinks clearly and makes us balanced in our outlook, judgments and conduct." (Stott; 95) He who habitually loves his brother Christian does not produce a contradiction between his profession and his possession. He is a whole person - one in motive and one in behavior. His motive is love and his behavior is love, and the capacity for this love is progressively growing.

In the man who loves there is nothing that causes himself to stumble. "That is to say, love is the one thing which enables us to make progress in the spiritual life, and hatred is the one thing which makes progress impossible...If God is love, and if the new commandment of Christ is love, then love is the one thing which brings us nearer to men and nearer to God, and hatred is the one thing which separates us from men and separates us from God." (Bar. 57) Hatred has the terrible affect of not only stunting or destroying growth, but hatred also blinds a man. "He who hates his brother is in the darkness, and he is walking in darkness, and he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes." (I Jn. 2:11) Hate blinds one to true progress and paralyzes all wise judgment-making.

"Love enables a man to walk in the light; hatred leaves him in the dark - even if he does not realize that it is so." (Bar. 58)

The love that John speaks of is the highest quality of love - the divine love that is bestowed by God as a gift. This type of love is humanly unattainable, which is to say that living a true Christian life (which is the life of love) is a supernatural, God-empowered life.

I John 2:9-11 makes it very clear that there is no neutrality in personal relationships. "A man is either walking in the light of love or in the darkness of hatred." (Barclay; 55)

CONCLUSION:

John lays down some accurate criteria to judge whether or not a person is a genuine Christian. He who experientially knows God is the one who carefully observes and obeys God's commandments (2:3-5) One's claim of having fellowship and union with God must be backed with a life which imitates the life of God (2:6) The test of the genuineness of Christian profession is the evidence of the possession of love in one's life. He who practices love in his relationships of life is like God and, being like God, walks in God's light. A love-centered person is free from stumbling and makes rapid spiritual progress. "It is love which sees straight, thinks clearly, and makes us balanced in our outlook, judgments, and conduct." (Stott; pg. 95)

## Chapter 9

### Does Your Profession Agree With Your Possession? (2:3-11)

#### Discussion:

1. According to I John 2:4, is it possible to know God without obedience to God's commandments? What is the difference between "knowing God" and "knowing about God"? Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "To know God is to experience His love in Christ, and to return that love in obedience." (C.H. Dodd) At what point does disobedience against God's moral laws and holy commandments, forfeit one's relationship with God? Does God "drop one like a hot coal" the moment that he (a professing believer) disobeys one of God's commandments? (Note I John 2:1-2; 3:6) (James 5:16)
2. In light of the fact of human imperfection and the universality of sin in human beings (Romans 3:10), tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: "One's claim of loving fellowship and union with God must be backed with a life which imitates the life of God. If one's character and behavior is unlike the character and behavior of Christ, then, regardless of one's profession and claim, such a person is a liar and the truth of God does not exist in him."
3. Give your interpretation of the following statement: "A man's words must be tested by his works." (Stott) Is it possible for one intellectually to affirm orthodox beliefs and yet fail experientially to know God? (Note John 2:4, James 2:19)
4. In light of the fact that the Old Testament teaches the importance and the necessity of one loving his neighbor as himself, why was John justified in calling this commandment to love a "New" commandment? (I John 2:8) In what three ways can this commandment to love be considered "New"?
5. In what ways can it be said that one is living "in the light" when he is proclaiming God-like love in his relationships with his fellow men? Give your comments and interpretation of the following statement by John Stott: "It is love which sees straight, thinks clearly and makes us balanced in outlook, judgments and conduct."
6. In what ways does hatred blind a person to moral and social reality in the world of human relationships? (I John 2:11) In what ways does love enable one to make progress in his spiritual life? In an age that tends to make moral neutrality and tolerance a virtue,

how do you react to the following statement: "A man is either walking in the light of love or in the darkness of hatred."? (Barclay)

CHAPTER 10

THE DEVELOPING CHRISTIAN LIFE

SUBJECT: THE DEVELOPING CHRISTIAN LIFE

SCRIPTURE: I John 2:13-14

INTRODUCTION:

1. Note meaning of 'children', 'young men', 'fathers'. "The little Children are those newborn in Christ. The young men are more developed Christians, strong and victorious in spiritual warfare; while the fathers possess the depth and stability of ripe Christian experience." (Stott; 96)
2. Repeated for Emphasis.

PROPOSITION:

The Christian life is a developing life - a life that is characterized by a sense of forgiveness, a victory over Satanic opposition, and an intimate knowledge of God's unchanging love.

I. Children Experience Forgiveness Through Name of Jesus

1. Man's need for forgiveness - a. Born In Sin. b. All Sinners (Rms. 3:23); Man is guilty. c. Wrath of God rests upon Man (Jn 3:36); d. Penalty of sin is death (Rms. 6:23); e. Man can't save himself (Is. 64:6)
2. God's provision for forgiveness through Name (Nature and Work of Christ) of Christ. "Those who know God's nature, God's character, what God is, in so far as it has been revealed to men, will be ready and eager to put their trust in Him, because they know what He is like." (Bar. I Jn. pg. 63) (The only Name the Father recognizes as the ground for forgiveness).
3. God's judgment already passed on your sin (The Good News is forgiveness of sins (Lk. 24:47)
4. Forgiveness is the greatest of all blessings from God (Greatest word in English Language - Note contest on 'greatest word in English language'.)
5. Forgiveness is perfectly purchased for all men, and those who ask for forgiveness are forgiven. (Costly blessing - "It seems most difficult for the mind to grasp the fact that, as revealed in God's Word, God does not deal with any sin in mercy or leniency. The sinner is never forgiven because God is bighearted. Any presentation of divine forgiveness which represents God as directly exercising clemency toward a sinner is a fatal detraction from the meaning of the cross of Christ, and a disastrous misrepresentation of the truth contained in the gospel. The forgiveness of God toward sinners, therefore, is a judicial pardon of a debtor in view of the fact that his debt has been fully paid by another, the Person of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Strauss; pg. 61)  
(Note I Peter 1:18-19) Note: It is not through wealth, or works, or weeping.  
"Could my tears forever flow,  
Could my zeal no languor know,  
These for sin could not atone,  
Thou must save and thou alone.  
In my hand no price I bring;  
Simply to the cross I cling." (Rock of Ages; 233)
6. Forgiveness produces great happiness - (Sense of relief which comes when one knows his sins are forgiven - Note new convert who first realizes that his past is forgiven.)

## II. YOUNG MEN OVERCOME EVIL ONE

1. Satan - a. Created Being - "The Anointed Cherub that Covereth." ("fullness of wisdom" and "perfection of beauty".); b. Charge of Earth after original creation - (When Satan said in his heart - "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the 'Stars of God' (other ruling powers): I will sit also upon the Mount of the Congregation, in the sides of the North. I will ascend above the clouds; I will be like the Most High." And that it was for this presumptuous act that the 'Pre-Adamite World' became a chaos, and without 'form and void', as described in Gen. 1:2). (Pg. 12 Larkin; The Spirit World)

2. Origin of Evil - The angels, as free moral agents, had the power of choice, not between 'Good' and 'Evil', but between following the 'Will of God', or their 'own will'. As long as Satan chose the 'will of God' there was no 'Evil' in the Universe, but the moment he chose to follow his own will, then he fell, and by persuading others to follow him he introduced 'Evil' into the Universe. (Is. 14:12-14)

3. Present Location - At liberty in the heavenlies - Job1:7;2;2)

4. Satan's Kingdom - Eph. 6:12

5. Methods

a. Deceiver of the World - I Jn. 5:19

Blinds the eyes of the world - 2 Cor. 4:3,4

Instigator of Great Apostacy - 2 Pet. 2:1-2

b. Adversary of God's People - Throughout all Scripture, there is a record of the conflict of God's people with Satan, and throughout the Church age it has been the same.

6. Doom - at the close of the Tribulation period, an angel from heaven will seize Satan and bind him with a great chain, already forged, and cast him into the Bottomless Pit, where he shall remain for 1000 years. (Rev. 20:1-3). At the end of which time he shall be loosed for a season, and then with his angels he shall be cast into the 'Lake of Fire' prepared for him in the long ago to spend the Ages of the Ages. (Rev. 20:7-10)

7. Method of Overcoming

---By Resisting the devil and submitting to God (I Peter 5:8,9) James 4:7)

---By quoting the Word of God (Jesus did this in His temptation - 'It is written').

David said, "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee."

"Strong because word abides in you - I Jn. 2:14b.

---By Involvement in God's work (the idle mind is the devil's workshop") (Jesus said, I must be about my Father's business.")

---By walking close to Jesus, obeying His commandments, and trusting Him for a way out (I Cor. 10:13; Heb. 4:14,15)

## III. FATHERS KNOWN HIM THAT IS FROM THE BEGINNING

(Sweeter as years go by - finding Him sufficient for every need.) Not merely know about His love, but know His love by experience. It is one thing to read about love abstractly and note the traits etc; it is quite another thing to know the love of a person by experience. "All Christians, mature and immature, have come to know God. But their knowledge of Him ripens with the years. The little children know Him as the Father; the fathers have come to know Him as him that is from the beginning, which is probably a reference, not to the Logos, but to the immutable eternal God who does not change, as men change, with advancing years, but who is for ever the same. Time hurried on, but in all generations they find a refuge in Him who from everlasting to everlasting is God. They are already consciously living in eternity." (Stott; pg. 97)

CONCLUSION:

"It is significant that in each of these six messages the verb is in the perfect tense, which indicates the present consequence of a past event. John is laying emphasis on the assured standing into which every Christian has come, whatever his stage of spiritual development." (Stott; 98)

## Chapter 10

### The Developing Christian Life (2:13-14)

#### Discussion:

1. How would you define "children", "young men", and "fathers", as these terms relate to spiritual development (I John 2:12-14)?
2. What else would you add to the following definition of "the Christian life": "The Christian life is a developing life - a life that is characterized by a sense of forgiveness, a victory over Satanic opposition and an intimate knowledge of God's unchanging love."?
3. What scriptural support can you cite that mankind universally is in need of forgiveness? (I John 2:12) Even though God wishes to forgive all persons, can a sinner experience God's forgiveness without asking for God's forgiveness? Why or why not? If Jesus died for all persons, and if God is not willing that any should perish (II Peter 3:9), then why will not all persons automatically be saved? (Romans 10:9)
4. On what basis does God forgive sinners? What is the only "Name" the Father recognizes as the "ground for forgiveness"? Why is man's wealth, works, or weeping not sufficient to attain God's forgiveness of sin and to merit God's eternal salvation?
5. What is the origin of good? Is "evil" an eternal reality, alongside "good", or is "evil" a perversion of "good" - i.e., moral rebellion? (Note Isaiah 14:12-14)
6. How much "liberty" does Satan have at the present time? (Note Job 1:7,2:2) How is Satan's kingdom described in Ephesians 6:12? What are some of the methods Satan uses in his attempts to destroy mankind? (Note II Corinthians 11:14; II Corinthians 4:3,4; II Peter 2:1-2; Revelation 12:9-10) What is the final destiny of Satan (Revelation 20:1-3,7-10)?
7. Name four specific methods which the sincere believer can use to overcome temptation and the Evil One.
8. What are the characteristics of the deep, intimate knowledge of God which the spiritually mature enjoy?
9. What is the significance of John's use of the "Greek perfect tense" six different times in I John 2:12-14?



CHAPTER 11

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU LOVE!

SUBJECT: BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU LOVE!

SCRIPTURE: I John 2:15-17

TEXT: "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

INTRODUCTION:

In the Scripture lesson for today, the writer (John) draws a sharp contrast between the man of the world and the man of faith. The man of the world may be termed a secularist. W. Curry Mavis clearly defines the meaning of secularism. "Secularism means, most simply, a regard for the interests and affairs of this life to the neglect of matters pertaining to the future life. It represents the enthronement of personal interests and human sufficiency at the very center of life. Man takes a priority over God in the practical matters of life, and he maintains a nonchalant attitude toward Him...In secularism, 'temporal values are seen as ends in themselves', and men devote their lives to them." (The Psychology of Christian Experience; 107,8)

Secularism is preoccupation with this world with oftentimes a denial that there is an afterlife. Secularism results when one is swept into the whirlpool of materialism. A secularist believes that life consists in the abundance of things that a man possesseth. Such a person is living for time only and has either disregarded or denied that there is an eternal existence. A secularist is one who adopts the attitude of 'let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.' Although a secularist may not outrightly deny the existence of God or manifest outward hostility to the Church, a secularist shows by his materialistic values and his indifferent attitudes that he is at heart a practical atheist. For him, physical reality is all that can be known, and for him the gateway to all knowledge is his five senses. The secularist feels that he is self-sufficient to cope with life and that his own wisdom is the standard for all decisions. To depend on God is naive and shows weakness in character.

The man of faith does not pattern his behavior after this present world style, but rather patterns his behavior after the will of God. He loves God's laws and on His laws he meditates day and night. The secularist loves the things of this world. In this Scripture, John is saying, "Be careful what you love!"

PROPOSITION:

What you love determines the quality of your present life and the destiny of your future life! It is the wise man who loves the thing which is permanent and eternal, rather than the thing which is transitory and decaying.

I. LOVE OF THE WORLD

A. Definition of 'World'

John wrote, "Do not love the world or the things in the world." (IJohn 2:15) What does John mean when he uses the word 'world' in this passage? Certainly John does not mean the world of God's creation, for the beauty of physical reality is to be enjoyed, and God is to be praised for it.

To understand John's definition of 'world', look at other passages in I John where 'world' is referred to: I John 3:1b: "The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him." I John 3:13: "Do not wonder, brethren, that the world hates you." "We know that we are of God, and the whole world is in the power of the evil one." I John 5:19. When John uses 'world' in the passage which we are considering today, he "Means human society in so far as it is organized on wrong principles, and characterized by base desires, false values, and egoism" (C.H. Dodd, quoted by Barclay pg. 66) Westcott says that 'world' is "the order of finite being regarded as apart from God." "'The world', therefore, is an inclusive term for all those who are in the kingdom of darkness and have not been born of God." (Stott; pg. 101) The NEB translates: "Do not set your hearts on the godless world or anything in it." (I Jn. 2:15)

Jesus made it very clear that "there is no neutrality; a man either loves the world, or he loves God." (Barclay). Said Jesus, "No one can be loyal to two masters. He is bound to hate one and love the other, or support one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and the power of money at the same time." (Mt. 6:24 Phillips)

A true Christian is one who separates himself from the world's practices and standards. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (II Cor. 5:17, 18)

The outlook and pursuits of the world reject Christ, therefore Christians are not to take part in the evil system. "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." (Jms. 4:4 RSV) "To be in the world is the opposite to 'being in God'." "The love of the finite as an absolute object necessarily excludes the love of the Creator." (Westcott).

"What then is to be the Christian's attitude to the world? He is not to escape out of it; he is to remain in it. He is to be 'unworldly' without becoming 'otherworldly', living 'in' it without being 'of' it." (Stott; 102,103) In Jesus' prayer for believers, He prayed to the Father: "I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one." (Jn. 17:15)

## B. Characteristics of the World

John says that the way of the world is the way of paganism. Three essential traits of the pagan way of life are: (1) Lusts of the Flesh, (2) Lusts of the eyes, (3) Pride of Life.

### 1. Lusts of the Flesh (Bse Desires; C.H. Dodd)

What is the 'lust of the flesh'? It is "the desire of which the flesh is the seat." (Westcott) To live according to the lusts of the flesh is "to judge everything in the world by purely material standards" (Barclay). It is life which is dominated by the senses. Man has a mad craze to get more things to gratify the ears, to gratify the taste, to gratify the smell, to gratify the eyes, to gratify the touch.

"The activities of the lower nature are obvious. Here is a list: sexual immorality, impurity of mind, sensuality, worship of false gods, witchcraft, hatred, quarreling, jealousy, bad temper, rivalry, factions, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, orgies and things like that. I solemnly assure you, as I did before, that those who indulge in such things will never inherit God's kingdom." (Gal. 5:19-21 Phillips)

Note the passage of Scripture in Deuteronomy 6:10-12. "And it shall be, When the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, and houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage." (Deut. 6:10-12)

There is no inherent sin in desiring the things which are listed in this passage. In fact these things are God-given gifts. However, the temptation is to forget the source of these blessings and to take credit for them, and to become self-indulgent. These things must not become the end for which a man is living.

Man desires "great and goodly cities" (wonderful place to live; pleasing atmosphere)

Man desires "houses full of all good things." (comfortable living; household conveniences.)

Man desires "good and full wells" (that is, an abundance of natural resources to satisfy our 1001 desires; America is most blessed in this way)

Man desires "vineyards and olive trees" (that is, plenty of large variety of foods, and all he wants to eat and more).

Any of these desires can become an end within themselves, and then they become 'lusts of the flesh' - and thus sinful.

## 2. Lusts of the Eyes (False Values - C. H. Dodd)

What is the 'lusts of the eyes'? "The tendency to be captivated by the outward show of things, without enquiring into their real values." (Dodd) "It is the spirit which can see nothing without wishing to acquire it, and which, having acquired it, flaunts it in the face of men. It is the spirit which believes that happiness is to be found in the things which money can buy and which the eye can see." (Barclay, pg. 68)

Says Lehman Strauss, "This is the desire for indulgence which is prompted by seeing. It could be the lust for fine clothes, a new automobile, a modern house, power, or the lust to satisfy the sensual appetite for some base and immoral indulgence. It is prompted by the sense of sight and it grows in the imagination of the mind." (pg. 94)

"The essence of the worldly man is, as someone has said, that 'he knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.' The world's motive is the profit motive; the Christian's dynamic is the desire to serve." (Bar. Eph. 115)

"Secularism has a strong appeal to practical minded people, such as Americans, because secular values are utilitarian. We have been conditioned to appreciate gadgets more than ideas." (The Psychology of Christian Experience; pg. 112)

What do your eyes behold? What type of entertainment do you enjoy? What goes through your eye gate? Do you view sensual pictures? Do you watch T.V. programs that create an evil imagination? Do you shun all pornographic literature and base pictures? Remember, the eyes are the shutters to snap pictures, which become indelibly imprinted upon the film of your mind. Let your prayer be the prayer of the Psalmist, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way." (Ps. 119:37) The Christian must guard his actions, and also guard the objects of his gaze and contemplation. Wrote Isaiah, "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; He shall dwell on high. (Is. 33:15,16a)

## 3. Pride of Life (Egoism - C.H. Dodd)

A person who is possessed with the 'pride of life' is a person who "continually boasts about things which he does not possess, and all his life is spent in an attempt to impress everyone he meets with his own non-existent importance." (Bar. 69)

"The pride of life is, therefore, an arrogance or vainglory relating to one's external circumstances, whether wealth or rank or dress, 'pretentious ostentation' (Plummer), 'the desire to shine or outshine others' in luxurious living (Ebrard)." (quoted by Stott; pg. 100)

The 'pride of life' is essentially a self-sufficient attitude - a braggart. Such a self-centered self-preoccupied person is described in Ezekiel 16:49: "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy."

Woe to such a person who feels no need of God, but who depends upon his own human resources alone. Said Jesus, "Woe to (alas for) you who are full now - completely filled, luxuriously gorged and satiated; for you shall hunger and suffer want! Woe to (alas for) you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep and wail!" (Lk. 6:25 Amplified)

To the Laodicean Church (in Book of Revelation), God said, "For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked." (Rev. 3:17)

John's words could be translated to mean: "For all that is in the world, base desires, false values, and egotism, is not of the Father but is of the world."

## II. LOVE OF GOD'S WILL

"And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides for ever." (I Jn. 2:17) It is the fool who builds his life upon the sands of time rather than the rock of eternity. The sands of time will wash away. The present life and world is passing away. To build life upon these things of the world is to build life upon something which literally has no future. "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be kindled and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire!" (II Peter 3:10-12)

Man's earthly existence is very transitory: "As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more." (Ps. 103:14-16)

Therefore, "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth." (Col. 3:2)

It is the wise man who loves the thing which is permanent and eternal, rather than the thing which is transitory and decaying. A well-known atheist in France confessed his most deep-seated urge: "I have in myself a great need of permanence...I mean a need of believing that there are products not subject to decay and degradation, works on which temporal changes have no influence." However, only "he who doeth the will of God abideth forever."

### A. Meaning of God's Will

#### 1. Content of Performance

Obedience to God's commandments is the essence of performing God's will. "And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He who says, 'I know him' but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps his word, in him truly love for God is perfected." (I Jn. 2:3-5a) Love for God and one's fellowman is the essence of God's will.

## 2. Constancy of Performance

The proper translation of I Jn. 2:17 is: "But the one who keeps on habitually doing the will of God abides forever." (Wuest) It is not past performance but continual, up-to-date performance of God's will which is the condition for claiming God's promise of 'abiding forever'. That is to say, we are constantly to exercise love, we are to maintain a daily close walk with Christ, in order that we may be guaranteed of eternal life. There is eternal life, but it is conditioned upon daily obedience to God's will.

### B. Reward For Obedience to God's Will

Eternal life is the reward for the man who builds his life upon the will of God. God shall not forget him at the moment of death. Rather God shall say to him, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." To enjoy eternal life is to enjoy the very life of God Himself.

#### CONCLUSION:

"Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;  
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;  
Change and decay in all around I see;  
O thou, who changest not abide with me!"

To love the evil world system, is to perish with that system. To love the will of God, is to enjoy the eternal life and love of God Himself. Don't be a fool. Be wise! Be Careful What You Love!

## Chapter 11

### Be Careful What You Love! (2:15-17)

#### Discussion:

1. Define and describe the characteristics of a "secularist".
2. When John exhorts us to "love not the world or the things in the world", how would he define the word "world"?
3. What specifically are some of the world's practices and standards from which a true Christian must separate himself? (II Corinthians 5:17,18) (Read I John 2:15-17 in as many different translations as you can find). How would you describe a worldly-minded Christian? (Note I Corinthians 3:1-3; Ephesians 4:20-32; Romans 12:1-2)
4. Give your interpretation of the following statement by John Stott: "He (the genuine Christian) is to be 'unworldly' without becoming 'otherworldly', living 'in' it without being 'of' it." (Note John 17:15)
5. What is meant by this phrase "lusts of the flesh"? What, according to Galatians 5:19-21, are some of the activities of the "lower nature"?
6. Is it possible to enjoy the "good things of life" (nice houses, enjoyable scenery, fun vacations, natural resources, material possessions, delicious food, quality clothing, material wealth) and yet make God, rather than things, the object of one's worship and affection? What is a "simple life-style", Biblically defined, and how can a sincere believer avoid self-indulgence in his daily life-style and yet, at the same time, learn to enjoy the "good things in life" which God has given?
7. How would you describe and define the "lusts of the eyes", and why do Americans seem especially to be vulnerable to this kind of sin? Do you agree that most Americans "have been conditioned to appreciate gadgets more than ideas"? What are some of the elements or characteristics in a distinctively "Christian value system"?
8. How would you describe and define "the pride of life"? What is the difference, in terms of attitudes and manifestations, between wholesome self-esteem and unwholesome self-sufficiency? (Note John 9:39-41; John 15:5; Galatians 6:3-5; Philippians 4:11-13; II Corinthians 3:1-6; Revelation 3:17)

9. What does common sense and clear Biblical revelation teach us regarding the futility of building our hopes and placing our faith in the treasures of the present world? (Note I John 2:17; II Peter 3:10-12; Psalms 103:14-16; Colossians 3:2).
10. What is God's will, generally speaking, for every person, according to the Bible? (Note I John 2:3-5).
11. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "It is God's desire that every person should enjoy eternal life in heaven, but the actual attainment of eternal life in heaven is conditioned upon a life of continual and significance obedience to God's revealed will." What significance is there in the use of the 'present tense' in I John 2:17 regarding the doing of the will of God?
12. What promise is granted to the person who persists in doing the will of God throughout his lifetime? (I John 2:17).

CHAPTER 12

HOW TO IDENTIFY A TRUE CHRISTIAN

SUBJECT: HOW TO IDENTIFY A TRUE CHRISTIAN

INTRODUCTION:

One was asked, "Are you a Christian?" Replied the man, "Of course I am a Christian, I am not a heathen!" This man identified being an American with being a Christian. To live as a decent citizen, earning an honest living, performing a few good deeds, and giving nominal adherence to a few religious creeds, is in many people's minds, the essence of Christianity.

However, as Sangster points out, "The heart of religion is not an opinion about God, but a personal relationship with him." (Can I Know God? pg. 16)

The Bible often speaks about the possibility of 'knowing' God. When the word 'Know' is used in the Bible with reference to man's relationship with God, this knowledge is not some type of abstract knowledge but rather a personal experiential knowledge of God.

PROPOSITION:

The true Christian is one who knows God in a personal way. John tells how one can identify a true Christian. There are three tests which can be applied to determine if one is a true Christian or not. One need not be in question whether or not he is a true Christian.

- I. OBEDIENCE, OR THE MORAL TEST (Read 2:3-6 of I John) (Already preached on this, so just give few comments.)
- II. LOVE, OR THE SOCIAL TEST (Read 2:7-11 of I John) (Already preached on this, so just give few comments.)
- III. BELIEF, OR THE DOCTRINAL TEST (2:18-27 of I John)

"As a man thinks, so is he." One test to apply to a person who professes to be a Christian is the doctrinal test. "What does he believe?"

"Everyone talkin' about heaven, ain't goin' there." John knew when he wrote his letter, that there were many who claimed to know God, but their claim was invalidated because of the doctrines they taught and practiced. Those who taught such false teachings were called antichrist, for their teachings were in opposition to the teachings of Christ.

Note I John 2:18, 19 for a description of the antichrists. These antichrists were fore-runners of the one who is to come.

The antichrists left the church because they couldn't win leaders over to their viewpoint. By leaving the Church they became manifest for what they were - 'against Christ' and thus the church was cleansed.

Leaving the fellowship of the Church, says John, is proof that such are not of God. Either they have backslidden from the Lord (turned against Christ and become antichrist) or they were always against Christ and their revealed deception caused them to leave the Church.

What are the beliefs or doctrines which true Christians believe in?

A. A TRUE CHRISTIAN BELIEVES IN AND EXPERIENCES THE HOLY SPIRIT'S ANOINTING.

The 'Christ' people know God because of the Holy Spirit's anointing or indwelling. Read I Jn. 2:20,21.

The Holy Spirit is the Enlightener and the Teacher. He is the Spirit of Truth. (2:26,27) In a world of falsehood and deception, the Christian needs a Guide to keep him in the Pathway of truth. The indwelling Holy Spirit is the subjective safeguard against falsehood.

B. A TRUE CHRISTIAN BELIEVES IN THE INCARNATION.

"The antichrists made (Jesus) a mere man invested for a brief period with divine powers or even adopted into the Godhead, but they denied that the man Jesus and the Eternal Son were and are the same Person, possessing two perfect natures, human and divine." (Stott; 111)

The true Christian believes that Jesus is and was the unique Son of God and that Jesus is and was "the Christ (God) come in the flesh." One who denies that Jesus is the Son of God and the Christ come in the flesh, is the liar par excellence. (v. 22,23) To depart from the doctrine of the Incarnation is to depart from Christianity itself. To deny the Incarnation is to be diabolical (antichrist). He who denies the incarnation denies "the Father and the Son." Any group which denies that "Jesus is God come in the flesh", is not a Christian group.

C. A TRUE CHRISTIAN IS ONE WHO BELIEVES AND KNOWS BY EXPERIENCE THAT THERE IS NO WAY TO TRULY KNOW GOD EXCEPT THROUGH THE SON.

He who has the Son has the Father also. He who does not have the Son does not have the Father. "And Jesus cried out and said, 'He who believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And he who sees me sees him who sent me.'" (Jn. 12:44, 45) Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me." (Jn. 14:6) "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (I Tim. 2:5)

D. A TRUE CHRISTIAN IS ONE WHO DOES NOT ACCEPT NEW DOCTRINES, IDEAS, AND TRADITIONS OF MEN, BUT RATHER HE ADHERES TO AND PRACTICES THE AUTHORITATIVE MESSAGE OF THE EARLY CHURCH, AS RECORDED IN SCRIPTURE.

One characteristic of the Last Days is the presence of many "who will listen to anybody and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth." (2 Tim. 3:1) "For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths." (2 Tim. 4:3, 4)

The true Christian does not react against changing methods, for changing times demand changing methods. However, the Christian opposes a liberalization or modification of the central Biblical message. The true Christian is Bible-centered in his teaching. The central message of Christianity is Jesus Christ as Saviour of mankind. To deny this message is to forfeit eternal life. (2:24,25)

The Word of Jesus which is the Word of truth is the objective safeguard against falsehood. The subjective safeguard against falsehood is the indwelling Holy Spirit, as already noted (2:20). "Both the apostolic teaching and the Heavenly Teacher are necessary for continuance in the truth. And both are to be personally and inwardly grasped. This is the biblical balance too seldom preserved by men. Some honour the Word and neglect the Spirit who alone can interpret it; others honour the Spirit but neglect the Word out of which He teaches." (Stott; 115)

CONCLUSION:

How can a true Christian be identified? By applying three tests: (1) The moral test - Obedience. Jesus made it clear that if one is a true follower of God, then that person will keep God's commandments; (2) The social test - love. The man who experiences bitterness or resentment has forfeited his claim to be genuinely Christian. "Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage. It is not touchy. It does not keep account of evil or glout over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it is glad with all good men when truth prevails." (3) The belief test - Doctrine. A true Christian believes that Jesus is the unique Son of God, and the bodily manifestation of God. A true Christian experiences the indwelling Holy Spirit and is guided into all truth as the Holy Spirit applies the teachings of the Word to his life. The true Christian is one who has come to personally and experientially know God, through Christ.

## Chapter 12

### How To Identify A True Christian (2:28-3:10)

#### Discussion:

1. What are the three main tests which one can apply to himself or to someone else, to determine whether or not one is a true Christian? (Note I John 2:3-6; 2:7-11; 2:18-27).
2. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement by Sangster: "The heart of religion is not an opinion about God, but a personal relationship with Him." What is meant when one speaks of a person as "a nominal Christian"?
3. What are some of the characteristics of false teachers (called antichrists), as described in I John 2:18,19,22?
4. What does it mean to you to experience the Holy Spirit's "anointing"? (Note I John 2:20). In what ways have you found that the Holy Spirit has safeguarded you against falsehood?
5. Is it possible for a person to be a genuine Christian and at the same time deny that Jesus is the eternal Son of God and the Christ come in the flesh? Why or why not? (Note I John 2:22; 4:1-3)
6. What response would you give to a person who declares to you: "I can know and enjoy God without involving Jesus, for Jesus is only a good man and a great prophet. I don't need to go through Jesus to get to God"? (Note I John 2:22,23; John 12:44,45; John 14:6; I Timothy 2:5).
7. What are the objective and subjective safeguards against falsehood?
8. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Some honour the word and neglect the Spirit who alone can interpret it; others honour the Spirit but neglect the word out of which He teaches."
9. Why is it important to change the methods but devastating to change the message, as believers seek to have a relevant ministry in our modern age?

CHAPTER 13

CHARACTER OF A CHRISTIAN - BORN OF GOD

SUBJECT: CHARACTER OF A CHRISTIAN - BORN OF GOD

SCRIPTURE: I John 2:28-3:10

TEXT: "Since we know that God is always good and does only right, we may rightly assume that all those who do right are His children." (I Jn. 2:29)

INTRODUCTION:

What is the character of a true Christian? A good description of a Christian is 'one who is Christlike'. Often people are heard to say, "That young boy looks just like his father!" Indeed so, for that child is begotten of the father.

A Christian is one who is born of God. Therefore, a Christian should be like God in many ways - pure, righteous, faithful, holy. God's command is, "Be ye holy, for the Lord thy God am holy." Holiness in the Christian is not an inherent quality, but a derived quality. Through spiritual birth, God imparts His very nature - the nature of righteousness - to the Christian. In fact, it is the impartation of this righteousness that makes a person a Christian.

PROPOSITION:

In terms of 'Being' and 'Doing' how can the begotten one be described? That is the question which we wish to answer from the Scriptures.

I. THE BEGOTTEN ONE PRACTICES RIGHTEOUSNESS (2:28,29)

"And now, my little children, stay in happy fellowship with the Lord so that when He comes you will be sure that all is well, and will not have to be ashamed and shrink back from meeting Him. Since we know that God is always good and does only right, we may rightly assume that all those who do right are His children." (I Jn. 2:28, 29 Living N. T. )

The person who is born of God is the person who practices righteousness. The secret to living a consistently righteous life is found - not in human strength - but in the power received by constantly abiding in Christ. The branch has no life apart from the vine, so a Christian has no life of righteousness apart from abiding in Christ.

John says that a spur to righteous living and faithful service is the knowledge that Christ is coming to earth again. (v. 28) Living righteously will give confidence when Jesus returns.

Note the affect that belief in the second coming of Christ had upon the lives and ministries of some of the greatest Christians in modern times. "D. L. Moody was asked the secret of his power and intensity. He said, 'I preached for years with the thought that before every sermon was finished the Lord Might Come.' J. Wilbur Chapman said, 'I preach the Lord's return because the thought of His second coming has changed my whole ministry. I have not the slightest doubt but that we are approaching the last days.' G. Campbell Morgan said, speaking in those dark terrible days of the bombing of England, 'To me the second coming is the perpetual light of my pathway, making the present bearable, I never lay my head on my pillow without thinking that before morning breaks the final morning may have dawned.' Hudson Taylor, that great pioneer for God who tackled the seemingly impossible in China and wrought such mighty things for Christ, said, 'This truth of the Lord's return has been the greatest spur to me in missionary service.' Dr. R. A. Torrey, peerless preacher of yesterday, said, 'The truth of our Lord's return is the most precious truth the Bible

contains. It fills the heart of a believer with joy. It girds him with strength for the battle. It lifts him above the sorrows and the fears and necessities and trials and ambitions and greed of this world, and makes him in all things more than a conqueror.'" (Rosell; No. 421)

The source of righteousness is Christ. A Christian is one who is Christ-like in nature. "The child exhibits the parent's character because he shares the parent's nature." (Stott; 117, 118) The incentive to holy, righteous living is found in comprehending the hope of Christ's second coming to earth.

## II. THE BEGOTTEN ONE IS A CHILD OF GOD (3:1-3)

Read I Jn. 3:1-3 from Living N. T.

### A. CAUSE FOR WONDERMENT AND AMAZEMENT (v. 1)

The amazement of Christians is that they are not only called - but actually become - children of God through the second birth. The love of God which makes this possible is a love beyond human comprehension or human categories. It is a love that is foreign to the human heart, a love that issues from the great heart of God Himself. This sonship is real - not just a title. This sonship is a product of grace - man does not deserve it and can not earn it, but only received it with gratitude.

### B. CAUSE FOR ALIENATION FROM THE WORLD (v. 1)

Spiritual sonship is so different from the world, that the world does not know the Christian. "On this account the world does not have an experiential knowledge of us, because it has not come into an experiential knowledge of Him." (Wuest)

### C. THE ULTIMATE REWARD FOR SONSHIP IS NOT YET REVEALED, BUT WILL BE REVEALED WHEN CHRIST COMES AGAIN. (v. 2)

"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." (I Cor. 2:9)

We will be with Christ and like Christ, but for the details of what this will mean, we must be content to wait.

Jesus, these eyes have never seen  
That radiant form of Thine;  
The veil of sense hangs dark between  
Thy blessed face and mine.

I see Thee not, I hear Thee not,  
Yet art Thou oft with me;  
And earth hath ne'er so dear a spot  
As where I meet with Thee.

Yet though I have not seen, and still  
Must rest in faith alone,  
I love Thee, dearest Lord, and will,  
Unseen but not unknown.

When death these mortal eyes shall seal,  
And still this throbbing heart,  
The rending veil shall Thee reveal  
All glorious as Thou art.

