

ONE CHRISTIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

OF

MAN'S DILEMMA

GOD'S SOLUTION

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About the Author

It was by the grace of God that Steve was brought to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was by God's longsuffering that he has been sustained in that faith. Steve became a Christian on November 17, 1961 when as a young marine on liberty he came upon a street meeting held by Open Air Campaigners for Christ in the city of Los Angeles, California. For the remaining three years of his enlistment after coming to faith, Steve immersed himself in various books and studies concerning his relationship with Christ.

During those three years he worshipped at Granada Heights Friends Church in La Mirada, CA. Sunday mornings and the Church of the Open Door in Los Angeles, CA. Sunday evenings. Steve was disciplined by three families who were members of Granada Heights Friends Church and nurtured his faith. To these three families he will forever be grateful.

Those three years were a tremendous blessing to Steve, and it was the foundation gained in those three years that sustained him through several tumultuous years during which he walked away from a faithful walk with the Lord and lived as a prodigal son. But thanks to God, Steve was still a son, and as the prodigal of Luke 15:8-22 was never disowned by the Father. In 1985, after living a life of riotousness that almost destroyed him, Steve surrendered to the authority of God and has since been in service of his Lord and Savior, Jesus, the Christ.

Steve readily acknowledges that it was and is only the grace of God that allowed him to remain alive during those years and by His love that Steve was brought back to fellowship with Him. This grace and love, Steve believes, is best spoken of in Romans 8:28-29:

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and who he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

It is confirmed in this passage that each child of God is being conformed (being changed) to the image of Jesus Christ. First, however, God calls that person out of the world into a loving relationship with Himself, making him a son. He justifies that person so that they may have fellowship one with the other and also that justification makes it possible for him to eventually be in the very presence of God.

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Chapter 1

Spiritual Darkness

A short time ago I overheard a conversation in which one of the conversationalists spoke several words of profanity. In the next breath, he talked about the men's group of the church of which he belonged. Granted, I don't know the man's heart, but something didn't seem to match up. I wondered how a man could take the Lord's name in vain and yet be a true Christian. Now, I am not suggesting that any of us is without sin. Each one of us sins every day by commission or omission. But it seemed by this man's language that this was his normal way of expression, and at best, was not respectful of the Lord, the One who suffered so greatly for the sake of mankind.

I wondered, “Is this man so blind that he doesn't realize that it is an affront to the Lord whenever His name is abused in this way? Is his heart so calloused that it doesn't bother him?” A calloused heart is for another consideration, but in this work we shall look at spiritual blindness, also known as spiritual darkness. Spiritual darkness in Scripture is used symbolically of ignorance and/or spiritual blindness. Certainly, man was not created this way; God Himself was satisfied with His creation. Man represented by Adam was created with a complete (mature) awareness of God. He was spiritually alive. In fact, in the creation account, we read that God endowed him with the ability to have dominion over the earth and all its inhabitants in accordance with God's will. This dominion was so complete that it reflected God's dominion over all creation. Consider Genesis 1:26-28: *“²⁶And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over*

every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. ²⁸And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”

In addition, there was communication between Adam and God as seen in Genesis 2:8-17 and 3:8-13:

2:8-17 ⁸And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. ¹⁰And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. ¹¹The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; ¹²And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. ¹³And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. ¹⁴And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates. ¹⁵And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: ¹⁷But 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.”

3:8-13 *“⁸And they 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. ⁹And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? ¹⁰And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. ¹¹And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? ¹²And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. ¹³And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.”*

There are many points of theology contained in these two passages, but our consideration at this time is that of the fellowship and communication that existed between Lord God and Adam and Eve. Certainly, in the Garden before Adam’s disobedience, spiritual darkness (blindness) did not exist. Adam was one with God in thought and deed. God’s will was Adam’s will. Adam’s desire was to worship and please God. How, then, did it become a way of life to profane God in language and lifestyle? How did man become blind to God’s holiness? How did he become delusional in thinking he could say or do as he pleased without consequence?

From Genesis, we learn that Adam disobeyed God and suffered immediate spiritual death (figurative for spiritual separation). Adam became so spiritually separated from holy God that God likened it to death. Just as physical death separates one from all that is living, so spiritual death separates one from God. This is why Jesus, in His dialogue with Nicodemus, said:

“³Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3).

“⁵Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ” (John 3:5-6).

Because of sin, man is not only dead toward and separated from God (bringing spiritual darkness), but is also alienated from Him. The progression of sin, commenced in Adam, was so drastic and rapid, that Adam and Eve’s first offspring, Cain, because of jealousy and anger killed his brother Abel (Genesis 4:1-8). Spiritual darkness rapidly gripped the heart of Cain. He then rejected God’s provision for the covering of sin, a sin offering that required shedding of blood. In spiritual darkness he thought to satisfy God’s righteousness by instituting a sacrifice that was bloodless.

Even though there was a godly line of people who attempted to follow God through Seth, they were still willing to give their daughters to men who were not of the godly line, men possessed by fallen spirit beings. These unions produced offspring that became so wicked that God wiped all humanity off the face of the earth except the family of Noah. *“¹And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, ²That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. ³And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.⁴There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men*

which were of old, men of renown. ⁵And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:1-5).

Oh, the depth of spiritual darkness! It resulted in spiritual death and separation. Without this spiritual death, Adam and Eve would not have lost the close relationship and fellowship they enjoyed with the Lord God in the Garden, Cain would not have killed his brother and unholy marriages would not have occurred. Spiritual death brought about wickedness so great that God destroyed all mankind except Noah and his family.

From Romans 1:18-23, we read of the consequence of spiritual death: *“¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; ¹⁹Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. ²⁰For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: ²¹Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²²Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, ²³And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.”*

Paul is referring in this passage, to the unregenerate Gentile. In his letter to the Ephesians Paul wrote that the wrath of God is toward all mankind. That all are guilty, Jew and Gentile, before God regenerates those He has chosen to new spiritual life. Consider; *“¹And you hath he quickened,*

who were dead in trespasses and sins; ²Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: ³Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, ⁵Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) ⁶And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”(Ephesians 2:1-6).

The natural propensity of man is to deny the very God they know exists and worship the creature. First Corinthians 2:14 explains: *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”* Spiritual darkness is the inability of the natural man to understand spiritual things, including but not limited to the truth that Jesus of Nazareth was the anointed of God. Natural man cannot look at himself, his language, or his lifestyle with the eyes of God. Consider Jesus’ dialogue in Matthew 15:1-20.

“¹Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, ²Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. ³But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? ⁴For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. ⁵But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; ⁶And honour not his father or

his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. ⁷Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, ⁸This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. ⁹But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

¹⁰And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: ¹¹Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. ¹²Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? ¹³But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. ¹⁴Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. ¹⁵Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. ¹⁶And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? ¹⁷Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? ¹⁸But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. ¹⁹For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: ²⁰These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.”

Perhaps this explains why a person might have a religion, but not have a heart that is inclined to worship God or does not see anything wrong with slandering His holy name. Perhaps some believe this is just a way of expression and not really an act against God, but isn't this line of thinking in contrast to what Jesus said in the above passage or what Paul was inspired to write in his letter to the Colossians?

“⁵Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: ⁶For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: ⁷In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. ⁸But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. ⁹Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; ¹⁰And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Colossians 3:5-10).

The wrath of God will eventually be exacted against the unredeemed. All acts of sinful flesh, including filthy language, will be judged, and punishment will be exacted according to God’s standards. Paul admonished the Ephesian believers (and us) to: *“¹Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; ²And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. ³But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; ⁴Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. ⁵For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ⁶Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. ⁷Be not ye therefore partakers with them. ⁸For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: ⁹(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) ¹⁰Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. ¹¹And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. ¹²For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them*

in secret. ¹³But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. ¹⁴Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. ¹⁵See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, ¹⁶Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:1-18).

To be filled with the Spirit means to be completely under His control. What person who is under the control of the Holy Spirit will ever take God’s name in vain or use language that does not glorify God and edify man? A Christian desires to honor and glorify God. The desire to glorify God and the defamation of His name cannot co-exist. A true Christian is God’s child. What son or daughter desires to bring disgrace to his or her Father? A person who takes the Lord’s name in vain using it in a slanderous, disrespectful way or uses filthy language should question his or her relationship with the Lord. Unfortunately, many are led to believe that if they are faithful (by their own standards) to their church and its traditions, they will be forgiven and granted heaven. Such Scriptures as Romans 8:28-30, however, stands in sharp contrast to such belief. They teach that he who is truly a born-again Christian is being conformed to the image of Christ.

A person who is truly a Christian has been called, justified, and glorified by God in order that he or she may be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. An image is a likeness. One who is a Christian will think, look, act, and talk more and more like Jesus. It cannot be otherwise. God Himself brings about these changes.

John the apostle informs us that Jesus Christ was the embodiment of divine light. *“¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²The same was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴In him was life; and the life was the light of men”* (John 1:1-4). And added in verses 9-12: *“⁹That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. ¹¹He came unto his own, and his own received him not. ¹²But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name”*.

Those who are spiritually re-born become children of God, children according to verse 21 of chapter 3 and will manifest the works of God. The two preceding verses, however, explain why man, left to himself, cannot work the works of God; consider: *“¹⁹And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprove”*.

The Holy Spirit regenerates each one to whom He has been sent (John 3:1-8), and that person becomes born again. According to Ephesians 4:17-5:7 his new spiritual birth will always result in the following: *“^{4:17}This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, ¹⁸Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: ¹⁹Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all*

uncleanness with greediness. ²⁰But ye have not so learned Christ; ²¹If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: ²²That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; ²³And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; ²⁴And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. ²⁵Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. ²⁶Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: ²⁷Neither give place to the devil. ²⁸Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. ²⁹Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. ³⁰And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. ³¹Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: ³²And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

5:¹Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; ²And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. ³But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; ⁴Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. ⁵For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ⁶Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God

upon the children of disobedience. ⁷Be not ye therefore partakers with them”.

This was Paul’s admonition to the Ephesians and to us; what a warning! If there has been a change in one’s life, there has been a change; this is a fact of spiritual rebirth. The Holy Spirit was sent by Jesus to indwell the believer as a helper, a guide, and He brings change. It must be realized, however, being indwelt does not necessarily mean a Christian is constantly under the complete control and authority of the Holy Spirit. There are times when a Christian is completely surrendered to the Holy Spirit and other times when he quenches His authority. During these times, he may slip into old habits, but there will always be consequences. The in-dwelling Holy Spirit will always convict the born-again person of sin and urge confession and repentance. How can one (such as the person mentioned at the beginning of this discourse) habitually use profanity or vulgarities without becoming uncomfortable within himself if he is truly a Christian?

Such language, habitually used or as a slip of the tongue, is not conducive with a Christian’s nature. He cannot be at peace with himself or with God. If he takes the Lord’s name in vain, uses profanities or vulgarities, and does not sense guilt, something is amiss in his life. Each person who is enslaved by this habit (or any other habit that is contrary to a life that reflects the Lord Jesus Christ) should take stock of himself. Am I truly born again? Am I really a Christian? Have I been deluding myself into believing that what I say or do really doesn't matter?

From the mount (Matthew 7:21-23), Jesus said: *“²¹Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my*

Father which is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity”.

Remember, if there has been a change, there is a change. Each one's measurement of himself should be: If I am truly born again (have become a Christian), my life will not be controlled by my old nature but by the new nature found in Jesus Christ. However, as we shall find in the next chapter, spiritual darkness constitutes man's spiritual depravity.