### III. THE BEGOTTEN ONE CONTINUALLY SETS HIS HOPE ON CHRIST, AND THUS CONSTANTLY KEEPS HIMSELF PURE. (v. 3)

Everyone who has the hope of someday seeing and being like Christ "will try to stay pure because Christ is pure." (Living N. T.) It is God's part to cleanse the human heart, but it is man's part to maintain faith and hope in Christ. A maintenance of faith in Christ keeps hope burning alive and results in constant inner cleansing. "And everyone who has this hope continually set on Him is constantly purifying himself just as that One is pure." (3:3 Wuest)

As one said, "Life with Christ is an endless hope; without Him a hopeless end." (Rosell; 150) "A young Christian at the deathbed of an aged saint, said to him, 'Shall I read to you the sweetest verse in the Bible?'. 'Yes'. The young man read the verse of John 14:2. 'In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.' 'No', said the dying man, 'that is not the sweetest verse. Read on'. The young man read on: 'And If I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.' 'That is the sweetest', said the dying man: 'It is not the mansion, it is He, Himself, I want.'" (Rosell. No. 401) The hope of seeing Christ face to face someday is a great incentive for keeping ourselves pure and holy as Christ is pure and holy.

#### IV. THE BEGOTTEN ONE DOES NOT HABITUALLY SIN (3:4-10)

##### A. SIN IS LAWLESSNESS

I John 3:4 says, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." Sin is "an active rebellion against God's will and a violation of His holy law." (Stott) There are other definitions of sin in the Scriptures ("whatsoever is not of faith is sin" - Rms. 14:23b and "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." -James 4:17). But this definition of sin in John ("sin is lawlessness") "is the clearest and most revealing". (Stott; pg. 122) "The statement 'sin is lawlessness' so identifies the two as to render them interchangeable terms. Wherever one of them is read, it is possible to substitute the other." (Stott; 122) This verse says: "Everyone who habitually sins, also habitually commits lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness." (v. 4 Wuest)

##### B. THE PURPOSE FOR CHRIST'S FIRST COMING WAS TO TAKE AWAY OUR SINS. (3:5)

"And you know that He (emphatic with special emphasis) became a man so that He could take away our sins, and that there is no sin in Him, no missing of God's will at any time in any way." (v. 5 Living N. T.)

"Lady Huntingdon was trying to lead a man to Christ. To her urgent entreaties he answered: 'Oh! it is of no use! I am lost! I am lost!' 'Thank God for that!' said she. 'Why?' exclaimed the man in astonishment. 'Because', said Lady Huntingdon, 'Christ came to save the lost. He is just the one who can save you.'" (Rosell: No 97)

"Some years ago in the typically explosive style of modern youth, a young man left his home. Father and mother wept, but he laughed their pleas aside and strode off to have his own way. His way led him to sin and each year found him increasingly broken and despondent until he was ashamed to write a letter to his loved ones. A score of years later he climbed out of a box car one morning to find himself in the village where he had been reared. His heart quickened to think that he was near his farm home but he suddenly saddened at the thought that surely his parents would not allow him to return broken and sinful to their door. Unable to leave the village without at least making an effort to see his mother, he scribbled a card in the familiar little post office and sent it R.F.D. to the farm a few miles out of town. It read, 'Dear Mom, I wouldn't blame you if you would not forgive me, but if you still love me and can forgive me hang a sheet on the clothes line and I'll be passing

by in the next few days. If you and Dad can't forgive me, never mind. I will not bother you again.' The next day he jumped aboard the slow train that made its way through the hills crossing the corner of his father's farm. Rounding the last hill he recognized the familiar cottage, and saw - not one sheet but EVERY CLOTHES LINE COVERED WITH SHEETS and pillow cases! Like a school boy he ran across the fields to the arms of a mother who would ALWAYS forgive. God is like that!" (Rosell; No 393)

As someone said, "When God pardons, He consigns the offense to everlasting forgetfulness." (Rosell; No 98)

C. THE WAY TO KEEP FROM HABITUALLY SINNING IS TO CONSTANTLY ABIDE IN CHRIST.  
(3:6,7)

Everyone who is constantly abiding in Christ is not habitually sinning. Those who are habitually sinning do not have a present, up-to-date, and victorious relationship with Christ. They do not have a present, acceptable standing before God. It could be that such individuals have never experientially known Christ, or it could be that the hearts of such people have become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, after once knowing Christ. The point is this; Those who are presently practicing sin do not presently know God. Such individuals are not abiding in Christ. Failure to abide in Christ is the cause of habitual sinning.

A Christian is one who is like Christ. The character of Christ's life was sinless. The pattern of the Christian's life too will be sinless. I emphasize the word 'pattern'. The Christian norm is never to sin, and by John's definition of sin we mean 'going against God's holy law'. John wrote earlier in his letter: I Jn. 2:1: "My little children, these things I am writing to you in order that you may not commit an act of sin." Habitual sinning is out of the question for a Christian. And John makes it clear that a Christian need never to commit even a single act of willful transgression against a known law of God. However, John makes it clear that it is possible to be a Christian and still commit isolated acts of sin. I John 2:2 says, "And if anyone commits an act of sin, One who pleads our cause we constantly have facing the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous One." (Wuest) So a Christian is one who does not habitually sin (that is, practice sin); however, a Christian may and sometimes does commit an isolated act of sin. Those isolated sins of course must be immediately confessed to God. A Christian is one, then, whose 'pattern' of life is sinless, but whose every detailed action may not be sinless.

The Christian who constantly abides in Christ will be delivered from a life of habitual sinning. "Sin and Christ are irreconcilably at enmity with each other. Christ in His sinless Person and saving work is fundamentally opposed to it." (Stott; 123)

D. A PERSON IS KNOWN AND BEST DESCRIBED BY HIS CHARACTER (3:8-10)

Wrote John, "But if you keep on sinning, it shows that you belong to Satan, who since he first began to sin has kept steadily at it. But the Son of God came to destroy these works of the devil. The person who has been born into God's family does not make a practice of sinning, because now God's life is in him; so he can't keep on sinning, for this new life has been born into him and controls him - he has been born again. So now we can tell who is a child of God and who belongs to Satan. Whoever is living a life of sin and doesn't love his brother shows that he is not in God's family". (I Jn. 3:8-10)

The one who habitually practices righteousness is of God; the one who habitually sins is of the Devil. Jesus said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." (Mt. 7:20) "Our parentage is either divine or diabolical.... In the intimate, spiritual sense, God is not the Father of all men, and all men are not His children." (Stott; 128)

As long as one appropriates the Nature of Christ, it is impossible to practice sin. (v. 9).

It is the practice of righteousness that best identifies a person as being born of God. "The heretics appear to have indulged in the subtly perverse reasoning that somehow you could 'be' righteous without necessarily bothering to 'practice' righteousness. John roundly denies the possibility. 'Doing is the test of 'Being' (Law)." (Stott; pg. 124)

Concretely defined, the righteousness which the Christian is to 'practice' is the righteousness of love. "Love is righteousness in relationship to others." (Plummer) In the next paragraph of his letter, John describes this love.

Note verse 8. The characteristic work of the devil is to sin (continuous present tense), but the work of the Son of God is to save.

Christ came decisively, completely, and once-and-for-all to destroy (aorist) the works of the devil. Those works include: (1) morally - enticement to sin; (2) physically - infliction of disease, (3) intellectually - seduction into error. (The word 'destroy' can be translated 'loose' - loose the diabolical chains which bound us.)

Because the devil is still doing his destruction in lives, the word 'destroy' must be taken not to mean 'liquidate' or 'annihilate', but rather 'to negative, to deprive of force, to render inoperative, to conquer and to overthrow' (Stott). The devil is still busy doing his wicked works, but he has been defeated and in Christ we can escape from his tyranny." (Stott; 125)

(Application)

Through Christ's death the power of God is made available to break the chains of sin in your life; have you availed yourself of that power? Do you have chains of sin or chains of bad habits which are enslaving you? If so, Christ has the power to loose you from those chains! You don't have the power to deliver yourself, but Christ does have that power! However, you must let Christ release His power in your life. That chain may be a moral chain, or a physical chain, or an intellectual chain. The whole purpose for Christ's coming was to release you from your bondage - to destroy the works of Satan and to break the chains that bind you!

In this whole section (3:4-10) "John is arguing rather the incongruity than the impossibility of sin in the Christian" (as shown by the continuous tenses - signifying habitual practice of sin). (Stott, 126, 127) "If even isolated sins are so incongruous, what is utterly impossible is persistence in sin, 'a character, a prevailing habit, and not primarily an act.'" (Westcott)." (Stott; 127)

#### CONCLUSION:

"If Christ appeared first both 'to take away our sins' and to 'destroy the works of the devil', and if, when He appears a second time, 'we shall see him' and, in consequence, 'we shall be like him', how can we go on living in sin? To do so is to deny the purpose of His two appearings. If we would be loyal to His first coming and ready for His second, we must purify ourselves, as He is pure. By so doing we shall give evidence of our birth of God." (Stott; pg 129)

## Chapter 13

### Character of A Christian - Born of God

#### Discussion:

1. Give your explanation of the following statement: "Holiness in the Christian is not an inherent quality, but a derived quality."
2. Who is the source, and what is the strong motivation for righteous living, according to I John 2:28?
3. What is one of the strongest evidences that one has been truly "born again", according to I John 2:29? Give some thought to the following statement by John Stott: "The child exhibits the parent's character because he shares the parent's nature."
4. What difference should a strong belief in the immanent second coming of Jesus make in the way one lives his life and in the way in which one declares God's truth to others?
5. Why should the fact that Christians are called "children of God" cause such wonderment and amazement? (I John 3:1). According to I John 3:1, should a "born again" person be surprised if he finds that some of his friends alienate him?
6. What future destiny can true believers anticipate when Christ appears the second time, according to I John 3:2? (Note I Corinthians 2:9)
7. Give your interpretation of the following statement: "A maintenance of faith in Christ keeps hope burning alive and results in constant inner cleansing." (Note I John 3:3)
8. What is John's definition of sin, and how does John's definition differ from Paul's and James' definition of sin? (Note I John 3:4; Romans 14:23; James 4:17). Do you believe that John's definition of sin is the clearest and the most concise definition of sin which can be found in the New Testament? According to I John 3:4, is it the occasional sin or the habitual practice of sin that constitutes one as "lawless"?

9. What was the main purpose for which Christ came to Earth to become a man, according to I John 3:5? (Note Romans 5:6; I Timothy 1:15; Mark 2:17). Give your comments on the following statements:
- "There is no sin stain so deep, but what Jesus' blood goes deeper yet!"
- "Come, and He will give you rest;  
Trust Him for His word is plain;  
He will take the sinfulest,  
Christ receiveth sinful men."
- "Christ receiveth sinful men,  
Even me with all my sin,  
Purged from every spot and stain,  
Heaven with Him I enter in."
- "Sing it o'er and o'er again  
Christ receiveth sinful men;  
Make the message clear and plain;  
Christ receiveth sinful men."
10. According to I John 3:6,7, what would you conclude about a person who claims to know God, in spite of the fact that he is presently practicing sin? From personal observation and from a careful study of scripture, can you conclude that it is possible for a backsliding believer eventually to lose, not only his personal fellowship with God, but his very salvation from God? Is it reasonable and Biblical to conclude that no one who is presently practicing sin ever knew God (in a saving relationship) in the past? Is not the possibility of apostasy taught in the scriptures? (Note Hebrews 3:12; 10:35-39; II Peter 2:20; 3:17; I Timothy 1:19; 4:1).
11. How do you reconcile the teaching of I John 1:7-2:2 and I John 3:4-8? (Be sure to read these verses in modern translations which make distinction between the Greek Tenses).
12. Is it an act of judging, on your part, if you declare to a professing Christian who is at the same time living a life of sin, that he is not a Christian and that he has no right to profess to being a Christian? (Note I John 3:8-10; Matthew 7:1, 15-20)
13. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: "Our parentage is either divine or diabolical. In the intimate, spiritual sense, God is not the Father of all men, and all men are not His children." (Note John 8:39-58, especially John 8:44)
14. According to I John 3:9, is it possible for a person to appropriate the nature of Christ and at the same time make a practice of sinning?

15. Is it possible to "be" righteous without bothering to "practice" righteousness? Is it possible to be "justified" without being "regenerated"? Can there be "positional" righteousness without "actual" righteousness evident in the life of a person who professes to be a Christian? Can one be "reckoned as righteous" by God without, at the same time, one being actually transformed from a practice of sinning? Does not James say that faith without works of righteousness is a "dead" faith? (Note James 2:17-22) Is it not true that "Doing is the test of Being"? (Law)
16. Concretely defined, what is the righteousness which the Christian is to "practice"? Give your comments on the following statement: "Love is righteousness in relationship to others."
17. What are some of the "works of the devil" (I John 3:8) that the Son of God came to destroy? Because it is evident that the devil is continuing to do his diabolical and destructive work in the lives of human beings, how can it be said that Jesus came to earth decisively and once-and-for-all "to destroy the devil's work" (I John 3:8)?
18. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "If we would be loyal to His first coming and ready for His second, we must purify ourselves, as He is pure. By so doing we shall give evidence of our birth of God." In what areas of your life do you need to purify yourself, in order for you better to be prepared for Christ's second coming?



CHAPTER 14

CHARACTER OF A CHRISTIAN - SELF-GIVING LOVE

SUBJECT: CHARACTER OF A CHRISTIAN - Self-giving Love

SCRIPTURE: I John 3:11-24

INTRODUCTION:

How can a true Christian be identified? The Bible offers definite tests to determine whether or not a person is a true Christian. The first test is the moral test - the test of obedience to God's commandments issuing forth in righteous living. This test is emphasized at least two times in the Book of I John: (I John 2:3-6 and later in I John 2:28-3:10). The righteousness that characterizes a Christian is a Christ-like righteousness, a righteousness that is supernatural and divinely imparted. A genuine Christian is one who practices righteousness. I John 3:6 says (in the Greek): "Everyone continually remaining in Him does not practice sin. Everyone practicing sin does not presently see and know Him."

The second test is the social test, or the test of love, as described in I Jn. 2:7-11 and in I Jn. 3:11-24 (which is our Scripture reading for today.)

The third test is the doctrinal test, or the test of belief. Those who deny the incarnation- that is, God come in the flesh - are not of God.

PROPOSITION:

One of the greatest character traits of a Christian is self-giving love. "Love is righteousness in relationships." Righteousness is concretely defined in terms of love. Just as righteousness is a divinely-imparted gift, so love is a divinely-imparted gift. This love can be described in four ways:(1) Personal love, (2) Perfect love, (3) Practical love, (4) Productive love.

I. PERSONAL LOVE (3:11-15)

This love is not abstract, general love for all the world, but personal, individual love for specific persons. "'It is easier to be enthusiastic about Humanity with a capital "H" than it is to love individual men and women, especially those who are uninteresting, exasperating, depraved, or otherwise unattractive. Loving everybody in general may be an excuse for loving nobody in particular' (Lewis)". (Stott; 143)

Some want to do great things for mission fields around the world, (and we should), but they are not on speaking terms with some Christian brother who lives next door to them. Christians may not agree with every viewpoint of fellow Christian brothers (Paul and Barnabus did not and even went their separate ways to work for the Lord), but we must love each brother (Paul and Barnabus continued to love each other). Christian brothers of varying temperaments and interests can still love each other dearly, because of the great mutual interest and possession that both have in Christ and His unifying love.

This personal love will produce righteous works which will be a silent rebuke to the ungodly (v. 12-15). Therefore the ungodly man who is rebuked by such righteousness and love, will hate the loving Christian. "The life of a good man always passes a silent judgment on the life of an evil man. That was the attitude of the wild and loose-living and reckless Alcibiades to Socrates. Socrates was the good man par excellence; Alcibiades was brilliant but erratic and often debauched. He used to say to Socrates: 'Socrates, I hate you, because every time I meet you, you show me what I am.'" (Barclay's I Jn. pg. 101) Hate is the mother of murder. It is the hand that moves the knife to the throat (like Cain did to Abel). "In equating the hater with the murderer, John is not exaggerating, 'for we wish him to perish whom we hate'. (Calvin) So hatred is murder, and it is true to say that whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." (Stott; 142)

We should not marvel (3:13) if the world hates us for what seems to be no apparent reason. The world, like Cain, feels the condemnation of God, and wants to destroy anything that represents God or reminds of God's righteousness. Certainly a Christian's divinely-imparted righteousness reminds one of God. "The hatred of the world for the Christian is still an ever-present phenomenon and it is due to the fact that the worldly man sees in the Christian the condemnation of himself; he sees in the Christian that which he is not, and that which in his heart of hearts he knows he ought to be; and, because he will not change, he seeks to eliminate the man who reminds him of the lost goodness." (Barclay's I Jn. ; pg. 101)

Possession of such personal, perpetual love is the evidence that one has passed from death to life (3:14). The person who continually loves (present tense) has a personal up-to-date relationship with God (is in a condition resulting from having passed out of death into life - perfect tense). "The fact that we are conscious of a love for Christians as Christians is a proof to us that we have entered upon a new life: that we now first truly live. The passage has been made: the new sphere of being has been gained. Life is not future but present." (Westcott; 112)

## II. PERFECT LOVE (3:16a)

This love is perfect for several reasons:

A. Perfect because this love is the divine love of God (agape). It is the highest type of love. It is not a human love, but a divine, self-sacrificing love.

B. Perfect because it cannot be purchased, achieved on the basis of human effort. Romans 5:5 says, "The love of God has been poured out in our hearts and still floods them through the agency of the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (Wuest) For God to make this gift of love available for man, it took the costly sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. "We have come to know by experience the afore-mentioned love, because that One on behalf of us laid down His soul." (v. 16 Wuest)

"It seems to imply not so much the laying down as the laying aside of something like a coat of clothes, the 'divesting oneself of a thing' (Westcott). It is, in fact, used in John 13:4 of Christ laying aside His garments. As Cain has been given as the supreme example of hate, Christ is presented as the supreme example of love. A person's life is his most precious possession. To rob him of it is consequently the greatest sin we can commit against him, which is presumably why the prohibition of murder is the first commandment of the second table of the law. For the same reason, to give one's own life on another's behalf is the greatest possible expression of love for him. This, then is the ultimate contrast: Cain's hatred issued in murder, Christ's love in self-sacrifice." (Stott; pg. 143)

(Qualification:)

Although this love is perfect in Source and quality, it is not perfect in expression, for this love is contained in and expressed through 'an earthen vessel' - cracked and subject to human frailties (weaknesses, mistakes, limitations in body, mistakes in judgment, imperfect actions). (Illustration: A little boy may want only to please his father, but he may make many mistakes in trying to carry out his father's desires)

C. Perfect in Quality, Source (Because from God, but man has need for an unlimited expansion and growth in his capacity for more love.).

## III. PRACTICAL LOVE (3:16b-18)

The chief example and motivation of love is Jesus Christ, who laid down his life for others. Christians too must be willing to lay down their lives for their brethren if necessary. But more usually this divine love means "communicating to another the

outward means of living." The Christian who meets the two following qualifications is put in a position of inescapable responsibility. "First, he must see a brother's need, 'not merely cast a passing glance, but see, long enough to appreciate and understand the circumstances of the case' (Brooke). Secondly, he must himself be better off. If he sees his brother's necessity and has the wherewithal to supply it, he cannot stand idly by." (Stott; 144)

A Christian must possess self-sacrificing love, patterned after Christ's self-giving love. (Illustration: Missionary who gave up money he had saved to buy washing machine, to provide money for literature distribution to pagans. Stated that he had for years used rocks for a wash board and that he could continue to do so.)

What does the phrase 'the goods of the world' mean? "The phrase includes all the endowments which make up our earthly riches, wealth, station, intellect." (Westcott; 114) Whatever you have that can aid your brother in poverty, you must give. This is the great motivation for mission giving! Your brother can be in all kinds of poverty - physical, mental, spiritual poverty. "It has been finely said of a great teacher that 'he was tender to dulness as to all forms of poverty'." (Westcott; 114) What does your brother need that you can supply? Intellectual enhancement? Understanding? Companionship in time of sorrow? Food and clothing to supply his physical needs?

"A rich businessman and a prominent attorney were travelling around the world. They saw many impressive sights, but agreed that something they saw in Korea was most impressive of all. One morning as they walked along a country road in Korea, they saw a boy pulling a plow which was steered by an old man. It amused the attorney so much that he insisted on taking a picture of the scene with his little pocket camera. Later he showed the picture to a missionary in the next village remarking about the peculiar spectacle. 'Yes', said the missionary, 'it seems a very strange way to plow a field, but I happen to know the boy and old man well. They are very poor. However, when the little church was built here in the village, they wanted to contribute something. They has no money. They had not grain to spare and winter was coming on, so they sold their ox and gave the money to the church building fund, and now, minus the valuable animal they have to pull the plow themselves.' The men looked at each other for a moment, then the attorney said, 'But what a stupendous sacrifice! Why did you allow it?' 'They did not feel that way about it. They regarded it as a great joy that they had an ox to give to the Lord's work.'" (Rosell; no. 230)

This love that God gives is the love that Jesus practiced. It is self-giving. "Love is 'the willingness to surrender that which has value for our own life, to enrich the life of another' (Dodd)". (Stott; 143) Wrote James, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." (James 2:14-17) Love is not in word or tongue only but in deed and truth, not in theory but in action, not with mere outward expression but with genuine movement of our whole being.

#### IV. PRODUCTIVE LOVE (3:19-24)

"If the RSV is correct in translating the first phrase of verse 20 'whenever our hearts condemn us', the suggestion seems to be that it may not be either an unusual or an infrequent experience for the Christian's serene assurance to be disturbed. Sometimes the accusations of our 'conscience' will be true accusations, and sometimes they will be false, inspired by 'the accuser of the our brethren' (Rev. 12:10). In either case, the inner voice is not to overcome us." (Stott; 145) Satan is the accuser of the brethren who appears as an angel of light - seeking to produce a condemning conscience in the Christian. Against this darkening, confusing, subtle force stands the powerful and merciful Spirit of God who comforts and stills the accusing voice of Satan.

There is the condemnatory voice of an over-sensitive conscience seeking to

accuse self, when there is no Biblical or objective basis for condemnation. Sometimes this over-sensitive conscience is developed in ones childhood. Children can develop notions and impressions that somethings are wrong when those things which produce guilt feelings are not wrong at all. Such false guilts need to be thrown aside and a new confidence with God and man regained. God is greater than human ideas and notions, and in God's sovereign love and mercy He will calm human doubts and deliver from false guilts.

When the body and mind are physically weary, doubt can easily creep upon one. (Illustration of the depression that Francis Asbury sometimes experienced after a hard meeting.)

The one who experiences the divinely-imparted love can be assured that he is of the Truth, and therefore he can have a tranquil heart. "It is the mind's knowledge by which the heart's doubts may be silenced...Love is the final objective test of our Christian profession, for true love, in the sense of self-sacrifice, is not natural to man in his fallen state. Its existence in any man is evidence of new birth and of the indwelling Spirit, and it shows itself 'in deed'. 'There are actual things we can point to - not things we have professed or felt or imagined or intended, but things that we have done' (Law). If we thus love 'intruth' (18), we may indeed have full assurance in our hearts. 'The fruit of love is confidence' (Westcott)." (Stott, 145, 146)

Are you beset by nagging doubts and feelings of condemnation and guilt? If so, first make sure of the source of your feelings. It could be that Satan is accusing you of things that you are not guilty of at all. The source of your condemnation could be a conscience that has been trained to be over-sensitive concerning some issues. The conscience will tell you what it is trained to tell you. If, for instance, the conscience has been trained hard and long to believe that it is wrong to eat certain kinds of food, then every time you eat those foods you will feel condemned. However, God makes it clear in His Word that all foods are proper to eat and that there is no sin connected with them. (Col. 2:20-23)

"Our conscience is by no means infallible; its condemnation may often be unjust. We can, therefore, appeal from our conscience to God who is greater and more knowledgeable. Indeed, He knows all things, including our secret motives and deepest resolves, and, it is implied, will be more merciful towards us than our own heart. His omniscience should relieve, not terrify, us. So it is knowledge which alone can quieten the condemning heart, our own knowledge of our sincere love for others and supremely God's knowledge of our thoughts and motives. Stronger than any chemical tranquillizer is trust in our all-knowing God." (Stott; 146)

However, if the condemnation which you feel is because of real sin in your life, the Sovereign mercy and love of God is still 'greater than your heart'. God knows your heart and can judge rightly. He is able and ready to forgive and to restore you to warm fellowship with Him if you confess and forsake your sins. So, whatever the source of condemnation - be it false or true - God is greater than the condemnation and can restore the believer to true confidence.

He who experiences God's divinely-imparted love, which frees the heart of condemnation, has a fearless confidence in the face of God the Father.

"Thus the meaning of the whole passage will be: The sense within us of a sincere love of the brethren, which is the sign of God's presence with us, will enable us to stay the accusations of our conscience, whatever they may be, because God, who gives us the love, and so blesses us with His fellowship, is greater than our heart; and He, having perfect knowledge, forgives all on which the heart sadly dwells." (Westcott; 118)

The love-baptized, confident Christian constantly and habitually keeps God's commandments. (3:22-24) "No-one may dare to claim that he abides in Christ and Christ in him unless he is obedient to the three fundamental commandments which John has been expounding, which are belief in Christ, love for the brethren and moral righteousness." (Stott; 151)

Such a Christian who possesses obedient love for God can expect to keep on receiving from God as He keeps on habitually asking God.

The product of love then is confidence - confidence in fearlessly facing God the Father, and confidence in expecting and receiving answers to prayer.

CONCLUSION:

"It may be helpful to summarize the teaching in this passage about hatred and love. Hatred characterizes the world, whose prototype is Cain. It originates in the devil, issues in murder and is evidence of spiritual death. Love characterizes the Church, whose prototype is Christ. It originates in God, issues in self-sacrifice, and is evidence of eternal life." (Stott; 144)

## Chapter 14

### Charater of A Christian - Self-Giving Love

#### Discussion:

1. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "It is easier to be enthusiastic about Humanity with a capital "H" than it is to love individual men and women, especially those who are uninteresting, exasperating, depraved, or otherwise unattractive. Loving everybody in general may be an excuse for loving nobody in particular."
2. Is it possible for fellow Christians to love one another even when they disagree in their viewpoints and when they vary greatly in their temperaments and personalities? Is it proper to say that "love is a decision of the will", with or without accompanying emotions of the heart? Is it possible for one to love a person even though he does not like that person? Why or why not?
3. What explanation can be offered for the fact that sometimes the godless person hates the godly person, even though the latter seeks only to express genuine care and compassion for the former?
4. Is it an exaggeration to equate the hater with the murderer? (I John 3:15) Why or why not?
5. According to I John 3:24, what is one of the strongest proofs that a person has truly become a Christian, has truly entered upon a new life?
6. In what way can a Christian's love be considered "perfect"?
7. What contrast is drawn between Cain and Christ, in terms of these two persons' attitudes and actions towards others? (Note I John 3:11-16)
8. Cite evidence from your personal experiences and observations and from the Holy Scriptures to document the truth of the following statement: "Although this love is perfect in source and in quality, it is not perfect in expression, for this love is contained in and expressed through 'an earthly vessel' - 'cracked' and subject to human frailties." (Note II Corinthians 4:7). Throughout one's entire life, will there continue to be a need for greater development in one's capacity to love? (Note the difference between "purity" and "maturity" and between "quality" and "quantity" as these terms relate to one's initial Christian experiences and to one's continuing spiritual developments).

9. According to I John 3:16, what, practically, does Christian love mean?
10. In terms of a Christian's social relationships, what two qualifications must exist to put a believer in a position of inescapable responsibility to his fellow human being? (Note I John 3:17)
11. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "A Christian must possess self-sacrificing love, patterned after Christ's self-giving love." In light of the physical and spiritual needs of the world's poor people, is it morally right for a Christian to live luxuriously? What Biblical evidence can you cite to support the following statement: "Christians are to live like the King, not like a king." (Note Isaiah 58:7; Luke 12:33; Matthew 8:20; Acts 10:36-38; Hebrews 13:16; I John 3:17,18; James 2:14-17; Ephesians 4:28) Is a distinctively "Christian life-style" always "a simple life-style"? What does it mean to you to live "a simple life-style"?
12. What "needs" does your "brother" have, of which you are aware and which you have the ability to help meet? (I John 3:17) What benefit, according to I John 3:18-20, does the knowledge that one has practiced compassionate actions in his life, bring to him during times when his conscience sends strange messages of condemnation to his heart? What is meant by the statement: "The fruit of love is confidence"?
13. How do you respond or react to the following definition of "love"? - "Love is the willingness to surrender that which has value for our own life, to enrich the life of another."
14. How do you distinguish between "real guilt" and "false guilt", "legitimate" feelings and "illegitimate feelings" of condemnation? What are some of the possible sources of "false guilt" and illegitimate feelings of condemnation? What is the scriptural answer for dealing with the accusations of one's conscience? (I John 3:19-20)
15. To what extent is one's conscience a "reliable guide" in determining the "rightness" or the "wrongness" of one's actions and attitudes? Who is greater than one's conscience? Why should God's omniscience relieve, rather than terrify, a believer - even during times when a believer has incurred feelings of guilt and condemnation because of violations of God's known laws or because of neglect in moral duty?

16. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "No one may dare to claim that he abides in Christ and Christ in him unless he is obedient to the three fundamental commandments which John has been expounding, which are belief in Christ, love for the brethren and moral righteousness."



CHAPTER 15

TESTING SPIRITS

SUBJECT: TESTING SPIRITS

SCRIPTURE: I John 4:1-6

INTRODUCTION:

What are the objective tests to determine whether or not a person is really a Christian? St. John states three main tests to apply: (1) Moral Test - Obedience, (2) Social Test - Love, (3) Doctrinal Test - Belief. These tests recur at least three times throughout the Book of I John. Like a revolving staircase, these tests are applied on a different level.

PROPOSITION:

Today let us again look at the doctrinal test - the test of belief. The doctrinal test to apply to all who teach is the test of the Incarnation. John points out (1) The Need for Testing Spirits, (2) The Method for Testing Spirits, (3) The results of Testing Spirits.

I. NEED FOR TESTING SPIRITS (v. 1)

Why is there a need for testing spirits? Simply, because many false prophets are gone out into the world. The scene of their false teaching and deception is the world of men. There is a battleground between good and evil and man's mind and heart is the scene of that battle. The activity of Satan is continual (as shown by the perfect tense.)

The Christian faith is not an indiscriminate faith. Rather, "true faith examines its object before reposing confidence in it." (Stott)

Satan can perform miracles as well as God. Satan counterfeits the work of God. The magicians in Egypt could perform some of the plagues, but were unable to perform all. "Pharaoh in turn called in sages and magicians and they, the scribes of Egypt, did the same by their secret formulas." (Ex 7:11) They mimicked the work of God.

Rev. 13:12-15 shows that the 'False Prophet' who will serve the Antichrist during the Tribulation is given power by Satan to perform great miracles. (Read this passage)

Satan appears as "an angel of light", posing as a worker of good. Satan can perform what appears to be deeds of great goodness. Satan uses many religions for his own purposes. Modernism in many churches today is simply a system of good works of charity, but works that are done from a motive of human pride rather than humility and honor to Christ. Modernism denies the true lordship and godship of Jesus Christ; thus, however good its works appear to be, modernism is an instrument of Satan.

Human teachers and religious teachings must be carefully examined, for Satan works through religion and impersonates himself in so-called beneficial systems. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." (I Jn. 4:1)

II. METHOD FOR TESTING SPIRITS (v. 2,3,5,6)

A. If a Teaching or a Teacher confesses and adheres to the Incarnation, the teaching and teacher are of God. (v. 2,3).

"Confesseth - openly and boldly acknowledges the Person of the Incarnate Saviour and not only the fact of the Incarnation." (Westcott; pg. 141) "The confession is that the man Jesus of Nazareth is Himself none other than the incarnate Christ or Son.... The perfect tense, come (eleluthota) compared with the present tense in 2 John 7 (erchomenon), seems to emphasize that the flesh assumed by the Son of God in the incarnation has become His permanent possession. Far from coming upon Jesus at the baptism and leaving Him before the cross, the Christ actually came in one flesh and has never laid it aside....The fundamental Christian doctrine which can never be compromised is the eternal divine-human Person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." (Stott;154)

(Show doctrines and religions which deny the Incarnation and deity of Jesus) - "No system can be tolerated, however loud its claims or learned its adherents, if it denies that Jesus is the Christ come in the flesh." (Stott)

There are several modern-day Churches that deny the Divine-Human Person of Jesus Christ.

1. UNITARIANISM - "They think of Jesus as merely a man, an exceptional man like Moses and Buddha, but no more than a man. In their view Jesus' main contribution was as a teacher."

2. Jehovah's Witnesses - "The Witnesses teach that Christ is not equal to God, but that He was created by God. For them, Jehovah is the only Saviour. When Christ lived in heaven, they say, He was known as the angel Michael. When Christ came to earth, He was stripped of his angelic nature and became only a man. So it was only as a man that Jesus died on the cross and a man's death is not enough to atone for the sins of the world. The Witnesses also teach that Jesus was not bodily resurrected, but only as a spirit. However, like others who have said this, the Witnesses cannot explain what happened to Christ's body." (139; So What's The Difference by Ridenour)

3. Christian Science - Mrs. Eddy's "problem was to prove that Jesus was not a real man, but only a spirit. To do this, she drew an artificial distinction between the two parts of His name, Jesus (His personal name) and Christ (His official name). She writes, 'The spiritual Christ was infallible; Jesus, as material manhood, was not Christ.' 'As a drop of water is one with the ocean, a ray of light one with the sun, even so God and man, Father and son, are one in being.' In other words, Jesus is no different from other men because they are all part of God, This, of course, denies the deity of Christ....Mrs. Eddy tried to solve the problem of the empty tomb like the Gnostics, who taught that Jesus was only a spirit, never a man, so he didn't really die nor rise from the dead. The apostle John wrote his gospel to refute the Gnostics and it is also an effective answer for Christian Science." (Ibid; 148, 149)

4. Mormonism - "Mormons have an unbiblical view of the doctrine of God. They claim that God is not a spirit, but is of material substance. They also say that there are many gods (polytheism) and that men are gods. In his Journal of Discourses, Joseph Smith wrote, 'God himself was once as we are now and is an exalted man...' Smith also wrote in Doctrine and Covenants, 'The father had a body of flesh and bone as tangible as man's....' Mormons say that our Savior was produced, not by a direct act of the Holy Spirit, but by actual sexual relations between a resurrected Adam-god and Mary. They further assert that the wedding Jesus attended in Cana where He turned water into wine was His own. Brigham Young wrote that Jesus married Lazarus' sisters, Mary and Martha, that day - and that He also married Mary Magdalene." (Ibid; 161, 164)

B. Another test to determine whether a message is from God "is whether it is accepted by Christians and rejected by non-Christians." (Stott; 158) (v. 5,6)

"There is a certain affinity between God's Word and God's people. Jesus had taught that His sheep hear His voice (Jn. x. 4,5,8,16,26,27), that everyone who is of the truth listens to His witness to the truth (Jn. xviii.37), and that 'he who is of God hears the words of God' (Jn. viii.47,Rsv). In the same way John asserts that since we are of God (6) and ye are of God (4), you listen to us. There is a correspondence between message and hearers. The Spirit who is in you (4) enables you to discern His own voice speaking through us (2). So you can recognize God's Word because God's people listen to it, just as you can recognize God's people because they listen to God's Word." (Stott; 138)

"The man whose source and origin is God will welcome the truth; the man whose source and origin is the world will reject the truth. When we come to think of it, that is an obvious truth. How can a man whose watchword is competition even begin to understand an ethic whose key-note is service? How can a man whose aim is the exaltation of the self, who believes in the survival of the fittest, and who holds that the weakest must go to the wall, even begin to understand a teaching whose principle for living is love? How can a man who believes that this is the only world, and that, therefore, material things are the only things which matter, even begin to understand a life which is lived in the light of eternity, and where it is the unseen things which are the greatest values in life?" (Bar. I Jn. 113)

### III. RESULT OF TESTING SPIRITS (v. 4)

"You have your source and origin in God, dear children, and you have won the victory over them, because that power which is in you is greater than the power which is in the world." (I Jn. 4:4 Barclay)

"You have not succumbed to their blandishments or believed their lies." (Stott; 157)

Have overcome - stand presently victorious (perfect tense) because of the exceeding power of Christ which works within.

Satan is strong but the Holy Spirit in the believer is much stronger. Through the Holy Spirit's illumination, the believer is enabled to detect falsehood and to overcome error.

"In this conflict the virtue of their Master's Victory (Jn. 16:33) is granted to them. They have to claim the fruits of a triumph which has been already gained." (Westcott, 144)

"He that is in you: - "The Church appears to be set over against the world; so that here the thought is of the body, and not of the individual." (Westcott; 144)

The 'world' is simply "the moral characteristics of the order, as separated from God." (Westcott; 144)

### CONCLUSION:

Don't believe everything you see or hear, regardless of how religious or spectacular, or miraculous it may be or claim to be. There are many false prophets who are actively and continuously working within the sphere of society and in the hearts and minds of many people.

(1) Does the professed religious teacher believe in the divine-human Christ (Incarnation) and (2) Is the proposed message from God accepted by the company of true Christians and rejected by non-Christians?

The result of carefully and prayerfully relying on the Holy Spirit is total victory - overcoming the false prophets.

Do not accept teaching and preaching gullibly, regardless of how persuasive and miraculous the leader claims to be. Test the spirits, and as you do, the Holy Spirit will enable you to detect false prophets and false prophecy. The warning against the false prophet in the O. T. days was very serious (Deut. 13:1-5) God help us to watch and pray.

## Chapter 15

### Testing Spirits

#### Discussion:

1. According to I John 4:1, why is there a need for "testing spirits"?
2. Cite scriptural evidence to prove the claim that Satan and Satan's servants are able to perform miracles as well as God, in the attempts to counterfeit God's works and in the attempt to deceive human beings. (Note Exodus 7:11; Matthew 7:21-23; 24:23-26; Mark 13:21-23; I Timothy 4:1-2; II Timothy 3:12-13; I John 2:126; II Corinthians 11:13-15)
3. What does it mean to acknowledge that "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh"? (I John 4:2)
4. What evidence is there, from a careful study of scripture, to say that Jesus Christ "actually came in one flesh and has never laid it aside" (Stott)? If this statement is true, does this mean that Jesus forever bears the marks (wounds) of His sacrificial death on His resurrected body in Heaven, demonstrating His continuing and eternal identification with humanity?
5. Is the doctrine of the incarnation a "fundamental doctrine" that one must believe if he is to be a Christian, or is it a "secondary doctrine" which is debatable among sincere Christians? Do you agree with the following statement: "The fundamental Christian doctrine which can never be compromised is the eternal divine-human Person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." (Stott)
6. Tell how you react to the following statement: "No system can be tolerated, however loud its claims or learned its adherents, if it denies that Jesus is the Christ come in the flesh." (Stott)
7. What is meant by the phrase: "There's a certain affinity between God's word and God's people"? (Note I John 4:5,6) What can be said about a person who resists the teaching of those who declare that Jesus is the co-eternal, co-equal Son of God who became a man and who, as the sinless divine-human Person, died on a cross and bodily arose again from the dead? According to I John 4:3, is it judgmentalism to call a person an "antichrist" if he denies the doctrine of the incarnation?

8. Whose presence is in the mind and heart of the believer to enable the believer to discern falsehood and to overcome the power and the deception of Satan? (Note I John 4:4) Do Christians work for a victory or from a victory? Whose "victory" can Christians identify with, and enjoy the benefits from? (Note John 16:33)
9. What, according to the scriptures, were some of the characteristics of a false prophet, and how was a false prophet to be punished? (Note Deuteronomy 13:1-5)
10. Do you agree with the following statement? "Don't believe everything you see or hear, regardless of how religious, or spectacular, or miraculous it may be or claim to be." What is the difference between being "gullible" and "teachable", between being "judgmental" and "discerning"?

CHAPTER 16

LET BROTHERLY LOVE PREVAIL!

SUBJECT: LET BROTHERLY LOVE PREVAIL!

SCRIPTURE: I John 4:7-21

INTRODUCTION:

The pagans during the early days of Christianity were convinced of the reality of Christianity because of the love which Christians had for one another. Declared the pagans concerning the Christians, "Behold how they love one another!" Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye love one another."

PROPOSITION:

Love is the authenticating proof that Christianity is real. The Bible says, "If I have the gift of foretelling the future and hold in my mind not only all human knowledge but the very secrets of God, and if I also have that absolute faith which can move mountains, but have no love, I amount to nothing at all." (I Cor. 13:2 Phillips) If love is so important, and is an absolute necessity in my life, than I must seek to find and to practice this love.

I. MOTIVATION FOR BROTHERLY LOVE (Why Love?)

A. God's very Nature is Love and the Origin of all true love is God. Wrote John, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." (I Jn. 4:7) "Others had said, 'God loves', but no one had ever said: 'God is love' in His essential nature and cannot do an unloving thing without violating His own nature." (Word Became Flesh; Jones; pg. 91)

The Nature of Reality is love, and, therefore to go against love is to go against reality. If the very Nature of the Creator is love, then it stands to reason that the nature of the creature ought to be love.

"Dr. Carl Menninger, head of perhaps the outstanding psychiatric center of American, in Topeka, Kansas, wrote a book on 'Love Against Hate'. He took the position that love is the constructive element - love builds up and hate tears down. When he came to the conclusion that people are in his institution because they had not loved or been loved, it was an epoch in his thinking. For psychiatry had been founded on the idea that insight is the cure-all for human personality problems. Give the patient insight as to his troubles, and he is automatically cured. But mental institutions are filled with people who have insight as to what is the matter with them, but they are still there...When Dr. Menninger gained this new insight, he called his staff together and said in essence: These people are here because they haven't loved or been loved. That is their disease. All else is symptom. So we will have to love them into loving, will have to make all our contacts with the patients love contacts, from the top psychiatrist to the caretaker. If you go in to change an electric light bulb in a patient's room, you must make your contacts love contacts. They tried it for six months, and found at the end of that time that the period of hospitalization had been cut in half. The patients were getting well in half the time it took under the old insight technique. Love was the key." (Word Became Flesh; Jones; pg. 92, 93) Dr. Smiley Blanton, another psychiatrist, says that "after sitting for forty years in my office and dealing with disrupted people I've come to the conclusion that they are disrupted because they haven't loved or been loved." (Ibid; 94)

"In the Bellevue Hospital in New York they found that babies, though given scientific care and feeding, died to the tune of 32 per cent the first year of a minor ailment. They decided that the babies were getting everything except love. So they sent out a call for 'Love Volunteers' - women who would come in and love babies so many hours a day. Hundreds of women volunteered...The superintendent reporting on results said, 'We could no more do without these 'love volunteers' than we could do without penicillin. Here is a vitamin, love, without which babies die to the tune of 32 per cent the first year of a minor ailment and 22 percent are so damaged that they must be classed as idiots.'" (Ibid; 94)

Man is made in the image of God, and if "God is love", then man is made to love and to be loved. "As it has been said, 'A saint is a man in whom Christ lives again', and the best demonstration of God comes not from argument, but from a life of love. In such a life God is seen as He is seen nowhere else." (Bar. I Jn. pg. 115)

B. God manifested His love perfectly by sending His Son to die for mankind. By Christ's coming God accomplished two things: (1) Made possible the gift of love to man. READ Verses 9, 10, 14. (2) Showed to man concretely the meaning of love in terms of active self-giving. "If God loved us so much, we ought to love one another." (v. 11) "He loved us and sent His Son to rescue us, not because we are in any sense lovable, but because He is love. So the greatness of His love is seen in the costliness of His self-sacrifice for the wholly undeserving (Romans 5:7,8) A clearer manifestation of God's love could not be imagined." "No-one who has been to the cross and seen God's immeasurable and unmerited love displayed there can go back to a life of selfishness." (Stott; 163)

(The love that is described here is 'agape' love which is divine love. Our love has a supernatural source. "Agape is self-sacrifice, the seeking of another's positive good at one's own cost, and a greater self-giving than God's gift of His Son there has never been, nor could be." (Stott; pg. 162) Greatest possible love - The fact of the Incarnation itself is most amazing (God become a man), but the greater manifestation of love than even that is seen in Christ's death (atonement) whereby He becomes our Saviour. Because He is our Saviour, it shows that we are sinners. "Men need to be saved from themselves; they need to be saved from the habits which have become their fetters; they need to be saved from their temptations; they need to be saved from their fears and their anxieties; they need to be saved from their own follies and their own mistakes. In every case Jesus brings men salvation." (Bar. I Jn. 120)

"There was a famous evangelist and preacher called Brownlow North. He too was a changed man and in his early days he had lived a life that was anything but Christian. Once, just before he was to enter the pulpit to preach in a church in Aberdeen, he received a letter. This letter informed him that its writer had evidence of some disgraceful thing which Brownlow North had done before he became a Christian; and it went on to say that the writer proposed to interrupt the service and to tell the whole congregation of that sin if Brownlow North preached. Brownlow North took the letter into the pulpit; he read it to the congregation; he told of the thing that once he had done; and then he told them that the charge was absolutely true but that Christ had changed him and that Christ could do the same for them." (Bar. Acts; pg. 193)

## II. MEANING OF BROTHERLY LOVE (What is Love?)

A. The practice of love is evidence that one has been born of God and knows God. The opposite is also true. "Everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." (I Jn. 4:7b, 8)

B. "Our love for one another is evidence of God's indwelling, and wonderful presence." "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." (I Jn. 4:12)

C. God's love in us is brought to completion. "God's love for us is perfected only when it is reproduced in us." (Stott; 164) Just as a size 7 glove is made for a size 7 hand, so God's love is perfectly made for man. "If we habitually are loving one another, God in us is abiding, and His love has been brought to its fullness in us and exists in that state of fullness." (v. 12 Wuest)

### III. METHOD OF BROTHERLY LOVE (How to Realize Love?)

A. Conversion to Christ and abiding in Christ is made possible through God's gift of the Holy Spirit. "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." (4:13) The historic (Christ's purchased gift through death on the cross) must become the experiential (through ministry of the Holy Spirit). "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." (Romans 5:5)

B. "The only way to love (v.16), as the only way to believe (v. 15), is by dwelling in God and God in us." (Stott; pg. 168) "It is the divine indwelling which alone makes possible both belief and love." (Ibid;) Believing (v. 15) and loving (v. 16) are only made possible because of the mission of the Son (v. 14) and because of the witness of the Spirit (v. 13). "There is objective historical evidence in the sending of the Son both of His deity (which we have seen, 14) and of the Father's love (which we have known and believed, 16). But even this is insufficient. Without the Holy Spirit our minds are dark and our hearts cold. Only the Holy Spirit can enlighten our minds to believe in Jesus and warm our hearts to love God and each other. So believing and loving are evidence that His Spirit is at work within us." (Stott; 168)

### IV. MEASURE OF BROTHERLY LOVE (How Much Love?)

A. Love Must Be Perfected. (READ verses 17-19) Phillips translates these verses this way: "So our love for him grows more and more, filling us with complete confidence for the day when he shall judge all men - for we realize that our life in this world is actually his life lived in us. Love contains no fear - indeed fully developed love expels every particle of fear, for fear always contains some of the torture of feeling guilty. This means that the man who lives in fear has not yet had his love perfected." (v. 17-19)

"John is not suggesting that any Christian's love could in this life be flawlessly perfect, but rather developed and mature, set fixedly upon God." (Stott; 168) What are the signs of perfect love?

1. Presence of Confidence - "It is grounded upon the fact that as he is (i.e. Christ), so are we in this world. Jesus is God's beloved Son, in whom He is well pleased; we too are God's children and the objects of His favour. If He called and calls God 'Father', so may we. We are 'accepted in the beloved' (Eph. 1:6); we can share His confidence towards God." (Stott; 169)

2. Absence of Fear. "The love that spells confidence banishes fear...Fear introduces the category of punishment, which is quite alien to God's forgiven children who love Him...to God's beloved children, we cease to be afraid of Him. It is evident, therefore that he that feareth is not made perfect in love." (Stott; 169, 170)

"Egerton Young was the first missionary to the Red Indians. In Saskatchewan he went out to find them and he told them of the love of God, the Father. To the Indians it was like a new revelation. When the missionary had told his message, an old chief said: 'When you spoke of the great Spirit just now, did I hear you say, "Our Father"?' 'Yes', said Egerton Young. 'That is very new and sweet to me', said the chief. 'We never thought of the great Spirit as Father. We heard Him in the thunder; we saw Him in the lightning, the tempest and the blizzard, and we were afraid. So when you tell us that the great Spirit is our Father, that is very beautiful to us.' The old man paused, and then he went on, as a glimpse of glory suddenly shone on him. 'Missionary, did you say that the great Spirit is your Father?' 'Yes', said the missionary. 'And', said the old chief, like a man on whom a dawn of joy had burst, 'you and I are brothers!' The only possible unity for men is in their common sonship with God." (Bar. John; v. 2; pg. 74, 75) The only possible source of confidence which banishes fear is in the fact that God is truly a loving Father, and that as Jesus is (an object of God's special love), so we too are objects of God's love.

B. Love Must Be Proved. (Read verses 20-21)

"A bell is not a bell til you ring it,  
A song is not a song til you sing it.  
Love in your heart is not put there to stay  
Love is not love til you give it away."

(Ser. Builder; Dec. 1971; pg. 14)

(Illustration of Arab and Jew)

CONCLUSION:

Jesus came to be our Saviour. Is He your personal Saviour? If not, why not give your heart to him just now. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."

Jesus came to perfect our love, through His perfect sacrifice. This love we cannot earn, achieve humanly with our own resources, for this love is divine in origin and is a gift to be given to receptive hearts. If you have a terrifying fear of God, come to Him for His gift of love.

Why should I love? (1) Because God's nature is love, (2) Because not to love is to go against reality, (3) Because I am made to function in love. When I don't love, I am going against my own physical, psychological, social, and spiritual constitution, (4) Because God so loved that He sent His Son to die for my sins, thus making it possible for me to experience divine love. Through his death I am provided an example that the way of self-sacrifice is the way to live, (5) Because the Holy Spirit is given to enable me to love, if I accept His empowering ministry, (6) Because when I love, I am closest to God and best express the nature and character of God within the sphere of time.

## Chapter 16

### Let Brotherly Love Prevail

#### Discussion:

1. According to I Corinthians 13, what are some of the distinguishing marks of Christian love? Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Love is the authenticating proof that Christianity is real."
2. Do you agree with E. Stanley Jones that God in His essential nature is love and that God cannot do an unloving thing without violating His own nature? How do you reconcile God's love with God's wrath? Is God's wrath and judgment simply one manifestation of God's holy love?
3. What evidence can you cite from personal experience, scientific studies, or scriptural revelation to document the following statement: "Man is made to love and to be loved. Only when man is giving and receiving love is man truly healthy - physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually."
4. How was God's love most perfectly manifested and revealed to mankind, according to I John 4:9? (Note Romans 5:7,8)
5. Because Jesus' relationship to mankind is that of Saviour to sinner, from what specifically does Jesus save man?
6. What does the practice of love in the life of a person prove to himself, to God, and to others? (Note I John 4:7,8,12)
7. How is a person enabled to experience God's love, according to I John 4:13? (Note Romans 5:5) What is the relationship between the Son and the Holy Spirit as these two persons of the Godhead work together to enable man to believe correctly and to love deeply? (I John 4:13-16)
8. According to I John 4:17-19, what does the presence of fear in a believer's life evidence?
9. Is it too bold of an assertion to say that each of us - as believers - are the objects of God's special favor, and that therefore we can share Jesus' confidence towards God? (Note Ephesians 1:6)

10. Do you agree with the following statement: "The only possible source of confidence which banishes fear is in the fact that God is truly a loving Father, and that as Jesus is an object of God's special love, so we too are objects of God's love."
11. According to I John 4:20-21, why is it illogical and contradictory for one to claim to love God while he, at the same time, is entertaining feelings of bitterness towards a fellow human being?
12. Is love a "feeling" or is love an "action"? What is your response to the following poem? -  
"A bell is not a bell till you ring it,  
A song is not a song till you sing it.  
Love in your heart is not put there to stay,  
Love is not love till you give it away."
13. From a study of I John 4:7-21, give at least six reasons why a person should practice love.



CHAPTER 17

THE VICTORIOUS LIFE

SUBJECT: THE VICTORIOUS LIFE!

SCRIPTURE: I John 5:1-12

INTRODUCTION:

Plagued with inner guilt, fears, frustrations, loneliness, and defeat, modern-day man is asking if there is such a thing as a meaningful and peaceful way of life. This age could well be called the age of despair. Many noted philosophers are declaring that there is no way out - that there is 'No Exit' from the modern-day dilemma. One such philosopher conceived the modern predicament of man like a man who is on the surface of ice on a small lake. Surrounding the lake is vertical cliffs, allowing no way for man to escape from the lake. The man on the surface of the ice is in a frenzy and deeply worried, for he knows soon that the ice will melt and he will break through the ice and perish. Knowing that there is no way to escape his ultimate fate, he is 'eating, drinking, and attempting to be merry' - indulging his flesh in every conceivable lust, and living carelessly, aimlessly, and seeking to forget about his ultimate fate.

Man is hopelessly seeking to find meaning to the transitory toys and joys of sensualism, and materialism, but underneath the surface there is a deep restlessness, and futility. Said Philosopher Bertrand Russell, "Brief and powerless is man's life. On him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way." Well known is Mencken's impious creed: "The universe, gigantic wheel in rapid revolution; man, a sick fly taking a dizzy ride on the rim thereof; religion, the fly's delusion that the wheel was constructed to give him the ride." (The Word of the Lord Came Unto Me Also; edited by Joseph Black; sermon by Marston; 128)

Man seems to be doomed to a terrible fate. Man finds it natural to do evil and hard to do good. Man is plagued with selfishness. Gladstone said, "Selfishness is the greatest curse of the human race." (Rosell; no. 445)

Man practices a 'dog-eat-dog' ethics, and uses his fellow-man to climb to the 'top of the heap'. Men - even so-called good men - are subject to temptation. Evil within - human nature - and evil without - the Devil - plague every man, making any kind of meaningful and victorious life seemingly impossible. Is there any answer to man's dilemma? Is there a supernatural power that man can tap which will give him strength to overcome the downward gravitational pull of sin, temptation, selfishness, greed, and pride?

PROPOSITION:

The Bible contains the secret to finding a victorious, strong life. John, in his Epistle describes the life of victory and the way to find that victory. Victory over supernatural forces of evil must take a supernatural power. There is a supernatural power available and that power is released into the world through a unique Person. This world of ours is a visited planet, and it has been visited by its very Creator. Think of it! God stepped down on this minute planet - Earth - lived a sinless life, died a sacrificial death, demonstrated ultimate power through His Resurrection, and offers a supernatural power to man to enable man to live a victorious life. This power enables man to conquer the enemies within - sinful lusts - and to conquer the enemies without - temptation and satanic power.

I. EVIDENCE OF VICTORY (5:1-3)

What are the evidences or marks in a person's life which indicate that he is truly a victorious person - victorious over inner evil forces and outer evil forces?

## A. THE NEW BIRTH

The New Birth is the evidence of supernatural power in a man's life, resulting in victorious living. "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God." (5:1a) "Our present, continuing activity of believing (in the eternal Son) is the result, and therefore the evidence of our past experience of new birth by which we became and remain God's children." (Stott). Have you been born again? Being born again means living a new life with new desires and new attitudes. (II Cor. 5:17) The New Birth results in a life of continuous belief - belief in Jesus as the unique and Divine Son of God through whom a person is given supernatural power to live a supernatural life. What is the main characteristic of that supernatural life, which belief in Christ makes possible? It is the life of love.

## B. LOVE FOR GOD AND LOVE FOR OTHER CHRISTIANS

Who is the victorious person who has and is conquering the inner and outer enemies of life? The person who practices love for God and love for other Christians. This is a supernatural love and is given as a gift to a person who believes in and commits himself to Jesus Christ.

The victorious person is the one who loves God's children. This is very logical, for "every one who loves the parent (God) loves the child (other Christians)."

What is the proof that a person really loves his fellow Christians? "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments." (5:2) If you are conscientiously obeying God's commandments and have a supreme preference for God in all you do, then you can be assured that you truly love your fellow Christians. Love for fellow Christians is one of the evidences or marks of a victorious person.

Love for God is also a mark of a victorious person. Proof that you love God is found in the fact that you are habitually observing God's commandments. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." (5:3a) "Love for God is not an emotional experience, so much as moral obedience." (Stott; 173)

Thus, obedience to God's commandments is both evidence that one loves God and that one loves his fellow Christians. Thus all three tests (doctrinal, social, moral) are combined to show that belief in the Son, love of God and man, obedience to God's commandments are the evidences of a truly victorious life. "The real link between the three tests is seen to be the new birth. Faith, love, and obedience are the natural growth which follows a birth from above." (Stott; 172)

## II. PATHWAY TO VICTORY (5:4-12)

In the first section, the way to find victory was shown to be the New Birth which manifests itself by faith in Christ, love of God and man, and obedience to God's commandments. Let us now explore the actual pathway to victory in more detail.

The victory that overcomes the world is faith (v. 4) or, to put it more concretely, 'belief that Jesus is the Son of God' (v. 5) When John uses the term 'world', he "gathers up the sum of all the limited, transitory powers opposed to God which make obedience difficult" (Westcott, quoted by Stott; 174) "Sometimes these are moral pressures - the outlook, standards and preoccupations of a godless, secular society, 'the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life'. Sometimes they are intellectual (heresy) and sometimes physical (persecution). But, whatever form the world's assault upon the Church may take, the victory is ours." (Stott; 175)

Thus, to overcome all the inner and outer powers that are opposed to God, one must believe that Jesus is the Son of God. "To believe in Jesus Christ is not simply to accept what He says as true; it is to commit all life into His hands and into His direction; it is to place ourselves in His hands in time and in eternity." (Barclay's I John; pg. 133) Faith or belief (commitment) to Jesus Christ results in being born of God. "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith. 'Faith' (v. 4) and belief 'that Jesus is the Son of God' are synonymous and results in being born of God. And the one who is born of God overcomes the world.

Also the one who is born of God finds that God's commandments are not burdensome. Why is this? (1) Because his new birth gives him a new nature. The laws of God are written no longer on tablets of stone but on the tablet of his heart. "For the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord, is this: I will set my laws in their understanding and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Heb. 8:10) NEB. God's commandments are not burdensome because fulfilling God's commandments is simply fulfilling the basic desires of my changed nature. (2) God's commandments are not burdensome because the Christian realizes that God's will is perfect - perfect in that it is beneficial to man and glorifying to Christ. God's will is the will of an all-wise, all-loving Father who seeks our highest welfare (Stott; 173). So when we obey, we are not only helping God but we are helping ourselves. (Illustration: Suppose you are very ill and the doctor commands you to take a certain medicine to get well. Would his commandment be burdensome to you? No, indeed! You would delight in obeying his command, for obedience would lead to healing.) God's commandments are not burdensome, for obedience to them gives you healing and keeps you healthy.

Thus, to summarize so far, Faith (belief that Jesus is Christ which means commitment to Him), produces the New Birth. The New Birth results in (1) overcoming the world (those transitory powers opposed to God), and (2) Loving God and ones fellow Christians, (3) Delighting in God's commandments (God's commandments not being burdensome because of a change in nature (Heb. 8:10), and because of realizing that God's will is good, acceptable, perfect, and beneficial to man.)

But the question may arise, 'What is the objective basis for believing in Jesus?' Why should one commit his life to Jesus?

John says there are three witnesses which bear witness to Jesus as a reliable object for ones faith. "There are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree." (I Jn. 5:8) It seems clear from this passage (5:6-8) that the Holy Spirit is the main witness to the Divine-Human person of Jesus. "And the Spirit is the witness, because the Spirit is the truth" (v. 7).

It is said of this Person (Jesus) that he is the one "who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood." (v. 6) What does 'water' and 'blood' refer to? Behind this letter of I John there lies the heresy of Gnosticism which believed that spirit was absolutely good and matter was absolutely evil. A branch of Gnosticism (as taught by Cerinthus) "taught that at the baptism, from that power which is above all things, the divine Christ descended and came into the man Jesus in the form of a dove; Jesus, allied as it were with the Christ who had descended upon Him, brought to men the message of the God who had hitherto been unknown, and lived in perfect virute; then at the end the Christ departed from the man Jesus and returned to glory, and that it was only the man Jesus who was crucified on Calvary and who was afterwards resurrected. We might put it more simply by saying that Cerinthus taught that Jesus became divine at the baptism, and that divinity left Him before the Cross, and that He died simply a man." (Bar. I Jn. 128)

"This is no trivial error. It undermines the foundations of the Christian faith and robs us of the salvation of Christ. If the Son of God did not take to Himself our nature in His birth and our sins in His death, He cannot reconcile us to God. So John emphasizes not just that He came, but especially that He came by water and blood." (Stott; 179)

This passage (5:6-8) appears to mean that the Spirit witnesses to the Divine-Human personhood of Jesus, that is, that Jesus was divine not only between His Baptism and Crucifixion, but that He was divine before and during His Baptism (water) and during and after His Crucifixion (blood). A total incarnation is vital to a total redemption.

Added to the three-fold witness of the Spirit, water, and blood to the Divine-Human Person of Jesus is the witness of God Himself which also witnesses to the Divine-Human Person of Jesus. "If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has borne witness to His Son." (v. 9)

"The perfect tense (v. 9) indicates the abiding validity (in itself and through the Spirit) of God's historical witness to Christ. It is God who bore witness to His Son in history, in the water and the blood, and it is God who bears witness to Him today through His Spirit in our hearts. (Stott; 181)

"If we receive the witness of men" (v. 9) refers to the O. T. Standard of establishing any fact through two or three witnesses. A triple human witness was enough to establish any fact in the O. T. times (Deut. 19:15) therefore a three-fold divine witness ought to be much more quickly accepted to establish a spiritual fact.

"To 'receive the witness....of God' (v. 9) and to 'believe on the Son of God' (10) are virtually synonymous expressions" (Stott; 182).

What is the result when one denies God's witness to the Divine-Human Person of Jesus? (1) "He who does not believe God, has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne to his Son" (v. 10); (2) "He who has not the Son has not life" (v. 12b). There is no true life without Christ - only mere existence. The one without Christ is "dead in trespasses and in sins." But those who have Christ have life - "abundant life."

What is the result when one accepts God's witness to the Divine-Human Person of Jesus? (1) "He who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself." (v. 10a) "That is (the believer) is given a yet deeper assurance by the inward witness of the Spirit that he was right to trust in Christ, a striking example of the spiritual principle that 'to everyone who has will more be given'." (Stott, 182) (2) "And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life." (v. 11-12a)

"Three important truths are taught in these verses about eternal life. First, it is not a prize which we have earned, but an undeserved gift. Secondly, it is found in Christ, so that, in order to give us life, God both gave and gives us His Son. Thirdly, this gift of life in Christ is a present possession. True, it is further described as 'eternal', 'aionios', which means literally 'belonging to the age', i.e. the age to come. But since the age to come has broken into this present age, the life of the age to come, namely 'eternal life', can be received and enjoyed here and now." (Stott; 183)

#### CONCLUSION:

Are you experiencing this eternal life of God? In other words, have you been born again? Said Jesus, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (Jn. 3:3)

Faith or belief in Jesus which means commitment to Jesus for time and eternity produces the New Birth. This New Birth results in overcoming the world and in a new nature that delights in keeping God's commandments, and in loving God and fellow Christians.

"But how can we come to faith in the divine-human Person of Jesus? John's answer here, as in the Gospel, is that faith depends on testimony, and that the reasonableness of believing in Jesus is ground upon the validity of the testimony which is borne to Him." (Stott; 176 That testimony to Jesus is found in the three-fold witness of the Spirit, water (Baptism) of Jesus, and blood (Death) of Jesus, all of which agree in testimony and all of which are backed by the testimony of God Himself to the Divine-Human Person of Jesus. To believe in the testimony of Jesus results in having the added inner witness of the Spirit, affirming the rightfulness of a person's belief in Jesus, and results in having eternal life. To deny the witness of God is to make God a liar, and is to forfeit any possibility of having eternal life.

Do you want eternal life (a new quality of abundant life for time and eternity)? Then simply believe God's witness to His Son and commit your life to Jesus Christ for time and for eternity. Do it Now! "Now is the day of salvation!" "Now is the acceptable time!"

## Chapter 17

### The Victorious Life!

#### Discussion:

1. From your observations of modern-day society, what evidence can you cite to demonstrate the fact that man is in desperate need of moral deliverance from his self-centered bondages? Is there any hope for mankind which seems to be filled with despair and bent on self-destruction? Is there a supernatural power that man can tap which will give him strength to overcome the downward gravitational pull of sin, temptation, selfishness, greed, and pride?
2. What is the result of the New-Birth in a person's life, in terms of belief, and how does this belief enable one to live a supernatural life? (Note I John 5:1)
3. Morally, socially, and doctrinally, (according to I John 5:1-3) what are the three marks or evidences of a truly victorious person?
4. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Love for God is not an emotional experience, so much as moral obedience." (I John 5:3)
5. What is the meaning of "world" as John uses the term in I John 5:4, and what are some of the forms of assaults which the "world" launches against the Christian?
6. If belief in Jesus as the Son of God is the essence of true faith, tell concretely what belief in Jesus really means. (Note I John 5:4,5)
7. Why does the person who is born of God find that God's commandments are NOT burdensome? (Note I John 5:3; Hebrews 8:10)
8. Do you agree with the following statement: "What God commands, man's nature demands. So, when man obeys God's commandments, he is not only glorifying God but he is also helping himself."
9. List some of the basic and wonderful results of the New Birth.
10. According to I John 5:6-8, what are the three witnesses which bear testimony to Jesus as a reliable object for one's faith?
11. What does "water" and "blood" refer to in I John 5:6? Explain what is meant by the following phrase: "A total incarnation is vital to a total redemption."

12. In addition to the witness of the "spirit", the "water", and the "blood", who else bears an ongoing and contemporary witness to the Divine Human Person of Jesus? (Note I John 5:9)
13. Why did John consider a threefold witness important to establish the truthful nature of a claim, especially the claim of the Human Divine Personhood of Jesus? (Note Deuteronomy 19:15)
14. What are the results when one denies God's witness to the Divine Human Person of Jesus? (I John 5:10,12)
15. What are the results when one accepts God's witness to the Divine Human Person of Jesus? (I John 5:10-12)
16. Name three important truths that are taught in I John 5:11-12 regarding "eternal life".



CHAPTER 18

THE CHRISTIAN'S ASSURANCE

SCRIPTURE: I John 5:9-21

SUBJECT: THE CHRISTIAN'S ASSURANCE

INTRODUCTION:

Man's basic need is for assurance and security. Man is plagued with fears and is in search for peace and confidence to face the future. One of man's basic fears is fear of the future. This fear can be destroyed through the grace and power of God. God has come to give peace and confidence and enable man to face the future with absolute trust and confidence.

PROPOSITION:

One of the richest heritages of the Christian is assurance - assurance of eternal life, assurance of answered prayer, and assurance of a present abundant life lived according to truth and reality.

I. ASSURANCE OF ETERNAL LIFE (I John 5:13)

A. 'Know' - present tense - Not gradual growth in assurance, but a possession here and now of a present certainty of the life they have received in Christ.

The whole purpose of the epistle is to assure the believers (whom the heretics had tried to make doubt) that they have eternal life.

B. 'Have' - present tense - Right now have eternal life - not future possession after death but present reality.

C. 'Eternal Life' - 'the life of God' for God alone inherently possesses and inhabits eternity. "What we are promised is that here and now there can be given to us a share in the very life of God (Barclay)

"In God there is peace, and therefore, eternal life means serenity. It means a life liberated from the fears which haunt the human situation. In God there is power, and, therefore, eternal life means the defeat of frustration. It means a life filled with the power which is the power of God, and which is, therefore, a life victorious over circumstance. In God there is holiness, and, therefore, eternal life means the defeat of sin. It means a life clad with the purity which is the purity of God, and armed with a defence against the soiling infections of the world. In God there is love, and, therefore, eternal life means the end of bitterness and hatred. It means a life which has the love of God in its heart, and the undefeatable love of man in all its feelings and in all its action. In God there is life, and, therefore eternal life means the defeat of death. It means a life which is indestructible, because it has in it the indestructible life of God Himself." (Barclay's I Jn. 134, 135)

D. Condition for maintaining present assurance of eternal life. - 'to the ones believing' - a continual commitment to Jesus Christ - to his name - (Character and person are worthy of trust and commitment).

II. ASSURANCE OF ANSWERED PRAYER

A. Gift - Confidence

Because the Christian has eternal life within, this fact gives him boldness and confidence toward God. The Christian may come boldly before the throne of God to make his needs and wishes known to God. The Christian has confidence in facing Christ's future Second Coming and the future Judgment Day, but the Christian also has confidence in approaching God daily in prayer. The Christian knows that God will not intimidate him or make him feel cheap. The Christian knows that God is concerned in the smallest detail of his life. To the Christian, God is a loving Father.

"There is an old Roman story which tells how a Roman Emperor was enjoying a triumph. He had the privilege, which Rome gave to her great victors, of marching his troops through the streets of Rome with all his captured trophies and his prisoners in his train. So the Emperor was on the march with his troops. The Streets were lined with cheering people. The tall legionaries lined the street edges to keep the people in their places. At one point on the triumphal route there was a little platform where the Empress and her family were sitting to watch the Emperor go by in all the pride of his triumph. On the platform with his mother there was the Emperor's youngest son, a little boy. As the Emperor came near the little boy jumped off the platform, burrowed through the crowd, tried to dodge between the legs of a legionary, and to run out on to the road to meet his father's chariot. The legionary stooped down and stopped him. He swung him up in his arms: 'You can't run out to his chariot.' And the little lad laughed down. 'He may be your Emperor,' he said, 'but he's my father.' That is exactly the way in which the Christian feels towards God. The might, and the majesty, and the power are the might, and the majesty, and the power of one whom Jesus Christ taught us to call Our Father." (Mt. 202)

"God is always listening. He is more ready to hear than we are to pray. God is always waiting. We never need to force our way into the presence of God, or to compel God to pay attention to us. He is waiting for us to come. To use a very human analogy. We know how we have often waited for the knock of the postman, or the ring of the telephone bell, to bring us a message from someone whom we love. In all reverence we can say that God is like that with us." (Barclay's I Jn. 136)

#### B. Condition - Keep on Asking According To God's Will

The Christian's requests of course must accord with God's will. "Prayer is not a convenient device for imposing our will upon God, or bending His will to ours, but the prescribed way of subordinating our will to His...Every true prayer is a variation on the theme 'Thy will be done'. Our Master taught us to say this in the pattern prayer He gave us, and added the supreme example of it in Gethsemane." (185, 186 Stott)

"Here, indeed, is something on which to ponder. We are so apt to think that prayer is asking God for what we want, whereas true prayer is asking God for what He wants. We are so apt to think of prayer as talking to God - as indeed it is - whereas it is even more listening to God." (Bar 137)

The Christian must keep on asking (present). The Christian, through the very process of importunate, persistent praying is growing spiritually.

"Prayer is as simple as asking; it is also work.. It is the quick breathing of a petition one time; another it is accompanied with heavy sighs and tears. It is in point of fact a paradox. And to view exclusively one side of the paradox (or coin) is to miss the other side of prayer. To ask and go on your way in faith is quite all right in some circumstances; in others it takes prolonged labor until one has 'prayed through'." (Demaray; 86)

#### C. Present Fulfillment

When the Christian meets God's condition of asking according to God's will, God immediately grants the petition. The phrase 'we do know (present) that he hears us', and the phrase 'we do know (present) that we have the petitions that we desired of him' are identical in meaning. As soon as the Christian meets God's condition in praying, the petitions are immediately granted. 'Our petitions are granted at once: the results of the granting are perceived in the future' (Plummer). (Stott, 186) (Like Inheritance - granted in moment of time (In writing); fulfilled & visibly realized in the future.

### III. REGULATION IN PRAYER

#### A. Illustration of Prayer (v. 14, 15)

These verses show that we must be vitally concerned in our fellowmen.

## AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?

He stood at the crossroads all alone,  
With the sunrise in his face;  
He had no fear for the path unknown,  
He was set for a manly race.  
But the road stretched east, and the road stretched west;  
There was no one to tell him which way was the best;  
So my chum turned wrong and went down, down, down,  
Till he lost the race and the victor's crown,  
And fell at last in an ugly snare,  
Because no one stood at the crossroads there.