CHAPTER 2

THE DEPRAVITY OF MAN

According to Webster's Dictionary, depravity is "the state of being depraved, i.e. marked by corruption or evil." Much of what man does is evil, but is man himself corrupt? Many today would say that man is not inherently corrupt. They believe that man is basically good, and his morality is conditioned by influences outside himself. They who hold this position believe man is a product of his environment; that if his environment were good or were to improve, he would likewise be good or improve as the given environment improves. But what does the Bible say about man's morality?

Genesis 1:26-27 declares: *"²⁶And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them"*.

Created in the image of God, man certainly had a good beginning. God, who could not create anyone or anything contrary to Himself, created man in His own image. Man was created to rule over the earth with a morality that mirrored God's rule over all creation. God proclaimed that everything He created was good, according to His standards. However, as we shall see from our study, man did not remain as he was created. He became something other than when he was created. He became a fallen creation. The question is: What was the extent of that fall? Was it a fall of partial depravation or a fall of complete

depravation? To answer these questions, it will be helpful to consider several passages in Genesis and Romans.

Genesis 2:8-9: “⁸And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.”

Genesis 2:15-17: “¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: ¹⁷But 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 3:1-8: “¹Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? ²And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: ³But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. ⁴And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: ⁵For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

⁶And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. ⁷And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. ⁸And they 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.”

Romans 5:12-14: *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. ¹³(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.”*

From these passages we learn God implemented a prohibition, man rebelled, and the result was death. Physical death resulted from man’s rebellion (disobedience), but more significantly, spiritual death. In other words, when man rebelled (was disobedient) he separated himself from the righteousness of God from which he had been created. Adam’s sin necessitated that God also separate Himself from man. Fellowship no longer existed. It is important to understand that God equated this separation with death. Just as physical death separates one from all that is living, so spiritual death separates one from God. This truth is affirmed by Jesus’ words to a Pharisee named Nicodemus?

“¹There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: ²The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. ³Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. ⁴Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born

when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? ⁵Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again ''' (John 3:1-7).

Adam began to die physically on the day of his sin, but immediately spiritually. From the above passage we learn that for him or anyone to see (understand) or enter the kingdom of God, he or she must be restored to spiritual life, be born again. Paul, in his letter to the Christians at Ephesus, explains that this spiritual rebirth occurs while one is separated from (dead toward) God. Consider: *"¹And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; ²Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: ³Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, ⁵Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)" (Ephesians 2:1-5).*

In chapter 4:18-19 of this same letter Paul explains the reason of man's separation from God. He writes; *"¹⁸Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: ¹⁹Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."*

A terrible thing occurred when Adam sinned (disobeyed God) and after reading these passages, we should have no trouble understanding how far man has been separated from a Holy God, but should there be someone still in doubt, consider the following parable of Jesus found in the gospel of Luke 16:19-31:

“¹⁹There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: ²⁰And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, ²¹And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. ²²And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; ²³And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. ²⁴And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. ²⁵But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. ²⁶And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. ²⁷Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house: ²⁸For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. ²⁹Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. ³⁰And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. ³¹And he said unto him, If they hear not

Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” In these verses, Jesus taught His disciples about the separation that exists between that which is godly and that which is of the world. The world is separated from God and dead toward Him to the extent that people would not be persuaded to believe God’s goodness though one should appear from the dead.

Certainly, this should answer the question about man’s separation from God, but is there a way back for man? Is man able to restore himself to fellowship with God? Beyond this, **does he have a desire to do so?** In answer to these questions, we return to the beginning once again and consider Genesis 3:6-8: *“⁶And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. ⁷And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. ⁸And they 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.”*

Two things occurred in the Garden that day concerning man’s fellowship (represented in Adam) with God. First, fear of God resulted from Adam’s disobedience. From that time on, unregenerate man has tried to hide himself from God by one means or another. Secondly, as seen in the account of Cain and Abel, there is a denial and refusal by man (represented in Cain) to accept God’s provision of forgiveness and restoration to righteousness. We read from Genesis 4:1-10: *“¹And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man*

from the LORD. ²And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. ³And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. ⁴And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: ⁵But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

⁶And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? ⁷If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.⁸And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.⁹And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? ¹⁰And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground."

Before expelling Adam and Eve from the Garden, God demonstrated that He would not and could not accept man's attempt to satisfy His righteousness. We read that Adam and Eve attempted to cover their physical and spiritual nakedness with fig leaves. God, however, for reasons revealed throughout Scripture, could not accept their attempts, but instead slew an innocent animal and covered them with its hide. This was a figure of the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ for man's sin. Ever since the fall, man has denied the truth of God and His provision for the atonement of sin. By offering a bloodless sacrifice, Cain refused to sacrifice an animal (a picture of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ) as commanded by God. Man, ever since, has been in denial of this same thing. He has gone about to establish his own righteousness and has refused

the righteousness of God. Paul writing about his own countrymen, the Jews, said: *"¹Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. ²For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. ³For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God"* (Romans 10:1-3).

This is not only true of Israel, but of humanity in general. Returning once again to Paul's letter to the Ephesians we read: *"¹¹Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; ¹²That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."* (Ephesians 2:11-12).

The depravity of man can be traced back in time to the valley of Shinar where Nimrod led the descendants of Noah away from Holy God. We read from Genesis 11:1-9 that even though mankind had been completely destroyed (except 8 persons) because of their wickedness, the first generations after the flood still refused to bow the knee to God and thought to build an empire excluding His authority over them.

"¹And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. ²And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. ³And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. ⁴And they said,

Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

⁵And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. ⁶And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. ⁷Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. ⁸So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. ⁹Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth" (Genesis 11:1-9).

These people, in essence, sought to form their own government refusing to be ruled by God and live according to their own standards of conduct. They thought to devise their own means of reaching heaven. Man's religion is exposed in this passage.

Moving ahead in history, we turn to the nation of Israel. Israel descended from Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. God changed Jacob's name to Israel, and in time, Israel fathered twelve sons. These twelve each procreated families of their own, which multiplied into tribes and became the nation of Israel. In God's plan, He chose and blessed this nation above all others and through them manifested His love, goodness, and mercy toward mankind. God promised to bless Israel beyond measure if they would worship and be obedient to Him.

The rest of the world was idolatrous toward God, creating gods of their own imaginations. They refused to recognize

or worship Him as the only true God. As a testimony of His righteousness and goodness, God gave Israel a land of their own, a place flowing with milk and honey that would provide all their needs. God gave them victory over peoples who occupied this land and promised to protect them from any and all attacks. As a testimony that He indeed was the God of Israel, He gave them His love, protection, and provision, and implemented conditions by which Israel was to live. These conditions were meant as a guide so that Israel could live in righteousness before God and set them apart from the rest of mankind. The blessings that would be granted Israel, if they were obedient, was to be His testimony to all the world of His grace toward them, likewise His chastisement if they were disobedient.

No matter how good God was to His people, Israel as a nation would not honor or worship Him. Rather than bringing other nations to their God, they worshipped the created gods of other nations. God saw these nations as being totally depraved and He deemed those other nations so corrupt that He commanded Israel to utterly destroy many of them and gave Israel victory over others. Victory came by way of death and destruction.

When obedient, there were times when Israel experienced the blessings of God, but often they chose to be disobedient. No matter how many times God forgave them of idolatry, Israel would not remain faithful to Him. They instead turned to the gods of the other nations. Again, man's depravity is shown through the nation of Israel. God eventually removed Israel as His faithful servant and chose another people through whom He would work, for a time.

During this time of being set aside Israel murdered their (and our) Redeemer. Even though God promised to re-

establish His government in their midst and give them His anointed as Savior and King, they rejected Him. In rejecting Him, they abandoned God's authority and rule over them. They wanted a king and Savior of their own imaginations. They looked for a king who would re-establish them as the ruling kingdom of the earth but would not subject them to His (God's) authority. Again, man's depravity is demonstrated.

The other people, mentioned above, are the church of Jesus Christ. The church is a called- out assembly of people from all nations of earth and has been given the Holy Spirit as an indwelling help. Yet the professing church (not the possessing) has in many cases, compromised its faithfulness to Christ. In the end, it will degenerate into great apostasy - so great an apostasy that Jesus Himself is no longer inside the professed church, but according to Revelation 3:20, is outside the church asking admittance. *"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."* Again, this points to the depravity of man.

Even after the calamities of the seven-year tribulation that is to come at the end of this age the unredeemed of the earth will not turn to God for mercy. We read from Revelation 6:12-17: *"¹²And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; ¹³And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. ¹⁴And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. ¹⁵And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the*

chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; ¹⁶And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: ¹⁷For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

Rather than turn to the Lord Jesus Christ in repentance, begging for mercy, they attempt to hide from Him. Again, this points to the depravity of man. After all of this evidence, there cannot be any doubt about man's depravity. But the question remains, "To what extent is this depravity? Is it partial, or is it total?" I think we have already answered this question, but if doubt still remains, consider the words of Jesus as recorded in John 3:19-21: "¹⁹And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. ²¹But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

Jesus' declaration was that those who do evil refuse to come to the light, and He added that even those who do come to the light do so only because of what God has wrought in their lives. He declared later in John's testimony ⁴⁴*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day"* (6:44). And remember, Jesus said that a man must be born again in order to see or enter the kingdom of God (John 3:1-8).

It was (and is) Jesus' assessment that in himself, man is lost. Man is not only lost and unable to save himself, but

has no desire to do so unless God the Father draws him (or her) to Him for salvation. How could this be clearer?

The apostle Paul was led to write; *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”* (1st Corinthians 2:14).

And recalling passages already utilized, we read: *“¹And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; ²Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: ³Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*

⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, ⁵Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) ⁶And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: ⁷That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:1-10).

“¹¹He came unto his own, and his own received him not. ¹²But as many as received him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: ¹³Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God ” (John 1:11-13).

Even those whom Jesus chose to be His disciples were chosen not because of their own will, nor of their heredity or nationality, but by the will of God.

Finally, turning once again to the writings of the apostle Paul, we read: *“¹There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. ²For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. ³For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: ⁴That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. ⁵For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. ⁶For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ⁷Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. ⁸So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God”* (Romans 8:1-8).

And from Romans 8:28-30; *“²⁸And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. ²⁹For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”*

Because of man’s depravity his salvation is totally dependant on God’s mercy and grace. He has called those who are saved out of spiritual darkness and regenerated in them

new spiritual life. Those who turn to God do so because of what God initiates in their lives. Without this, man is lost.

We should remember we are not here for our own benefit; God created us for His own good pleasure and to glorify Himself. He is glorified when He redeems a person, and He is glorified as He conforms this person to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. He will be glorified in the end of time when He judges the unredeemed for their sin and refusal to come to Him for forgiveness and mercy. All sin must be reconciled. It is either dealt with at the cross of Jesus or it will be dealt with at the White Throne Judgment. As one comes to the cross, he does so crying out for forgiveness and mercy. When a person rejects the cross, he calls God a liar, denying that Christ's sacrifice is sufficient to satisfy God's judgment against sin.

We all are approaching the inevitable. We are all approaching the death of our bodies. This is an undeniable fact. We are going to die. One hundred per cent of people die. But what occurs after death? If God exists, and He does, we are subject to Him, not He to us. It is His world, and we will be judged by His righteous, holy standards, not our own.

Some people's bodies will not die in the normal understanding of death. They will, however, go through an instantaneous change. Please consider 1 Corinthians 15:50-54: *"⁵⁰Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵²In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴So*

when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”

Thank you, Lord Jesus; you have taken us who have been redeemed out of spiritual darkness, placing in us your light and have removed a heart of depravity giving us a heart that seeks your holiness, and you have destined us to heaven either by resurrection or rapture.