Another chum on another day,  
At the selfsame crossroads stood;  
He paused a moment to choose the way  
That would lead to the greater good.

And the road stretched east, and the road stretched west;  
But I was there to show him the best;  
So my chum turned right and went on and on,  
Till he won the race and the victor's crown;  
He came at last to the mansions fair,  
Because I stood at the crossroads there.

Since then I have raised a daily prayer,  
That I be kept faithfully standing there,  
To warn the runners as they come,  
And save my own or another's chum.

- Author Unknown

The true Christian is filled with compassion for his fellow Christians within the Christian congregation. If anyone sees his brother sinning he should have compassion upon him and earnestly pray to God and ask God to draw him back with the chords of love. It is possible and indeed many times happens that a Christian brother "is swept away by a passion or a desire, which at the moment is too strong for him." Such a man "hates his own sin; in the moment of temptation he falls to sin, but afterwards he hates his sin, and he hates himself." (Bar. 142)

The true Christian does not kick a person when he is down, but rather tenderly and lovingly lifts up the brother who has fallen. The Bible says, "So let the man who feels sure of his standing today be careful that he does not fall tomorrow." (I Cro. 10:12 Phillips)

### B. Limitation of Prayer (v. 16-17)

"Not every sinner can be given life in answer to prayer however." (Stott, 187)

Listen to Phillips' translation which clarifies this passage: "If any of you should see his brother committing a sin (I don't mean deliberately turning his back on God and embracing evil), he should pray to God for him and secure fresh life for the sinner. It is possible to commit sin that is a deliberate embracing of evil and that leads to spiritual death - that is not the sort of sin I have in mind when I recommend prayer for the sinner. Every failure to obey God's laws is sin, of course, but there is sin that does not preclude repentance and forgiveness." (I Jn. 5:16, 17)

What kind of sinner cannot be given life in answer to prayer? It is the sinner who deliberately embraces sin, who delights in sin as a way of life, who so hardens his heart against God that repentance never enters his mind. Without repentance, there is no forgiveness, and without forgiveness there is no eternal life. Therefore, not even prayer

forgiveness there is no eternal life. Therefore, not even prayer can change the man who is determined not to repent, and the ultimate end of such a man is spiritual death. John "does not advise prayer, for he clearly doubts its efficacy in this case." (Stott; 187)

What is the "sin unto death"? It appears to be blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. "This sin, committed by the Pharisees, was a deliberate, open-eyed rejection of known truth. They ascribed the mighty works of Jesus, evidently done 'by the Spirit of God' (Mt. 12:28), to the agency of Beelzebub. Such sin, Jesus said, would never be forgiven either in this age or in the age to come. He who commits it 'is guilty of an eternal sin'. (Mk. 3:29; Mt. 12:22-32)." (Stott; 188)

"If (man) allows himself again and again to flirt with temptation, and again and again to fall to temptation, on each occasion the sin becomes easier; and, if he escapes, as he thinks, the consequences, on each occasion the self-disgust and the remorse and the regret become less and less; until in the end he can reach a state when he can sin without a tremor, and can congratulate himself on being able to get what he wants and to escape the consequences. It is precisely that which is the sin which is leading to death. So long as a man in his heart of hearts hates sin and hates himself for sinning, so long as he knows that he is sinning, he is never beyond repentance, and, therefore, never beyond forgiveness; but once a man begins to revel in sin, and to make sin the deliberate policy of his life, and loses all sense of the terror and the awfulness of sin and also the feeling of self-disgust, he is on the way to death, for he is on the way to a state where the idea of repentance will not, and cannot, enter his head. The sin unto death is the state of the man who has listened to sin so often, and refused to listen to God so often, that he has come to a state when he loves his sin, and when he regards sin as the most profitable thing in the world." (Barclay's I Jn. 143)

#### CONCLUSION:

The Epistle of I John was written to assure believers of their eternal life. Also assurance is given to the believer that God is waiting lovingly and expectantly for the believer to come to Him to ask for good things. All requests must be made earnestly, persistently, and in accord with God's will. Such petitions are immediately granted, although many times the results of the granting are perceived in the future.

John assures the Christian that if a brother Christian sins that the faithful Christian should pray for the restoration of the fallen one.

John believes it is no use however to pray for the man who has so advanced in sin that his heart is hardened against God and he calls darkness light and attributes that work of the Holy Spirit to Satan. Such sin leads to eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire (Second Death).

Assurance is the message that John most wants to convey. John wants his readers to guard against sinning and live a regenerated life. Such a person is protected against Satan (v. 18), as contrasted to the world which is in the grasp of the Evil One (v. 19). The Son of God has come to give us understanding of God and eternal life. He who accepts the Son is living according to truth and reality, and keeps himself from the false idols of the world (v. 20-21). Such a person is truly alive!

## Chapter 18

### The Christian's Assurance

#### Discussion:

1. According to I John 5:13, is it presumptuous for one who believes in Jesus to claim assurance of eternal life? Is "eternal life" a present reality for the person of faith, or is "eternal life" only a future anticipation?
2. If it is possible for a believer, here and now, to enjoy eternal life (i.e., to share in the very life of God), then what does "eternal life" concretely mean to a believer as he lives his life here on Earth?
3. If "belief" in Jesus is the condition for maintaining a sense of personal assurance of eternal life (I John 5:13), what does it mean "to believe" in Jesus? Is "belief" a momentary and once-and-for-all experience, or is "belief" an on-going, continuous attitude of commitment to Jesus? Does one who abandons personal commitment to Jesus (i.e., one who no longer believes in Jesus) have any basis for claiming present assurance of eternal life? According to I John 5:13 (and other related scriptures), does the Bible teach a "conditional" security or an "unconditional" security regarding salvation? Is it not true that "eternal life" can be forfeited in the life of a one-time believer who falls away from God and who resumes a lifestyle characterized by habitually sinning?
4. Because God is a loving Father, what are the children of God assured of, regarding prayer? (I John 5:14)
5. What condition must a believer meet if he expects God to answer his prayers? (I John 5:14)
6. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: "Prayer is not a convenient device for imposing our will upon God, or bending His will to ours, but the prescribed way of subordinating our will to His. Every true prayer is a variation on the theme 'Thy will be done'. Our master taught us to say this in the pattern prayer He gave us, and added the supreme example of it in Gethsemane." (Stott) (Matthew 6:9-13; 26:39; Psalms 40:8; 143:10)

If prayer is God's prescribed way of subordinating our will to His will, then is it not presumptuous (if not blasphemous) to use prayer as a way of "dictating" our wishes to God? Is it not possible to use prayer as a means of advancing selfish goals, concealed behind the notions of "claiming God's promises"? Is it not

important, when praying, first to submit one's will to God before one "claims God's promises"? (Is not the "name it - claim it" method of praying questionable, if not outrightly "unBibical"?)

7. Is prayer mostly asking God for what we want, or is true prayer mostly asking God for what He wants? Is prayer mostly talking to God or is prayer listening to God?
8. In what ways is prayer a "paradox"?
9. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "As soon as the Christian meets God's condition in praying, the petitions are immediately granted." Do you agree with the following statement by Plummer? - "Our petitions are granted at once; the results of the granting are perceived in the future."
10. What, practically, does it mean for a Christian to be his "brothers keeper"? (Note I John 5:16; James 5:16,19,20; Galatians 6:1; I Corinthians 10:12)
11. What is your interpretation of I John 5:16,17? Is the "sin unto death" the kind of sin that Jesus spoke of when He talked about sinning against the Holy Spirit? Is it possible for one who presently is born again to commit sin that is a deliberate embracing of evil that leads to spiritual death? (Note James 5:19-20; Hebrews 6:4-8; 10:38,39; Matthew 12:22-32; Mark 3:29)
12. Give your comments on the following quotation from William Barclay: "The sin unto death is the state of the man who has listened to sin so often, that he has come to a state where he loves his sin, and where he regards sin as the most profitable thing in the world."
13. What are some of the "idols" from which the sincere believer must keep himself, as he seeks to live for God? (Note I John 3:21)



CHAPTER 19

HOW TO FIND PEACE WITH GOD

A GREAT MAN ONCE SAID,

"Man Is Restless Until He Finds His Rest In God!"



*"In this house of starry dome, floored  
with gemlike plains and seas, shall I  
never feel at home, never wholly be  
at ease?"*

THE BIG QUESTIONS OF LIFE:

- (1) WHO AM I?
- (2) WHERE DID I COME FROM?
- (3) CAN I FIND PEACE OF MIND?
- (4) WHAT IS MY PURPOSE FOR LIVING?
- (5) WHERE AM I GOING AFTER I DIE?
- (6) CAN I KNOW GOD IN A PERSONAL WAY?

EVERY PERSON HAS A GOD-SHAPED VACUUM WITHIN HIM!

MANY ARE TRYING TO FILL THAT GOD-SHAPED VACUUM WITH SUBSTITUTES  
FOR GOD:

PLEASURE!

MONEY!

RELIGION!

POWER!

MORALITY!

DRUGS!

PROPERTY!

ALCOHOL!

SEX!

ENTERTAINMENT!

*("O God, don't let me be disillusioned into thinking that  
earth's treasures and pleasures can satisfy me!")*

## HOW SERIOUS IS SIN?

"For The Wages of Sin is Death!" (Romans 6:23)

Definition:

"Wages: That which is paid for work or services."

## SIN BRINGS MISERY AND UNHAPPINESS!

"Fleeting pleasures of sin" (Hebrews 11:25)

"I have no pleasure in them" (Eccles 12:1)

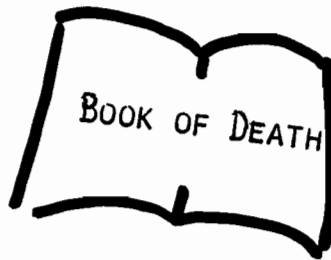
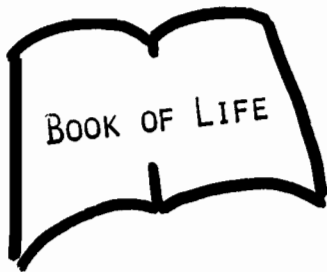
"When I kept silent about my sin, my body  
wasted away through my groaning all day long"  
(Psalms 32:3)

"Our iniquities, like the wind,  
take us away" (Isaiah 64:6)

"There is no peace", says my God, "for the wicked." (Isaiah 57:21)

"There is a way which seems right to a man, but it's  
end is the way of death." (Proverbs 14:12)

SINNING LEADS TO ETERNAL SEPARATION FROM GOD!



(Revelation 20:11-15)



IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT  
TO KNOW THAT YOUR NAME IS  
WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF LIFE!

FOCUS ON:	ACTIONS ATTEMPTING TO SOLVE HUMAN PROBLEM;	RESULTANT STATE OR RELATIONSHIP
Outward Circumstances	Give up business which has evil companions; abandon evil reading; move into new locality; establish new environment.	OUTWARD Reformation
Personal Habits	No longer Drink or Smoke, or Lie, or Curse.	Personal Reformation
Personal Discipline	Exercise, Eat well, Develop the arts, perform good deeds, self-improvement	Self-Improvement Cultivation
Personal SINS	Confession; Repentance, Faith in Christ alone; Restitution, 'Means of Grace'	Outward and Partial Transformation (Conversion)
Unsurrendered SELF	Total Surrender of Self (emotions, intellect, will) in Faith to Sovereign Lord.	Inner Purity and Love, and outer Power to Witness. (Increasing conformity to Christ- likeness).

## CAN MY SINS BE FORGIVEN?



"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us!" (Psalms 103:12)

East ←————→ West

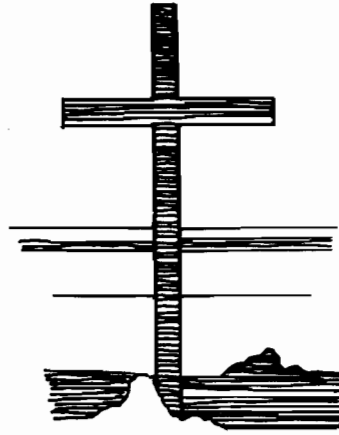
Buried our sins in the sea  
Sea of His forgetfulness

"I will forgive their iniquity, and their  
sin I will remember no more!"  
(Jeremiah 31:34)

"The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins!" (Matthew 9:6)

FORGIVENESS IS THE LOVELIEST WORD IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE!

FOR WHOM DID CHRIST DIE?



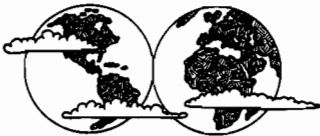
I Timothy 2:4-6

I Timothy 4:10

II Peter 3:9

John 6:33, 51

Colossians 1:20



EVERYONE!

Romans 5:18

Romans 11:32

II Corinthians 5:19

Titus 2:11

John 7:37, 38

John 3:14-17

Revelation 22:17

Acts 17:30

I John 2:2

## AGREE OR DISAGREE? TRUE OR FALSE?

- T God wants to save all persons. It is not God's will that any person perish. (II Peter 3:9; I Timothy 2:4).
- T Christ died for all persons, thus providing a universal atonement which is adequate for the whole human race generally and every man individually. (I Timothy 4:6) (I John 2:2)
- T Man is corrupted by sin or totally depraved, but God extends to every person a grace which enables him to turn to Christ for forgiveness. (Isaiah 45:22)
- T Because every person is a free moral agent, he may, if he chooses, resist the grace of God (Joshua 24:15; John 1:11, 12)
- T Every person everywhere is commanded to repent of his sins and believe in Christ (Acts 16:31; 17:30)
- T No person is excluded from salvation unless he excludes himself by willful unbelief.
- T Because Christ died for all persons, all persons are in a saveable relationship with God, but only those persons who initially exercise personal faith in Christ and continue to exercise personal faith in Christ as Saviour will actually and ultimately be saved.
- F Before the human race was created, God unconditionally chose some persons to be saved and some persons to be lost.
- F God gives the gift of saving faith only to those persons whom He has chosen to save.
- T Ultimate assurance of personal salvation is impossible apart from conscious, deliberate perseverance in faith.

GOD IS A GOOD GOD WHO HAS GIVEN HUMAN BEINGS EVERYTHING  
RICHLY TO ENJOY! (I Timothy 6:17b)

A BEAUTIFUL WORLD TO LIVE IN (Genesis 1:1)

Light

Firmament (Heavens)

Land and Seas

Trees and Plants

Sun, Moon, Stars

All Creatures Big and Small

A Creative Job To Perform (Genesis 2:15)

A Loving Companion To Enjoy (Genesis 2:18)



All Things Bright and Beautiful!  
"It was Good!" (Genesis 1:31)



A Trusting Relationship With God  
(Genesis 1:26-27)

A Big World To Rule Responsibly  
(Genesis 1:28)



"It is not good for the man  
to be alone. I will make a  
helper suitable for him."  
(Genesis 2:18)

## SIN MARRED GOD'S BEAUTIFUL CREATION!

### WHAT IS SIN? ? ? ?

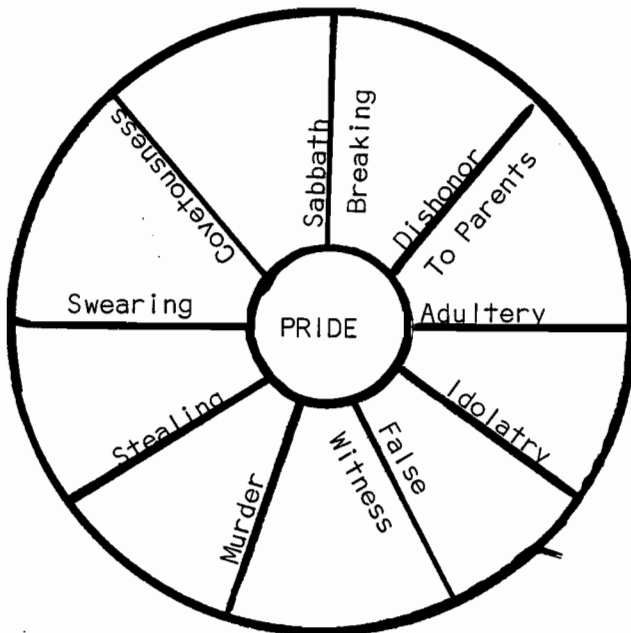
Disobeying Holy Laws of God (Genesis 3:1-5) (I John 3:4)

Gratifying Selfish Desires Apart From God (Genesis 3:6)  
(Galatians 5:19)

Breaking Loving Relationship With God (Genesis 3:8 (Romans 3:21))

### WHAT IS THE ESSENCE OF ALL SIN? ? ? ?

Self-Centered PRIDE

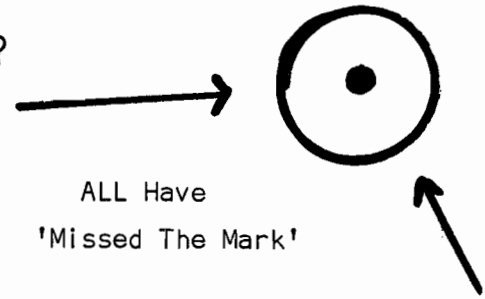


Do Decent People Need Saving?

*"The thing that is deeply wrong with human nature is not that some people commit adultery, and some steal, but that all of us are self-centered - the decent and the indecent, the nice and the nasty. Manners, polish, refinement, and culture only cover that disease, like rouge on the face of a woman dying of anemia. They can't affect the deadly disease underneath. To be saved is to be saved from that disease. We all have it; therefore we all need to be saved."*

- William Sangster -

# WHAT IS THE EXTENT OF SIN? ? ?



ALL Have  
'Missed The Mark'

Definition: Harmartia (Greek word for 'sin')  
'Missing the Mark' as when a spear is thrown at a target.

"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. ALL have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." (Romans 3:10-12)

**JEWS AND GENTILES ALIKE ARE ALL UNDER SIN!** (Romans 3:9)

All Persons are Sinners by Nature (Psalms 51:5) (Genesis 6:5)

All Persons are Sinners by Choice (Isaiah 64:6)

## SIN IS BOTH

(Matthew 5)

OUTWARD

A WRONG ACTION

(Cheating, Lying, Stealing, Adultery)

Murder  
Adultery  
Stealing

&

A WRONG ATTITUDE

(Anger, Lust, Hatred, Resentment, Greed, Jealousy)

INWARD

(Ephesians 5:3-7) (Matthew 15:19)

Anger  
Lust  
Coveteousness

**SIN IS FAILING TO DO WHAT IS GOOD!**

"Anyone who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, SINS." (James 4:17)

WHAT ARE THE RESULTS OF SIN? ? ?

SHAME! (Genesis 3:7)

HIDING FROM GOD!  
(Genesis 3:8)

GUILT!

BLAMING OTHERS! (Genesis 3:12-13)

FEAR! (Genesis 3:10)

KNOWLEDGE OF EVIL! (Genesis 3:22)

KNOWLEDGE

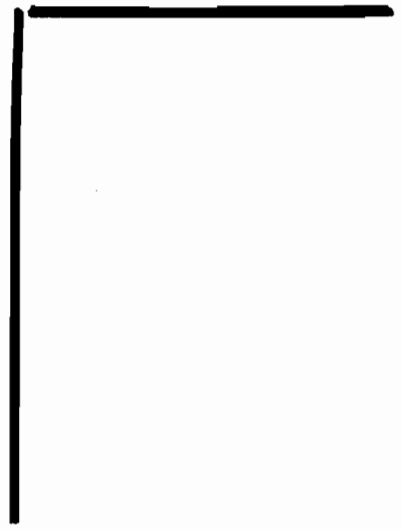
ALIENATION FROM GOD! (Genesis 3:23-24)



← SIN IS →

Separation From  
God

Isaiah 59:2



## WHAT CONDITIONS MUST I MEET TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S SALVATION? ?

**AWAKENING** - Right Attitude Toward Your Condition

(John 16:8-11) ("I am a sinner and in need of a Savior!")

**REPENTANCE** - Right Attitude Toward Your Sin

("I am deeply sorry for my sins and want the direction of  
(Luke 15:11-32) my life to change!")

**FAITH** - Right Attitude Toward Your Saviour

("I trust Christ alone to forgive my sins and to change my  
life!")  
(Romans 5:1-5  
Living Bible)

**SURRENDER** - Right Attitude Toward Your Self

("I turn over the full controls of my life (my will, my  
intellect, my emotions) to Christ, and will allow Christ  
(Galatians 2:20 initially and daily to exercise His Lordship in my life!")  
Luke 14:25-33  
Living Bible)

**LET'S LOOK AT THESE CONDITIONS MORE CAREFULLY:**

AWAKENING!

John 16:8-11



GOD'S HOLINESS

MAN'S SINS  
(John 1:4-9)

- \_\_\_\_\_ A 'Collision' With God!
- \_\_\_\_\_ Realizing I Am On The Wrong Road!
- \_\_\_\_\_ Admitting I Have A Spiritual Need!
- \_\_\_\_\_ No Longer Rationalizing My Sins!
- \_\_\_\_\_ Seeing My True Moral Condition!
- \_\_\_\_\_ Recognizing That I Need To Be Saved!

"The Word that God speaks..... exposes the very thoughts and motives of a man's heart." (Hebrews 4:12-13 Phillips)

REPENTANCE!

(Luke 18:9-14)



- \_\_\_\_\_ A Moral 'U - Turn'
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sincere Sorrow Over My Sins (II Corinthians 7:9,10)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Accepting Responsibility For My Sins
- \_\_\_\_\_ Turning My Back On My Old Way Of Life
- \_\_\_\_\_ Humbly Confessing To God That I Have Been Wrong
- \_\_\_\_\_ Acknowledging My Personal Moral Bankruptcy

**DEFINITION OF REPENTANCE:**

A change of mind, from an attitude of embracing sin to an attitude of forsaking sin, resulting in a change of direction,  
from a life of practicing sin to a life of practicing righteousness.

## FAITH

(Romans 4:1-5  
Living Bible)



- \_\_\_\_\_ Turning From Sin To The Saviour
- \_\_\_\_\_ Transfere Of Trust From Myself To The Saviour
- \_\_\_\_\_ Putting Myself Into The Care and Keeping of The Saviour
- \_\_\_\_\_ An Intellectual Assent To Truth Coupled  
With A Life Commitment To The Saviour
- \_\_\_\_\_ Putting My 'Weight' Down On The Saviour
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ Total Commitment Of My Total Self To Christ

### DEFINITION OF FAITH:

Entrusting yourself totally to God, like a man sinking in quick sand who ceases to struggle to save himself and instead clasps the saving hand of the man who is standing on the solid ground near by.



FOLLOWING CHRIST

- Matthew 7:13-14
- Matthew 16:24

SURRENDER

(Luke 14:25-33 Living Bible)  
(Galatians 2:20)

'The Way'

- \_\_\_ Forsake My Own Selfish Ways
- \_\_\_ Follow In The Footsteps Of Jesus
- \_\_\_ Turn Over the 'Title Deed' of My Life To Christ
- \_\_\_ Put Christ on The Throne Of My Life
- \_\_\_ Allow Christ To Use My Talents In His Service
- \_\_\_ Learn To Live A Life Of Obedience & Love

*"Were the whole realm of nature mine that were a present far too small!  
Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my ALL!"*

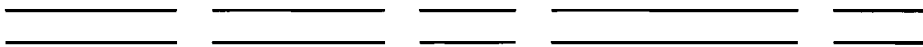
## THE WAY TO ETERNAL LIFE



1. WEALTH CANNOT BUY IT!
2. WORLDLY PLEASURES (EMOTIONS) CANNOT BRING IT!
3. HUMAN REASON (INTELLECT) CANNOT GRASP IT!
4. HUMAN EFFORT (WILL) CANNOT ACHIEVE IT!

BUT

FAITH ALONE CAN RECEIVE IT!



(Ephesians 2:8-9)

(Everyone Places His Faith In Someone Or Something)

The OBJECT of Your Faith Determines

The VALUE of Your Faith.

**CHRIST** Alone Is A Trustworthy Object For Your Faith.

(Titus 1:1,2)

REVIEW:

1. GOD IS GOOD - "And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good." (Genesis 1:3)
2. MAN IS A SINNER - "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)
3. SINNING HAS SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES - "Evil thoughts lead to evil actions and afterwards to the death penalty from God." (James 1:5) (L.B.)
4. ALL HUMAN ATTEMPTS AT SALVATION ARE FUTILE - "There is a way which seems right to a man, but it's end is the way of death."  
(Proverbs 14:12)
5. CHRIST ALONE CAN FORGIVE SINS AND GIVE SALVATION - "Jesus said, 'I am the way, and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through me.'  
(John 14:6)

EACH INDIVIDUAL MUST MEET CERTAIN CONDITIONS TO BE  
SAVED!

6. EACH INDIVIDUAL MUST MEET CERTAIN CONDITIONS TO BE SAVED

- \_\_\_ AWAKENING ("I Need A Saviour!")
- \_\_\_ REPENTANCE ("I Turn From My Sins!")
- \_\_\_ FAITH ("I Place My Trust Alone In Christ For Salvation!")
- \_\_\_ SURRENDER ("I Am Willing Obediently To Follow Christ Forever!")

WHEN YOU SINCERELY MEET THESE CONDITIONS IN YOUR HEART CHRIST WILL:

- A. Forgive you (the sins you remember, and the sins you don't remember!)
- B. Make You God's Child (John 1:12)
- C. Come Into Your Life And Establish Fellowship (Revelation 3:20)

LET'S MAKE A COMMITMENT TO  
JESUS CHRIST NOW!

## A PRAYER FOR SALVATION:

*"Dear God, I acknowledge that you are altogether trustworthy in your character, and faithful to your promises. Abandoning all hope for salvation in myself, I cast myself helplessly and hopefully in your mighty saving arms! I realize that I am a sinner and in need of a Saviour! I acknowledge that you alone can forgive my sins. I am genuinely sorry for my sins, and I desire to change the direction of my life, from a life of embracing sin to a life of forsaking sin! I now confess all my sins to Jesus Christ, the sins I remember and the sins I don't remember. I place my trust in Christ alone for my Salvation. Thank you for forgiving my sins as you promised. Thank you for coming into my life. I intend to live for you the rest of my life with You as my Helper! In Jesus Name! Amen."*

IS THERE ANYTHING ABOUT THIS PRAYER YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND?

DOES THIS PRAYER HONESTLY EXPRESS THE DESIRE OF YOUR HEART?

YOU PRAYED:

*"I now confess ALL my sins to JESUS CHRIST"*

1. Was Your Prayer A Sincere Prayer?
2. If So, What Has Happened To Your Sins?
3. How Do You Know Your Sins Are Forgiven?

(REMEMBER! WE ARE SAVED BY FAITH, NOT BY FEELINGS!)

## ASSURANCE OF ETERNAL LIFE!

I John 5:12 Says:

"He (Jim, Sue, John, Mary, etc.) that HAS  
(present tense reality) the SON HAS Life ---- NOW!"

(ETERNAL LIFE is not only a Future State Of Continuing Existence, but  
Eternal Life Is a PRESENT Quality of NEW LIFE In Relationship With CHRIST!)

\_\_\_ NEW Attitudes  
\_\_\_ NEW Desires  
\_\_\_ NEW Relationships  
\_\_\_ NEW Direction  
\_\_\_ NEW Goals

(John 10:10)  
(II Corinthians 5:17)

NEW!

NEW!

NEW!

WHAT MUST I DO NOW THAT I AM SAVED?

F O L L O W   C H R I S T . . . . ONE STEP AT A TIME!



1. DAILY CONFESS ALL SINS TO CHRIST...TO EXPERIENCE CLEANSING  
(I John 1:9)
2. DAILY READ THE BIBLE .... TO LEARN SPIRITUAL TRUTHS  
(II Timothy 2:15, Acts 17:11)
3. DAILY PRAY TO THE FATHER .... TO DEVELOP LOVE RELATIONSHIP  
(Matthew 7:7-11)
4. SHARE YOUR FAITH WITH YOUR FRIENDS ... TO HELP FULFILL  
CHRIST'S GREAT COMMISSION  
(Matthew 28:19-20)
5. ATTEND CHURCH REGULARLY...TO RECEIVE ENCOURAGEMENT FROM  
FELLOW BELIEVERS  
(Hebrews 10:25)
6. LEARN TO PRACTICE TITHING.... TO HONOR GOD AND TO SUPPORT  
HIS WORK  
(Malachi 3:8-10)





CHAPTER 20

SCRIPTURAL SUPPORT FOR THE DOCTRINE OF 'CONDITIONAL ETERNAL SECURITY'

ITEMIZATION OF THE 'SNARES' WHICH CAN CAUSE A BELIEVER TO FALL FROM GRACE.

1. Unforgiving Spirit

Matthew 18:21-35

2. Deception By False Teachings or Evil Spirits

Matthew 24:4, 5, 11-13, 23-26

Luke 11:24-28

I Cor. 10:20

Colossians 2:8, 18, 19

I Timothy 1:3-6

I Timothy 4:1

I Timothy 6:20,21

II Timothy 2:14-18

II Timothy 3:13-15

Hebrews 13:9

James 1:16

II Peter 3:16, 17

I John 2:26

II John 7, 8, 9

Revelation 22:18, 19

3. Spiritual Neglect and Procrastination (Spiritual Drifting or Gradual Hardening or Lukewarmness.)

Matthew 25:1-13

Hebrews 2:1-3

Hebrews 3:7-11, 13, 15

Revelation 3:15, 16, 17

4. Spiritual Carelessness and Shallowness (Lack of Vigilance)

Luke 8:12, 13

Hebrews 4:1, 11

II Peter 3:17

5. Yielding To Temptation, Leading To Backslidding or Apostacy

Luke 8:13

I Cor. 6:7-9

II Cor. 12:21-13:5

Philippians 3:18-19

I Thessalonians 3:5

I Timothy 5:11-15

Hebrews 6:4-9

Hebrews 10:28-29

Hebrews 12:16, 17, 25-29

James 1:14, 15, 16

James 5:19, 20

II Peter 2:1-22

I John 3:6

I John 5:16

Jude 4, 6, 7, 8-10, 12, 24

Rev. 2:18-26

Rev. 3:5, 8-12

6. Preoccupation By Worldly Interests and Pursuits and Riches

Luke 8:14  
I Cor. 6:6  
I Timothy 5:6  
I Timothy 6:9-12  
James 4:4  
I John 2:15, 16, 17  
Revelations 3:4

7. Faithlessness and Lack of Spiritual Endurance (Disobedience and unbelief and Bitterness)

Luke 12:42-48	Hebrews 3:12, 19
John 15:1-7	Hebrews 4:6, 11
John 6:66-71	Hebrews 6:10-20
John 8:31, 32, 51	Hebrews 10:23, 36, 39
Acts 11:21-23	Hebrews 11:13 (Ezekiel 33:10-16)
Acts 14:21-22	Hebrews 12:1
Romans 11:20-22	I John 2:17, 25, 28
I Corinthians 9:23-27	Jude 5
I Cor. 10:22	Rev. 2:7, 10, 11, 17
I Cor. 15:1, 2	Rev. 3:5, 10, 12
II Cor. 11:2-4	Rev. 21:7, 8
Gal. 6:9	
Philippians 2:12	
Colossians 1:23	
II Timothy 2:12	

8. Shallow attitude towards Sin and towards Grace (Antinomianism)

Romans 6:11-23  
Romans 8:12-14, 17  
Gal. 6:7, 8  
Hebrews 10:26, 27  
II Peter 1:5-11  
Jude 4

9. Refusal of or Insensitivity to the Spiritual Means of Grace

John 13:8  
I Cor. 11:27-32  
Hebrews 10:22-25

10. Offense By Fellow Believers

Romans 14:15-23

11. Attitude of Ingratitude, Grumbling, and Division

I Cor. 10:10  
Philippians 2:14

12. Self-Confidence and Pride

I Cor. 10:11, 12

13. Resort to Religious Performance Instead of Grace (Legalism)

Gal. 5:1-4

I Timothy 1:3-6

14. Discouragement & Despair During Trials & Persecutions, or Chastenings. (Lose Heart)

I Thessalonians 3:3, 4

Hebrews 10:32-34

I Peter 1:7

Revelation 12:11

15. Rejection of the Dictates of the Conscience

I Timothy 1:19, 20

I Timothy 4:2

16. Temporal Irresponsibility To Dependents

I Timothy 5:8

17. Spiritual Profession Without Spiritual Performance (Lack of Good Deeds and Good Conduct)

James 1:21, 22

James 2:14-26

II Peter 1:6-10

SCRIPTURE	PROMISES	CONDITIONS	WARNINGS
1) Matthew 18:21-35	God's Total Forgiveness of one's Total debt to God. (v. 32)	Willingness to forgive others 'Seventy times seven' times. (v. 22)	Lack of mercy & forgiving spirit will incite wrath of the Lord, and forfeit one's forgiveness and result in torture to the unforgiving person. (v. 34,35)
(2) Matthew 24:4, 5, 11-13, 23-26	Faithful will be saved (v. 13).	"He who endures to the end will be saved." (v. 13)	Possibility of elect being led astray by false 'Christ's (v. 4, 5, 11, 24) Multiplied wickedness can cause cooling of one's love (v. 12)
(3) Matthew 25:1-3	Those who are ready go in with Christ to the marriage feast. (v. 10)	Sufficient oil, (v. 4), Lamp trimmed.	"Watch, for you know neither the day nor the hour" when Jesus shall return (v. 13).  Warning against neglect to purchase oil, thus resulting in lamps going out when Christ comes (v. 8), and being shut out of the marriage feast while trying too late to purchase oil. (v. 10-12)
(4) Luke 8:11- 15	Spiritual fruitfulness and productivity (v. 15)	Hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, patient endurance. (v. 15)	Guard against devil stealing Word from heart (v. 12); guard against shallowness and falling away during temptation (v. 13); guard against life being choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life. (v. 14)
(5) Luke 11:24-28	Spiritual Blessing (v. 28), and life that is orderly and clean (v. 25).	Refusal to allow demons to enter one's life (v. 26). Hear the Word of God and keep it (v. 28).	Guard against evil spirits which are seeking re-entrance into the man who has been delivered from them. (v. 26)

SCRIPTURE	PROMISES	CONDITIONS	WARNINGS
<p>① Luke 12:42-46</p>	<p>Master will set believer over His household, over all His possessions (v. 42,44).</p>	<p>Faithfulness and wise management of God-entrusted responsibilities. (v. 42), (v. 43)</p>	<p>Guard against impatience at Master's delay in coming, resulting in mistreatment of servants who are entrusted to steward, and resort to a life of debachery by steward. (v. 45)</p> <p>Such a faithless steward will be punished with a severe beating and assigned to the place of the unfaithful. (v. 46, 47)</p>
<p>(7) John 6:66-71</p>	<p>Eternal life (v. 68), and knowledge that Jesus is the Holy one of God (v. 69).</p>	<p>Believe, and thus come to know Jesus (v. 69) Continuance with Jesus, rather than 'drawing back' and no longer going with Jesus (v. 66).</p>	<p>Possibility of 'drawing back' and no longer going with Jesus (v. 66), and possibility (as in the case of Judas), of betraying Jesus, after having been chosen by Jesus. (v. 70, 71).</p>
<p>② (8) John 8:31, 32</p>	<p>"You are my disciples" "You will know truth which will set you free"</p>	<p>"If you hold to my teachings" or continue in the Word.</p>	
<p>(9) John 8:51</p>	<p>Never see death</p>	<p>"if a man keeps my word"</p>	
<p>(10) John 13:8</p>	<p>Have a part with Jesus</p>	<p>"Unless I wash you, you have no part with me"</p>	<p>Possible to have no part with Jesus, by believer's refusal to allow Jesus to "wash his feet." (That is, minister to the believer)</p>
<p>(11) John 15:1-7</p>	<p>Great fruitfulness, and inner purity, and answered prayer</p>	<p>God cut off every branch that bears no fruit; God trims fruitbearing branches to produce more fruit; The branch must remain in the vine.</p>	<p>Possible for branch not to remain in the vine, in which event the branch withers, and is ultimately "thrown into the fire and burned."</p>

SCRIPTURE	PROMISES	CONDITIONS	WARNINGS
(12) Acts 1:21-23	"The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord," producing great gladness to the Church.	"Remain true to the Lord with all their hearts."	Possible for a believer not to remain true to the Lord.
(13) Acts 14:21, 22	Won a large number of disciples to the Lord	"Strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith"; "We must go through many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God."	Possible for a believer not to remain true to the Lord, and possible for a believer not to successfully go through the many hardships, and thus ultimately not to enter the kingdom of God.
(14) Romans 6:11-23	Alive to God in Christ Jesus (v.11). Set free from sin and become slaves to righteousness (v. 18) Holiness and eternal life (v. 22) (v. 23)	"Do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires" (v. 12)  Offer parts of body to God as instruments of righteousness, rather than offering parts of body to sin, as instruments of wickedness (v. 13) Become slaves to God. (v. 22)	Possible for body parts to be yielded as instruments of sin and wickedness. (v. 12,13) Possible to entertain a shallow attitude toward grace, and a light attitude toward sin, and thus claim that grace quickly provides for one's practice of sin. (v. 15) Offering oneself to obey sin results in final spiritual death. (v. 16)
(15) Romans 8:12-14, 17	"You will live" (v. 13)  Sons of God (v. 14)  Heirs of God and Co-heirs with Christ, (V. 17) with anticipation of sharing with Christ in His glory	"If by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body" (v. 13) If you are led by the Spirit of God (v. 14)  If we share in his sufferings (v. 17)	You will die if you live according to the sinful nature (v. 13)

SCRIPTURE	PROMISES	CONDITIONS	WARNINGS
(16) Romans 11:20-22	Standing in Christ Kindness to Believer (v. 22) ("Provided you continue in his Kindness.")	Standing in Christ "by faith" (v. 20) Humility (rather than arrogance), combined with godly fear and reverence.  "Provided you continue in his kindness."	God will not spare those who persist in unbelief. Unbelief causes the branch to be broken off the Vine. "Sternness to those who fell" (v. 22)  Those who do not continue in God's kindness will be cut off. (v. 22)
(17) Romans 14:15-23	Standing in Christ	If one acts in love by carefully refraining from anything that is a source of stumbling to one's fellow Christian. If one guides his life and actions by "righteous- ness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." (v. 18)	Possible for believer to be offended by and even destroyed by fellow believer. Possible for believer to destroy the work of God and cause brother to stumble by insensitive actions. (v. 20, 21) It is possible for believer to sin as a result of doing things with doubt rather than with faith. (v. 23)
(18) I. Cor. 9:23-27	Share in the blessings of the Gospel. (v.23) Enjoy God's prize which is "a crown that will last forever." (v. 25)	Strict Training. Run the race with aim and purpose. Fight with purpose. "Beat my body and make it my slave"	Possible that "after I have preached to others, I myself will be disqualified for the prize." (v. 27)
(19) I Cor. 10:1-22	(By Implication) Participation in spiritual food and drink (like Israel). (v. 3, 4)  Participation in the body & blood of Christ. (v. 16, 17).  Enjoyment of Spiritual Victory over Temptation Through Christ's enabling strength & provisions (v. 13)	"Flee from idolatry" (v. 7, 15)  "Now these things occurred as examples, to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did." (v. 6)  Do not commit sexual immorality. (v. 8) Do not test the Lord wrongly (v. 9). Do not grumble against the Lord (v. 10)  "Be careful that you don't fall." (v. 126)  Stand up under temptation. (v. 13)	Possible, after a believer has experienced many spiritual blessings, for God no longer to be pleased with him (v. 5)  Possible for one who has experienced 'spiritual food and drink' to set his heart on evil things (as Israelites did) (v. 6). Possible for believer to fall into idolatry and sexual immorality and consequently to be destroyed by God. (v. 7,8) Possible for believer to test (overtempt) the Lord and to be destroyed by the Lord (v. 9) Possible to grumble against the Lord and to be "killed by the destroying angel." (v. 10)

cont.

SCRIPTURE	PROMISES	CONDITIONS	WARNINGS
9) cont.			<p>"These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us.... So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" (v. 11, 12)</p> <p>"I do not want you (believers) to be participants with demons." (v. 20)</p> <p>Don't arouse the Lord's jealousy. (v. 22)</p>
(20) I Cor. 11:27-32	<p>"We would not come under judgement....." (v. 31)</p>	<p>"A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup." (v. 28)</p> <p>"if we judged ourselves" (v. 31)</p>	<p>It is possible for a believer to become insensitive to the spiritual significance of "The Lord's Supper" and consequently to sin "against the body &amp; blood of the Lord" and bring "judgment on himself". (v. 27,29)</p> <p>Some even died in the Early Church by insensitively partaking of Lord's Supper. (v. 30)</p>
(21) I Cor. 15:1, 2	<p>Received Gospel, resulting in salvation (v. 2a)</p>	<p>"saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you." (v. 2b)</p>	<p>If one does not hold firmly to the word which he has received for initial salvation, he has "believed in vain." (v. 2)</p>
(22) II Cor. 1:24	<p>"You stand firm" "We work with you for your joy."</p>	<p>"By faith you stand firm."</p>	
(23) II Cor. 11:2-4	<p>"I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him." (v. 2)</p>		<p>A gullible believer can deceptively be led away from his pure and single-hearted devotion to Christ, into false teachings (as illustrated by Eve's deception by Satan). (v. 3, 4)</p>

SCRIPTURE	PROMISES	CONDITIONS	WARNINGS
(24) II Cor. 2:21-13:5	<p>"He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you." (v. 3)</p> <p>"Christ is in you....." (v. 5)</p> <p>"By God's power we will live with him to serve you." (v. 4)</p>	<p>"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves." "Unless of course, you fail the test." (v. 5)</p>	<p>Possible for a one-time believer to sin grievously (impurity, sexual sin, debauchery) without being activated to repentance.</p>
(25) Gal. 5:1-4	<p>"Christ has set us free". (v. 1)</p>	<p>"Stand firm" "Do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." (v. 1)</p> <p>"If you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all" (v. 2)</p>	<p>"You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; You have fallen away from grace." (v. 4)</p>
(26) Gal. 7-9	<p>"Reap eternal life... (v. 8)</p> <p>Reap a spiritual harvest..... (v. 9)</p>	<p>if one sows to please the Spirit" (v. 8)</p> <p>if one does not become weary in doing good and give up. (v. 9)</p>	<p>"Do not be deceived. God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows." (v. 7)</p> <p>"The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction." (v. 8a)</p>
(27) Eph. 3:17	<p>"Christ may dwell in your hearts.....Through faith"</p>		
(28) Phil. 2:12-16	<p>"God works in you to will and do what pleases him." (v. 13)</p> <p>"Become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe" (v. 15)</p>	<p>"Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling." (v. 12)</p> <p>"Do everything without complaining or arguing." (v. 14)</p>	<p>Possible to run in vain and to labor in vain. (v. 16)</p>

SCRIPTURE	PROMISES	CONDITIONS	WARNINGS
(29) Phil. 4-4:1	<p>Gaining Christ and being found in him; Knowing Christ Jesus My Lord, and the power of his resurrection. (v. 8, 9)</p> <p>"attain to the resurrection from the dead." (v. 11)</p> <p>"God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." (v. 14)</p> <p>The Lord Jesus "will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body." (v. 21)</p>	<p>Accept Christ's righteousness by faith and reject self-righteousness and legalistic righteousness</p> <p>Experience fellowship of sharing in Christ's sufferings, becoming like him in his death" (v. 10).</p> <p>"I press on to take hold....forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize" (v. 12-14)</p> <p>"Let us live up to what we have already attained." (v. 16)</p> <p>"Live according to the pattern we gave you." (v. 17)</p> <p>"Eagerly await a Savior from heaven" (v. 20)</p>	<p>By Implication, there is a warning to believers Not to become like those who "live as enemies of the cross of Christ," whose "destiny is destruction," whose "god is their stomach," whose "glory is in their shame," and whose "mind is on earthly things." (v. 18, 19)</p>
(30) Col. 1:21-23	<p>"God has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation"..... (v. 22)</p>	<p>"....if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel." (v. 23)</p>	<p>It is possible for a believer to be moved from the hope held out in the gospel.</p>
(31) Col. 2:4-8	<p>"You received Christ Jesus as Lord" (v. 6)</p>	<p>"Continue to live in Christ, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness." (v. 6, 7)</p>	<p>"See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ." (v. 8)</p>

SCRIPTURE	PROMISES	CONDITIONS	WARNINGS
<p>(2) Col. 2:18, 19</p>	<p>Standing in Christ, anticipating qualification for the spiritual prize.</p>	<p>"Do not let anyone... disqualify you for the prize." (v. 18)</p>	<p>It is possible for a believer to allow a deceptive philosophy (v 18) to disqualify him for the spiritual prize. (v. 18)</p> <p>It is possible for one to succumb to the teachings &amp; practices of a false philosophy, and consequently to lose "connection with the Head (Christ)". (v. 19)</p>
<p>(33) I Thess. 3:1-8</p>	<p>Standing in faith &amp; love (v. 6, 7) among brethren in the fellowship.</p>	<p>"Standing firm in the Lord" (v. 8)</p> <p>"We sent Timothy .... to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials." (v. 2, 3)</p>	<p>It is possible for believers to be unsettled by the inevitable trials &amp; persecutions which all believers are destined to experience (v. 3, 4).</p> <p>It is possible for a believer to fall during temptation and lose his faith, resulting in the efforts of the soul-winner becoming useless (v. 5).</p>
<p>(34) I Tim. 1:3-7, 18-20</p>	<p>Sincere Faith, and a good conscience, and a pure heart.</p>	<p>"Fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience." (v. 18, 19)</p>	<p>It is possible to turn to false doctrines. (v. 3)</p> <p>It is possible to begin promoting controversial doctrines (regarding law - keeping) rather than promoting the work of God which is faith.(v. 4)</p> <p>It is possible to wander away from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith and to turn to "meaningless talk." (v. 6)</p> <p>It is possible (as in the case of Hymenaeus &amp; Alexander) to reject faith &amp; a good conscience, and thus to make shipwreck of one's faith (v. 19, 20)</p>
<p>(35) I Tim. 2:11-15</p>	<p>"Woman will be kept sage.... (v. 15)</p>	<p>"Woman should learn in quietness and full submission." (v. 11)</p> <p>"I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man." (v. 12)</p> <p>"through childbirth, if they continue in faith, love, and holiness with propriety." (v. 15)</p>	

SCRIPTURE	PROMISES	CONDITIONS	WARNINGS
<p>36) I Tim. 4:1-16</p>	<p>Godliness holds "promise for both the present life and the life to come." (v.8)</p> <p>The Living God saves those who believe. (v. 10)</p>	<p>"Train yourself to be godly." (v. 7)</p> <p>"Set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity." (v. 12)</p> <p>"Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift. (v. 13, 14)</p> <p>"Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers." (v. 16)</p>	<p>It is possible to "abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons." (v. 1)</p> <p>It is possible for one's conscience (apparently even a one-time believer's conscience according to context of Scripture to become "seared as with a hot iron." (v. 2)</p>
<p>37) I Tim. 5:8</p>	<p>Standing in Christ by faith.</p>	<p>Provision for one's relatives, and especially for one's immediate family.</p>	<p>It is possible to deny the faith and, as such, become worse than an outright unbeliever.</p>
<p>(38) I Tim. 5:11-15, 5, 6</p>	<p>Close relationship with God, with hope placed alone in God. (v. 5)</p>	<p>Put hope in God and continue night &amp; day to pray and to ask God for help." (v. 5)</p>	<p>It is possible for sensual desires to overcome one's dedication to Christ. (v. 11)</p> <p>It is possible for believers to break holy pledges, and to fall into hurtful habits, thus incurring the Judgment of God. (12-13).</p> <p>It is possible to turn away from the faith "to follow Satan." (v. 15)</p> <p>It is possible to begin living for pleasure and thus to die spiritually. (v. 6)</p>

SCRIPTURE	PROMISES	CONDITIONS	WARNINGS
(39) I Tim. 6:9-12	Standing in Christ, by faith.	Flee from the 'love of money' which is the 'root of all kinds of evil.' (v. 10, 11)  "Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness." (v. 11)  "Fight the good fight of the faith." (v.12a)  "Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called." (v. 12)	It is possible for believers to fall in love with money, resulting in "wandering from the faith and piercing themselves with many griefs," and plunging themselves into "ruin and destruction." (v. 9, 10)
(40) I Tim. 6:17-19	Rich contentment by placing one's hope in God "Who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment." (v. 17)	The rich believer is not to be arrogant and is not to put his hope in uncertain wealth, but instead, he is to put his hope in the all-providing God. The rich are "to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share." (v. 18)	In order for the rich to "take hold of the life that is truly life," and to establish "a firm foundation for the coming age," the rich believer is required to be generous and 'rich in good deeds'. The selfish and greedy will be judged.
(41) I Tim. 6:20, 21	God has entrusted eternal truth to spiritual leaders to be communicated carefully.	"Guard what has been entrusted to your care." Avoid the godless talk and foolish arguments of worldly 'Knowledge'.	It is possible for believers to succumb to the godless talk and foolish arguments of worldly 'knowledge' and, consequently to 'wander from the faith' ('lose their faith' - Phillips).
(42) II Tim. 2:11-18	"We will live with him.... (v. 11)  We will reign with him.... (v. 12)	..."if we died with him" (v. 11)  ..."if we endure." (v. 12)	It is possible for a believer to "disown Him" (God), with the result that God will disown that person. (v. 12) In such a case, the faithful character of God does not stand in question. (v. 13)  Quarrelling about words .... only ruins those who listen." (v. 14)  It is possible for a believer (as in the case of Hymenaeus and Philetus), to engage in 'godless chatter' and consequently to

SCRIPTURE	PROMISES	CONDITIONS	WARNINGS
2) cont.			'wander away from the truth' (v. 16, 17, 18) and to cause others to have their faith destroyed (v. 18)
(43) II Tim. 3:13-15	Possession of the Holy Scriptures, "which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." (v. 15)	Continue to obey the teachings of the Holy Scriptures which you have known 'from infancy.' (v. 14, 15)	Avoid the deceptive influence of "evil men and impostors who will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived." (v. 13)
(44) Heb. 2:1-3	The message 'which we have heard', "confirmed to us by those who heard him." (v. 1, 3)		It is possible to 'drift away' from 'what we have heard' (the message of faith). (v. 1) It is possible to neglect and ignore God's great salvation, resulting in just punishment. (v. 2, 3)
(45) Heb. 3:6-19	<p>"Christ is faithful over God's house" (which are believers). (v. 6)</p> <p>"We are his house (that is, Christ lives in us)....."</p> <p>"We have come to share in Christ....." (v. 14)</p>	<p>"Encourage one another daily, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." (v. 13)</p> <p>"....if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast." (v. 6)</p> <p>"....if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first." (v. 14)</p>	<p>It is possible for believers to harden their hearts, and to stray away from God's ways, with the tragic result of never entering God's rest. (v. 7-11)</p> <p>It is possible for 'brothers' (believers) to have a "sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God." (v. 12)</p> <p>It is possible for a believer to become "hardened by sin's deceitfulness." (v. 13, 15)</p> <p>It is possible for one-time believers to disobey God so grievously that they never enter into God's rest. "They were not able to enter, because of their unbelief." (v. 19)</p>

SCRIPTURE	PROMISES	CONDITIONS	WARNINGS
<p>(16) Heb. 4:1-16</p>	<p>"Promise of entering his rest still stands,</p> <p>"We have had the gospel preached to us" (v. 2)</p> <p>"We have a great high priest who has gone into heaven..... (v. 14)</p> <p>We have a high priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses because he was tempted in every way that we are tempted. (v. 15)</p>	<p>....let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it." (v. 1)</p> <p>"therefore, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess." (v. 14)</p> <p>"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (v. 16)</p>	<p>If believers are not continually on their guard, it is possible to fail to attain the rest offered to them by God (v. 1).</p> <p>"Those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience." (v. 6)</p> <p>To enter the rest which God has prepared for His people, believers must "make every effort... so that no one will fall by following (the Israelite's example of disobedience". (v.11)</p>
<p>(47) Heb. 8, 9</p>	<p>Christ, who learned obedience from what he suffered, became the source of eternal salvation for mankind.</p>	<p>Only those who are practicing obedience are recipients of Christ's eternal salvation.</p>	
<p>(48) Heb. 6:4-9</p>	<p>Spiritual enlightenment; appropriation of heavenly gift; Share in the Holy Spirit; experience of the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the coming age. (v. 4-5)</p> <p>"Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case - things that accompany salvation." (v. 9)</p>	<p>One enjoys 'the blessing of God' (v. 7) and is fruitful, only if he 'drinks in the rain often falling on the land' (v. 7)</p>	<p>It is possible for a person to be spiritually enlightened, to taste the heavenly gift, to share in the Holy Spirit, to taste the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, and (after experiencing spiritual reality to this extent) yet to 'fall away' (apostacize). Such an apostate (as was found in the early Church as well as in modern times) 'crucifies the Son of God all over again and subjects him to public disgrace' (v. 4-6). Such a condition of apostacy renders repentance again 'impossible.' (v. 4)</p> <p>Instead of the land (human heart) receiving the rain (blessings of God), and thus producing a 'crop useful to those who farm it', the human heart (land) can produce worthless 'thorns &amp; thistles'. Such a life "is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned." (v. 8)</p>

SCRIPTURE

PROMISES

CONDITIONS

WARNINGS

9) Heb.  
8:10-20

"God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people." (v. 10)

It is important to diligently continue to help God's people "to the very end, in order to make your hope sure." (v. 11)

One only inherits 'what has been promised' (v. 12) through diligence, faith, and patience.

"We do not want you to become lazy but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised." (v. 12)

"Abraham received what was promised....." (v. 15)

"....after waiting patiently." (v. 15)

We are encouraged "who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us." (v.18)  
The firm & secure anchor of the soul is maintained hope in Christ.

(50) Heb.  
10:19-31

"We have confidence to enter the most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus" (v. 19)

"Let us keep on drawing near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water" (v. 22).

It is possible to deliberately keep on sinning after a person has received the knowledge of the truth, with dire consequences involved - "a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God" (v. 26, 27)

"We have a great priest over the house of God." (v. 21)

"He who promised is faithful." (v. 23)

"Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess." (v. 23)

It is possible for a one-time believer to trample the Son of God under foot and to treat as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and to insult the Spirit of grace with the consequent punishment of dying without mercy. (v. 28-29).

"Spur one another on toward love and good deeds." (v. 24)

"Let us not give up meeting together (as some are in the habit of doing)." (v. 25)

"Let us encourage one another." (v.25)

SCRIPTURES

PROMISES

CONDITIONS

WARNINGS

51) Heb.  
10:32-39

God allows one to receive the light of truth (v. 32)  
"You knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions." (v. 34)

A believer must stand his ground "in a great contest in the face of suffering" (v. 32)

A believer needs to persevere in the faith in spite of severe persecution (public exposure to insult and persecution, and imprisonment for the faith, and confiscation of personal property) (v. 32-34)

Maintainence of confidence and perseverance in the faith are necessary in order to "receive what God has promised." (v. 36)

A believer must choose to believe and thus be saved, rather than to shrink back from the faith and thus be destroyed. (v. 39)

(52) Heb.  
11:13-16

Believers are called 'foreigners & strangers on earth', and, although all of God's promises to them are not fulfilled on earth, these believers live with anticipation and hope of someday enjoying 'a better country - a heavenly one' (v. 16)

"God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them." (v. 16)

"All these people were still living by faith when they died." (v. 13)  
(Note: Ezekiel 33:10-16)

(53) Heb.  
12:1-17

Believers are "surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses" (v. 1)  
Jesus is the Great Pioneer and Perfecter of the believer's faith, and the sufferer and Saviour and Intercessor for mankind. (v. 2)

Believers must throw off everything that hinders them and the sin which so easily entangles them. (v. 1)  
Believers must run with perseverance the race marked out for them (v. 1).

Believers must fix their eyes on Jesus, who is the Pioneer and Perfecter of the Faith and who is the believer's intercessor before the Father (v. 2)

It is possible for a believer to 'grow weary and lose heart'. (v. 3)

It is possible for the believer to lose heart when he receives rebuke and discipline from the Lord (v. 5, 6)

SCRIPTURES

PROMISES

CONDITIONS

WARNINGS

(53) cont.

As a believer you must "consider him (Christ) who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."  
(v. 3)

The believer must 'struggle against sin' (v. 4)

Believer must willingly receive the Lord's discipline in his life (v. 5), and submit to the Father in order to live (v. 9).

The believer must endure hardship as discipline (v. 7)

Share in God's holiness.....if the believer is willing to receive discipline from the Lord. (v. 10)

willing to receive discipline from the Lord. (v. 10)

A harvest of righteousness and peace.....

"for those who have been trained by the painful discipline of the Lord (v. 11)

"Strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. Make level paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed." (v. 12, 13)

"Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy: without holiness no one will see the Lord." (v. 14)

The Grace of God is available for every person. (v. 15)

"See to it that no one misses the grace of God." (v. 15)

"See that no one is sexually immoral" (v. 16)

It is possible for the lame christian to become disabled rather than healed (v. 13)

It is possible for a believer to miss the grace of God' (v. 15)

It is possible for a 'root of bitterness' to spring up in a believer's life, causing trouble and defilement to many. (v. 15)

It is possible for a believer to fall into sexual immorality. (v. 16)

It is possible for a believer to become godless (like Esau) by selling out his spiritual inheritance. (v. 16, 17)

SCRIPTURES	PROMISES	CONDITIONS	WARNINGS
(54) Heb. :25-29	<p>God speaks to mankind from heaven, revealing His holy will and nature, and warning men to follow the Lord of Heaven. (v. 25)</p> <p>We are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken." (v. 28)</p>	<p>"See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks." (v. 25)</p>	<p>It is possible for us believers to "turn away from him who warns us from heaven," (v. 25) rather than continue to "worship God acceptably with reverence and awe," with the result that we will be punished by God who is "a consuming fire." (v. 28, 29)</p>
(55) Heb. 13:9-14	<p>"Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make his people holy through his own blood." (v. 12)</p> <p>Believers are "looking for a city that is to come." (v. 14)</p>	<p>"It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace." (v. 9)</p> <p>"Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore." (v. 13)</p>	<p>It is possible for believers to be "carried away by all kinds of strange teachings." (v. 9)</p>
(56) Heb. 13:17, 7	<p>"Leaders keep watch over you as men who must give an account." (v. 17)</p> <p>The word of God is spoken by leaders of God. (v. 7)</p>	<p>"Remember your leaders." (v. 7)</p> <p>Imitate the faith of your leaders. (v. 7)</p> <p>"Obey your leaders and submit to their authority" (v. 17)</p>	
(57) James 1:12-16	<p>Believers will receive the victor's crown, the life that God has promised..... (v. 12)</p>	<p>.....to those who love him, to those who persevere under trial, to those who stand the test. (v. 12)</p> <p>Let no believer say when he is tempted, 'God is tempting me.' (v. 13)</p>	<p>It is possible for a believer to be tempted, to succumb to 'his own evil desire' and to be 'dragged away and enticed,' (v. 14) and to indulge in sin (which, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death). (v. 15)</p> <p>It is possible for a believer to be deceived." (v. 16)</p>



SCRIPTURES

PROMISES

CONDITIONS

WARNINGS

(63) I Peter  
1:5-9, 13

"You are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time....."

(v. 5)

... "through faith",  
(v. 5)

The faith of believers must be proved genuine (at the time of Christ's return), through suffering all kinds of trials. (v. 7)

Believers are being filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, because they are being saved....

(v. 8, 9)

...through their love and faith in the Saviour. (v. 8, 9)

"Prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed." (v. 13)

(63) II Peter  
1:5-11

Standing in Christ by Faith.

Faith is only complete and effective when one increasingly adds to it the other great qualities of goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. (v. 6, 7)

If a believer does not possess the listed ethical qualities, "he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins." (v. 9)

You will be effective and productive in your knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.....if you possess the

(v. 3)

above-mentioned qualities 'in increasing measure.' (v. 8)

SCRIPTURES	PROMISES	CONDITIONS	WARNINGS
53) Cont.	A believer will never fall from God's grace... (v. 10)	... if he works hard to endorse by his conduct the fact that God has called and chosen him. (v. 10)	
	"You will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (v. 11)		
(64) II Peter 2:1-22	"The Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials." (v. 9)		<p>I. It is possible for a believer to "leave the straight way" (v. 15) and become an outright apostate (exercising deceptive and destructive actions, many of which are described so tragically in II Peter 2):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Introduce destructive heresies even denying the Sovereign Lord who bought them. (v. 1)</li> <li>(b) Exploit people with stories they have made up. (v. 3)</li> <li>(c) "Follow the corrupt desire of their sinful natures and despise authority." (v. 10a)</li> <li>(d) "Bold &amp; arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings" (v. 10b)</li> <li>(e) "But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are brute beasts, creatures of instinct."</li> <li>(f) "Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight." (v. 13)</li> <li>(g) "With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed.: (v. 14)</li> <li>(h) "They lure back into sin those who have just escaped from such wicked living." (v. 18) L.</li> </ul>

cont.

SCRIPTURES

PROMISES

CONDITIONS

WARNINGS

(65) II Peter  
3:16, 17

Enjoyment of a "secure  
position" in Christ.  
(v. 17)

Believers are to be  
on their guard against  
the error of lawless  
men.

It is possible for a believer  
to relax watchful guard and  
consequently to "be carried  
away by the error of lawless  
men and fall from his secure  
position." (v. 17)

II. It is possible for persons  
who have "escaped the corruption  
of the world by knowing our Lord  
and Savior Jesus Christ," (v. 20)  
to become "again entangled in it  
and be overcome", and become  
"worse off at the end than they  
were at the beginning." (v. 20)

"It would have been better for  
them not to have known the way  
of righteousness, than to have  
known it and then to turn their  
backs on the sacred commandment  
that was passed on to them."  
(v. 21)

III. The penalty of apostates  
will be severe:

(a) "Bringing swift destruction  
on themselves" (v. 1)

(b) "Their condemnation has long  
been hanging over them, and their  
destruction has not been sleeping  
(v. 3)

(c) "The Lord knows how.... to  
hold the unrighteous for the day  
of judgment" (in hell), while  
continuing their punishment."  
(v. 9)

(d) "Like beasts they too will  
perish." (v. 12)

(e) "They will be paid back with  
harm for the harm they have done."  
(v. 13)

(f) "Blackest darkness is reserve  
for them." (v. 17)

SCRIPTURES

PROMISES

CONDITIONS

WARNINGS

(66) I John  
1:5-2:11

We have fellowship with  
one another and the  
blood of Jesus cleanses  
from every sin.....

.....if we walk in the  
light, as he is in  
the light. (v. 7)

God is faithful & just  
and will forgive us our  
sins and purify us  
from all unrighteousness....

.....if we confess our  
sins to God and  
continue to maintain  
an attitude of constant  
need for God's  
forgiveness. (Confess  
is in the present Greek  
Tense).

"We can be sure we  
know him. ....  
(v.3)

..... if we obey his  
commands." (v. 3)  
(v. 4)

"Whoever claims to  
live in him must walk  
as Jesus did." (v. 6)

(67) I John  
2:15-28

Promise to believers  
That they will live  
forever.....  
(v. 17)

.....if they "persevere in  
in doing God's will"  
(v. 17 Willims)

"See that what you  
have heard from the  
beginning remains in  
you. If it does, you  
you also will remain in  
the Son and in the  
Father." (v. 25)

"And now, dear  
children, continue  
in him, so that when  
he appears we may be  
confident and unashamed  
before him at his  
coming." (v. 28)

Believers can succumb to the  
temptation of loving the world  
and the things of the world  
(i.e. 'lust of the flesh, and  
the lust of the eyes, and the  
pride of life'). (v. 16)

It is possible for believers to  
be 'led astray' (v. 26) by  
antichrists.

SCRIPTURES	PROMISES	CONDITIONS	WARNINGS
68) I John 3:10	<p>The reality of the New Birth..... (v. 29)</p> <p>"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (v. 1)</p> <p>"When he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." (v. 2)</p>	<p>is evidenced by the practice of righteous actions. (v. 29)</p> <p>One can only remain a child of God as he continues (present tense) to love his brother. (v. 10)</p>	<p>It is possible for a believer who once 'knew' Christ to fall into habitual sinning, and thereby to destroy his personal relationship with Christ.</p> <p>(The Greek perfect tense, properly translated, refers to men whose present practice of sinning shows that their profession of faith was false from the beginning. It also refers to men whose present practice of sinning reveals that they are apostates who have departed from true saving faith in Christ.) (v. 6)</p> <p>He who practices sinning is he who cannot, at the same time, be born of God. The two conditions of standing begotten of God and habitually sinning are totally incompatible and contradictory and cannot exist in a person at the same time. (v. 9)</p>
69) I John 4:5	<p>The Second Birth which enables one to 'overcome the world' (v. 4)</p>	<p>One overcomes the world through faith (v. 4).</p> <p>He who continues to believe in the Son is he who continues to overcome the world. (v. 5)</p>	<p>"There is a sin that leads to death." (note: some believe that this Scripture refers to a condition of apostasy from which there is no return, a condition of abandonment from which one cannot be recovered - 'the sin against the Holy Ghost').</p>
70) I John 5:16	<p>A brother who does not commit a sin which leads to death, can be forgiven and restored.</p>	<p>A fellow Christian should pray for the backslidden brother and "God will give him life."</p>	<p>"There is a sin that leads to death." (note: some believe that this Scripture refers to a condition of apostasy from which there is no return, a condition of abandonment from which one cannot be recovered - 'the sin against the Holy Ghost').</p>

SCRIPTURES

PROMISES

CONDITIONS

WARNINGS

(71) II John  
6-9

It is possible to  
live a life of love  
(v. 6)

Believers are to 'live  
in obedience to his  
commands.' (v.6)

"Watch out that you do not  
lose what you have worked  
for, but that you may be  
rewarded fully." (v. 8)

It is possible to have  
both the Father and  
the Son.....if one continues  
(v.9)

in the teaching.  
(v.9)

(Guard against deceivers  
and antichrists - v.7)

It is possible for a believer  
no longer to continue in the  
teaching of Christ, with the  
consequence of no longer  
having God. (v. 9)

(72) Jude  
4-12

It is possible for  
Jesus Christ to be  
"our only Sovereign  
and Lord." (v. 4)

Those whom God honors and  
delivers He can later destroy  
because of their persistent  
unbelief (v. 5), or because  
of rebellion against God's  
authority (v. 6), or because  
of indulgence in gross sin.  
(v. 7)

It is possible (as in the  
case of the apostates that  
Jude warns against) for one-  
time believers to become  
"godless men, who change the  
grace of our God into a license  
for immorality and deny  
Jesus Christ our only Sovereign  
and Lord" (v. 4).

The actions of apostasy are  
most brazen and violent and  
deceptive (v. 4, 8-10), but  
these actions will invoke  
God's ultimate destruction &  
judgment (v. 10)

Notes Shank, " 'Twice dead'  
(v. 12) can only refer to the  
fact that men who once were  
alive in Christ have again  
become spiritually dead by  
severing their union with  
Him 'who is our life'."  
(Life In The Son; pg. 174)

SCRIPTURES

PROMISES

CONDITIONS

WARNINGS

(7) Jude  
20, 21, 24

It is possible to  
experience eternal  
life (v. 21)

It is possible to be  
kept from falling  
(v. 24), through  
Christ's power.

Believers must keep  
themselves in God's  
love as they wait  
for the mercy of their  
Lord Jesus Christ to  
bring them to eternal  
life. (v. 21)

It is possible for a believer  
to fall from grace. (v. 24)

(74) Rev. 2:7

God will "give the  
right to eat from  
the tree of life,  
which is in the  
paradise of God"....."to him who  
overcomes."

(75) Rev. 2:10, 11

Believers need not  
be afraid during  
times of suffering  
(v. 10)

Believers will be  
given the 'crown of  
life'.....if they are faithful,  
'even to the point of  
death'. (v. 10)

Believers will 'not  
be hurt at all by the  
second death'.....if they will be  
overcomers. (v. 11)

(76) Rev. 2:17

'Hidden Manna' and  
'a white stone with a  
name written on it'  
will be given to the  
believer.....'who overcomes'

SCRIPTURES

PROMISES

CONDITIONS

WARNINGS

(77) Rev. 2:18-26

Deeds, love & faith,  
service & perseverance  
spiritual progress.  
(v. 19)

It is possible to tolerate  
compromise and it is possible  
for even God's servants to  
fall into sexual immorality,  
causing intense spiritual  
suffering and eventual  
spiritual death, ("unless  
they repent").

"Hold on to what you  
have until I come."  
(v. 25)

(v. 20-23)

"I will give authority  
over the nations.....to him who  
overcomes and does my  
will to the end."  
(v. 26)

(78) Rev. 3:4, 5

Believers "will walk  
with Christ, dressed  
in white, for they  
are worthy".....if they do not  
soil their clothes"  
(v. 4)

It is possible for a believer's  
name to be erased from the  
Book of Life. (v. 5)

The believer will be  
'dressed in white',  
and his name will  
remain in the Book of  
life, and his name  
will be acknowledged  
before the Father  
and his angels.....if he continues  
to overcome. (v. 5)

(79) Rev. 3:8-12

God places before  
the believer "an  
open door that no one  
can shut." (v. 8)

Believers must keep  
God's Word and not  
deny God's name.  
(v.8)

It is possible for a believer  
to deny God's name, and no  
longer to keep God's Word.  
(v. 8)

God will keep  
believers from the  
hour of trial.....if they keep God's  
commandment "to endure  
patiently" (v. 10)

"Hold on to what you  
have.....so that no one will  
take your crown." (v. 11)

SCRIPTURES

PROMISES

CONDITIONS

WARNINGS

cont.

Christ will make the believer "a pillar in the temple of my God," and the believer will never leave it, and the believer will have the name of God and the name of the Holy City written on him.....

(v.12)

.....if he continues to overcome. (v. 12)

80) Rev. 3:14-22

"You can become rich".....

.....If you "buy from me gold refined in the fire." (v. 18)

God has 'white clothes' available to cover shameful spiritual nakedness, and He has 'salve' available "to put on your eyes, so you can see." (v. 18)

It is possible for believers to become 'lukewarm' spiritually, invoking God's anger, and the possible judgment of being 'spit out of God's mouth' (v. 16).

Believers are greatly loved by God.. ..

.....but they must be willing to receive God's rebukes and discipline, which are meant to lead them to earnestness and repentance. (v. 19)

It is possible for one-time believers to become self-sufficient, proud, and self-deceived (not realizing that they have become "wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.") (v. 17)

Christ stands at the door and knocks and he will establish deep fellowship with the person.....

(v.20)

.....who hears God's voice and who opens the door. (v. 20)

Christ will give the believer the right to sit with Him on His throne.....

(v. 21)

.....if he continues to overcome. (v. 21)

SCRIPTURES

PROMISES

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WARNINGS

Rev. 12:11

Believers can overcome the devil ("accuser of the brethren").....

"by the blood of the Lamb and by the Word of their testimony." (v. 11)

"They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death." (v. 11)

(82) Rev. 17:14

Believers will enjoy and share Christ's triumph over evil.....

.....because they are "called, chosen, and faithful followers."

(83) Rev. 21:7,8

The believer "will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son".....

.....if he continues to overcome. (v. 7)

"But the cowardly who turn back from following me, and those who are unfaithful to me.....their doom is in the Lake that burns with fire and sulphur. This is the Second Death." (v. 8 Living Bible)

(84) Rev. 22: 18, 19

God promises a share in the Tree of Life, and in the Holy City.....

.....if the believer does not add or subtract from "the words of the prophecy of this book." (v. 18)

"If anyone adds anything to what is written here, God shall add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone subtracts any part of these prophecies, God shall take away his share in the tree of Life and in the Holy City just described." (v. 18, 19) Living Bible

CHAPTER 21

UNDERSTANDING THE THEME OF HEBREWS

## "LET US HOLD FAST"

(Understanding The Theme Of Hebrews)

Notes William Barclay, "When we sum it all up, we can say that Hebrews is a letter written by a great teacher, written by a man whom we would call a professor, to a little group or college of Christians in Rome. He was their teacher; at the moment he was separated from them; he was afraid that they were drifting away from the faith; and so he wrote this letter to them." Notes Robert Shank, in his helpful book "Life In The Son".