CHAPTER 3

MAN'S WILL: FREE OR OTHERWISE?

Today, many people claim that man has a free will, a will that reaches even into heaven. This is the belief that man can choose to follow God and forsake the allurements of the world (the flesh), but is this true? Scripture affirms that man has a will, but is he free to choose God? The answers to these questions are not only interesting, but are of utmost importance.

All will agree that when making a choice, there needs to be options available. Man chooses between at least two different alternatives. Coming to a fork in a road, he will actually choose between four possibilities. He can go to the right, go to the left, return in the direction from which he came, or stay at that intersection. To get where he wants to go, he must make a decision. In making that decision, he has an objective; i.e. to go toward a desired destination one he knows or suspects is there. Likewise, choices are available when one chooses to follow one leader or another. Whichever the scenario, choice has an intended purpose and is not without motive. Choice has a goal, a purpose, and is therefore not abstract. Choices are influenced by the want or need of the goal (or purpose) and are always made from the greater influence of the time. Man's will, therefore is not arbitrary, but exercised toward a choice that is made according to the greatest influence at the time of decision.

The traveler in the illustration above will decide from among known facts. He knows that his destination lies either to his right or left. He knows that it is not behind him, nor is it at his present location. If he has information that his destination is to the right, then he will choose to go the right. If his destination is to the left, he will choose that

direction. Another option is to guess, but even this has prejudices to which he succumbs. Decision or exercise of the will, then, is subject to the greater prejudice or influence at the time of determination. It can never be otherwise.

It cannot be any different in the spiritual sense, when one makes a choice toward God; it is made from an influence that motivates him toward his decision. The question is; does that influence come from within him-self or, from an outside influence? We should remember that Paul declared the following, *“¹And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; ²Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: ³Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, ⁵Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved”* (Ephesians 2:1-5).

According to Paul, every person is spiritually dead toward God until he is spiritually regenerated (made spiritually alive) by the Holy Spirit. In such a condition it is impossible by an act of the will to choose toward a God that he does not know, or recognize. His will is held captive by that which he does know, his flesh, the world, or Satan.

Scripture tells us (Genesis 2:17) that God warned Adam that by partaking of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil he and Eve would die spiritually toward Him and that is what happened. And Romans 5:12-14 tell us that this death was passed to all persons. We read;

"¹²Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: ¹³(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come."

Jesus declared that for a person to be spiritually alive he must be reborn spiritually. Consider John 3:3...3:5-8:

"I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. ...⁵I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷You should not be surprised at my saying, You must be born again. ⁸The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians wrote; *"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"* (1st Corinthians 2:14). It is evident from these passages that man cannot choose to follow God by an exercise of his will apart from a benevolent God. It is likewise affirmed that the things of God are seen as foolishness to the natural man.

The apostle John wrote: *"¹¹He (Jesus) came unto his own, and his own received him not. ¹²But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: ¹³Which were*

born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 15:16).

And referring once again to Ephesians 2:8-10 we read: *“⁸For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”* Those who do become saved (made alive toward God) are saved by the grace (unmerited favor) of God. Even the faith necessary to believe, according to verse eight, is a “gift of God.” The writer of Hebrews affirms in chapter 2 verse 12 that Jesus is the author (originator) and finisher of the Christian’s faith.

Some hold that man may on his own, without the efficacious influence of the Holy Spirit, choose to follow God. They use such verses as John 3:16 in support of this contention: *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* However, if these individuals would read on in chapter 3 they would discover that Jesus added, *“¹⁹And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved”* (John 3:19-20).

Man has a heart that is set against God (John 15:18). As a result of his nature, he will never choose or prefer the divine and spiritual apart from a new nature imparted to him by God. In other words, he must be born again. I believe the Scriptures are clear; man has a free will, but it only can and always will choose that which it knows. Since

man in his natural state does not know God, he will always choose that which he *does* know, the way of his flesh and the way of the world.

For those readers who have been redeemed, consider your own salvation. Was there not a time when you were unwilling to come to Christ? Since you have come to Him, are you prepared to give Him all the glory and join with the writer of Psalm 115:1 and sing out: *“Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake.”* The Christian must acknowledge he or she came to Christ because the Holy Spirit brought them from unwillingness to willingness.

For those who have not been redeemed (born again), please realize that if you are being drawn to God, it is by His volition, not yours. If you truly are seeking God, it is because He has called you. He will not turn you away. If you are being drawn to God, **you will** come and commit to Him. Romans 8:29-30 declares any person who comes to Him does so by His drawing and that such coming is His finished work. Consider; *“²⁹For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”*

God calls out from humanity those who become redeemed, not in response to their will, but according to His will. He calls them not because they have chosen Him, but because He has chosen them. He lightens their path through the illumination of the Holy Spirit so they may see their need of spiritual renewal.

For any sinner to be saved, three things are indispensable: God the Father must purpose his salvation (and He has),

God the Son must purchase his salvation (and He has), and the God Holy Spirit must bring it to pass (and He has). Man's salvation is exclusively the work of God, and this work was concluded before the creation of the world. Revelation 13:8 tells us that the Lamb of God was slain from the foundation of the creation in order that those whose names are written in the His "Book of Life" (Revelation 17:8) could and would be redeemed.

We note, Romans 8:29-30 declares man's calling, justification, and glorification is the work of God, and Revelation 17:8 declares that the names of those who were to be redeemed were written in the "Book of Life" in eternity past, before creation. Nowhere in either passage is man's choice or efforts mentioned.

Some might wonder if this be true; why do people around the world worship their concept of God and yet are not born again? In answer, it must be remembered: When man sinned (represented in Adam), he did not then become a creation without a spirit (soul). Although he died in the spiritual sense toward God, man was still a spiritual being retaining a desire to worship an entity outside of him-self. In affirmation of this truth we read from Romans 1:18-23 the mindset of the Gentile peoples during the years that God reached out to mankind through the children of Israel.

"¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; ¹⁹Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. ²⁰For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: ²¹Because that,

when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²²Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, ²³And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.”

This mindset, of course, transcends the Gentiles of that time to all peoples whom have not yet been redeemed. All persons before redemption worship their concept of God, the god of their own imaginations. Romans 3:10-12 states: *“¹⁰As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: ¹¹There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. ¹²They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. ”*

God calls fallen man out of spiritual darkness, regenerates his inner man to God consciousness, and creates within him a new desire of fellowship with Him. Then, and only then, does man call out to God. In the process, God provides the message, the messenger, and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit regenerates, illuminates, convicts, and converts. Consider Romans 10:13-15 and I Corinthians 1:18-25:

Romans 10:13-15: *“¹³For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. ¹⁴How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”*

First Corinthians 1:18-25: *“¹⁸For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. ²⁰Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? ²¹For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. ²²For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: ²³But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; ²⁴But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. ²⁵Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”*

In summary, God has purposed to save man by and through His Word. He has called certain ones to salvation and accomplishes this at His determined time. Someone might ask, “If salvation is not by the choice (free will) of man but by the calling of God, why are we to go around the world testifying of His grace and calling people to repentance?” The answer is this; we don’t know who are to be saved. Only God knows and brings it about through His Word and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Believers are to go forth giving out the good news found in Jesus Christ. As the Christian shares the good news of Christ’s sacrifice on behalf of those called, the Holy Spirit brings conviction and conversion. In my mind (and I think this is the fact of Scripture), God grants new life to those of His sovereign calling. He, through the work of the Holy Spirit, opens their understanding, creates in them an awareness of Himself and causes a repentant heart, a commitment to Himself, and a desire of fellowship. He reverses the consequence of sin that had separated man from God.

If we understand this, we have come to an appreciation of God's grace. Furthermore, we are prompted to engage in a spirit of worship and are inspired toward practical godliness and zeal in service. This appreciation of God's grace should comfort our hearts, strengthen our souls, and bless our lives. On the other hand, if we hold to the belief that we chose to come to God on our own, we diminish in our thinking the gift of Christ's sacrificial death and the need for the intervention of the Holy Spirit to call us out of spiritual darkness.

CHAPTER 4

THE FALLACY OF AN EASY SALVATION

In his book, *A Laymen's Guide to the Lordship Controversy*, Richard P. Belcher writes,

“If one were to suggest that the time would come when a group of evangelical Christians would be arguing for a salvation without repentance, without a change of behavior or lifestyle, without a real avowal of the lordship and authority of Christ, without perseverance, without discipleship, and a salvation which does not necessarily result in obedience and works, and with a regeneration which does not necessarily change one's life, most believers of several decades ago would have felt such would be an absolute impossibility. But believe it or not, the hour has come”.

If what Mr. Belcher writes is true, and I believe it is, then how should we evangelize our friends, our family, and neighbors? How should we present the gospel to our children? Certainly we should not present a deluded gospel, yet Christians today are often cautioned not to say too much to the lost. Certain spiritual issues are labeled taboo when speaking to the unconverted: God's law, Christ's lordship, repentance, surrender, obedience, judgment, and hell are not to be mentioned, lest we add something to the offer of God's free gift. Many evangelicals have come to wrongly apply the doctrine of “faith alone.” They make faith the only permissible topic when speaking to non-Christians about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, believing that this preserves the purity of the gospel. What this has done is weaken the message of salvation. It has

also populated the church with “converts” whose faith is counterfeit and whose hope hangs on a bogus or false promise. These people say they “accept Christ as Savior,” yet brazenly reject His rightful claim as Lord. They pay lip service, but utterly scorn Him with their hearts (Mark 7:6). They casually affirm Him with their mouths, although they deliberately deny Him with their deeds (Titus 1:16). They address Him superficially as “Lord, Lord,” yet stubbornly decline to do His bidding (Luke 6:46). Such people fit the tragic description of the “many” in Matthew 7:23 who will one day be stunned to hear Him (Jesus) say, *“I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”*

The fallacy of one choosing Jesus Christ as Savior is a prevalent belief today in evangelism. Truly, one does choose Christ as Savior, but this follows the work of the Holy Spirit. Many of the evangelical persuasion have come to believe, however, that choosing Christ originates within man and then the Holy Spirit comes alongside to aid the one making the decision. A “decision for Christ” is usually signified by some physical or verbal act such as raising a hand, walking an aisle, repeating a prayer, signing a card, reciting a pledge, or something similar. If the sinner performs the prescribed activity, the “moment of decision” becomes the ground of the person’s assurance. Scripture refutes these fallacies.

From John 3:3-6 we read: ³*Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* ⁴*Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?* ⁵*Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* ⁶*That which is born of the*

flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” From Paul’s letter to the Ephesians we read: “*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins*” (2:1).

From these passages it is clear that any movement toward God comes after the granting of newness of spiritual life. The chicken came before the egg, and life comes before faith. It is impossible for one who is dead either physically or spiritually to produce anything. Life in both cases must exist. Spiritual life produces faith and according to Ephesians 2:8 is God’s gift: “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.*”

The “and that” of verse 8 refers back to the entire previous statement of salvation (2:1-7). Salvation is by grace through faith. Because it is impossible for man to believe on his own (1 Corinthians 2:9-14), faith must be initiated by God. Man comes to a point of placing faith in God, but it is not of himself. Verses 9 and 10 of Ephesians 2 affirm this truth. Consider; “*⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*” If faith is of one’s own device, it must be qualified as a work.

Verses 8 through 10 state clearly that faith is the work and gift of God. Salvation is more than just simply declaring, “I believe.” When newness of life (spiritual awakening) occurs in a person’s life, repentance also takes place. This cannot be otherwise because it is the result of the Holy Spirit softening man’s heart toward God. Jesus Himself preached, “*Repent ye, and believe the gospel*” (Mark 1:15). To believe in biblical terms always goes beyond a mere acceptance of facts. Belief points to a commitment or

obligation to the object of faith, in this case the gospel, more pointedly, as in the case of salvation, to Jesus Christ. A good example of this truth is the Philippian jailer. He and his family were moved to the point of commitment to Christ, a commitment that came with a cost.

The writer of Hebrews said that Christ *“became the author of eternal salvation unto all that obey Him”* (Hebrews 5:9).

Paul wrote, *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved”* (Romans 10:9).

Confession is a part of repentance. One must be in agreement with God about his or her sin. Confession and repentance are both components of this agreement. Even though they are different, they are not mutually exclusive of one another. They must both exist. At Pentecost, Peter preached, *“Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remissions of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 2:38).

There are a multitude of other Scriptures that declare that true salvation is always accompanied with repentance and being defined as, “the turning from sin to Christ.” For instance, 1John 2:3-4 says: *“³And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ”*

Are we to believe that the inspired Scripture constitutes poorly worded theology? It should be obvious that Jesus and the apostles certainly held that repentance was a part of

salvation. Why should we separate the two if God's Word does not? If Scripture cautioned against preaching repentance, obedience, righteousness, or judgment to unbelievers, then perhaps we would have a just cause to limit our presentation of Christ to a mental acceptance of Him. Scripture, however, contains no such warnings. The opposite is true. If we want to follow the biblical model, we cannot ignore those issues. Sin, repentance, righteousness, and judgment are the very matters about which the Holy Spirit convicts the unsaved. Can we omit them from the message and still call it the gospel? Apostolic evangelism inevitably culminated in a call for repentance (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 26:20).

Are we to do less than they, simply telling the sinner he must "accept Christ" and not declare his need of repentance or turning from sin? Finally, to declare that by accepting Christ as Savior either by the raising of a hand, walking an aisle, or verbally accenting to that acceptance, while not declaring the necessity of repentance, is in direct contradiction of Ephesians 2:10, which states: *"For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."*

God's work in the Christian begins immediately upon regeneration, conforming him or her to the image of Christ. The Holy Spirit uniquely prepares the heart of the recipient of salvation. The Holy Spirit sheds light on man's sin. The Holy Spirit calls one out of spiritual darkness. The Holy Spirit regenerates man to spiritual life. The Holy Spirit begins to conform one to the image of Jesus Christ at the point of regeneration. To put it bluntly, if there is no change in the one who claims to have accepted Christ as Savior, he or she is still in sin. May we be found as the

good servants of Jesus' parable of Matthew 25:14-30 not as the unfaithful servant; Consider: ¹⁴*The kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. ¹⁵And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. ¹⁶Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. ¹⁷And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. ¹⁸But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. ¹⁹After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. ²⁰And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. ²¹His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. ²²He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. ²³His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. ²⁴Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: ²⁵And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. ²⁶His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: ²⁷Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. ²⁸Take therefore the talent from him, and give it*

unto him which hath ten talents. ²⁹For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. ³⁰And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Salvation is a free gift, but it is not a free ride.

CHAPTER 5

FAITH: CHOICE OR GIFT

What is faith? Is it appropriated or is it bestowed? Webster's Dictionary describes faith as trust, having confidence. The Bible states in Hebrews 11:1: "*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*" In the remainder of the chapter, the writer gives examples of how said faith played out in the lives of many Old Testament people. Consider:

"²For by it the elders obtained a good report. ³Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. ⁴By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet spoke. ⁵By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. ⁶But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. ⁷By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. ⁸By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place, which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. ⁹By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: ¹⁰For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

¹¹Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. ¹²Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

¹³These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. ¹⁴For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. ¹⁵And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. ¹⁶But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

¹⁷By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, ¹⁸Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: ¹⁹Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure. ²⁰By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

²¹By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. ²²By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones. ²³By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. ²⁴By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; ²⁵Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; ²⁶Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the

treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. ²⁷*By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.* ²⁸*Through faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.* ²⁹*By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.*

³⁰*By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.* ³¹*By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.*

³²*And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:* ³³*Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,* ³⁴*Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.* ³⁵*Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:* ³⁶*And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:* ³⁷*They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;* ³⁸*(Of whom the world was not worthy:)* *they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.* ³⁹*And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:* ⁴⁰*God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."*

In these verses, spiritual faith is defined as believing God even though He was not seen by those who believed. How was this possible for them? How is it possible for those of us in this generation? How can one believe (have confidence, i.e., trust) in the unseen God when our physical senses cry out for what can be proven only by what we see? According to the Apostle Paul, **it is not possible** for human beings in their natural state to possess faith in the unseen God. Consider his words to the Corinthian church; *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”* (I Corinthians 2:14). The term “natural man” refers to the person who has not been born again or spiritually regenerated. For one to believe what God says, one must be transformed in his or her spirit. One must be transformed from the state of spiritual death and transformed into the state of spiritual vibrancy, spiritual life.

Because of sin, all persons are born spiritually dead toward God and must have a spiritual renewal. Jesus explained this to the Pharisee Nicodemus (and to us) in a conversation with Nicodemus recorded in the gospel of John, chapter 3, consider verse 3; *“I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* And verses 5-6; *“I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”*

According to these verses, without a spiritual rebirth, no one can see (understand) or enter into the Kingdom of God. It follows that if one cannot see (understand) the spiritual kingdom, one cannot have faith in God. Faith in God and spiritual discernment are birthed in those who are regenerated unto new spiritual life. The context in which

these two verses are found give added insight: *“¹There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: ²The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. ³Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. ⁴Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? ⁵Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. ⁸The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit”* (John 3:1-8).

The first prerequisite to faith, then, is being spiritually alive. Secondly, spiritual faith is not something that one may conjure up or appropriate within him or herself. According to Ephesians 2:8-10: faith is a gift of God; *“⁸For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”*

Verse eight identifies faith as the gift of God. And, verse ten identifies that we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Faith, therefore, is not an act of the will as some hold, but is a gift from sovereign God. John 1:11-13 and Romans 8:28-30 affirm this truth.

John 1:11-13: *“¹¹He came unto his own, and his own received him not. ¹²But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: ¹³Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”*

Romans 8:28-30: *“²⁸And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. ²⁹For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”*

God calls, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies all those He calls by and through His will, not in response to man’s will.

Spiritual faith cannot be experienced by the natural man but is a gift of God to those whom He redeems and regenerates. On one hand, God grants the ability to believe (to have faith). On the other hand, He works on behalf of the ones who are to receive faith in order to bring it about. He conveys the truth of His being and then overcomes spiritual darkness.

In the Old Testament, He often sent “the angel of the Lord” (deity in the flesh, a Theophany of the pre-incarnate Christ) to convey His message. At times, God spoke directly to certain ones as a voice from heaven. On many occasions He sent an angel or spoke through a prophet. In New Testament times He has spoken to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. as Hebrews 1:1-2 affirms: *“¹God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto*

the fathers by the prophets, ²Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds .” In turn, Jesus empowered His followers (the apostles and certain disciples) to speak forth (proclaim) His word. This empowerment has passed from them to every person who becomes saved, each one in his or her own time. Hebrews 4:12 informs us of what His word is able to accomplish when delivered in the authority (the power) of the Holy Spirit. *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”* It brings conviction, repentance and conversion.

In summary, saving faith is a gift, not an exercise of the will. It is brought about by the energizing power of the Holy Spirit who utilizes that which has been written or spoken about God and His Anointed One, the Lord Jesus Christ. For those who might claim that God isn't fair because He has measured faith to some and not to others, consider Romans 1:18-32: *“¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; ¹⁹Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. ²⁰For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: ²¹Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²²Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, ²³And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping*

things. ²⁴Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: ²⁵Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. ²⁶For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: ²⁷And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. ²⁸And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; ²⁹Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, ³⁰Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: ³²Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”

Granted, in context, Paul is referring to the non-Israelite during the time that God had called and used the children of Israel as His witnesses to humanity, but this is applicable to all persons before regeneration, past, present, and future. Man is man and does not change on his own. The soul of man is always concerned with that which he knows. In the case of the unregenerate man, he only knows the things of the flesh. His spirit, which gives him God-consciousness, has been cut off from God. Man’s spirit is dead toward God. Way back in Genesis God declared that because of sin man became separated from Him, separated to the point of

death. Consider Genesis 2:17: *“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.”*

As physical death separates one from all that is living, spiritual death separates one from God. This is affirmed by the fact that if one is to see (understand) the kingdom of God and be reunited with Him, he or she must be born again. Is God fair in exercise of His sovereignty, bestowing faith to some and not others? Those who would hold that God is not fair must deal with John 16:6-11, which states:

“⁶But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. ⁷Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. ⁸And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹Of sin, because they believe not on me; ¹⁰Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; ¹¹Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.”

The Holy Spirit has been given to convict all men of their sin, not only those to whom mercy is shown. All men deserve the wages they have earned, eternal separation from God, but He said: *“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion”* (Romans 9:15). Consider the context in which Paul proffered these words: *“¹⁴What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. ¹⁵For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. ¹⁶So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. ¹⁷For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for*

this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. ¹⁸Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. ¹⁹Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? ²⁰Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? ²¹Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? ²²What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: ²³And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, ²⁴Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

²⁵As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. ²⁶And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God. ²⁷Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: ²⁸For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth” (Romans 9:14-28).

One must remember John 3:16-20, which states: “¹⁶For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. ¹⁷For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. ¹⁸He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned

already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.”

Christ's blood was shed to pay the penalty of sin; something man could not do for himself, even if he wanted to. But because man could not and would not come on his own to God for mercy, God reached out to man in Old Testament times by giving prophets to Israel and reached through Israel to the Gentiles.

In these New Testament times, He has demonstrated His love to the world by giving us His Son, the Holy Spirit, His Word, and the church. His reaching out to man is testimony of His grace, yet man on his own will not turn to God. Therefore, it pleased God to extend unmerited favor to those whom are to be saved, to those whom he calls.

Man, according to Scripture, is totally depraved. That is, man in his natural state has no inclination toward the one true God. He, in essence, is spiritually dead. Remember, Jesus explained to Nicodemus (and to us) in John 3:19-21: *“¹⁹And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. ²¹But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.”*

Without the mercy (unmerited favor) of God, no one would have faith or salvation, but thanks to His mercy and grace, we who are His, have both. Someday, we will join our voices with the heavenly chorus and sing; “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing” (Revelation 4:11).

CHAPTER 6

GRACE OR WORKS

Grace according to the Bible is the unmerited favor of God. Works on the one hand are defined as any activity that is done in an attempt to earn salvation or the favor of God; acting to appease God's wrath. On the other hand works can be defined as any activity done to honor God through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Is man saved by grace, by works, or a combination of both? Many believe God is sovereign over everything, but add that He cannot save man unless man allows Him to do so. To do otherwise would violate man's (so-called) free will. Some say salvation is by grace (the unmerited favor of God) yet contradict this statement by saying man must do this or that to be saved, but is either of these the message of the Bible?

Before looking into Scripture to see what it says about man's salvation, it should be understood that the Bible stands alone. Its own claim is that it is the Word of God. The apostle John said emphatically: *"¹⁸For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: ¹⁹And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book"* (Revelation 22:18-19).