Those who contend that the writer to the Hebrews views his readers as men who have halted short of saving faith in Christ, rather than as true believers, do so out of regard for the necessitates of their theology. The evidence of the epistle is against them.

Others agree that the Epistle to the Hebrews obviously is addressed to true believers, but contend that the writer's purpose is not to sound a warning against apostasy, but to share with his readers the secret of spiritual progress. His call to them, as they contend, is not Don't turn back! - but Let us go on! Again, such opinion is dictated by the necessities of their theology, rather than by the contents of the epistle.

"The phrase let us go on appears but once (6:1). 'Let us go on,' he writes, 'unto perfection'. The writer may have reference to his intention to proceed to the advanced development of the doctrine of Christ to which he proposes to lead them in the course of his letter. Or, it may be a call to his readers to advance from spiritual infancy in which he found them (5:11-13) toward the maturity (v.14) which is possible for all who will grasp it. Actually, both things are within the writer's purpose. Certainly it is his intention to proceed toward the fuller development of his Christology, which is the grand theme of the didactic portions of his letter. But the presentation of his Christology is not an end in itself; it is offered for the profit of his readers. The didactic portions of his letter are but the base from which he launches his frequent exhortations, the principal burden of which is not let us go on, but let us hold fast.

Certainly he is concerned that his readers go on unto perfection. But his first concern is that they hold fast the confession of hope without wavering. If they do, they will go on toward perfection. The Christian life, a living relationship proceeding upon a living faith in a living Savior, is never static. Jesus said unto them, *Take heed what ye hear: for with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath* (Mark 4:24,25). Robertson's comment is worth pondering: The man who does not acquire soon loses what he thinks that he has. This is one of the paradoxes of Jesus that repay thought and practice. Growth in grace, or spiritual decline, may be hardly perceptible in many instances; nevertheless, it remains true that a Christian either grows or degenerates. The Christian life is never static. The congregation to whom the Epistle to the Hebrews was written had not merely failed to grow in their Christian lives; they had degenerated to the point of becoming spiritual infants again (5:11,12) They had become with the years less quick in understanding, and not more quick according to a natural and healthy development....The Hebrews had through their own neglect become young children again....As yet however this dulness had not extended to action, though such an issue was not far off (comp. 2 Pet. ii,20). (Westcott)

Their peril of finally apostatizing increased in proportion as they declined spiritually. The writer's concern for them is reflected in his frequent and urgent exhortations.

In contrast with the exhortation 'let us go on unto perfection,' which occurs but once, the exhortation 'let us hold fast our confession' occurs twice (4:14; 10:23) and the epistle abounds with cognate exhortations: 'if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end' (3:6); 'if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end' (3:14); 'Lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God' (3:12); 'lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin' (3:13); 'lest at any time we should slip away' (2:1); 'if we neglect so great salvation' (2:3); 'harden not your hearts' (3:8,15); 'lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief' (4:11); 'show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end' (6:11); 'let us keep on drawing near with a true heart in full assurance of faith' (10:22); 'cast not away therefore your confidence' (10:35); 'for ye have need of patience, that...ye might receive the promise' (10:36); 'the just shall live by faith: but if he draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him' (10:38); 'lest ye be wearied and faint' (12:3); 'despise not the chastening of the Lord nor faint when thou art rebuked of him'

(12:5); 'be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live' (12:9); 'lest that which is lame be turned out of the way' (12:13); 'lest any man fail of the grace of God' (12:15); 'lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who sold his birthright' (12:16); 'if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven' (12:25); 'be not carried away with divers and strange doctrines' (13:9); 'let us keep going forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach' (13:13). Any emphasis in the Epistle to the Hebrews on going on toward spiritual maturity is secondary. The burden of the writer's 'word of exhortation,' is that his readers 'hold fast the confession of their hope' in Jesus Christ as the only Savior and 'the Source of eternal salvation unto all who obey Him.'" (Life In The Son, Pages 231-234, Robert Shank)

The great James Denney in his book 'The Death of Christ' also believed the main thrust of the book of Hebrews was conservation of the Faith. "The Epistle to the Hebrews does not make as clear to us as the Pauline epistles how it is that Christ's death becomes effective for men. The author was not an evangelist so much as a pastor, and it is not the initiation of Christianity, but its conservation, with which he deals throughout."

After one makes a careful study of the book of Hebrews, one is impressed with a pattern in the book. Three basic components emerge: (1) Promises and Provisions, (2) Conditions and Exhortations, (3) Warnings and Perils.

A contextual study of Hebrews involves appreciating the promises and provisions of God as they are couched in the broader conditions and the warnings as expounded in the total passage under consideration. A proof-texting method of Bible Study is always dangerous and is a direct violation of the principles of hermeneutics.

If conservation of the faith is the main concern of the author of Hebrews, then the didactic portions of the Book are the 'launching pads' for the frequent exhortations to maintain the faith. Again, (to quote Robert Shank): "The didactic portions of his letter are but the base from which he launches his frequent exhortations, the principal burden of which is not 'let us go on,' but 'let us hold fast.'" (Life In The Son; page 232)

The Christology of Hebrews is rich and beautiful and is worthy of a study within itself. But the didactic portions are only secondary. The hortatory sections, in which the author's main trust is "Let us hold fast," are primary.

Why was Hebrews written? Because the author "was afraid that

they (the believers) were drifting away from the faith." (William Barclay). The key emphasis in the Book is, "Let us hold fast!" Why this emphasis?

(1) Because there was a real possibility that these believers could go back to the Jewish religion which would mean a repudiation of the way of grace through Jesus and the New Covenant. (2) Because of the possibility of falling away from grace (becoming faithless) under the severe attacks of persecutors (10:32-34; 13:3). (3) Because of the possibility (and reality) of failing to grow spiritually and instead degenerating to the point of becoming spiritual infants again (5:11,12). "Their peril of finally apostatizing increased in proportion as they declined spiritually. The writer's concern for them is reflected in his frequent and urgent exhortations." (Life In The Son; Robert Shank; page 233). (4) Because of the possibility of believers becoming discouraged and embittered when God wielded the chastening rod (Hebrews 12).

CHAPTER 22

ANALYTICAL OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

## HEBREWS

### Didactic (1:1-14)

Jesus is superior to all things and to all persons! Jesus is Creator and sustainer of the physical universe (1:1,2), the heir of God (1:1), the incarnate manifestation of God's glory (1:3), the atoning sacrifice for sin (1:3), the resurrected and exalted Son (1:3). Jesus is superior to the angels in every way (1:5-14), as demonstrated by his everlasting reign (1:8), by His creative power (1:10), by His everlasting person (1:11), by His immutability (1:12), by His victorious kingly reign (1:13). Angels are servants of the redeemed (1:14).

### Hortatory (2:1-4)

Based on the superior revelation of God through Christ, believers are exhorted to pay closer attention to the message and to guard against drifting away from the truth. There is no escape from judgment for those who "neglect such a great salvation." (2:3)

### Didactic (2:5 - 3:6)

Christ has universal dominion, Christ (not the angels) will control the future world (2:5); there is Scriptural precedent for Christ's universal rule (2:6-8). This universal dominion of Christ is based on His redemptive suffering (2:9-10), and based on His incarnate identification with mankind (2:11-18) through which Christ broke the power of Satan and gave spiritual victory to mankind.

Based on Christ's person ('Son of God') and based on Christ's work of redemption (Sacrificial death), God has made Christ the Head over His own house - the faithful (3:1-6).

### Hortatory (3:6 - 4:16)

Since Christ is superior to the prophets (1:1-2), to the angels (1:4-14; 2:5), and to Moses (3:1-6), and since His creative power (1:2,3a,10,11) and redemptive work (1:3b;2:9,10) are mightily manifest, we believers (3:7)

are warned against hardening our hearts against God's love and mercy as the unbelieving Israelites did in the desert when God tested them (3:7-10). Believers under trial are warned not to allow their hearts to become hardened, evil, and unbelieving (3:12,13,15), following the example of the Israelites who forfeited the promise of God and reaped the wrath of God (3:11) because of unbelief. God's promises for salvation can only be fulfilled in the lives of those who are faithful to God to the end of life (3:14). Believers are to look at the example of the Israelite apostasy (3:16-19), as a warning against the perils of unbelief.

God's desire is universal salvation of mankind, but only those who experience salvation through persevering faith (4:1,2b,3,5,6) finally enter the eternal 'rest' of God (in heaven). "*There is a full complete rest still waiting for the people of God*" (Living Bible 4:9), but persistent disobedience makes it impossible finally to enter that rest (4:7-11).

The secret motives of our hearts (the true spiritual conditions) are fully known to God (4:12,13), but God has mercy upon us during our tests, if we continue to trust our Great High Priest who intercedes before the Father on our behalf. (4:14-16).

#### Didactic (5:1-10)

Christ, after the example of Aaron and the Aaronic priesthood, was called and chosen by God to be High Priest in behalf of sinning mankind. Through the humble obedience which Christ learned through suffering, He became the Giver of eternal life to all persons who obey Him.

#### Hortatory (5:11 - 6:20)

Obedience (described through the afore mentioned picture of Christ who suffered redemptively, (5:1-10) must be practiced in order to keep one from relapsing into spiritual infantilism, and to become mature in one's ability to understand the deep truths of God's Word, and in order for a believer to be mature in his ethical discernment (5:11-14).

Relapse into spiritual immaturity, as evidenced by failure to understand the deeper truths of God (6:1-3), can lead to a state of apostasy (6:4-6) and spiritual sterility (6:7-8); therefore, (negatively-speaking) because of the reality of this spiritual peril, and (positively-speaking) because of the trustworthiness of

God's saving promise and oath (as exemplified in God's faithful promise to Abraham and Abraham's response of faith to that promise (6:13-20), believers are urged to persevere in a life of faith and practical love (6:13-20), believers are urged to persevere in a life of faith and practical love (6:9-12) and not to become "sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." (6:12;RSV)

#### Didactic (7:1-10;18)

The lesser (Abraham, representing Levi and the total Aaronic priesthood), paid tithes to the greater (to Melchizedek, representing Jesus Christ). This shows the mighty saving purposes and redemptive blessings of the priesthood of Christ which has come to replace the weak Aaronic priesthood (7:6).

The superior and eternal priesthood of Christ has replaced the inferior and transient Aaronic priesthood (as shown by the fact that, humanly-speaking, Christ was descended from the tribe of Judah, not the priest-tribe of Levi (7:12-28).

The New Covenant of Grace, based on Christ's superior Heavenly priesthood (8:1-6), (as foretold in Jeremiah 31:31-34), has replaced the Old Covenant of Law. The New Covenant results in the forgiveness of sins and in a change of the human heart that issues forth in willing obedience to God's commands (8:7-13).

The transforming blood of the New Covenant is the blood of Christ, which blood was shed once-and-for-all as the eternally effective atonement for sins, in contrast to the oft-repeated blood sacrifices of animals in the Old Testament ritualistic sacrificial system (which was only a shadow of the heavenly tabernacle). (Hebrews 9:1-10; 18)

#### Hortatory (10:19 - 12:29)

Believers are exhorted to appropriate the wonderful provisions for Christ's atonement (Hebrews 10:19-23), and to persevere in love (10:24), in responsible christian fellowship (10:25) and in faithful suffering for the Lord (10:32-34), in view of the terrible possibility of falling away from the Savior through deliberate sinning, thus incurring the terrible judgment of God (10:26-31). Perseverance in the faith (i.e., continuing to trust the Lord for everything throughout one's entire lifetime) is the condition for the fulfillment of God's promise of final salvation to believers (Hebrews 10:35-38), and is

patterned for the present-day believers after the exemplary faith of Godly ancestors, some of whom exercised faith and thus enjoyed victory through deliverance from death (Hebrews 11:1-35a), and some of whom exercised faith and enjoyed victory in spite of death (Hebrews 11:35b-40).

Believers are exhorted to rid themselves of all known sin and to 'run with patience the race' that God has set before them, keeping encouraged as they look at the example of Jesus who suffered patiently at the hands of evil men (Hebrews 12:1-4).

Believers are exhorted to accept the corrective discipline of the Lord as remedial and redemptive and contributive to spiritual maturity, and not to become discouraged or rebellious when experiencing such discipline (12:1-11). Believers are exhorted to guard against various sins, (quarrelling, bitterness, immorality, spiritual indifference (12:14-17), and, in view of the holiness and justice of God (12:18-24), to maintain an unshakable faith and obedience (12:25-29).

#### Didactic (13:1-6)

Some practical aspects of Christian discipleship are briefly noted: The importance of maintaining brotherly love, the importance of hospitality to strangers, the importance of showing compassion to believers who are suffering for their faith, the importance of maintaining marital fidelity, the importance of being content rather than being greedy, the importance of affirming God's abiding presence which eliminates fear.

#### Hortatory (13:7-17)

Submission to the true spiritual leaders (verses 7,17), adherence to the true spiritual way (in contrast to the false way of legalism, verses 9-12), identification with Jesus' sufferings (verses 13-14), and the offering of praise and good works are all called for as appropriate human responses to the beautiful provisions and blessings of God's new covenant (described in the earlier portions of the Book).

#### Conclusion (13:18-25)

Personal appeal for the prayers of the Hebrew believers, and affirmation of God's power to the believers in the New and everlasting covenant, sealed with Christ's blood. Final appeal to heed the word of exhortation which has been the main purpose of the author in writing the Book of Hebrews. Closing benediction.

CHAPTER 23

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF 'PROMISES', 'CONDITIONS',  
AND 'WARNINGS' IN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

PROMISES & PROVISIONS

CONDITIONS & EXHORTATIONS

WARNINGS & PERILS

Hebrews 1:1-14

Jesus is creator and sustainer of universe (1:1,2), Heir of God (1:1) Incarnate manifestation of God's glory (1:3), atoning sacrifice for sin (1:3), resurrected and exalted Son (1:3).

Jesus is superior to the angels in every way (1:5-14) (warranted by Scriptural support), as demonstrated by His everlasting reign (1:8), by His creative power (1:10), by His everlasting person (1:11), by His immutability (1:12), by His victorious kingly reign (1:13), angels are servants of the redeemed (1:14).

Hebrews 2:1-4

"We must pay closer attention to what we have heard" (2:1)

possible to "drift away" from the message believers have heard.

Message was transmitted by angels (2:2)

The message was "declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him." (2:3)

We (believers) must not neglect the great salvation of the Lord (2:3)

If believers neglect the great salvation of the Lord, they shall not escape! (2:3)

Jesus' incarnation and atoning death (2:8-9) is the basis of restoring man to a proper relationship with God by which man is enabled to resume his God-given role of

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Domination over the universe ("putting everything in subjection under his feet" (2:5-8), especially verse 8).

Jesus' identification with mankind through the incarnation and Jesus' atoning sacrifice for mankind, is the basis for the believers' victory over sin (2:15) and over temptation (2:18).

"Holy brethren, who share in a heavenly call" (3:1)

Jesus "was faithful to him who appointed him" (3:2)

Jesus as Son of God's House is superior to Moses as servant of God's House (3:3-6)

"Holy brethren, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession." (3:1)

"And we are his house if we hold fast our confidence and pride in our hope." (3:6)

"Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, etc." (3:7-11)

It is possible for believers, like as in the case of the Israelites in the wilderness, to succumb to sin and to harden their hearts (to go astray in their hearts verse 10). "Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God." (3:12)

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CONDITIONS & EXHORTATIONS

WARNINGS & PERILS

"The promise of entering his rest remains" (4:1)

"There remains a sabbath rest for the people of God" (4:9)

"Exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today', that none of you maybe hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." (3:13)

"For we (believers) share in Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end." (3:14)

"let us fear lest any of you be judged to have failed to reach it" (4:1)

The good news of the message must "meet with faith in the hearers" (4:2)

"Let us therefore strive to enter that rest." (4:11)

Just as the unbelieving rebellious, disobedient Israelites (who broke the covenant obligations laid down in the Mosaic covenant) reaped the judgment of God, so believers, whose hearts have become hardened and disobedient, will also reap the judgment of God. Such apostates will never receive God's promised inheritance (in the heavenly 'promised land' of rest). (3:12-19)

It is possible (like as in the case of the unbelieving Israelites) for believers to receive the good news but subsequently to fail to enter God's eternal rest (heaven) because of falling into a state of persistent unbelief (and hardening of the heart), (4:5-7)

It is possible for believers to fall "by the same sort of disobedience" (4:11)

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"We have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens." (4:14)

We (believers) have a sympathizing and merciful High Priest, (4:15) and, therefore, "we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (4:16)

"being made perfect (through suffering) he became the source of eternal salvation...being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek." (5:9,10)

"...let us hold fast our profession." (4:14)

"Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace." (4:16)

Jesus, the Son, is the source of salvation "to all who obey him." (4:9)

Believers' obedience (learned, as in the case of Jesus, through suffering, 5:7,8) must be practiced in order to keep them from relapsing into spiritual infantilism (5:12,13), and in order for them to become mature in their

The thoughts and intentions of the hearts of all men are exposed by God's powerful, penetrating Word; "all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (4:12,13) (Implied: Disobedience (4:11) cannot be concealed, and a final accountability must motivate the believer to "strive to enter the rest" (4:11)

It is possible for one-time vital believers (those who "have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and

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The land can receive a blessing from God (6:7)

God will not overlook "your work and the love which you showed for his sake in serving the saints." (6:10)

ability to understand the deep truths of God's word, and in order for them to be mature in their ethical discernment (5:14)

"For land which has drunk the rain that often falls upon it, and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God." (6:7)

"And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness in realizing the full assurance of hope until the end." (6:11)

the powers of the age to come." 6:4-6) to commit apostasy, (which is described as a condition of persistent (note the use of the Greek present participles) hostility to Christ. i.e. crucifying the Son of God by continuing 'to hold him up to contempt.' (6:6)

Note the marginal reading of the American Standard Version: "It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, the while they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame." ("The present condition of deliberate, open hostility may conceivably be remedied and the persons renewed to repentance and salvation.... The ground which has yielded only thorns and thistles has already been adjudged worthless (verse 8), and is now rejected; but it is said to be only 'near to a curse'. It awaits eventual burning; but that fate as yet is only in prospect. Perhaps it may be averted." (Life In The Son; Shank: pg. 318,319)

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"So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he interposed with an oath so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us." (6:17-18)

God's trustworthy character and promises and mediatorial provisions are the basis for the believer's steadfast hope ("sure and steadfast anchor of the soul" 6:19)

Believers are to be "imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." (6:12)

Just as Abraham "having patiently endured, obtained the promise", so believers are to follow his example. (The Abrahamic Covenant was conditional: Abraham had to patiently endure if the promise was to be fulfilled!)

(Quote from "Life In The Son" by Shank

"Patient, enduring faith, like that of Abraham, is presented (6:11 ff/) as the sole alternative of the apostasy cited in verses 4-8. Such apostasy, an everpresent peril for the writer and his readers, was a peril also for Abraham. If he and "Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise" (11:9), had grown weary of "looking for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (verse 10) and of counting themselves "strangers and pilgrims on earth" (verse 13) seeking "a better country, that is, an heavenly" (verses 14,16), they could have returned to

It is possible for believers to become spiritually sluggish. (6:12)

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The lesser (Abraham, representing Levi and the total Aaronic priesthood), paid tithes to the greater (to Melchizedek, representing Jesus Christ). This shows subordination and inferiority of the Aaronic priesthood to the priesthood of Christ, as symbolized by Abraham's ancient actions toward Melchizedek (7:9-11). The greater (Melchizedek, representing Christ) blessed the lesser (Abraham, representing the O.T. priesthood with its human weaknesses and sins). This shows the mighty saving purposes and redemptive blessings of the priesthood of Christ which has come to replace the weak Aaronic priesthood (7:6).

"that country from whence they came out" (verse 15). Growing weary of setting their affection on things above, they could have returned to both the literal and the spiritual Ur of the Chaldees, dismissing the anticipation of "an heavenly country" and a "city which hath foundations" as of no practical consequence for the present."

"Consequently (because of the superior priesthood of Christ) he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to intercession for them." (7:25)

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The superior and eternal priesthood of Christ has replaced the inferior and transient Aaronic priesthood (as shown by the fact that, humanly-speaking, Christ was descended from the tribe of Judah, not the priest-tribe of Levi) (7:12-28). The New covenant of Grace, based on Christ's superior Heavenly priesthood (8:1-6), (as foretold in Jeremiah 31:31-34) has replaced the Old Covenant of Law. The New Covenant results in the forgiveness of sins and in a change of the human heart that issues forth in willing obedience to God's commands (8:7-13)

The transforming blood of the New Covenant is the blood of Christ, which blood was shed once-and-for-all as the eternally efficacious atonement for sins, in contrast to the oft-repeated blood sacrifices of animals in the O.T. ritualistic sacrificial system (which was only a shadow of the heavenly tabernacle). (Hebrews (9:1-10:18)

We have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way

"...how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." (9:14) —

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which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God...(10:19-21)

"he who promised is faithful." (10:23)

...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." (10:22)

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering...and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." (10:23-25)

"For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgment, and a fury of fire which will consume the adversaries." (Hebrews 10:27)  
(Note: "The word 'sin' is in the present participles which denotes not a single act of unbelief, but a state or condition of unbelief. Those

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"You knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one."  
(10:34)

"But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, etc."  
(20:32,33)

"Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is

described are those who...turn away from Christ and continue...to turn away...just as long as we continue in this state of willful apostasy we put ourselves beyond the possibility of forgiveness."

(Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews by Daniel Shepherdson, page 457 - 461)

It is possible for one-time believer to succumb to sin and to "spurn the Son of God and profane the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outrage the Spirit of grace," and as a result reap the terrible judgment of God. (10:29) (It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (10:31)

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"For yet a little while, and the coming one shall come and shall not tarry (10:37)

"But we are not of those who <sup>shrink</sup> back" (10:39)

The promises and blessings afforded to the faithful are multiple (as related in Hebrews 11):

Divine approval (verse 2), approved by God as righteous (verse 4), escape from death (special case of

promised." (10:35-36)

...but my righteous one shall live by faith (10:38)

Believers must "have faith and keep their souls." (10:39)

"For by it (faith) men of old received divine approval." (11:2)

"through (faith) he (Abel) received approval as righteous, God bearing witness by accepting his gifts." (11:4)

"By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death." (11:5) Enoch pleased God through his faith (11:5).

"And without faith it is impossible to please him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." (11:6)

...and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." (10:38)

Those who shrink back are destroyed (10:39). Perseverance in the faith (i.e., continuing to trust the Lord for everything throughout one's entire lifetime) is the condition for the fulfillment of God's promise of final salvation to believers (10:35-39) and is patterned for present-day believers after the exemplary faith of godly ancestors, some of whom, as a result of their faith, enjoyed victory through deliverance from death (11:1-35a), and some of whom, as a result of their faith enjoyed ultimate victory in spite of physical death (11:35b-40).

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Enoch, verse 5),  
pleasing God (verse  
5), becoming an heir  
of God's righteousness  
(verse 7) a God  
prepared city (heaven)  
(verse 16), etc., etc.

By faith, Noah saved  
his household from  
death (in the flood)  
and became an heir of  
the righteousness  
which comes by faith."  
(11:7)

The success of the  
life of Abraham and  
Sarah was because of  
the exercise of their  
faith in God  
(obedience to God)  
(11:8-12, 17-19)

The roll call of faith  
continues throughout  
the entire eleventh  
chapter of Hebrews.

"Therefore, since we  
are surrounded by so  
great a cloud of  
witnesses.....  
..

...let us also lay  
aside every weight,  
and sin which clings  
so closely, and let us  
run with perseverance  
the race that is set  
before us, looking to  
Jesus....."(12:2)

"Jesus the pioneer and  
perfector of our  
faith, who for the joy  
that was set before  
him endured the cross,  
despising the shame,  
and is seated at the  
right hand of the  
throne of God" (12:2)

"Consider him who  
endured from sinners  
such hostility against  
himself, so that you  
may not grow weary or  
faint-hearted."  
(12:3)

"My son, do not regard  
lightly the discipline  
of the Lord, nor lose  
courage when you are  
punished by him."  
(12:5)

"he (God) disciplines  
us for our good, that  
we may share his

"Lift your drooping  
hands and strengthen  
your weak knees, and

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holiness" (12:10)

make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed." (12:12,13) "Strive for peace with all men, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." (12:14) "See to it that no one fail to obtain the grace of God; that no 'root of bitterness' spring up and cause trouble and by it the many become defiled; that no one be immoral or irreligious like Esau." (12:15,16)

It is possible for a "root of bitterness" to spring up and cause trouble in a believer's life, resulting in the many becoming defiled." (12:15)

"You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel." (12:22-24)

"See that you do not refuse him who is speaking." (12:25)

"For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven." (12:25)

"Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.....

....and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and

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"he has said, 'I will never fail you nor forsake you.' Hence we can confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid; what can man do to me?'" (13:6)

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever." (13:18)

"Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood." (13:12)

awe:.....

"Let brotherly love continue." (13:1)

"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers." (13:2)

"Remember those who are in prison...and those who are ill-treated." (13:3)

"Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled (13:4).....

"Keep your life free from the love of money, and be content with what you have." (13:5)

"Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith." (13:7)

"Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings; for it is well that the heart be strengthened by grace." (13:9)

...for our God is a consuming fire." (12:29)

...for God will judge the immoral and adulterous." (13:4)

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"Therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp, bearing abuse for him."  
(13:13)

"Through him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name." (13:15)

"Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God."  
(13:16)

"Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you."  
(13:17)

"Pray for us...I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner."  
(13:18,19)

"Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in

"I appeal to you, brethren, bear with my word of exhortation."  
(13:22)

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his sight, through  
Jesus Christ: to whom  
be glory for ever and  
ever." (13:20-21)

"Grace be with all of  
you." (13:25)

CHAPTER 24

THUMBNAIL SKETCHES OF DOCTRINAL PATTERNS

## THUMBNAIL SKETCHES OF DOCTRINAL PATTERNS

### DID YOU KNOW ARMINIUS WAS A CALVINIST?

If you believe in the teachings of historic Methodism, you are an Arminian. But if you were scarcely aware of this fact, you are an uninformed Arminian. Fortunately, however, a few minutes of thoughtful reading can, to some degree, remedy the situation.

#### What is an Arminian?

An answer to this question must begin with the teachings of John Calvin, the great protestant reformer, because Arminianism was, first of all, a reaction to Calvinism. These teachings are simply summarized in what are called "The five points of Calvinism." They are:

#### Calvinism's Five Points

**Point One:** Even before creation, God foreordained the fall of the human race in order that He might show forth His mercy by saving a select number of individuals therefrom. Obviously, those not included in this selection were thereby predestined to be lost even before they existed.<sup>1</sup> This is called Predestination or, more accurately, Double Predestination.

**Point Two:** The atonement of Christ, which was to be the basis for salvation, needed only to include those whom God had already chosen to save. All others, therefore, would be excluded. This is aptly titled a Limited Atonement.

**Point Three:** The corruption of man by sin was so complete that it left him without the ability even to call on God for mercy. This is termed Total Depravity.

**Point Four:** But since God had already chosen to save certain ones, he would call them to salvation in such a way that they would be unable to resist His call. The name for this is Irresistible Grace or Effectual Calling.

**Point Five:** Finally, and very logically, those who were thus called and saved would be unable ever to fall away and be lost. This is called The Perseverance of the Saints.

<sup>1</sup>The late B.B. Warfield, a former Calvinistic authority, states the following, "In point of fact, there is and can be no difference among Calvinists as to the inclusion of the fall in the decree of God."

## Cast-Iron Logic

These five points can be seen to compose a "cast-iron" system of logic. But locked into them is a conception of God which is austere and forbidding. One is saved or lost by eternal decree! It is not surprising that when this idea of "fixed-fate" laid hold of a poet of another century, he was moved to write,

"God, ever merciful and just  
With newborn babes did Tophet<sup>1</sup> fill;  
Down into endless torments thrust  
Merely to show His sovereign will.  
This is that Horrible Decree!  
This is that wisdom from beneath!  
God (O detest the blasphemy!)  
Hath pleasure in the sinner's death."

But in spite of its austerity Calvinism spread rapidly. By the end of the sixteenth century it had fanned out in all directions from Geneva but its strength had become particularly concentrated in the Netherlands. There, something startling happened. A Dutchman named Koornkeerts infuriated the Dutch clergy by attacking Calvinism in his writings.

Such an attack was not allowed to go unchallenged. A brilliant and well trained young Calvinist, Jacobus Arminius, was asked to answer Koornheerts. This he set about to do, but his study of the subject only convinced him that Calvinism was indefensible. From his thorough search of the Scriptures was born a view out of harmony with austere Calvinism.

### Arminianism's Five Points

A struggle followed but Arminius did not live to see it resolved. The "five points of Arminianism," however, are based on his writings. They are:

**Point One:** God wants to save all men. Those who respond to the call of His Spirit are the elect or the predestinated.

**Point Two:** Christ died for all men. The atonement is adequate for the whole race generally and every man individually. Therefore, the atonement is universal in its scope.

**Point Three:** Mankind, it is true, is corrupted by sin or totally depraved, but God extends to every man a grace which enables him to turn to Christ for forgiveness. This is called Preventient Grace - the grace that goes before.

**Point Four:** Because man is truly a free moral agent, he may, if he chooses, resist the grace of God. This is termed Resistible Grace.

<sup>1</sup>He11.

**Point Five:** Because man does not surrender this freedom when he is saved, he is able (though less likely than many preachers imply) to renounce his faith and be lost. Arminius was of the firm conviction that all men are free moral agents both before and after they are converted.

### What Is an Arminian?

Obviously, these five points are an answer to Calvinism. But they are more! They are a positive affirmation that God loves all men, that Christ died for all men, and that no man is excluded from salvation unless he excludes himself by willful unbelief.

That was the truth that gripped the hearts of the Wesleys over a century after the death of Jacobus Arminius. The fire in the soul of early Methodism was the conviction that, God "is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9b). And this is still the abiding mood of a true "Wesleyan-Arminian."

What, then is an Arminian?

An Arminian is one who believes that God, in Christ, extends His love to all men and that each one must accept personal responsibility for his attitude toward that love.

Don Bastian

### CENTURIES AFTER CALVIN AND ARMINIUS

The Calvinism commonly encountered today is something less than the "high" Calvinism of John Calvin, even as the Arminianism of the Wesleyan movement is something more than the Arminianism developed by followers of Arminius after his death. Harsh doctrine has been bled from the former, and warmth of spirit has been infused into the latter.

Arminius revolted from the rigid predestinarianism of Calvinism which held that man is saved or lost by God's arbitrary election from all eternity, without regard to man's faith and obedience. This doctrine Arminius opposed on grounds of Scripture. He was one of the most scholarly men of his or any age, and his Biblical insight and keen logic disturbed the scholastic reasoning of Calvinists who falsely charged him with being heretical.

After the great leader's death, some who called themselves his followers did wander into Pelagian rationalism, arguing that man never fell and therefore is born free from original sin. Thus they corrupted the teachings of Arminius and anticipated aspects of the liberal theology of today which exalts man and denies his need of salvation through the death

of Christ on Calvary. Calvinists to this day sometimes identify Arminianism with liberalism, as did one who expressed to me his surprise that I could be Arminian and at the same time evangelical.

### Wesleyan Arminianism

A century after Arminius came the Wesleys who met the distortions of liberal Arminianism with two teachings, (1) the necessity of a transforming experience of pardoning grace for sins committed, and (2) the operation of cleansing grace to remove the stain of "inbred sin." We may say that Wesleyanism is original Arminianism baptized with the Holy Spirit! Thus the Methodist movement restored and vivified Arminianism.

Not only did the Wesleyan movement restore Arminian orthodoxy and infuse it with the power of the Spirit, but its impact upon glacial Calvinism was so effective, both by its spiritual warmth and its theological and Biblical arguments, that by the close of the nineteenth and opening of the twentieth century leading Calvinistic bodies had been forced to revise some of their creeds in line with the "whosoever" of John 3:16. Early Methodists declared salvation for all with such radiant fervor and convincing logic that rigid Calvinism began to yield and its basic doctrine of "predestination" or deterministic "election" was rather generally abandoned.

### Today's Neo-Calvinism

From "high" Calvinism's primary doctrine of "predestination" had flowed a secondary doctrine of "the final perseverance of the saints." Obviously, once grant the premise that God chooses from all eternity those who will be saved, then nothing can prevent the final salvation of these "elect." But when the basic doctrine of "election" was abandoned, logically the secondary doctrine of "perseverance" likewise fell.

But strangely enough, some in the Calvinistic tradition retained the dependent doctrine of "perseverance" after its foundation doctrine of "election" had collapsed. That old doctrine of "perseverance" now survives as "eternal security," a doctrine with varying interpretations according to its different advocates, but all interpretations agreeing that once a person becomes a Christian he can never be lost. Strange logic! According to this position not God but man decrees in effect by one act of choice his own eternal "election" to salvation. As a rebel against God he was once free to choose or reject salvation, but now as a Christian he is not free to choose another eternal destiny!

The old foundation of "perseverance" having given way, these Neo-Calvinists sought a new basis for "eternal security" in isolated passages of Scripture to which they gave strained interpretations. Claiming to accept the Scriptures literally,

they nevertheless resorted to fantastic figurative devices to bolster their positions, and too often seem to have taken the uninspired footnotes of some authoritarian editor of the Bible in the place of the plain teaching of the Bible text.

### By Way of Summary

Without claiming completeness and only in general terms, let us note the three channels of doctrine in this day that as intelligent and sincere Christians we should carefully distinguish.

1. Liberal Arminianism is the essential position of liberal theology which minimizes or denies the basic fact of man's fall and his inbred sin and therefore exalts Jesus as an example more than Christ as a Redeemer.
2. Neo-Calvinism, which has surrendered "high" Calvinism's basic doctrine of "predestination" but retains its secondary doctrine of "election" under the name "eternal security," resting the same on the insecure basis of isolated "proof-texts." These "proof-texts," taken out of their context, sometimes distort the clear teaching of the Bible as a whole and open the way for Antinomianism, or security in sin after salvation.
3. Wesleyan Arminianism, which is the original Arminian doctrine infused with the warmth of the Holy Spirit. It opposes the Pelagianism of liberalism by its insistence upon the necessity of a Redeemer because of man's historic fall and his present sins, and opposes the Antinomianism of Calvinism by maintaining the doctrine of deliverance from the taint of inbred depravity and grace to enable man to live without willful sinning.

### In Any Case-Christian Courtesy

What should be the attitude and relationship of Wesleyan Arminians to those in the other two groups?

First, let us remember that in both groups may be found some who are better than their doctrines require and who may indeed be Christian in life.

Second, while graciously tolerant of those who believe another doctrine, let us remember that in the long run what we believe will powerfully influence our lives; and to guard against the errors of others let us seek to understand clearly our own doctrines and their grounding in Scripture.

Third, let us live up to our doctrines so that our lives and our radiant Christian experience will carry conviction to our friends that a pure heart and life are indeed provided by God's abundant grace and can be maintained by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Leslie R. Marston  
A Bishop of the Free Methodist Church

## THUMBNAIL SKETCHES of DOCTRINAL PATTERNS - DISCUSSION

1. Briefly, state the five points of Calvinism, and explain why these five points can be seen as a "cast-iron" system of logic. Is it true to say that "Double Predestination" is the basic premise in the entire theological system of Calvinism, and that each of the other four sequential points in the Calvinistic system are corollaries?
2. At the end of the sixteenth century, when the teaching of Calvinism was spreading fast, who came to the forefront in his opposition of Calvinism, and what were the events that lead to this startling opposition?
3. Briefly state the five points of Arminianism, and share verses from Scripture which document the truth of this theological system.
4. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "No man is excluded from salvation unless he excludes himself by willful unbelief."
5. In what way was Jacob Arminius' teachings corrupted by some of his followers, following the death of Arminius? How doctrinally did the Wesleys counter these distortions of Arminianism? What effect did John Wesley's clear Biblical teachings have upon Calvinist theology by the close of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries?
6. If the basic Calvinistic doctrine of "election" is abandoned, is it possible logically to retain belief in the secondary Calvinistic doctrine of "perseverance" (i.e., the doctrine of "unconditional eternal security")? Why or why not?
7. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Once a person becomes a Christian he can never be lost." Give Scriptural support for your answer.
8. Briefly summarize the main teachings of the these following theological positions, regarding God, man, sin, and Jesus Christ: (A) Liberal Arminianism, (B) Neo-Calvinism, (C) Wesleyan Arminianism.
9. What should be the attitude and relationship of Wesleyan Arminians to those in the other two groups?