Some question what John meant by "the prophecy of this Book." Did he mean the entire Bible or the singular book entitled "The Revelation?" The question is mute, because

John also wrote the gospel of John and three epistles that bear his name, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John. Each book complements the others, with no variance of thought. Nowhere in these five books does John contradict himself.

The apostle Paul, in his second letter to Timothy, his son in the faith, wrote: *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness”* (2 Timothy 3.16). And the apostle Peter testified; *“¹²So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. ¹³I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, ¹⁴because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. ¹⁵And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things. ¹⁶We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’ ¹⁸We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. ¹⁹And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. ²¹For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit”* (2 Peter 1:12-21).

Peter's testimony was that the Word of God came by holy men of God as they were inspired and moved by the Holy Spirit. The canon of Scripture (66 books) was completed in the first century. Some tried to add certain writings after the close of that century but there were falsehoods and contradictions in their writings and these writings were not accepted. God preserved **His** Word. There are no falsehoods or contradictions within its pages. It must be understood and accepted that all other writings are an addition to those original sixty-six books. Such additions or deletions according to John will bring God's wrath upon those who do. So then, in that the Bible is God's message to man, what does the Bible say about His grace? What does it say about man's works?

Ephesians 2:1-10 begins our answer; *"¹And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; ²Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: ³Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, ⁵Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) ⁶And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: ⁷That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."*

Paul writes that the Ephesians (and by extension, you and I) “were dead in trespasses and sins” before regeneration, before being renewed spiritually toward God. Paul further explains in verse three that “*we were by nature the children of wrath.*” This means that we were at enmity (at war) with God as we “gratified the cravings of our sinful nature.” No “good” works could come out of a being such as this. To believe anything else is a denial of the truth. But even while we were in this condition; “⁴ *God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,* ⁵*Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ*”.

Our regeneration was accomplished by God and God alone, we were dead toward Him at the time of our regeneration, and we were regenerated (reborn spiritually) because God is rich in mercy and because He loved us. Verse six us that; “*He raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.* Verses 7-10 tell us why He did this; “⁷*That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.* “⁸*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:* ⁹*Not of works, lest any man should boast.* ¹⁰*We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*” Nowhere in the entire passage does it say that our salvation, our regeneration, was the result of God’s mercy and our works. On the contrary, we are saved because of His riches in mercy and because we are His workmanship. In the ages to come (throughout eternity), His love and mercy will be on display in our salvation, not His love and mercy and our good works. According to verse ten, we will do good works and they will be on display in the ages to come, but our good works are a result of His workmanship. Paul said emphatically: “⁸*For by grace are ye saved*

through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

We are saved by grace (the unmerited favor of God) and grace alone, not because of works. Mankind will not and does not have an opportunity to boast of his or her salvation. We are saved by grace, through faith, but even our faith, according to verse eight, cannot be claimed as our own work. Faith is the gift of God.

The prophet Isaiah 64:6, speaking of the Israelites (and prophetically, us), wrote: *“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags”* (Isaiah 64:6); and Paul writing of both the Jew and the Gentile wrote: *“There is no one righteous, not even one”* Romans 3:10. This means that there is none who qualify as being righteous before salvation. To emphasize this further, he added; *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* 3:23. No one, no matter how much he (or she) does in their natural state (1 Corinthians 2:14), can ever glorify God by works because everyone before salvation is unfit for His kingdom.

One should be very careful of the traditions of man, or, of additions or deletions of the Scriptures. All writings or traditions, of man should be measured by the Bible, not the Bible by these writings or traditions. According to Jesus our salvation is because of the work of the Holy Spirit, not because of any works we may have done or will do. Reading from the gospel of John 3:1-8, we find; *“¹Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. ²He came to Jesus at night and said, Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him. ³In reply*

Jesus declared, I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. ⁴How can a man be born when he is old? Nicodemus asked. Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born! ⁵Jesus answered, I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷You should not be surprised at my saying, You must be born again. ⁸The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

God the Father purposed our salvation, God the Son paid the price of our salvation, and the Holy Spirit brought it about in the lives of those He saves. He will not share His glory with anyone else. Romans 8:28-30 is the classic text of God's grace: "²⁸And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.²⁹For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

God called, justified, and glorified those who are saved in order to bring about His determination (predestination) of conforming us to the image of His Son. This was and is all of God; man's works are nowhere mentioned. But, someone might ask, "What about those persons who are in remote parts of the earth such as jungle peoples who have had no contact with the civilized world, those who have had no exposure to the written or spoken Word of God? Are they lost? How can God hold them responsible for not

accepting or trusting in Him of whom they knew nothing about?” The answer is that God doesn’t hold them responsible for not accepting unrevealed truth. Men are lost because of sin and they are separated from Holy God. More importantly God has separated Himself from fallen (sinful) man. When man’s representative (Adam) disobeyed God in the Garden and took of the forbidden fruit he became something other than he had been created. He was created righteous, in a state of innocence, but when he sinned (disobeyed) he became unrighteous. He chose to follow his own will, not God’s. He chose to follow a new governing nature, a nature that was controlled by pride and self-rule. Someone might say, “If I had been in the Garden, I would not have sinned, as did Adam.” That is an indefensible argument since no one will ever be in the Garden.

That this nature became the nature of all Adam’s offspring is proven that even in the most remote part of the earth, men break the rules (the laws) of their given society. Even in our own societies we find people breaking the speed limit, running red lights, parking in handicap zones, though they are not handicapped, and so on. We must even teach our children to be good. It is because of this nature that men sin and they are separated from Holy God and He is separated from sinful men. But thank God, this is not the end of the story. He has taken the salvation of man upon Himself. Praise God.

CHAPTER 7

SALVATION: THE WORK OF GOD

Many have said that the salvation of the soul (or the spirit) of man is a two-sided work. By this they mean that God does His part for man's salvation, and man does his. Those who hold to this belief say that God has made available through the sacrifice of His anointed (the Lord Jesus Christ) new spiritual life (salvation) and that He offers it to each person who is born into the world. They also say that God cannot redeem man's soul unless man allows it to happen. By this they are implying that God must have the permission of man for salvation to take place.

There are others who believe that new spiritual life is bestowed by God first, followed by a positive response by man to God. Much has been written about this from both perspectives. I personally believe that it is impossible for a spiritually dead person (the condition of all humanity before spiritual life is granted) to make this positive spiritual decision about the Creator, before he or she is made spiritually alive. Paul, in writing to the church at Ephesus confirms this truth; *"⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, ⁵Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)"* (Ephesians 2:4-5). Paul held that he and his readers were dead toward God until God, Himself, made them alive. If this is true, there will be those who ask; does God bestow new spiritual life to everyone, if he doesn't, why doesn't He? And, Is God fair by bestowing spiritual live to some and not others?

To begin with, John 3:16-17 informs us that God has given a universal call to all, excluding none: *"¹⁶For God so loved*

the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. ¹⁷For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. .” Paul answering the Philippian jailor’s question, “What must I do to be saved?” said: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved” (Acts 16:30-31). In short, God has offered salvation to all, but even though He offered to forgive a person his sins it does not preclude that the offer has been or will be accepted. God does not force one to accept His offer. Neither does man accept the offer automatically because of his natural state and love of sin; As Jesus explained to the visitor, Nicodemus: “¹⁷For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. ¹⁸He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.” (John 3:17-20).

God is just in that He offers salvation to all. To those who come to Him, there is forgiveness and salvation. For those who do not come to Him, His wrath remains on them. In either case, God is righteous. He does not force man to choose either way. The burden, therefore, is on man, not God. However, as Jesus explained in verses 19-20 above, because of his sinful nature, man does not want to give up the appetites and so-called “pleasures of the flesh”. The “everyone” of verse 20 includes everyone prior to regeneration. Paul, in Romans 3:10-12 concludes this as well: “¹⁰As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: ¹¹There is none that understandeth, there is none that

seeketh after God. ¹²They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”

Because God is God—just and righteous—one has to be just and righteous to be in His presence. There is no compatibility between righteousness and unrighteousness, between holiness and un-holiness. Where God is, unrighteousness is not. Where unrighteousness is, God is not. God is the standard by which all that are in His presence must be found.

As a creation of God, man is responsible to love, obey, and serve God. As a sinner (unregenerate man—natural man), he is responsible to repent and believe the Gospel. However, one must recognize that natural man is unable to love and serve God because as a sinner, he cannot repent and believe. Jesus said in John 6:44, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him:” The heart of the natural man (the man who has not been reborn) is so “desperately wicked” that if left to himself, he would never come to Christ as Jesus explained “*ye will not come to me, that ye might have life*” (John 5:40). To become acceptable to God and receive salvation through Christ, a person must realize that he is a sinner and that without Christ he is eternally lost. This, however, is impossible since he is dead towards God (Ephesians 2:1 and 5).

First Corinthians 2:14 states: “*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*” A grim picture is painted here. However, God is also a merciful God. He gave up His son for those who are to be redeemed. Jesus Christ (God the Son) gave Himself as the only sacrifice acceptable of

God. His sacrifice paid the debt of the sin for those who have or will come to Him. Charles H. Spurgeon, in his sermon “The Grace of God” referencing Ephesians 2:8 “By Grace Are You Saved through Faith,” wrote:

“I think it well to turn a little to one side that I may ask my listener to observe adoringly the fountain-head of our salvation, which is the grace of God. ‘By grace are you saved.’ Because God is gracious, sinful men are forgiven, converted, purified, and saved. It is not because of anything in them, or that ever can be in them, that they are saved; but because of the boundless love, goodness, pity, compassion, mercy, and grace of God. Tarry a moment, then, at the wellhead. Behold the pure river of water of life, as it proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb! What an abyss is the grace of God! Who can measure its breadth? Who can fathom its depth? Like all the rest of the divine attributes, it is infinite. God is full of love, for ‘God is love.’ God is full of goodness; the very name ‘God’ is short for ‘good.’ Unbounded goodness and love enter into the very essence of the Godhead. It is because ‘His mercy endures for ever’ that men are not destroyed, because ‘His compassions fail not’ that sinners are brought to Him and forgiven. Remember this; or you may fall into error by fixing your minds so much upon the faith, which is the channel of salvation, as to forget the grace, which is the fountain and source even of faith itself. Faith is the work of God’s grace in us. No man can say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Ghost. ‘No man comes unto me,’ said Jesus ‘except the Father which has sent me draw him.’ So that faith, which is coming to Christ, is the result of divine drawing.”

Without the intervention of God, man is in a terrible predicament—lost and separated from the holiness of God. We read from Revelation 20:11-15: *“¹¹And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. ¹²And 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. ¹³And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. ¹⁴And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”*

Romans 8:28-30 explains that God is calling man out of spiritual darkness unto Himself, creating in them new spiritual life. *“²⁸And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. ²⁹For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”* Note that this entire passage is in the past tense. God first “efficaciously called” all those He had predestined to be conformed to image of His son. He justified and glorified each one. No activity of man is mentioned. The question arises, “how did God, in that efficacious call, make unwilling man, in love with his sin, willing to turn from that sin? And how did He make it possible for unrighteous man to be righteous?” An answer to this begins to unfold for us in John 3:1-8: *“¹There was a man of the Pharisees,*

named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: ²The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. ³Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. ⁴Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? ⁵Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. ⁸The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

God the Holy Spirit overcomes the spiritual darkness of the one who is called and renews his spirit to life. This overcoming of the Holy Spirit follows this process: 1) Man is regenerated (made spiritually alive); 2) he recognizes that he is a sinner; 3) He becomes repentant of his sin; 4) He recognizes that his salvation depends on God's provision, the Lord Jesus Christ, and that he is completely at the mercy of God; 5) He desires to once again have fellowship with God, worshipping Him for who He is; 6) He is washed clean of his sin; and 7) And, He is sealed and placed by the Holy Spirit into the family of God. John 3:3 tells us that the first thing to happen in this succession is that man is "born again" made spiritually alive: Earlier the question was asked, "How does God make it possible for unrighteous man to be made righteous?" Jesus explains in John 3:6: God the Holy Spirit regenerates a person to new spiritual life making him spiritually alive again. John 3:5 tells us that: "no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is

born of water and the Spirit” and Titus 3:5 explains the meaning of this: “⁵ Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. ”

The phrase “born of the spirit” in both John 3:3 and 3:5 means to be “born from above”. A birth caused and effected from heaven. This was true of a Jewish proselyte named Lydia who worshipped the God of the Hebrews in spiritual darkness yet did not really have spiritual life: *“¹³ And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. ¹⁴ And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. ¹⁵ And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us” (Acts 16:13-15).*

We see God’s triune work in the life of Lydia, and it is the same work exercised in all who come to faith. God the Father has purposed the salvation of those who are redeemed. God the Son has purchased the life of those who are redeemed, and God the Holy Spirit has regenerated re-birthed those who are redeemed. Nowhere in Scripture do we find God asking man’s permission to save him: Ephesians 2:1-9 gives great insight of this: *“¹ And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; ² Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: ³ Among whom also we all had our*

conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, ⁵Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) ⁶And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: ⁷That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

The passage emphatically states that we were dead toward God (vs.1). We lived to gratify the craving of our sinful natures (vs.3). God chose us in spite of ourselves (vs.4). And, He gave us the faith necessary to believe (vs.8). It was all of Him, so that we could not boast and say, “I permitted God” (vs.9), and He did this for His glory (vs.7).

Jeremiah 31:31-34 sums up what God is doing for each individual he calls to Himself, as well as what He will do for Israel nationally some day in the future. God will call Israel back to Himself; He will grant them newness of life; He will be their God; He will put His law in their hearts and minds and they will be His people. *“³¹Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: ³²Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: ³³But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their*

hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.'"

Thank you, Lord, for doing for us what you will do for national Israel some day in the future; that which we could not have done for ourselves, even if we had wanted to. Thank you for changing our hearts of stone to hearts of flesh, and thank you for granting us newness of life so that we are able to enjoy fellowship with you again.

CHAPTER 8

NO OTHER NAME UNDER HEAVEN

Man has been led to believe that if a person faithfully believes and commits to a religion, he/she will be accepted by God and granted salvation. While this sounds logical, it is not what the Bible teaches, nor is it what the God of the Bible claims. Jesus said in John 14:6: *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”* The apostle Peter said in Acts 4:12: *“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”*

The apostle Paul wrote in Romans 5: 12-19: *“¹²Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—¹³for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. ¹⁴Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come. ¹⁵But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! ¹⁶Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man’s sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. ¹⁷For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. ¹⁸Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of*

one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. ¹⁹For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.”

There is a major difference between the majority of religions and biblical Christianity. Religions are works of man and promote the thought that salvation is earned. Christianity, on the other hand, extends God’s grace to fallen man. Religion often denies the saving grace of God, and although acknowledges that God extended grace, claims this is in response to the effort of man doing his or her best. Paul wrote:

“¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. ⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved” (Ephesians 2:1-5).

Paul went on to write: “⁸*It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not by works, so that no one can boast*” He gave the reason of God’s grace in verse 7: “*in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus,*” and added in verse 10: “*For we are God’s workmanship,*

created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

A religion based on works attempts to rob God of the glory justly due Him. This will not prevail throughout the ages to come. Instead, His glory will be recognized by His kindness to the redeemed, accomplished by the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ's sacrifice removed God's wrath from those brought to salvation. For those who are not redeemed, God's wrath remains. Revelation 20:11-15: tells of the consequence of that wrath: *“¹¹Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. ¹³The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. ¹⁴Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”*

Paul said of his fellow Jews: *“¹Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. ²For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. ³Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.”* (Romans 10: 1-3).

Jesus' testimony to us through Nicodemus is: *“³No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again... ⁵nor can*

one enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit” (John 3:3 and 5).

Returning to Paul’s letter to the Romans, we read that salvation cannot be gained by keeping the law but through Jesus Christ, the God/man. ⁵*Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: The man who does these things will live by them. ⁶But the righteousness that is by faith says: Do not say in your heart, Who will ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷or Who will descend into the deep? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸But what does it say? The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: ⁹That if you confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. ¹¹As the Scripture says, Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame. ¹²For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³for, Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Romans 10:5-13).*

Paul was called by God to proclaim His Word so that in hearing it, people would be saved. Although he ministered to the Gentiles, Paul always carried in his heart a love for his own people, the Jews. The Jews could not be saved by their religion, nor could any religion of the Gentiles save them. Only the Lord Jesus Christ could accomplish this. Paul, after many years of faithful service to the Lord, was martyred because of his faithfulness. In fact, his own people, the Jews, had him killed because they rejected the truth and dogmatically held to their religion. It is very dangerous to believe that religion can save. According to

the Bible, salvation is only accomplished by the work of Jesus Christ.

The writer of Hebrews puts it this way: *“¹The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. ²If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshippers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. ³But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, ⁴because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. ⁵Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: ‘Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; ⁶ with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. ⁷Then I said, Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, O God.’ ⁸First he said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them’ (although the law required them to be made). ⁹Then he said, ‘Here I am, I have come to do your will.’ He sets aside the first to establish the second. ¹⁰And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ¹¹Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices which can never take away sins. ¹²But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God” (Hebrews 10:1-12).*

Many people deny this truth and seek to satisfy Holy God by religious works, but as Paul and Silas testified to the Philippian jailor: “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved—you and your household” (*Acts 16:31*).

Have you trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ, dear reader, for your salvation? John 3:18 and 3:36 unequivocally state:

3:18 *“Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”*

3:36 *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whosoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on Him.”*

God is assuredly a God of Love. This was demonstrated by what God the Father gave for man’s salvation (His only begotten Son). God the Son demonstrated God’s love when He freely gave of Himself to suffer and die on the cross to satisfy the righteousness of God. God the Holy Spirit continues to demonstrate God’s love as He ceaselessly roams the earth regenerating and sealing those God the Father calls to salvation.

CHAPTER 9

BORN AGAIN

Many today claim to have had a born-again experience. When asked what the term means, there are a wide range of answers given. The Bible, however, has one definition of being born-again; to be born from above. John 3:1-8 writes: *“¹Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. ²He came to Jesus at night and said, Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him. ³In reply Jesus declared, I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. ⁴How can a man be born when he is old? Nicodemus asked. Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born! ⁵Jesus answered, I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷You should not be surprised at my saying, You must be born again. ⁸The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”*

Jesus told Nicodemus (and us) that for a person to understand (see) or enter the kingdom of God, he or she must be born-again. This is not a term to be taken lightly, but deeply considered. Some may say there are many ways to heaven, but Jesus said; “one must be born-again” to enter. He further explains in verse 6; *“Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.”*

A definition of terms found in verse 6 may prove helpful as we consider His statement. The word “flesh” used in this passage has to do with that part of man that is corporal, his physical body. The term is also used in many passages of Scripture as the natural man—the man of earth. The word “Spirit” in this verse refers to the Holy Spirit (notice the capitalization), but when used the second time, it refers to the spirit of man. Based on these definitions, verse 6 means that the Holy Spirit of God gives birth (in the sense of regeneration) to the spirit of man. Being born-again is not a new physical rebirth, but a rebirth of the inward man, a rebirth of one’s spirit. The logical question then becomes: How does the Holy Spirit rebirth (regenerate) the spirit of man? To answer this question, we should first consider man in his complexity. The following three passages will aid our understanding.

Genesis 2:7; “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.”

Hebrews 4:12; “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

Genesis 2:16-17 “¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

From these passages, we learn that man was born with a body, soul, and spirit. The body is the instrument of the

soul of man and his spirit is that which connects him with his creator, with God.

When we read that man must be born-again spiritually to see and to enter heaven the natural question arises; what happen that requires that he be reborn spiritually? To answer this question we must journey back to the book of beginnings, to Genesis. There, we read of Adam, mans ancestor and federal head. He had been created righteous and placed in an environment that afforded him everything desired or needed. He was to live free with one exception; he was not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God knew that in the day that he partook of that fruit he would separate himself from God. And, as importantly, God would separate Himself from Adam, because of what Adam would become. God told Adam what would happen, in the day that he disobeyed Him, He said you will begin to die physically and you will die immediately in your spirit toward me.

Adam's spirit gave him God consciousness; a desire to know and fellowship with God and the ability to communicate with Him. But if Adam were too disobeyed he would die immediately toward God. Just as physical death would separate him from all that was living, disobedience and sin would separate Adam from God in the spiritual sense. This of course is what happened, but it wasn't his sentence only, but upon all his descendants (which means, everyone). For him to have fellowship and communication with God again Adam needed to be (and all his descendants need to be reborn (restored) spiritually. A God consciousness, a desire for fellowship, and a desire for communication all needed (need) to be restored (renewed). According to Jesus in our opening passage (John 3:1-8), this restoration of spiritual life is granted by God and He refers to it as "being-born again."

In explanation of what He meant, Jesus told Nicodemus (and us), that it wasn't a physical rebirth that was necessary for a man to see or enter heaven but a spiritual rebirth. He said, *"⁵Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit"* (John 3:5-6). And then added *"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit"* (vs.8).

The wind, Jesus said, begins and ends unhampered. In the same way, the Holy Spirit moves among men as He pleases, when He pleases, and where He pleases. This is not without purpose, however. He regenerates to newness of spiritual life those to whom He has been sent. Romans 8:28-30 tells us that God calls persons to salvation for the purpose of conforming them into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. We read; *"²⁸And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. ²⁹For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."*

Being born-again begins with the efficacious calling of God so that those called will be of many brothers (verse 29), spiritual brothers of the Jesus Himself. When one is called, he or she is called *from* something *to* something different. He or she is called from spiritual death to new spiritual life. This calling results in the overwhelming of spiritual darkness?" The Holy Spirit, God's agent, convicts and convinces man of his sin and births in him a new desire to please God and a distain of his sin. This is not accom-

plished in the abstract but in association with the word of God, the good news of God. As with Lydia, a woman from Thyatira (Acts 16:14-15) who came to understand and believe after she heard the word of God spoken by Paul and Silas. The writer of the book of Hebrews tells us; *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart”* (Hebrews 4:12). And, the apostle Peter tells us that *“we have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God”* (1 Peter 1.23).

Being born-again begins with the call of God. The Holy Spirit then illuminates the truth about Jesus to the heart of the one who is to be born-again as He convicts and convinces said person of his need of redemption. It is by the determined will of God that one is born again, mitigated by His love and grace. Consider Ephesians 2:8: *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”* This passage tells us that we are saved by the grace of God and that He gives us the faith necessary to believe what is written, or spoken about Jesus. Paul writes that it is *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost”* (Titus 3:5).

And He writes that this rebirthing takes place when we were yet alienated (dead) toward God. Consider; *“¹And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; ²Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of*

disobedience: ³Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, ⁵Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved) (Ephesians 2:1-6).

Being born again begins with the work of the Holy Spirit while we are in a dead (separated) state toward God.