CHAPTER 25

THE DOUBLE WILL OF GOD

## THE DOUBLE WILL OF GOD

God's perfect will is the salvation of all, but the exercise of God's perfect will is not determinative, absolute, irresistible, inevitable, unconditional. God's perfect will (i.e., the salvation of all persons) must always be studied with God's permissive will in view (i.e., God permits any man to reject His salvation, and, as a result, reap God's judgment). Is God's perfect will ever frustrated? Yes, for if it were not, all men would be saved! His perfect will is frustrated to the extent that wicked men, who are capable of repentance, refuse to repent! When men refuse to repent (or when I, a believer, refuse to resist the devil and instead succumb to sin even though divine resources are available to me), God's perfect will is frustrated and God's permissive will is operative. God limits Himself by permitting the genuine exercise of human will.

God has foreknowledge of my sins, but He does not in any way determine my sins. His perfect will is holiness of life for every man, but His permissive will allows men to disobey and to sin and ultimately to be lost!

God wills that all men be saved! He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (II Peter 3:9). When the Bible describes God's will for universal salvation, the 'universal' must not be reduced in meaning to 'some'. God wills to save all; Christ died for all; the Holy Spirit calls all to repentance. Why are not all going to be saved in the end? Because God 'permits' man to exercise free will in rebellion against God's saving purpose. God's perfect will is the salvation of all, but the exercise of God's perfect will is not determinative, absolute, irresistible, inevitable, unconditional. The realization of God's perfect will is determined by the reception of God's universal offer of salvation by all men.

Calvin's doctrine of predestination of the righteous necessarily involves God's predestination of the wicked! The God of Calvin is arbitrary, unjust, cruel, and tyrannical when God's actions are not concealed behind the cloud of 'God's inscrutable purposes'. Much is incomprehensible concerning God, but not God's universal saving purpose and Christ's unlimited atonement! Every man can be saved if he will. Christ is able to save to the uttermost - and this includes everyone! God cannot desire the salvation of all persons (the Biblical teaching regarding God's desired or perfect will) and at the same time determine the sin and perdition of some men! Notes Robert Shank: "Calvin's thesis of unconditional particular election and reprobation is predicated on a misapprehension of the import of Romans 9:6-29 which is in radical contradiction of both context (9:30 - 11:36) and the central thesis of the Epistle to the Romans, 'The just shall live by faith' (1:17)." (Elect in the Son; pg.223) From the fatal misapprehension of Romans 9:6-29 is derived the assumption of

monothetism - determinism, the concept so apparent in Calvin's definition of election...Calvin's doctrine of election and the unwarranted assumptions of monothetism - determinism - monergism on which it is predicated must be rejected. Confounding predestination with election, denying the authentic agency of Christ in election in its full dimension, positing as in abstracted election in which the atonement is symbolic and accessory, Calvin's doctrine of election rests on serious misapprehensions and misconstructions of scripture." (Elect In The Son; by Robert Shank; pg. 223, 224, 226)

"It is difficult to read at length from Calvin without concluding that he was master at eating his cake and having it too. The left hand giveth, and the right hand taketh away. Calvin's difficulty stemmed from the fact that he labored under an erroneous fundamental assumption. His cardinal error was his failure to acknowledge that the will of God has more than a single aspect, which led to his consequent denial that God desires to have all men to be saved. It is apparent from his writings that Calvin reasoned thus: If God truly wished all men to be saved, then all men would be saved. But most men are not saved. Therefore, we must conclude that God does not wish all men to be saved. Calvin's logic is unassailable; but it is based on the erroneous assumption that the will of God has but a single aspect.

"Calvin deplored the fact that his opponents ...`recur to the distinction between will and permission, the object being to prove that the wicked perish only by the permission, but not by the will of God'. Certainly anything within His permission is within God's will. But this does not establish the fact that His will has but a single aspect. All that occurs in the universe is within the permissive will of God. Neither men nor angels nor devils can go beyond the limits of God's permissive will. But it is by no means true that all that occurs is in accord with the perfect will of God.

"One may argue that, since the world is filled with greed, lust, violence, debauchery, hatred, and impenitence, God evidently wishes it to be so and is well pleased. But the scriptures declare otherwise. Although God allows these things to exist in the world, He has revealed His displeasure and wrath with respect to all such things and has commanded all men to repent. Thus it is evident that there are two aspects of the will of God with respect to sin: His permissive will allows it; but His perfect will forbids it and will bring all sin into judgment.

"There are two aspects of the will of God for men with respect to salvation. Numerous scriptures reveal God's perfect will to `have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth' (I Timothy 2:4); but the fact that not all men are saved reflects God's permissive will. If a man is saved, it is in accordance with God's perfect will that all men should be saved; if a man is lost, it is in accordance

with God's permissive will that men, being free moral agents rather than mere puppets, may refuse to obey Him. The latitude between God's perfect will and His permissive will is the area within which men function with freedom as responsible moral intelligences, accountable before God in solemn judgment. God is at work in humanity 'bringing many sons unto glory' (Hebrews 2:10) through the redemptive process rooted in His grace and wrought in Christ. But as moral intelligences created in His image, men must of their own free will concur in God's redemptive process if they are to share His everlasting glory as His sons. The fact that men are responsible, as free moral agents, is a corollary of the fact that the will of God has two aspects, rather than one.

"The fact that the will of God has two aspects, rather than one, is fully apparent in numerous passages of scripture. Consider the following: 'If any man wills to do His will, he shall know...' (John 7:17). 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father...' (Matthew 7:21). 'But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel (boule, purpose) of God for them, being not baptized of John' (Luke 7:30). According to the scriptures, much that happens is contrary to the will of God, it is evident that the will of God has two aspects, rather than one."

Life In The Son, by Robert Shank, pgs. 347-349

## Chapter 25

### The Double Will of God

#### Discussion:

1. Because God is Almighty (Sovereign) and because God wills that none should perish (II Peter 3:9), can we conclude that all in the end will ultimately be saved (universalism)? Why or why not? What is the meaning of God's sovereignty as it relates to the exercise of man's free will?
2. If God wills to save all persons, if Christ died for all persons, and if the Holy Spirit calls all persons to repentance, then why are not all persons going to be saved in the end?
3. If God has only one will (i.e., a perfect will), instead of two wills (i.e., a permissive will as well as a perfect will), is it not true that one logically is forced to believe in either Predestination (i.e., that God wills to save some and to damn others) or in universalism (i.e., that God will save all persons ultimately)?
4. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "God's perfect will (i.e., the salvation of all persons) must always be studied with God's permissive will in view (i.e., God permits men to reject His salvation and, as a result, reap God's judgment)."
5. What is the difference between God's predestination and God's foreknowledge?
6. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The sovereignty of God operates in the final judgment when the righteous will be rewarded and the wicked will be punished."
7. Is it not true that if God predestines only some to be saved, that He necessarily predestines others to be lost, and thus God becomes (if this were true) the author of sin (because some persons are under the compulsion to sin if these persons have no genuine choice not to sin)? Does not such a view of Predestination cause one to conclude that God is arbitrary in His decisions and unjust and cruel in His treatment of those whom He has 'willed' to condemn? Does the New Testament teach that God is arbitrary, unjust, cruel, or tyrannical in His treatment of mankind?
8. What evidence can you cite from scripture, and from observation of the human situation, to document the fact that there are two aspects of the will of God with respect to sin and salvation?

9. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The latitude between God's perfect will and His permissive will is the area within which men function with freedom as responsible moral intelligences, accountable before God in solemn judgment."

CHAPTER 26

LIFE IN THE SON

## "LIFE IN THE SON"

SCRIPTURE: JOHN 15:1-12

TEXT: "I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." (John 15:5)

INTRODUCTION: "And here at last we find strict diagnosis of our malady, which is, in short, that man is heaven-starved - men are born thirsting for infinity."

### I. PROVISION OF LIFE

(Jesus Christ Alone is the Source of All Life)

Life - real real - is found only in the Son. Many there are who are seeking to find life outside of the Son - in the world. Man is built to worship - someone or something. The world's gods (materialism, secularism, worship of science, worship of human nature which is humanism, and sensualism) - none of these satisfy the questing of the human spirit which is made only for God.

Christ came to give life and life more abundant and free. Said Jesus to God, his Father, "For you have given him authority over every man and woman in all the earth. He gives eternal life to each one you have given him." (John 17:2) God desires to save all, to give life to all. Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly." "I am the way, the truth, and the life", said Jesus. "Eternal life is in him, and this life gives light to all mankind." (John 1:4) "The Father has life in himself, and has granted his Son to have life in himself." (John 5:26) "Jesus told her, 'I am the one who raises the dead and gives them life again. Anyone who believes in me, even though he dies like anyone else, shall live again.'" (John 11:25)  
(Illustrate by showing that new-born babe has many provisions through parents)

#### 1. Requests granted (prayer answered) - verse 7.

G. Campbell Morgan: "I am going to render it a little differently. 'If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall demand as your due whatever you are inclined to, and it shall be generated unto you.' That rendering is certainly warranted, and is an amazing statement. But do not let us forget the flaming sword which guards the way. If ye abide in Me: If we do that, what then? You shall demand as your due. The Greek word certainly warrants that rendering. It is one of the strongest words used with regard to prayer. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, utter your demands, whatever you are inclined to. It shall be done, and the word means generated, caused to be; creative power shall operate. If we are abiding in Him, and His

words are abiding in us, we shall not be inclined to anything out of harmony with His will. That is the condition. But if we are there; then we may demand as our due, and God generates, if necessary, that which is so demanded, as the result of living union with Christ." (Gospel According to John)

2. Fruitfulness in character and reproductive power (born to reproduce). (v. 8)
3. Father's love and security (sense of God's security). (vs. 9,10)
4. Fullness of joy (v. 11)

A right relationship with God puts one right with the moral laws of the universe and puts one right within himself. The man who can live at peace with God and in love with his fellow man, is the truly happy person. A branch vitally attached to the Vine is a healthy, cooperative and "happy" branch.

If Christ has provided such a wonderful life, it is important to know the method or the process by which this eternal life can be obtained and maintained.

There are three ways in which this happens -

- (1) By Grafting (Conversion),
- (2) By Abiding,
- (3) By Pruning.

## II. PROCESS OF LIFE

(Methods by which spiritual life is appropriated)

1. By Grafting.

The Vine is Jesus, who possesses life and maintains it as a right of his unique Sonship. The branches have life inasmuch as they are vitally attached (grafted) to the Vine. "In grafting it is imperative that the cambium layers of vine and branch are united and held thus until the life from the vine enters the branch. In the spiritual realm this involves a confession, a surrender, saving commitment of the soul to Christ who henceforth becomes Lord in every realm of life. This initial union with Christ is followed by the constant coming of the life-energy of Christ into the believer, progressively sanctifying and confirming him in this new relationship." (Turner; Commentary on John; pg. 296)

## 2. By Abiding (vs. 4,5)

John 6:56,57: "Whoever continues to eat my flesh and drink my blood continues to live in union with me and I in union with him. Just as the living Father has sent me and I live because of the Father, so whoever keeps on eating me will live because of me." (Williams)

Said Jesus: "Abide in me, and I in you" (John 15:4) From this we learn: "The mutual indwelling of the disciples and the Saviour is dependent upon the volition of the disciples. The indwelling of Christ within the disciples is presented as the corollary of their abiding in Him." (Robert Shank; Life In The Son; pg. 43)

The important question is this: "How do I maintain this living relationship with Christ?"

### (A) Obedience to Commands (v. 10).

"And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us." (Read John 14:15,21,23,26 Comment on verses 21 and 23) - "Love and obedience are mutually interdependent. Love prompts and is best expressed by obedience. 'Obedience proves love and secures love in return'." (Turner; pg. 302) Habitual obedience proves love; constant love results in habitual obedience. (The continuous tenses are used in these verses)

### (B) Love of Brethren - read John 13:35; 15:12; Heb. 13:1; I John 4:7

### (C) Unity among Brethren - John 17:20-21; Eph. 4:3; I Peter 3:8

### (D) Sanctified in the Truth - John 17:17

### (E) Continued Belief - John 1:12

"The issue is complete on the part of God, but man must bring it to pass by continuous exertion" (Westcott). This promise of adoption is given to those who continue to believe. John 6:29: "Answered Jesus and said to them, this is the work of God, that you continually be believing on Him whom that one sent off on a mission." (Wuest) John 20:31 (present tense in both words) - the believing one is having eternal life as he is believing. "The word 'abide' is an important one in this gospel. It occurs a total of forty times here as compared with only twelve in the other three gospels. It is used to indicate 'staying, living, dwelling, continuing, persisting, remaining and awaiting.'" (Turner; pg. 298)

3. By Pruning. (v. 2b,3)  
(Illustrations from nature common to all - pruning tomato plants in garden, etc.) "Let us get nearer to Him and He will see to the fruit." (Maclaren) What should be pruned?

(A) The Bad.

Sin must immediately be confessed. (Proverbs 28:13 says: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Remember I John 1:9 and 2:1.

(B) Some of the good which hinders growth into the best.

"The skillful vinedresser knows that many healthy branches must be removed if fruit rather than foliage is desired. These are 'good' branches in that they are healthy, vigorous, and beautiful, but if they are too numerous they must be severed from the vine the same as the diseased branches. ....Christians are to be useful rather than merely ornamental; they should be fruitful...The alert believer is always concerned lest 'the good become the enemy of the best.'...To a Christian who is well-informed and eager to be at his best for the Master, the usual question will not be 'What is wrong with this?' but rather, 'Will this help make me more Christ-like, more useful in his kingdom?' To the person intent on being 'well-pleasing in his sight' many 'good' things will be 'pruned' to make room for the 'best'." (Turner; John; pg. 299, 300)

Taking away that which saps growth means setting priorities.

- (1) In Time - 'Teach me to number my days that I might get a heart of wisdom'. 'Redeem the time for the days are evil', or 'Buy up every opportunity to do good'. One man "reduced a normal life to the length of one day in order to test how far he was forward on the pilgrimage of life. He assumed that life was seventy years and that a normal day runs from seven o'clock in the morning till eleven o'clock at night. That being so, he worked it out roughly like this: At 20 years of age it is half-past eleven; at 30 it is two o'clock; at 40 it is four o'clock; at 50, half-past six; at 60, a quarter to nine. What time is it for you?" (Sangster) "Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

- (2) In Possessions (food, house, clothing) - Do I discipline the use of my possessions to get maximum benefit out of them for the good of man and the glory of God, or do I simply use them to bring glory to myself? John Wesley posed these questions: "Didst thou use thy food, not so as to seek or place thy happiness therein, but so to preserve thy body in health...a fit instrument of thy soul? Didst thou use thy apparel, not to nourish pride or vanity, much less to tempt others to sin, but conveniently and decently to defend thyself from injuries of the weather? Didst thou prepare and use thy house, and all other conveniences, with a single eye to my glory? In every point seeking not thy own honour, but mine....?" (Mary Alice Tenny; Blueprint For a Christian World; pg.124)
- (3) In Reading - Do the books I read benefit me, and re-sult in enabling me to help others more? "The rules which Wesley early adopted might advantageously be followed by anyone who desires the utmost returns from books. They were: First, to consider what knowledge you desire to attain to: Secondly, to read no book which does not some way tend to the attainment of that knowledge; Thirdly, to read no book which does tend to the attainment of it, unless it be the best in its kind; Fourthly, to finish one before you begin another; and, Fifthly, to read them all in such order that every subsequent book may illustrate and confirm the preceding." Ibid. (Tenney;pg.142)
- (4) In Amusements - Concerning Amusements, ask yourself these questions: "First, does my love for this amusement surpass my love of God and does the time spent upon it rob me of time or energy I should spend in His service? Secondly, does this amusement contribute directly or indirectly to the development of my Christian character? Thirdly, does this amusement have in it any element that will harm either myself or another?" (Ibid; pg. 159)
- (5) In Money - Ask yourselves these questions:
1. Do I realize that money is a good servant, but a terrible master?
  2. Do I realize that it is better to be rich by having fewness of needs rather than being rich by having abundance of possessions?
  3. Do I realize that after all my needs are met, then all I make belongs to other people's needs?
  4. Do I realize that the tithe belongs to God?
  5. Remember this motto: "Earn all you can; save all you can; give all you can."

Thou art the Vine,  
 And I, O Jesus, am a branch of Thine;  
 And day by day from Thee  
 New life flows into me.  
 Naught have I of my own,  
 But all my strength is drawn from Thee alone.  
 As, severed from the tree, the branch must die.  
 So even I  
 Could never live this life of mine  
 Apart from Thee, O divine Vine;  
 But Thou dost dwell in me,  
 And I in Thee:  
 Yea, Thine only life through me doth flow,  
 And in Thyself I live and Grow.

-E.H. Rival1

John 15 can be looked at in terms of three words: PROVISION of life, PROCESS of life, and PERIL of life. Christ is the only provision of life in contrast to the world's false provisions (Materialism, Secularism, worship of Science, Humanism, Sensualism). Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He is the very essence of Life. Christ answers prayers (v.7), Christ produces fruitfulness in character and reproduction (v.8), Christ gives love and security (v.9,10), and Christ gives fullness of joy (v.11).

What is the process of life? (1) Grafting (conversion), (2) Abiding, (3) Pruning. It might be good if this were as far as we could go in seeking to understanding this passage of scripture. So far the exposition has been full of promise and cheer. However, the 'shadowside of every promise is the condition'. 'If ye abide in me' is the condition. The scriptures are full of both promises and warnings. If we take the promises seriously, then we must also take the warnings seriously. To take the warning passages seriously assumes that there is a real possibility of falling, of spiritual apostasy. In other words, the security of the believer is real - but only for the believer (the one who continues to believe). Some say that apostasy is completely impossible for the true believer. But "completely absurd is the assumption that men are to be sincerely persuaded that apostasy is impossible and, at the same time, sincerely alarmed by the warnings." (Life In The Son; pg. 172 by Robert Shank)

John 15 contains a very serious warning - as well as many promises. The promises apply only to those who abide in the Vine (Christ). "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." (John 15:6)

Jesus Christ could not speak about the blessedness of fruitfulness and the joy of life in Himself without speaking about its necessary converse, the awfulness of separation from Him, of barrenness, and of destruction. (McLude) It is essential

Jesus said, "The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak; watch therefore that ye enter not into temptation." (Need for discipline: example of my mother who often went to prayer meeting even with a headache).

Need daily "quiet time". "Get away into the `secret place of the most high; and rise into a higher altitude and atmosphere than the region of work and effort; and sitting still with Christ, let His love and His power pour themselves into your hearts. `Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers and shut thy doors about thee.' Get away from the jangling of politics, and empty controversies and busy distractions of daily duty. The harder our toil necessarily is, the more let us see to it that we keep a little cell within the central life where in silence we hold communion with the Master. `Abide in Me and I in you.'" (Alexander Maclaren; pg.13 John)

"The best way to secure Christian conduct is to cultivate communion with Christ." (Ibid; 13)

"Get more of the sap into the branch, and there will be more fruit." (13)

"First of all be, and then do; first of all receive, and then give forth; first of all draw near to Christ and then there will be fruit to His praise." (pg. 14)

"We may cultivate individual graces at the expense of the harmony and beauty of the whole character." (13,14)

2. Because of Failure to Trust and Obey God Alone.

"Are we bearing fruit? No amount of ascetic discipline or devotional fervour is a substitute for the practical obedience which alone is 'fruit'." "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away." (v.2a) "Apart from Him, I can do nothing. All fruit that I ever bear or can bear comes wholly from His life within me, No particle of it is mine as distinct from His. Whatever has its ultimate origin in myself is sin." (William Temple; pg. 251; Readings in St. John's Gospel)

(a) Some trust riches instead of Christ.

(b) Some compromise their standards and succumb to influences of world.. (Read I John 2:15-16) "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (II Corinthians 6:17-18) "Be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds." (Romans 12:2)

Wrote Paul in sadness: "Demas, in love with this present world, hath forsaken me," What a tragedy - that a onetime disciple and companion of Paul would become infatuated with the world and leave Christ's work! May we guard our own hearts! A passionless heart is a dangerous thing!

"May thy rich grace impart  
Strength to my fainting heart.  
My zeal inspire;  
As Thou hast died for me,  
O may my love to thee  
Pure, warm and changeless be,  
A living fire!"

"Teach me to love thee as thine angels love,  
One holy passion filling all my frame;  
The baptism of the heaven-descended Dove,  
My heart an altar, and thy love the flame."

3. Because of a cooling of love toward God or toward one's fellow man.

to our spiritual health to be aware of the dangers to that spiritual health. Let us face honestly the perils to life and carefully guard against those perils.

### III. PERIL OF LIFE

(Possibility of Being Severed From the Vine)

"The consequences of failure to abide in Christ are

(1) fruitlessness:

`As a branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the Vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me... for apart from me ye can do nothing' (vs.4b,5c); and

(2) removal:

`Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away... If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them and cast them in to the fire, and they are burned' (vs.2a,6). Robertson comments: `The apostles are thus vividly warned against presumption. Jesus as the Vine will fulfill his part of the relation as long as the branches keep in vital union with him.'"

1. Because of Failure to Attend Upon God (or Wait Upon God)

"When a mortal goes to God for forgiveness and the Holy Spirit, he must receive the gift and, if he is wise, receive it daily for each new day as it comes. That is where discipline comes into the holy life; not the toilsome, straining, failing effort to be good; but the faithful attending on God to receive....The fact of one high moment cannot secure holiness for ever; it is a life of intimate relationship (which issues in mystic indwelling) and faithfulness shows itself in our consistency in attending... Most Christians reverse Wesley's order. Enlightenment comes first and they need to forge the discipline afterwards. Some fail to do it, and the precious thing they found slips from them. They may even come to doubt if they discovered any secret at all, and in chill cynicism write it off as the ebullience of adolescence. They have ceased to wait upon God and this is the heavy price. There can be no continuance of the holy life in the soul of any man who does not continually wait on God." (Sangster's Daily Readings; pg. 188)

To be kept vitally attached to the Vine, "it will mean arranging life, arranging prayer, arranging silence in such a way that there is never a day when we give ourselves a chance to forget Him." (Barclay's John; pg. 205)

The one who persists in carrying a grudge towards others, eventually severs himself from the Vine. One cannot love God and at the same time hate his fellowman. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love....If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." (I John 4:7,8,20-21)

Love of God will manifest itself in love of the brethren. The vertical relationship cannot exist without the horizontal relationship. One cannot call God 'Father' without calling his fellowman 'Brother'. Love for the Father cannot exist without love for the family. One's forgiveness from God is guaranteed on the basis of willingness to forgive one's brother. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:14,15) "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." "The forgiving grace of God cannot dwell in bitter, unforgiving hearts. He who refuses to forgive his brother has no real sense of need for the forgiveness of God and no just claim on His gracious forgiveness." (Robert Shank; pg. 40; Life In The Son) And those who are attached to the Vine are those who constantly sense their need of God's grace and forgiveness.

Continued attachment to the Vine depends upon loving cooperation among the branches.

#### CONCLUSION:

Continued failure to attend or wait upon God and avail oneself of the means of grace can cause one to be severed from the life-giving Vine. Failure to trust God and obey Him can cause the same. A cooling of one's love towards God or one's fellowman is a dangerous, perilous thing.

"There are three ways in which we can be useless branches. We can refuse to listen to Jesus Christ at all. We can listen to Him, and then render Him a lip service unsupported by any deeds. We can accept Him as Master and then, in face of the difficulties of the way, or moved by the desire to do as we like and not as He likes, we can abandon Him. But there is one thing we must remember. It is a first principle of the New Testament that uselessness invites disaster. And the fruitless branch is on the way to destruction." (Barclay's John; pg.204) "Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom."

## Chapter 26

### Life In The Son

#### Discussion:

1. List and describe some of the world's `gods', the worship of which brings no lasting satisfaction to the soul of man.
2. List as many scriptures as you can which clearly indicate that Jesus Christ is the very essence and source of abundant life.
3. What is God's promise in John 15:7, and what important condition must be met in order for one to expect the promise to be fulfilled?
4. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "If we are abiding in Him, and His words are abiding in us, we shall not be inclined to anything out of harmony with His will."
5. According to John 15:7-11, what wonderful benefits and blessings can this believer, who is in union with Christ, anticipate?
6. What, concretely speaking, does it mean for a person to be grafted into the Vine (Jesus Christ)?
7. According to John 15:4, is it possible for Christ to indwell a person if the person does not first exercise a positive volition to surrender himself to Christ (the Vine)? According to this verse, is it true that all persons (believer and non-believers) have the so-called `Christ spirit' within?
8. As used at least forty different times in the gospel of John, what does the word `abide' mean? What are some of the conditions which sincere believers must seek to meet in their daily lives if they intend `to abide' in the Son (Vine)?
9. When Jesus states that every fruitbearing branch in the Vine needs to be pruned in order that greater fruitfulness may result, what do you, practically speaking, think that `pruning' involves? (John 15:2b,3)
10. Illustrate from your own life or from your observations of the lives of productive Christians which you know, the meaning of the following statement: "To the person intent on being `well-pleasing in His sight' many `good' things will be `pruned' to make room for the `best'." What is meant by the statement: "The good may become the enemy of the best"?

11. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Completely absurd is the assumption that men are to be sincerely persuaded that apostasy is impossible and, at the same time, sincerely alarmed by the warnings."
12. What, according to John 15:6, is the terrible ultimate consequence to the one-time believer who chooses no longer to abide in the Vine?
13. Does the fact that it is possible for a one-time believer to sever himself from the Vine (by continued deliberate disobedience), conflict with one's understanding of God's sovereign power and His unconditional love for humanity? What is a proper understanding of the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's free will (both before and after a person's initial conversion to Christ)? Is it true to say that with every promise to be claimed in the Bible there is a corresponding condition to be met? Do you agree with the following statement: "Jesus as the Vine will fulfill His part of the relation as long as the branches keep in vital union with Him"? Can God's faithfulness "avail" for man's unfaithfulness? (II Timothy 2:12) Is it not true that God's faithfulness (in spite of man's unfaithfulness) is never 'in question' (II Timothy 2:13), but that it is possible for a faithless 'one-time-believer' to be disowned by God? (Note: The fact that a person has been disowned by God [because of faithlessness], does not call God's faithful character or His unconditional love into question. God continues unconditionally to love backslidders, but God cannot unconditionally 'keep' a person 'saved' if that person deliberately chooses to return to a life of sin and disobedience!)
14. Considering John 15:6, do you agree with the following statement by the great expositor Alexander MaClaren: "One of two things must befall the branch, either it is in the Vine or it gets into the fire. If we would avoid the fire let us see to it that we are in the Vine".
15. What is the meaning of and the place for 'discipline' in living the Christian life and in maintaining a vital relationship with Christ (the Vine)? Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "There can be no continuance of the holy life in the soul of any man who does not continually wait on God." Is it possible to have ascetic discipline and devotional behavior without the exercise of practical obedience in one's life?

16. What, to you, does it mean to get away into the 'secret place of the most high'? Why is the discipline of maintaining a 'daily quiet time' so important if one is to maintain his relationship with God?
17. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "All fruit that I ever bear or can bear comes wholly from His life within me. No particle of it is mine as distinct from His. Whatever has its ultimate origin in myself is sin." Does man have any inherent 'goodness' of his own, apart from Christ?
18. What are some of the perils which true believers must avoid if they are to maintain their relationship with God? (Note I John 2:15,16; II Corinthians 6:17,18; Romans 12:2; II Timothy 4:10; Revelation 2:4-6; 3:16; Hebrews 12:14-17; Matthew 6:14,15)
19. What, according to William Barclay, are three ways in which we can be useless branches?
20. Do you agree with the following statement by William Barclay? - "There is one thing we must remember. It is a first principle of the New Testament that uselessness invites disaster. And the fruitless branch is on the way to destruction."

## SECURITY FOR BELIEVERS

I was eighteen. I had a great desire to study about my faith. So I enrolled in a correspondence course distributed through a Bible institute in Los Angeles. I scored perfectly on each of the rather easy tests.

One lesson was labeled "The Position of the Believer." It taught an irreversible (eternal) security for anyone who accepted Christ. I gave the expected answers on the test. But I also wrote a letter expressing my objections to the teaching. I received a short letter assuring me that if I read the enclosed brochure I could not fail to be convinced.

The brochure said there were two views about the security of one's salvation.

One view was illustrated by the way a cat carries its young. The other view was illustrated by the way the monkey carries its young.

My Calvinistic friends who advocated irreversible and eternal security said their view was illustrated by the cat. A cat carries its kittens by mouth. If the kitten falls, it's the mother cat's fault.

The other view (supposedly mine) was illustrated by the monkey. If the little fellow fell off the back of its mother, it had no one to blame but itself. It should have hung on and been more careful.

That presentation demanded my response. So I wrote that the cat illustration probably was adequate for the view they taught. But the monkey illustration would never do for that which others and I believed.

Illustrations are helpful aids to understanding. But they must be carefully selected and carefully used. The Bible uses many illustrations. Often a single word or term is in fact an illustration, metaphor, or analogy. "Born again" is one of those illustrating words.

With this caution regarding illustrations or analogies in mind, I suggested to my teachers that their cat illustration taken seriously was a violation of plain biblical teaching. There could be no view of salvation which relieved the individual believer of responsibility for his relationship to God. Nor is it biblical or reasonable to blame God for our sins, apostasy, and neglect of Him. Indeed, one cannot save himself, but neither can one be saved apart from himself. We were created by God to be responsible and "respond-able."

Grace is the picture of God's givingness, of His reach out to savingly touch us. Faith is my response to His reach. My faith response is an acknowledgment of my sin, my inability to save myself, my need of a Saviour. "As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so live in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith..." (Colossians 2:6). What was required of me to "receive" Jesus is always required to continue and live (walk) in Him.

The cat illustration taken seriously makes God responsible for any break in the relationship with God. It relieves the individual of responsibility for continuing to respond to the grace of God. In many forms this error is spread today by well-intentioned but misled teachers. The Bible never relieves the individual believer of his responsibility for constant response to the grace (givingness) of God.

But what about the monkey illustration? It was a complete misunderstanding of what the Bible taught and of what I believed. Certainly I know of no evangelical who believes that my security is dependent alone on what I can do. But indeed my security is dependent on my response to what God can do for me. The monkey illustration is a distortion. God does not force me to be a believer or a receiver of Christ. But once I receive Christ and thereby begin a relationship with Him, I am not a little monkey hanging on for dear life. The illustration fails to indicate the believer's relationship to Christ.

I suggested an alternative illustration for what I and multiplied thousands believe. I said that while understanding the limitations of illustrations I would prefer that of the willing handclasp.

God offers His hand. He takes the initiative (grace). I respond by willingly placing my hand in His (faith). A new relationship is begun. He holds me as long as I want my hand to be in His. My security is illustrated by this common interlocking of hands by friends. The Bible vividly portrays the reconciliation which makes God and me friends.

But to suggest that God, having taken my hand, now says to me, "Ah, now I've got you; just try to get away; nothing you can ever do again can get you loose from me," is clear violation of the total biblical thrust and of the nature of relationships. My security is in the sustaining of our relationship, which has most of the characteristics of a human one except there is one party to the covenant who is unfailing and unchanging. God is constant and unchanging in His attitude and acts of "steadfast love." The constancy of our Lord does indeed beget a growing constancy in us as we "walk" or "live" in Christ.

I believe in the security of the believer. But it is conditional rather than unconditional. I am secure while I keep on believing, trusting, responding. To be secure in any other fashion would violate all that is meant by personal relationship and covenant.

I believe in the "perseverance of the saints" if they persevere in their relationship with Jesus as both Saviour and Lord. I believe that all the resources for persevering that were available to Jesus - the Holy Spirit, communion with the Father - are available to us. Indeed, we have the Word of God, the grace of God, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the church to help us persevere. We should most certainly be secure. But at no point in our personal history does God intend to depersonalize us by destroying our will, our power to choose, our capability of responding positively or negatively to our relationship with God.

The Bible beautifully uses marriage as an analogy of relationship to Christ. Christ, the Bridegroom, wants to give himself fully to the bride - the church. The meaning is both corporate (church) and individual. Commitment is two-way. The resulting covenant is two-way. The Bible also speaks of the violation of this relationship. Israel's going a whoring is an eloquent though horrible illustration of the facts of life. No one is unconditionally secure until he is ushered into the presence of Jesus to be with Him forever.

The teachers of unconditional security hold out false security in the name of the Bible. They appeal to illustrating Bible words. So they argue if you are once "born" you can't be "unborn." But "born" is used to beautifully illustrate the newness of life which the Christian experiences in a saving relationship with Jesus, not to erect a doctrine of false security. Once in a family as a son or daughter, always a member of the family is a similar distortion of analogy. In our natural life we had nothing to say about being born or becoming a member of a family. In our spiritual life we do, in fact, have the final say. We must be alert to the misuse of analogy, metaphor, and biblical illustration.

Proponents of unconditional security often appeal to John 10:27-29. The clincher is "shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand." True. No force outside the person can break the relationship. The same applies to their appeal to Romans 8:38-39. Indeed nothing can separate us from the love of God - except ourselves. (Read the previous verses and discover that the words are addressed to "more than conquerors," not violators of a relationship with Christ.)

Appeal is also made to the theory of imputation of righteousness. That means that we are not responsible for righteousness but that Christ's righteousness is by religious magic made ours despite our own flaws, sins, or apostasy. This makes a farce of the Christian faith by removing it from re-

ality. Advocates say, "When God looks at you He does not see you, for Christ stands between you and God. So your dirty rags are never seen, only the white raiment of Jesus." The trouble is that God sees us as we are at all times. We are not saved merely positionally. We are either really saved, transformed, and made new, or Christianity is hypocrisy. The righteousness of Christ is continually imparted to me as I respond to Him and permit the Holy Spirit to work within me. I can have a clean heart!

There are Bible passages which should shock those still clinging to the error of unconditional eternal security. Look at a few.

Examine the strong attack of Peter against false teachers who once clearly knew Jesus as Saviour and Lord. II Peter 2:20-22 is a direct and conclusive contradiction of the teaching of unconditional security. Christians "escaped" but became "entangled" again in the "defilements of the world," and their "last state has become worse for them than the first." Compare this with II Peter 1:9-11, "...if you do this you will never fall." Clearly, "to fall" is so possible that warnings are necessary. One need not fall "if"!

The book to the Hebrews was written as a check against threatening apostasy. Genuine Christians are addressed (6:10 and 10:32-34), nevertheless warning is appropriate. Note especially 10:23 which urges holding "fast the confession of our hope without wavering" and follows up with a severe picture of punishment if they do not (10:26-29).

Apostasy - utter and final - is possibly for "those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit ..." (6:4-6). No wonder the writer concludes, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (10:31).

Jesus twice said, "He who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22; 24:13).

We observe Paul's anxiety for his converts who had received the Spirit (Galatians 2:2-5) and were running well yet later were not obeying the truth (5:7). He was alarmed. His labor could be in vain (4:11). See also I Thessalonians 3:5). Paul did not doubt the reality of his own conversion, but he still disciplined himself lest he should fail or fall (I Corinthians 9:27).

And finally, the words to the church at Ephesus found in Revelation 2:4,5 should cause us to reject reliance in false security: "I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent."

The Bible teaches conditional security. But what a wonderful security it is. God is always for me - every moment. Christ

died for me. Christ rose for me. Christ sits at the Father's right hand praying for me. The Holy Spirit is for me. The Bible is given to me as my guide. The church was instituted of God for me. What security!

But Bible and reason tell me if I ignore all that is for me I have no right to expect God to treat me as though He had given me a lifelong irrevocable life insurance policy.