In summary then, being born again is the renewal of spiritual life. Not a re-creation of man's spirit because it exists from time of birth, but a renewal of a recognition of True God, a desire to please Him and a desire to serve Him. Also, an awareness of sin is reawakened and a desire to flee from it, bringing confession and repentance. If these things are the makeup of one's life, he or she has been born again. And, spiritual rebirth is by the will of God, not the will of man. John 1:11-13 states: "¹¹He (Jesus) came unto his own, and his own received him not. ¹²But as many as received him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: ¹³Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Be assured, being born-again brings change to one's life. As Paul tells us in his letter to the Ephesians: "¹Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; ²And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour. ³But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; ⁴Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of

thanks. ⁵For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ⁶Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. ⁷Be not ye therefore partakers with them. ⁸For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: ⁹(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) ¹⁰Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord” (Ephesians 5:1-10).

Many have been deceived into thinking that if they recite a certain prayer, walk down an aisle and make a profession of faith, or are baptized (by water), they are born-again. While this may be true of those who have been born-again, these things alone do not preclude that truly have been. A changed life is the evidence of true rebirth. A truly born again person will not live by the dictates of the flesh, which are these; ¹⁹Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, ²⁰Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, ²¹Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like” (Galatians 5:19-21). If a person is truly born-again he will have crucified the flesh with its affections and lust (Galatians 5:24) and he will keep the Lord’s commandments. .

If a person is truly born again, there will be a change in his life. Without a changed life, there has been no rebirth. The apostle John assures us of this in his first letter to many of those whom he had ministered to sometime earlier. He wrote; ³And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is

the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. ⁶He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” (1st John 2:3-6).

And he added, we will love our Christian brothers: Consider; “⁸Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. ⁹He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. ¹⁰He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. ¹¹But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes” (2:8-11). Continuing with this thought, he wrote; “¹⁴We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another. Whoever does not love abides in death. ¹⁵All who hate a brother or sister are murderers, and you know that murderers do not have eternal life abiding in them. ¹⁶We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. ¹⁷How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? ¹⁸Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. ¹⁹And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him ²⁰whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. ²¹Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God” (3:14-21).

5:1-5: “¹Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. ³For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments.

And his commandments are not burdensome, ⁴for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. ⁵Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"

He wrote that the truly born-again person will not continue to love the things of the world as he did before being reborn. ¹⁵*The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; ¹⁶for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world. ¹⁷And the world and its desire are passing away, but those who do the will of God live forever" (2:15-17).*

And, he wrote that the truly born-again person will acknowledge Jesus as God in the flesh. ²¹*I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and you know that no lie comes from the truth. ²²Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. ²³No one who denies the Son has the Father; everyone who confesses the Son has the Father also. ²⁴Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you will abide in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵And this is what he has promised us, eternal life" (2:21-25).*

And finally, he wrote; the truly born-again person does not continue in sin (does not continue in habitual sin). ⁹*Those who have been born of God do not sin, because God's seed abides in them; they cannot sin, because they have been born of God. ¹⁰The children of God and the children of the devil are revealed in this way: all who do not do what is*

right are not from God, nor are those who do not love their brothers and sisters” (3:9-10).

These things must be true in the life of him or her who claims to be born-again. They are after all, God’s workmanship affected in those who have been created (reborn) in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:10). If God has truly worked these things in one’s life, he or she is born again.

CHAPTER 10

THE EMPTY CROSS

The cross of Jesus Christ is displayed in various ways and is to many a reminder that He suffered and died for mankind. Many times we see it occupied by a replica of Christ's body. In other displays, the cross is vacant. This conveys God's acceptance of His Son's sacrifice as payment for man's sin. Its emptiness testifies to the belief that His death was the beginning of man's atonement. For the apostle Paul, the empty cross and the empty tomb present the risen Christ. In his letter to the Romans, he states: "*He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification*" (Romans 4:25).

Paul further affirms the absolute necessity of Christ's resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:12-23: "¹²*Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?* ¹³*But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:* ¹⁴*And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.* ¹⁵*Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.* ¹⁶*For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:* ¹⁷*And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.* ¹⁸*Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.* ¹⁹*If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.* ²⁰*But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.* ²¹*For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.* ²²*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* ²³*But every man in his own order: Christ*

the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."

The information the apostle John was instructed to relay in the book of Revelation gives testimony that Jesus did not remain in the tomb. Revelation 1:9-18: *"⁹I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. ¹⁰I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, ¹¹Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. ¹²And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; ¹³And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. ¹⁴His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; ¹⁵And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. ¹⁶And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. ¹⁷And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: ¹⁸I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."*

In Chapters 4 and 5 John was caused to write: *"4: ¹After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven:*

and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter. ²And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. ³And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. ⁴And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. ⁵And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. ⁶And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. ⁷And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

⁸And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. ⁹And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, ¹⁰The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ¹¹Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

“5: ¹And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. ²And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to

loose the seals thereof? ³And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. ⁴And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. ⁵And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

⁶And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. ⁷And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. ⁸And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. ⁹And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; ¹⁰And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. ¹¹And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; ¹²Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. ¹³And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. ¹⁴And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.'''

Born-again Christians see not only the empty cross, they see the empty tomb and Jesus glorified. This is God's testimony that He has accepted Christ's sacrifice for the atonement of the sin of those He redeems. Hebrews 10:1-12 affirms this truth: *"¹For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. ²For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. ³But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. ⁴For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. ⁵Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: ⁶In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.*

⁷Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. ⁸Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; ⁹Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. ¹⁰By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ¹¹And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: ¹²But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

Because of His faithfulness, God the Father has made God the Son Savior and Lord. This could not be true if Jesus had remained in the tomb. Why is all this so important? Because man, before he has been made righteous, is lost

and eternally separated from God. He must bear the consequence of his sin unless that consequence is transferred to another. This is what God has done. In His mercy, God has transferred the penalty of the sin (spiritual death) of the redeemed to Christ.

The writer of Hebrews was led by the Holy Spirit to give the following warning in Chapter 3: *“¹Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; ²Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. ³For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. ⁴For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. ⁵And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; ⁶But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. ⁷Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, ⁸Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: ⁹When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. ¹⁰Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. ¹¹So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) ¹²Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. ¹³But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; ¹⁵While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. ¹⁶For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that*

came out of Egypt by Moses. ¹⁷But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? ¹⁹So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.”

In this chapter the writer continues his thoughts from chapters one and two. He begins by challenging his believing Jewish brothers to consider the Apostle and High Priest of their profession, the Lord Jesus Christ, confirming to them His Son-ship. In verse seven, he begins to address his earthly racial brothers (those who have not come to faith in the Lord Jesus) and warns them not to delay in turning to Christ as their forefathers delayed trusting God’s leading in the wilderness. Their forefathers were not allowed to enter the rest of God (the Promised Land). In much the same way, the recipients of the letter of Hebrews would not enter into the rest of redemption if they did not turn to Christ. Not trusting Christ would end in a very sad reality, never being able to enter the rest of heaven. Because the cross and the tomb are both empty no one has to remain separated from God. Jesus made it possible for man to be brought back into fellowship with God, his Creator.

CHAPTER 11

ETERNAL SECURITY

Why are some Christians under the delusion that they could lose their salvation? After all, Jesus said: “²⁷*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: ²⁸And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. ³⁰I and my Father are one” (John 10:27-30).*

In examining this passage we find....

- 1) God the Father gave God the Son certain ones to be His sheep.
- 2) Jesus gave to His sheep eternal life.
- 3) His sheep shall never perish.
- 4) God is greater than all and no one is able to pluck (remove) a child (sheep) from His hand.

Because the passage emphatically confirms that those who are the Lord’s (are His sheep) are kept by the authority (power) of both Jesus (God the Son) and God the Father, not independently, but in co-operation with one another, one needs never fear losing his or her salvation. Perhaps it is such passages as Hebrews 6:1-12 and Matthew 10:22-23 that cause the wavering Christian confusion and consternation. Both passages, when misinterpreted, could cause one great concern, but when properly understood, all fear should be erased.

Hebrews 6:1-12: ¹Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, ²Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. ³And this will we do, if God permit. ⁴For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, ⁵And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, ⁶If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. ⁷For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: ⁸But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

⁹But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. ¹⁰For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. ¹¹And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: ¹²That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

On the surface, it may appear that one could lose his or her salvation. However, there is nothing in these verses that speaks of a born-again person losing his or her salvation. If salvation could be lost, it would be terrible news, for according to the passage one could never approach salvation again. The passage states, “It is impossible (not improbable, but impossible) to renew them again to repentance.” One should keep in mind, the writer of this

letter was writing to a diverse group of people, not just Jewish converts to Christianity. He was also addressing Jews who had approached Christianity but after considering the cost had backed away.

John Walvoord (The Bible Knowledge Commentary) writes: This passage has been interpreted in four ways:

- 1) “That the danger of a Christian losing his or her salvation is described, a view rejected because of many biblical assurances that salvation is a work of God which cannot be reversed;
- 2) That the warning is against mere profession of faith short of salvation, or tasting but not really partaking of salvation;
- 3) That hypothetically if a Christian could lose his or her salvation, there is no provision for repentance;
- 4) That a warning is given of the danger of a Christian moving from a position of true faith and life to the extent of becoming disqualified for further service.”

In light of passages such as John 10:27-30 (quoted above) and Ephesians chapters 1 and 2, etc. the phrases:

- “1) *Who have once been enlightened;*
- 2) *Who have tasted the heavenly gift;*
- 3) *Who have shared in the Holy Spirit;*

- 4) *Who have tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the coming age; and*
- 5) *If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame”*

are best understood to apply to those who approached Christianity, but backed away when they considered the cost. The words “fall away” cannot refer to loss of eternal life. This would be in contradiction to John 10:27-30 and Hebrews 6:1-12. These verses emphatically declare the inalienable possession of eternal life for those who trust Christ. The writer of our text in Hebrews evidently has in mind defection from the faith, that is, apostasy or withdrawal from the Christian profession. Remember, profession does not mean possession.

Jesus said about those who professed but did not possess:
“²¹*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 which is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. ²⁴Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: ²⁵And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and*

beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. ²⁶And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: ²⁷And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. ” (Matthew 7:21-27).

The writer of Hebrews clearly makes a distinction between believers and non-believers when he said; “*Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case—things that accompany salvation*”(verse 9 of Hebrews 6). In the previous verses he had been writing of those who approached the throne of grace and then backed away.

John MacArthur, in his commentary on the book of Hebrews, writes: “We should notice that this passage makes no reference at all to salvation. There is no mention of justification, sanctification, the new birth, or regeneration. Those who have been enlightened are not spoken of as born again, made holy, or made righteous. None of the normal New Testament terminology for salvation is used. The enlightenment spoken of here has to do with intellectual perception of spiritual, biblical truth. In the Septuagint, the Greek word (phôtizô) several times is translated “to give light by knowledge or teaching.” It means to be mentally aware of something, to be instructed, informed. It carries no connotation of response—of acceptance or rejection, belief or disbelief.

Partakers (Greek, mētōchēs—met-okh-os) has to do with association, not possession. These Jews had never possessed the Holy Spirit; they simply were around when He was around.”

The writer of Hebrews gives a clear warning that should be taken to heart. It is this: “There is no repentance” for anyone if they have rejected the repentance that is given through the Lord Jesus Christ. They were to leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, Consider what he writes in 6:1-2; *“not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, reverting back and relying on the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of eternal judgment”* The author is exhorting the Hebrews to go on unto Christ to whom all these doctrines pointed. “For it was impossible for those who were once enlightened and had tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of [literally, companions with] the Holy Spirit and had tasted the good Word of God [the message of the prophets] and the miracles they had witnessed, if they fell away, to renew them again unto repentance” (Hebrews 6:4-6).