If we walk in the Spirit by faith and obedience - if we maintain our relationship with Christ - God and heaven is ours forever!

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## SECURITY FOR BELIEVERS

### Discussion:

1. Why, according to the author, are the two analogies of "the cat" and "the monkey" inadequate to explain the relationship between the believer and his Saviour?
2. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: "One cannot save himself, but neither can one be saved apart from himself. We were created by God to be responsible and 'respond-able'."
3. Describe the meaning and the function of faith as it relates to man's initial and continuing response to God for eternal salvation.
4. If a person fails to continue to respond in faith to the grace of God, following his initial conversion, is such a person guaranteed salvation regardless of his lack of response? Why or why not? Do you agree with the following statements? - "My security is dependent on my response to what God can do for me. I am secure while I keep on believing, trusting, responding."
5. In what ways is the analogy of "the willing handclasp" helpful in understanding the relationship between the believer and his Saviour, as it relates to salvation?
6. What spiritual resources are available to the believer which help enable him to persevere in his dynamic relationship with God?
7. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "At no point in our personal history does God intend to depersonalize us by destroying our will, our power to choose, our capability of responding positively or negatively to our relationship with God."
8. How does the analogy of the "Marriage Relationship" help to illustrate the relationship between the believer and his Saviour, in terms of salvation?
9. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "No one is unconditionally secure until he is ushered into the presence of Jesus to be with Him forever." Cite verses of Scripture that teach "conditional eternal security" in contrast to "unconditional eternal security".
10. Both from logic and from Scripture, how would you refute the following analogies which are used in an attempt to "prove" unconditional eternal security: "Once 'born' you can't be 'unborn'", and "Once in a family as a son or daughter, always a member of the family"?

11. What response would you give to the proponents of "unconditional eternal security" who appeal to John 10:27-29 and Romans 8:38-39 as "proof" that a believer's relationship with God can never be severed?
12. Explain what is meant by the theory of "imputation of righteousness" and show how such a doctrine is both unrealistic and unBiblical.
13. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "We are not saved merely positionally. We are either really saved, transformed, and made new, or Christianity is hypocrisy."
14. How does II Peter 2:20-22 refute the doctrine of "unconditional eternal security"?
15. If it was impossible for believers ever to fall away from God, why would God give so many warnings against apostasy in His Word? (Note Hebrews 10:26-34)
16. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Bible and reason tell me if I ignore all that is for me I have no right to expect God to treat me as though He had given me a lifelong irrevocable life insurance policy."

CHAPTER 28

IS APOSTASY WITHOUT REMEDY?

## IS APOSTASY WITHOUT REMEDY?

"I have sinned - I have betrayed innocent blood!" Such was the cry of wretched Judas in his bitter remorse, Did his anguished cry awaken concern and pity in the hearts of the priests, the official shepherds in Israel? "What is that to us?" was the scornful retort of his fellow-conspirators. "See thou to that."

Hurling into the holy place the coins which mocked his anguish, thirty silver coins for which he had sold Jesus - and his soul, Judas hurried from the temple to ... where? He was a man without friend, without priest, without God, without hope. Where could he go? To a tree, a noose, and a bloody field - his last way station on a swift journey to hell. "What is that to us?"

The priests were painfully scrupulous about the "lawful" use of the money, now that it was in their pious possession again. What zeal they had for the proprieties of religion! But for the innocence of Jesus, and for the soul of Judas - "What is that to us?"

To the priests, the problem of apostasy was merely academic and quite irrelevant. Not so for Judas. It was a problem with which he could not live, and for which he found no solution. And I dare say it is a problem which weighs heavily on many anxious souls today.

Is apostasy without remedy? Several passages of Scripture seem to affirm that it is. John writes, "If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for that" (I John 5:16).

The writer to the Hebrews warns, "For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit and tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame" (6:4-6 ASV).

Again he warns: "If we sin wilfully after receiving the full knowledge [epignosis] of the truth, there remains no more a sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. A man who has set a nought Moses' law dies without mercy on the word of two or three witnesses? Of how much greater punishment think ye shall he be judged worthy who has trodden under foot the Son of God and has counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy [commonplace] thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of grace? ... It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:26-29,31).

The writer's consideration of the problem of falling away after having been "partakers of the Holy Spirit" (6:4) and his assertion that deliberate defection constitutes an outrage against "the Spirit of grace" (10:29) strongly associate such apostasy with the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, concerning which Jesus solemnly warned: "Therefore I say unto you, every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come" (Matt. 12:31,32 ASV).

Jesus presents no prospect of forgiveness for the sin against the Holy Spirit. Is there a "point of no return" which men may reach, a condition of abandonment from which they cannot be recovered? So the Scriptures affirm. It is recorded of Eli's sons that they refused their father's reproof and "hearkened not unto the voice of the father, because Jehovah was minded to slay them" (I Samual 2:25 ASV). Lange comments:

They were in a state of inner hardening which excluded the subjective condition of salvation from destruction, and so they had already incurred God's unchangeable condemnation. As hardened offenders, they were already appointed by God to death; therefore the word of instruction has no moral effect on them. (1)

God had determined that "the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice not offering for ever" (I Samual 3:14).

Contemplating the rise of the ultimate Antichrist, "the man of sin" and "the lawless one" whose appearance on the world scene will be accomplished by "the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders," Paul declares of men who "received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved," that "God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be condemned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thessalonians 2:9-11). Robertson comments, "Here is the definite judicial act of God (Milligan) who gives the wicked over to the evil which they have deliberately chosen (Romans 1:24,26,28) ... [the] terrible result of willful rejection of the truth of God." (2)

It is evident that the sons of Eli and the unbelievers cited by Paul had passed a "point of no return." Many believe this to be the situation of the apostates depicted in Hebrews 6 and 10 and in I John 5:16. Joseph Addison Alexander's poem, "The Doomed Man," gives pause for solemn reflection:

There is a time, we know not when,  
A point we know not where,  
That marks the destiny of men  
For glory or despair.  
There is a line, by us unseen,  
That crosses every path;  
The hidden boundary between  
God's patience and His wrath.

But other passages indicate that apostasy (2) is not without remedy. Consider Paul's important assertion in Romans 11. He declares that "some of the branches" (individual Jews who rejected Jesus at His appearing) have been broken off because of their unbelief, but can yet be restored if they do not continue in unbelief. "Because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not haughty, 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. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again" (Romans 11:20-23). (3)

Paul himself is an example of one who, when Christ was offered for sin, became a "branch broken off." For he continued with Judaism while, at Calvary, God's redemptive processes shifted from the ordinances of the old economy to Christ's "one sacrifice for sins for ever." The Levitical priesthood and ordinances of animal sacrifice suddenly became invalid in God's sight, and all who continued in such observances only imagined a vain thing. In their rejection of Jesus and the New Covenant in His blood, they were broken off through unbelief. This must necessarily have been the case with Paul who, under the old economy, "touching the righteousness which is in the law [was] blameless" (Philippians 3:6; cf. Luke 1:6). (Paul did not mean, of course, that he had been without sin under the law. In fact, the law had made him painfully aware of sin. But he honored the law, though he could not keep it perfectly, and availed himself of the grace vouchsafed in the ordinances and was thus "blameless" with respect to "the righteousness which is in the law.")

To assert that Paul was not under saving grace in his earlier life and had never known salvation before his encounter with Christ on the Damascus road is to assert that men could not be saved under the old economy. But despite the fact that he had continued "blameless" under the law, when Christ was offered in fulfillment of the law and the prophets and to establish the New Covenant in His blood, Paul became a "branch broken off" through his unbelief in the appointed Saviour and the New Covenant announced in His Gospel. Not until he "continued not still in unbelief" was he "grafted in again" into "the root" of covenant relationship with God enjoyed by the patriarchs and all the faithful of all previous generations.

How truly was Jesus "set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel" (Luke 2:34).

God's grace! How rich, how full, how free! Those who first celebrated Calvary in rank apostasy and blasphemed the holy name of Jesus could be restored to grace, if they continued not in unbelief. The desire of God's heart is to "have mercy upon all" (Romans 11:32) and to answer the prayer of Jesus, "Father, forgive them..."

Again, consider Paul's words to the Galatians. Some of the Galatians had erred from the faith through the influence of the Judaizers and thus became "severed from Christ" who, because of their attempt to ensure justification through fleshly observances, now "profited them nothing" (5:4,2 ASV). But while not minimizing the tragedy and woe of their present spiritual state through their unwitting defection from Christ, Paul does not despair of their recovery. He assumes that the erring Galatians may be restored and is therefore willing to "travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (4:19) as once he did in leading them to their original conversion to Christ (cf. I Corinthians 4:15). He has confidence in the Lord that they will come to share his mind (5:10a) that faith in Christ alone, to the exclusion of all confidence in fleshly observances, is the way of justification and salvation. Thus we see that, while the error of the Galatians constituted actual defection from Christ and His saving Gospel and was a mortal error, it was not without remedy. Paul was willing to "travail again" in their behalf, that they might be restored to grace through a return to simple faith in Christ (cf. II Corinthians 11:3 and context).

Consider another evidence that apostasy is not without remedy. Paul directed the Corinthians to excommunicate a man guilty of incest (I Corinthians 5:1 ff.). Such action was necessary for the purity and testimony of the church. But another purpose was also in view. The offender was to be excommunicated and officially delivered over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh for a salutary purpose: "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (v. 5). The offender's sin, unjudged and unforgiven, has wrought spiritual death within - a state which now was to be publicly acknowledged through excommunication. But the offender was not to be considered beyond recovery. In fact, excommunication itself would tend toward his possible restoration. It would awaken him to the tragedy of his circumstance and his need for forgiveness and restoration. Robertson comments: "Paul's motive is not merely vindictive, but the reformation of the offender .... The final salvation of the man in the day of Christ is the goal and this is to be attained not by condoning his sin."(4) We may surmise from II Corinthians 2:5-11 (if the same man is in view) that the salutary purpose in excommunication was realized, and he was restored to grace and welcomed back into the fellowship of the church.

Let us consider another evidence that apostasy is not without remedy. Paul expressed fear that, should he return to Corinth, he should be obliged to "bemoan" (pentheo, a term of mourning as for the dead) many who had sinned flagrantly and had not repented (II Corinthians 12:21). He warns the Corinthians that, should he come, he will not spare the rod of reproof (13:2) against those who have lapsed into lascivious living and have not repented. Knowing that they may be unaware of their tragic spiritual circumstance, he admonishes them (13:5) to examine themselves to see whether they are still in the faith, as they presume to be, or have instead become reprobate ("adokimoi, the very adjective that Paul held up before himself as a dreadful outcome to be avoided, I Corinthians 9:27 (5)), in which case Jesus Christ no longer dwells in them. But it is fully evident (12:21) that Paul assumes that the offenders who have not as yet repented may do so, if they will, and so be restored to a saving relationship with Christ.

James concludes his letter with a word of both warning and encouragement: "Brethren, if any of you do err [planao, wander away, go stray] from the truth, and one convert him [epistrepho, cause to return, bring back], let him know that he who converts the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (5:19,20). Robertson writes:

It was easy then, and is now, to be led astray from Christ, who is the Truth .... A soul from death... the soul of the sinner (hamartolon) won back to Christ, not the soul of the man winning him .... It is ultimate and final salvation here meant by the future (sosei)." (The duty of believers to recover those who err from the truth and depart from the faith is emphasized in other passages, e.g., II Timothy 2:25,26 [note context, v. 18], Jude 22,23 and Galatians 6:1, cf. Thayer on paraptoma and katartize.)

Finally, let us consider the gracious appeal of the risen Christ to the church in Laodicea (Revelations 3:14-22), a church in which He found not one thing to commend. The Laodicean church had lost all distinction from the world around it, being "neither hot nor cold." (How many churches there are in our day in the disastrous circumstance of the church at Laodicea!) Jesus expresses His wish that they were either hot or cold - anything but "lukewarm," a condition exactly like that of the environment around them. They have lost their spiritual distinction from the pagan world and differ nothing, being actually a part of the world rather than of the kingdom of Christ. Professing themselves to be wealthy and in need of nothing, they are in reality wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked - lacking the garment of the righteousness of Christ to cover their spiritual nakedness. They are spiritually dead. But they have not yet passed a "point of no return;" Jesus has not yet spewed them out of His mouth. In their present state, they are as distasteful to Christ as a beverage which is intended to be hot, but is

only lukewarm; or a beverage which should be cold, but has become lukewarm. He is on the point of spewing them from His mouth, and there is nothing about them in their present state which will allow Him to do otherwise. But He still loves them and therefore entreats them, while there is yet opportunity, to "be zealous therefore and repent." There seems little prospect that the church, as a whole, will heed His warning and repent and be restored to grace. Nevertheless, individuals within the church may heed His call, if they will. Therefore, standing outside the door of the Laodicean church, Christ tenderly entreats: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in His throne" (vv.20,21). They are mistaken who assume that apostasy is necessarily without remedy.

One of the passages often cited by those who contend that apostasy is necessarily without remedy is I John 5:16. John does not define the "sin unto death" in his statement. But the context of his entire epistle suggests that the sin of which he writes is the ostentatious renunciation of the Saviour through open denial that Jesus is actually the Christ come in the flesh, the holy Son of God. (Cf. 4:15, 5:1,5,9,10,13,20; 1:2.) Such denial is fatal and marks one as an antichrist (4:2,3). The attempts of the antichrists to "seduce" the faithful by persuading them to join them in discarding the cardinal doctrines of Christ constitute a real threat to their spiritual safety, against which John urgently warns them (4:1-3. II John 7-11, I John 2:18-28). But though John warns believers to have nothing to do with the antichrists and does not enjoin prayer in their behalf, neither does he forbid such prayer nor expressly affirm that their restoration is impossible. Westcott writes:

St. John does not command intercession when the sin is seen, recognized by the brother, in its fatal intensity; but on the other hand he does not expressly exclude it. Even if the tenor of his words may seem to dissuade such prayer, it is because the offender lies without the Christian Body, excluded from its life, but yet not beyond the creative, vivifying power of God. (7)

Nothing is impossible for God that is consonant with His character and His eternal purposes.

Another passage cited by those who assume that apostasy is necessarily without remedy is Hebrews 6:4-6. But we need not conclude that the passage teaches that the renewal of apostates to repentance is necessarily impossible. Westcott comments on verse 6:

The use of the active voice limits the strict application of the words ["it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance"] to human agency. This is all that comes within the range of the writer's argument. (8)

Certainly the Bible teaches that repentance is essentially the work of God and, in any instance, is the response of the individual to divine influences from God through the Spirit. But God uses human beings as His agents in accomplishing His purposes. While it pleases God to save all who believe, it pleases Him also to employ men as His agents in preaching and teaching the Gospel of Christ which is His power unto salvation to all who believe. There is a definite place for human agency in effecting the repentance and salvation of the lost. Westcott doubtless is correct in his assertion that the impossibility of renewing to repentance the apostates depicted in Hebrews 6 is limited to human agencies. (Contrast James 5:19,20; Jude 22,23; Galatians 6:1; II Timothy 2:25,26, where human agency is encouraged and the prospect of success is implied.) What is said by the writer to the Hebrews to be impossible for men is not impossible for God, with whom all things right and good are possible.

Again, Westcott writes:

The present participles (contrast *parapesontas* of the definite past act of apostasy) bring out the moral cause of the impossibility which has been affirmed. There is an active, continuous hostility to Christ in the souls of such men as have been imagined. (9)

The apostasy in view in Hebrews 6 takes its character, not merely from a past act, but also from a present deliberate hostility toward Christ. The impossibility of renewal to repentance and salvation rests, not on the mere fact of a past act, but on the fact of a present condition of opposition. The marginal reading to the American Standard Version is suggestive: "It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, the while they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame." The present condition of deliberate, open hostility may conceivably be remedied and the persons renewed to repentance and salvation.

There is hope implied also in the verses which immediately follow: "For a piece of ground that drinks in the rains so frequently falling on it, and continues yielding vegetation useful to those for whose sakes it is cultivated, receives from God His blessings. But if it continues to yield thorns and thistles, it is considered worthless and in danger of being cursed, and its final fate is burning" (vv.7,8 Williams). The ground which has yielded only thorns and thistles has already been adjudged worthless, and is now rejected; but it is said to be only "near to a curse." It awaits eventual burning; but that fate as yet is only in prospect. Perhaps it may be averted. The branch pruned away from the vine (John 15:6) immediately withers, because it is severed from the

source of life; but it is not immediately gathered and cast into the fire and burned. The branches broken off through unbelief may yet be grafted in again, if they abide not still in unbelief (Romans 11:20-23). "God is able to graft them in again!" The Laodicean church is dead; there is not one sign of spiritual life in it. The risen Christ is on the point of spewing them from His mouth and ending all prospect of restoration. But He has not done so as yet, and He bids them hasten to repent and know again His saving grace. Restoration is not impossible for apostates, including those depicted in Hebrews 6.

Shepardson takes a similarly hopeful view of Hebrews 10, declaring that the apostasy in view is...

purposeful and continuous apostasy from Christianity. The word "sin" is in the present participle, which denotes not a single act of unbelief, but a state or condition of unbelief. [Cf. Lange on Hebrews 10:26, "... the pres. hamartanonton marks habitual in contrast with transient denial."] Those described are those who ...turn away from Christ and continue ... to turn away... just as long as we continue in this state of willful apostasy we put ourselves beyond the possibility of forgiveness...

The revealed character of God makes it certain that such apostasy, if continued, must sooner or later bring terrible punishment. Holy love will compel some adequate recognition in penalty of such a crime. Whatever judgment comes to men will be commensurate with their character and opportunities. Because of what He is, He must not only punish the wicked, but also care for His own; judgment for all will be unquestionably just. For those who are in Christ, judgment will have no terrors; but for those who have separated themselves from Him and are now living "without God and without hope in the world," it will be seen to be "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Such is our author's renewed warning against the awfulness of continuous apostasy from [Christ], this apostasy being regarded from the point of view of the judgment and looked back upon as a completed thing. (10)

Shepardson's contention that the fearful judgment of Hebrews 10:29 f. is regarded from the point of view of the coming Day of Judgment and is seen in retrospect as a thing completed is fully warranted by language. The verb axiothesetai is future passive indicative. It is declared by the writer to the Hebrews that one who proves himself to be a willful, persistent apostate "shall be judged worthy" of infinite punishment. Final condemnation may yet be averted, while life and opportunity continue.

Westcott likewise contends that the apostasy in view in Hebrews 10 is not necessarily without remedy: "It must be observed that the argument assumes that the sacrifice of Christ is finally rejected and sin persisted in (hamartanonton).

The writer does not set limits to the efficacy of Christ's work for the penitent." (11)

We have earlier associated the apostasy depicted in Hebrews 6 and 10 with the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The charge of the Pharisees that Jesus cast out demons by Beelzebub was blasphemy against the Holy Spirit in that it constituted a denial of His testimony to Jesus, who performed His ministry "in the power of the Spirit." The testimony of the Spirit to Jesus today is the proclamation of His saving Gospel and the personal witness of believers in whom He dwells. Men who reject that witness, including all who apostatize, are as guilty of blaspheming the Holy Spirit as were the Pharisees who ridiculed Christ's ministry of deliverance. But let us observe that it is a mistake to view such blasphemy as the isolated act of a single moment. Although in both Matthew 12:32 and Mark 3:29 the act of blaspheming the Holy Spirit is expressed by aorist subjunctives, it does not follow that the act must be considered as momentary and punctiliar. Burton declares that the aorist of the dependent moods "...when indefinite may refer to a momentary or extended action or to a series of events." (12) Language therefore does not specify that the unforgivable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the act of a single moment. Other considerations indicate that such blasphemy is unforgivable only as one finally persists in it.

It is encouraging to read that, despite the intensity of the hatred and resentment toward Jesus which so generally prevailed among the priests and the Pharisees during His earthly ministry, in the early days of the church "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7) and many of the Pharisees became believers (Acts 15:5). Must we assume that the blasphemous verdict that Jesus cast out demons by the power of Beelzebub was never general among the Pharisees, and that not one man who once held that opinion ever became a believer? What, then, must have been the original opinion of Saul the Pharisee concerning the exorcisms of Jesus, whom he considered a rank fraud and an enemy of Moses, the law, and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Did he not originally concur in the judgment of those who charged that Jesus cast out demons by Beelzebub? Did he not share in their guilt and condemnation? But where sin abounds there grace does much more abound, free to all who will receive it with contrite hearts.

The mercy of God is great. "That mercy is wider than all humanity, deeper than all sin, was before all rebellion, and will last for ever. And it is open for every soul of man to receive it if he will." (14) Even after declaring that apostates are "reserved unto the day of judgment to be punished" (II Peter 2:9) and that "to them the mist of darkness is reserved for ever" (v.17) and that "the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (3:7) already has been determined upon, Peter declares that the Lord "is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all

should come to repentance" (v.9) and asserts that the long delay in judgment ("the long-suffering of our Lord," v. 15) is for salvation. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. His heart of mercy finds no delight in the punishment of sinners which His righteousness and the moral integrity of His universe demand. He prefers mercy to judgment.

To men who "have forsaken the Lord, [who] have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger, [who] are gone away backward," a merciful God implores, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 1:4; 55:6,7).

It is evident that blasphemy against the Spirit of grace is unforgivable, not as it stands as the isolated act of a single moment, but only as it remains the final attitude of the individual in his rejection of the appeals and proffered mercies of God. Surely there is warrant for believing that only in rare instances (e.g., Eli's sons) may apostasy be irremediable before the occasion of death; and certainly not in any instance in which the individual becomes concerned about his spiritual circumstance and sincerely penitent toward God.

Many dear souls mistakenly fear that they have so blasphemed the Holy Spirit that they have passed a "point of no return." It is easy so to imagine. For who of us has not sorely grieved the Blessed Comforter? Who has not quenched His holy influence? Who has not ignored His still, small voice and His faithful guidance? But men who fear that they have so blasphemed the Holy Spirit that they are forever beyond recovery are mistaken. Their fear is evidence that such is not the case.

Many, however, regard their very fear as cause for despair. The assertion that, for those who apostatize, there remains only "a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries" (Hebrews 10:27) has struck terror to the hearts of many who have imagined that the writer meant that there was no possibility of recovery and that, for all who once withdraw from Christ, there remains no prospect other than to live out their days in constant dread and fearful anticipation of inevitable final condemnation. Their fear, itself, has been regarded as infallible evidence that their situation is hopeless and their doom is sealed for eternity. But they have misunderstood the writer's statement. The rendering of ekdoche as "looking for" or "expectation" has been most unfortunate. Alford writes:

....reception (i.e., meed, doom: not, as I believe universally interpreted without remark, expectation. The word used (ecdoche) appears never to have this sense, and this is the only place where it occurs in the New Test. All which remain is the reception of the doom of judgment, and the fiery indignation, &c.) of judgment...(15)

The writer's meaning is that the certain prospect before apostates (except they repent) is fiery judgment (cf. RSV, Williams, Goodspeed). The picture of men abandoned to perdition living out their days in dreadful anticipation of fiery judgment is completely contrary to the Scriptures. To the contrary, the few passages which refer to men in such circumstance portray them as brazen and self-confident, anticipating no such fiery judgment. There is no fear apparent in Eli's sons following their warning. There is no suggestion of fear present in the men cited by Paul in II Thessalonians 2:10-12. Men abandoned to final reprobation during "the tribulation, the great" (Revelations;14, the Greek text is emphatic) are depicted as utterly devoid of penitence and the fear of God. Their only response to the righteous judgments of God will be increasing impenitence and blasphemy (Revelations 9:20,21; 16:9,11,21). All who feel a revulsion and horror at the thought of such impudence may be sure that they are not beyond the holy influences of the Spirit of grace and the possibility of redemption. Let them recognize that "the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." And the feeling of repentance within their hearts is the gracious call of a loving God. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalms 51:17).

Some have been distressed by the fact that Judas is said to have repented, but his repentance availed nothing. Matthew records that "Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he [Jesus] was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders" (27:3). But the Greek text does not state that Judas actually repented (metanoeo), but merely that he regretted (metamelomai). The words are synonyms; but there is an important distinction between them. Metamelomai signifies regret of remorse for the past, but also a deliberate change of mind, heart, purpose, and intention for the future. Although Thayer contends that the distinction between the two is not so great as some have supposed, he concedes that "...metanoeo is the fuller and nobler term, expressive of moral action and issues, [and this fact] is indicated not only by its derivation, but by the greater frequency of its use, by the fact that it is often employed in the imperative (metamelomai never), and by its construction with apo, ek (cf. he eis theon metanoia, Acts xx.21)." (16) Most translators have recognized that metameletheis indicates that the remorse of Judas fell short of actual repentance toward God, and have translated accordingly. Robertson comments:

....mere sorrow avails nothing unless it leads to change of mind and life (metanoia), the sorrow according to God (II Corinthians 7:9). This sorrow Peter had when he wept bitterly. It led Peter back to Christ. But Judas had only remorse that led to suicide. (17)

Another passage which has troubled many is found in Hebrews 12. It is recorded that Esau, a profane (earthly minded) person, "for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears" Hebrews 12:16,17). The picture of Esau tearfully seeking repentance, but all in vain - forever rejected, has terrified many troubled souls who have imagined themselves to be in such fearful predicament.

First, let us recognize that in the case of Esau, the "rejection" had nothing to do with his salvation. Westcott comments:

The son who had sacrificed his right could not undo the past, and it is this only which is in question. No energy of sorrow or self-condemnation, however sincere, could restore to him the prerogative of the firstborn. The consideration of the forgiveness of his sin against God, as distinct from the reversal of the temporal consequences of his sin, lies wholly without the argument...It would be equally true to say that in respect of the privileges of the firstborn which Esau has sold, he found no place for repentance, and that in respect of his spiritual relation to God, if his sorrow was sincere, he did find a place for repentance. (18)  
(Irrespective of the chicanery of Rebekah and Jacob, God had rejected Esau as the heir to the Abrahamic Covenant and the progenitor of the Messianic line - a matter which has nothing to do with the question of his salvation.)

Lunemann makes a strong case for applying the clause, "for he found no place for repentance," to Isaac rather than to Esau. (19) This view is in complete accord with the account in Genesis (27:33 ff.) and was adopted by the translators of the American Standard Version: "when he afterward desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place for a change of mind in his father, though he sought it diligently with tears." What Esau vainly sought was not his own repentance, but a change of mind in Isaac and the bequest of the blessing pertaining to the firstborn, which was now impossible.

But while the issue with respect to Esau himself pertained only to the matter of his temporal blessing as the firstborn, rather than to his salvation, it is nevertheless true that the writer to the Hebrews presents the episode as an object lesson to warn his readers not to trifle with their heavenly birthright as sons of God by becoming earthly minded, after the example of profane Esau. As Esau lost the temporal

heritage which might have been his, so the writer warns Christians that they may lose the heavenly heritage which is theirs. But it was some years after carelessly consenting to sell his birthright that Esau finally lost, through the deception of Rebekah and Jacob, the heritage which he earlier has considered as of trifling consequence in comparison with the immediate satisfaction of his physical appetite.

Eventually there came a time when the heritage which Esau had treated with disdain became irretrievably lost. After the blessing of Isaac had been pronounced, Esau's loss could not be remedied. Isaac's first blessing and the rights of primogeniture had been bestowed upon Jacob; the issue was closed, and Esau's tears and loud protests were forever in vain. Just so, for every Christian whose love of the present world leads him to trifle away his heavenly birthright as an heir of God and joint-heir with Christ, there must come a time (except he repent) when judgment becomes final, and the heritage lost can never be recovered.

But that time is not yet, so long as life and the day of grace continue. For were this not so, the many appeals of God to those who have gone astray would be vain mockery, and many encouraging passages in the Scriptures would be outright deception of the cruelest sort. The door of hope is not closed against those who, having become "not my people" because of their wickedness and unfaithfulness, may yet cry, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up" (Hosea 6:1). But let none presume upon time, for life and opportunity are uncertain, and the day of grace must come to an end. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:6,7).

But despite the many Scriptures to the contrary, some persist in denying that restoration is possible for those who actually have fallen from grace, on the ground that a second birth is an impossibility. "Jesus did not say, 'Ye must be born again and again,'" say they. "There can be but one spiritual birth for an individual, just as there can be but one physical birth." The objection seems valid to men whose concept of the new birth is inadequate and unscriptural and who assume that an equation exists between physical and spiritual birth. But such is not the case, as we have considered in Chapter 7. Furthermore, although there was but one physical birth for Lazarus of Bethany, he experienced a resurrection to a resumption of the physical life which began with his birth. Shall we assume that the God who can recall dead men to a resumption of physical life cannot restore fallen men to a resumption of spiritual life in Christ?

Distinguishing between conversion and restoration, Westcott comments on Hebrews 6:4-6:

Some divine work then may be equivalent to this renewing, though not identical with it (Matt. xix. 26). The change in such a case would not be a new birth, but a raising from the dead.

The end of this renewal is metanoia, a complete change of mind consequent upon the apprehension of the true moral nature of things. It follows necessarily that in this large sense there can be no second metanoia (Compare v.1). There may be, through the gift of God, a corresponding change, a regaining of the lost view with the consequent restoration of the fullness of life, but this is different from the freshness of the vision through which the life is first realized. The popular idea of repentance, by which it is limited to sorrow for the past, has tended to obscure the thought here. (20)

Delitzsch, however, contends that there is no prospect of restoration for the apostates depicted in Hebrews 6: "No more salvation (says the writer of the epistle) for those who, having learned by the Holy Ghost to know Jesus as the very Son of God, assume the same position toward their Saviour as those unbelievers who brought Him to the cross." (21) But what, then, of Peter? He fully knew Jesus to be "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16); and not by mere human insight, but by divine revelation: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." And what holy privilege was his! On the mount, with James and John, he beheld His glory - the glory as of the only begotten of the Father - and heard the Voice out of the Cloud, "This is my beloved Son" (Matthew 17:5). And yet, in the hour of trial, he denied even the remotest acquaintance with Jesus: "I do not know the man!" - as though He were quite an ordinary person, thus conceding that the judgment of His enemies was, in his opinion, entirely correct. How persistent he was in his denial - three times! He cursed and swore under oath, "I know not the man!"

And yet, Peter found forgiveness. Is that not encouraging for us all, as we think of the many times and ways we have so shamefully denied our Holy Saviour? Have we not sworn by deed and life, if not in word, "I know not the man"? Have we no need to go out and weep bitterly with Peter? But still He comes - the Man of Sorrows, forever scared - and gently asks, "Lovest thou me?"

To every weary prodigal - disillusioned, hungry, heartsick of the far country - the Saviour offers precious encouragement and assurance that the Father longs for his return. There is room for him in the old accustomed place at the Father's table where there is bread enough and to spare - Living Bread broken for us, of which we may eat and live for ever. Even now, the Father watches for his return. He has but to rise and return in humble confession, "Father, I have sinned - against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." With what compassion the Father will wel-

come him! How fervent will be His embrace and kiss! With what joy will He cry, "Bring forth the best robe - the righteousness of Christ; put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. Let us eat and be merry! For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found!"

(Life In The Son, Chapter XIX; by Robert Shank)

- (1) J.P. Lange, Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Samuel, p.76.
- (2) A.T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, Vol IV, p.53.
- "Apostasy" as used in this treatise is a comprehensive term embracing any departure from God and saving grace, whether deliberate or casual.
- (3) Contrary to the assumptions of some, Romans 11:20-23 does not concern Israel and the Gentiles corporately, but Jews and Gentiles as individuals. For a discussion of the significance of Romans 9-11, see Appendix C.
- (4) Robertson, op. dit., p. 113.
- (5) Ibid., p. 270.
- (6) Robertson, op. cit., Vol VI, p.67.
- (7) B.F. Westcott, The Epistles of St. John, p.210.
- (8) B.F. Westcott, The Epistles to the Hebrews, p.150.
- (9) Ibid., p. 151.
- (10) Daniel Shepardson, Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews, pp.457-461.
- (11) Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews, p.327.
- (12) E.D. Burton, Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek, Sec. 98.
- (13) Ibid., Sec. 133.
- (14) Alexander Maclaren, Expositions of Holy Scripture: Ephesians, p.88.
- (15) Henry Alford, The New Testament for English Readers, p. 1548.
- (16) J.H. Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 405.
- (17) Robertson, op. cit., Vol.I, p.222f.
- (18) Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 408f.
- (19) Gottlieb Lunemann, Meyer's Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the New Testament: The Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 710f.
- (20) Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews, p.150.
- (21) Franz Delitzsch, The Epistle to the Hebrews, Vol. I, P.293.

## Is Apostasy Without Remedy?

### Discussion:

1. "Is there a 'point of no return' which men may reach, a condition of abandonment from which they cannot be recovered" (Shank)? What scriptural support can you cite to document your answer?
2. According to Romans 11:20-23, is apostasy always without remedy? What realities in Paul's earlier life reveal the fact that Paul became a "branch broken off", and what did Paul have to do to become a "branch grafted in again"?
3. What evidence is there, from a study of the book of Galatians, that apostasy is not without remedy, that God is willing to restore persons who have fallen out of grace because of doctrinal heresy?
4. What primary purpose did Paul have in mind when he commanded the leaders of the church at Corinth to excommunicate the onetime believer who has grossly sinned? (I Corinthians 5)
5. When Paul writes sever warnings to the church at Corinth regarding the impending punishment which backslidders (immoral) church members are facing, does Paul believe these persons are inevitably doomed for judgment, or does he hold out some hope for their recovery through repentance? (Note II Corinthians 12:21)
6. In what ways is James 5:19,20 both a serious warning and an encouragement?
7. In light of the poor moral condition of the Laodicean church (Revelations 3:14-22), what evidence is there that, though God's judgment upon this church was impending, individual backslidden persons within this church were not without hope of spiritual recovery?
8. Does I John 5:16 teach that some backslidden persons are beyond spiritual recovery?
9. How does the use of the present (continuous) tenses in Hebrews 6:4-6 help to interpret this difficult portion of scripture, enabling one to conclude even from these "despairing" verses that it is possible for apostasy to be healed? (Note the marginal reading of the American Standard Version: "It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, while they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame.
10. How does the use of present (continuous) tense for "sin" in Hebrews 10:29, affect ones interpretation of "sin" as it relates to "apostasy"? Is it not true that as long

as one continues in a state of willful apostasy, he puts himself beyond the possibility of forgiveness? Do you agree with Westcott's contention that the apostasy in view in Hebrews 10 is not necessarily without remedy? - "It must be observed that the argument assumes that the sacrifice of Christ is finally rejected and sin persisted in. The writer does not set limits to the efficacy of Christ's work for the penitent." (Westcott)

11. What is meant by "the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 12:32; Mark 3:29), and what conditions must exist before this sin is ultimately unforgivable?
12. What does II Peter 3:9 teach regarding God's nature and His will for lost mankind, including apostates?
13. Do you believe that the Holy Scriptures support the following conclusion by Robert Shank? - "It is evident that blasphemy against the spirit of grace is unforgivable, not as it stands as the isolated act of a single moment, but only as it remains the final attitude of the individual in his rejection of the appeals and proffered mercies of God."
14. How should a believer's fears, following his moral failures and sin, be interpreted - as evidence of spiritual hopelessness and inevitable impending doom, or as evidence that the morally concerned person who has grieved the Holy Spirit is being called to repentance and spiritual restoration? Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Surely there is warrant for believing that only in rare instances (e.g., Eli's sons) may apostasy be irremediable before the occasion of death; and certainly not in any instance in which the individual becomes concerned about his spiritual circumstance and sincerely penitent toward God." (Shank)
15. What is the difference between "remorse" and "repentance", and how are these two concepts demonstrated in the lives of Judas Iscariot and Simon Peter?
16. How does the fact that the word "repentance" means "change of mind" help in one's interpretation of Hebrews 12:16,17 as these verses relate to Esau's desire to change Isaac's mind regarding Isaac's bestowal of the privileges of the firstborn to Jacob instead of to Esau? Does this passage of scripture teach that it was impossible for Esau to restore his spiritual relationship with God? Using the example of Esau, what warning does the writer of Hebrews give to Christians today?
17. What, according to Westcott, is the difference between "conversion" and "restoration"?

CHAPTER 27

SECURITY FOR BELIEVERS