If the meaning of the passage is that a person could lose his or her salvation after it was granted, how sad that would be. There is positively no chance of regaining salvation.

Now to the second of the problematic passages mentioned above: Matthew 10:22-23 states: *“²²All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. ²³When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.”*

Jesus makes this same statement (*he who stands firm to the end will be saved*) in Matthew 24:13 where it is clear that He is referring to a faithful remnant of the Jews during the Tribulation period who refuse to compromise their loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ. Their endurance shows they are genuine disciples. Taken by itself, one could interpret the

Lord's meaning of that statement in both passages to mean that salvation could be earned or kept by steadfast endurance. It cannot mean this because throughout the Scriptures, salvation is by election, and those elected are kept by the power of God. Romans 8:28-30 for instance, emphatically states that salvation is by the calling of God, not of one's works. ²⁸*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.* ²⁹*For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.* ³⁰*And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.*"

Each one of the underlined verbs is in the past tense and denotes a completed action. Those who have been born again have already been glorified in the eyes of God. In that He cannot fail in the calling (for it is an efficacious call), in that He cannot fail in the predestining, in that He cannot fail in the justifying, in that He cannot fail in the glorifying, we are seen as already with the Lord in heaven. Who is able to prevent it or reverse it? No one, not even one's own self. If it could be done, God is not sovereign. He would be subject to His creation, not His creation to Him.

Having addressed the two passages of Scripture that are most commonly misinterpreted when considering the believers security, we should now look to the apostles Peter and Paul and see what they, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, were convinced of. Turning to Peter's first letter to the strangers (the saints a.k.a. the pilgrims) who had been scattered through-out Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, the Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit; we

read: “³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:3-5).

Peter encourages these believers who had been suffering great persecution that they had an inheritance that was “*incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven, and kept by the power of God, through faith.*” We must take note of some very interesting words employed by Peter in this passage: He wrote that their inheritance was;

- 1) Incorruptible, could not be corrupted by sin.
- 2) Undefiled, could not be defiled by sin.
- 3) Could not fade away, could not disappear.
- 4) Kept, held by the power of God.

A Christian is (we are) kept by the power of God. This is the divine side. Faith is the human side. Saving faith always has the quality of permanence, as it is God’s gift (Ephesians 2:8-9) to those who are His sheep. This faith may be tested, but never lost. It is given from the hand of God. Much of the confusion about eternal security would be eliminated with a clear understanding of the meaning of grace. Salvation is by grace through faith and not by works. We are not saved because we are good, nor lost because we are bad. A man who is truly born again is safe forever and

can be as sure of heaven as if he has already been there ten thousand years. He may fall into sin, and since the flesh (the fallen nature) of the believer has not been changed and is still corrupt, he may do some evil things. David, for example, was guilty of adultery and murder even though he had been brought into a true relationship with God. He was forgiven for these sins and restored to God's fellowship. However, David suffered greatly as a result of his sins. Every child of God will suffer as a result of the sins he commits. Though sin must be dealt with, God's grace is not nullified.

If a sinning saint (one who is born again) refuses to confess his sin, God must deal with him. 1 Corinthians chapter 5 demonstrates this principle. Here Paul speaks of a man living in an openly sinful relationship with "his father's wife" (verse 1) – evidently his stepmother. By apostolic judgment, and authority, this man was excluded from the fellowship of the Corinthian church.

The church was *"To deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus"* (5:5). The apostolic command was: *"Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person"* (verse 13). It is evident from 2 Corinthians 2 that by this drastic method, the sinning Christian came back to repentance and confession. We learn this from Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 2:5- 11: *"⁵But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all. ⁶Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. ⁷So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. ⁸Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him. ⁹For to this end*

also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. ¹⁰To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also: for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; ¹¹Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.”

Paul nowhere implied that the man in His first letter or those referred to in his second letter lost their salvation. Their sin had to be dealt with, but they themselves remained saved.

Looking at eternal security from another angle: A long time ago (eternity past) in a far-away place (heaven), God the Father and God the Son put into motion those things that would glorify the Godhead. We are given an insight into the heart of God when we hear God the Son pray to the Father: *“You loved me before the foundation of the world”* (John 17:24). The three persons of the Godhead (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) shared a mutual love and fellowship in their eternal counsels.

In these counsels, the Triune God made plans for the universe, including earth and its inhabitants, prior to the creation. *“Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world”* (Acts 15:18). *“Being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will”* (Ephesians 1:11).

In their counsels, they planned for a certain body of people, persons in every age who would be redeemed, who were *“chosen in Him before the foundation of the world”* (Ephesians 1:4). Furthermore, a “book of life” was prepared in which their names were written, although there

would be many born “whose names were not written in that book of life” (Revelation 17:8).

The Triune God knew that man (His premier creation) would choose to rebel against His will. This resulted in man being cast out of His presence and sentenced to spiritual death, yet He (God), undertook a marvelous plan of redemption for those who would be redeemed. It was purposed that God the Son would become man and endure punishment and separation from God the Father on behalf of man. He was “*foreordained before the foundation of the world*” (1 Peter 1:20) to be “*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*” (Revelation 13:8) for the payment of man’s sin. On the basis of His (the Lamb’s) great sacrifice, God could “promise eternal life, before the world began” (Titus 1:2) to all who would come to God the Son as they believed that promise.

It should be stressed, before moving on, that man’s *salvation and his eternal security was a purpose of the Godhead*. It was a purpose that each one of the Godhead would glorify the other as they brought about the salvation of those who were to be redeemed. It should also be stressed that man was not involved in the purpose or the carrying out of that purpose.

God cannot fail! He is God and His purpose was to save those who would come to him in faith. In this purpose, God called certain persons to Himself for salvation—God the Son paid the price of that salvation by the shedding of His blood—and God the Holy Spirit brought the good news to those whom He was sent and regenerated them to newness of spiritual life as He convicted them of their sin and convinced them of their need of a Savior, and sealed them as God’s possession. Each person of the Godhead

accomplished His purpose, to fail would have meant that God did not succeed in His purpose. That could not happen; as stated, He is God. Man's salvation and the keeping of it is vested in God's purpose, failure was not possible.

The apostle John wrote of this purpose in the gospel that bears his name. Consider; ¹⁴*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: ¹⁵That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁶For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. ¹⁷For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved"* (John 3:14-17). Eternal life (vs. 15) means eternal life. Everlasting life (vs. 16) means everlasting life.

Leaving the Gospel of John we again turn to Romans chapter 8 and reread verses 28-30: ²⁸*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. ²⁹For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."* God has called, efficaciously, all those He is conforming to the image of God the Son. Those He called He also justified. Those He justified He also glorified. This calling, justifying, and glorifying are all written in the past tense and was (is) accomplished in the life-time of each person called. It was (is) a finished work and none were (are) lost.

Returning to the gospel of John, we read: *“¹¹I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. ¹²While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled”* (John 17:11-12). And He went on to ask; *“²⁰Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; ²¹That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me”* (John 17:20-21).

Before His arrest and crucifixion, Jesus thanked the Father for giving His disciples to Him. He asked that God the Father would keep them, and all who would come to believe in Him through their testimony, by His power (authority). He states that none were lost except Judas Iscariot (in fulfillment of Scripture). The Christian (we who have been spiritually reborn) are kept, are secure in that promise.

The question is sometimes raised, “What would happen to a sinning Christian if he should die before being brought to repentance and confession? First Corinthians 11:17-34 gives a great answer. Paul wrote: *“¹⁷In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. ¹⁸In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. ¹⁹No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God’s approval. ²⁰When you come together, it is not the Lord’s Supper you eat, ²¹for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains*

hungry, another gets drunk. ²²Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not! ²³For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' ²⁵In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' ²⁶For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. ²⁷Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. ²⁹For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. ³¹But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. ³²When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world. ³³So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. ³⁴If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment. And when I come I will give further directions."

In the Corinthian church, many were sick, and some had even died because they did not rightly judge and conduct themselves respectfully toward their Christian brothers or the Lord. Because they did not judge themselves, the Lord brought chastisement and even death in order that they "be not condemned with the world" (verse 32).

In closing, perhaps there are some who lack an assurance of their eternal security. It may be that their doubt is not in God's ability to sustain them, but in the assurance that they were once truly saved. It is very probable that they question whether they truly repented of their sins, took up their cross, and followed Jesus because they fell back into sin. Second Peter 2:10 warns us to *"give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall."* Each of us should confirm our call and election, as Peter exhorts his readers.

There are two facets of God's plan of salvation. Election refers to His sovereign pre-creation choice of individuals. Call refers to His action in time by which the choice is made evident. One's election took place before the world was made (Revelation 17:8); His or her call takes place when he or she is converted (Acts 16:25-33). Chronologically, election comes first, then call. In human experience; however, one first becomes aware of his call, then realizes he was chosen in Christ in eternity past. One cannot make his call and election surer than God's grace; God's eternal purpose can never be thwarted.

Doubt of salvation sometimes comes when one falls back into sin. One can avoid such consternation by growing in the likeness of Christ, which is a confirmation of salvation. Manifesting the fruit of the Spirit is unmistakable evidence that he or she truly belongs to Him. A holy life proves the reality of one's salvation. However, even as God's children, we all sin. First John 1:8-9 states emphatically: *"⁸If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

But, when one commits sin, (which one will, regretfully), he or she need not fear the loss of salvation. On the contrary, evidence of the surety of salvation is in the truth of the recognition of said sin and a desire of its confession and cleansing. Returning to Peter's testimony we read; *"³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time"* (1 Peter 1:3-5). We are kept by the power of God; that is the divine side. Faith is the human side. Saving faith always has the quality of permanence because it is God's gift to those who are His sheep. Because faith is from the hand of God, it may be tested but never lost. Praise God, we are secure. We have this promise because God keeps us secure and because God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are faithful in their purpose.

Have you, dear reader, trusted in Jesus for a right standing before God? He said: *"I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by me"* John 14:6. Each of us should pause and ask ourselves: Is there evidence in my life that I am truly a child of God? Am I truly spiritually born again? It is imperative that one is a child of God, for if one is not, at death, he or she will be eternally separated from Him. Jesus warned in Matthew 25:41: *"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"*

May God richly bless you! Hope to see you in heaven.

About the Book

Many people today would list many different things as being man's dilemma; such things as: health problems, unemployment, poverty, crime, war, and so on. Each, of course, are problems found in every society, excluding none. One could say man's dilemma is universal and they would be correct. However, each of the things listed above are actually the result of man's dilemma, not the cause. The cause is found in man's depravity. In that depravity, every un-regenerated human being sets his own standard as to his or her conduct of life. Man has rejected the absolute standard of his creator and as a result is alienated toward not only God, but from one another. Man has no solution for this and therein lies the dilemma. God on the other hand, has the solution, it is found in His provision, the Lord Jesus Christ. In the pages of this work the author considers man's dilemma God's solution from eleven different perspectives. Each chapter is a study in itself but fits nicely as one completed work.

May God bless His Word to the reader's understanding as he or she meditates on it.

Note: The reader will notice that many Bible passages have been repeated in several chapters. The writer found this necessary to bring out the complete message of each chapter.

All Scripture references are transcribed from the King James Version of the Bible.