

What is a Christian?

A BIBLICAL STUDY OF THE ONE TRUE FAITH

B I L L P A R K E R

FOREWARD

This book is intended to be a very personal and thorough examination of the truth of Christianity and what a true Christian is as revealed in God's Holy Word (the Bible). In that vein I believe it will be very beneficial for those who are seeking to understand these matters. It is also intended to be a guide in the necessary exercise of self-examination for those who claim to be Christians. My hope and prayer for all who read these pages is that they will use this information as a tool to read and study the Bible and examine themselves in the light of what God has revealed concerning His great glory in the salvation of sinners by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe this should be a top priority for everyone who claims to be a Christian as there is so much deception, ignorance, and confusion in the world concerning this subject. Self-examination has become a lost art as so many today simply take their claim of salvation and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ for granted. Please allow me to emphasize the commandment given in the Bible to all who claim to have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ –

2 Corinthians 13 – (5) Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

We who claim to be Christians are to test ourselves and our claim of salvation (of being a Christian) by the proper standard set down within God's verbally inspired Word (the Bible). God has given us clear definitions and distinctions whereby we can test ourselves (test our faith) and know the reality as to whether or not we are truly Christians. He has not left us to our own ways and thoughts. The commandment here is to examine ourselves as to whether or not we are ***"IN THE FAITH."*** Notice this is not an examination as to whether or not faith is in us or whether or not we have enough faith. No one has faith within themselves (or has enough faith) if that faith is not founded on the truth taught in the Bible and fixed on the proper object of faith which is the Lord Jesus Christ and His work of redemption for His people. The apostle Paul wrote that the necessity of



this self-examination should be impressed upon us because it is vital to our eternal well-being – ***“except ye be reprobates,”*** i.e. totally disqualified and rejected as true believers. But notice what he was inspired to write in ***verse 6*** –

2 Corinthians 13 – (6) But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.

It was not Paul’s desire (nor is it my desire) simply to point out what is wrong and expose everyone as false Christians. It was Paul’s desire (and it is my desire) that in going through the Biblical process of self-examination all who read the Word of God will emerge from this journey with a greater assurance of salvation (of being a true Christian) based on the proper foundation of God’s Word. For this to be our experience we must be inspired and guided by God the Holy Spirit through the means of God’s Word as He leads us to look to and depend upon the Lord Jesus Christ and Him alone for all salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and final glory in heaven. May the Lord be with us all as He brings us to be submitted to the Lord Jesus Christ as He is identified and distinguished in the revealed truth of the Bible. All Scriptural references are from the Authorized KJV and are printed in bold italics.

William W. (Bill) Parker

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In any book that contains the truth of the Gospel of God's free and sovereign grace in the Lord Jesus Christ, the first expression of thanks must be to God Himself. Apart from our sovereign Lord's effectual grace and power these matters that are of such eternal value would be hidden from sinners like ourselves. I thank God for revealing the truth to His people and for giving me a new heart to receive, believe, and communicate His Word to His people.

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Pastor Bill Parker

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INTRODUCTION

Do you claim to be a Christian? If you do, then this book will challenge and test your faith. But please do not let this dissuade you from reading the book, because it is always a good thing for a professing Christian to do exactly what God's Word (the Bible) commands us to do in self-examination (**2 Corinthians 13:5**). If you do not claim to be a Christian, then this book will show what I believe to be the one true faith, the one true way of salvation for sinners. Self-examination and truly seeking the Lord for salvation are not easy tasks. The message of salvation is a simple message, but to find the truth of that message takes some time and effort. We have to sift through all of our preconceived notions, our generally accepted ideas (which could be wrong), as well as all the many differences and divisions that seem to pervade the atmosphere amongst those who claim to be Christians. If our claim of being a Christian is true, then we should never shy away from putting it to the test of Scripture. Either way, a sincere and diligent exercise in self-examination can only help us. If our claim of being a Christian is true (according to the Bible), then we will grow in grace and in knowledge of Christ. If our claim is false, then we should be encouraged to seek the Lord and find Him and His salvation in truth.

The issue of this book is the reality of what a Christian is both as a person and in his/her beliefs. Many of us assume we know the answer, but do we really know? Today the word "Christian" is often carelessly tossed around, not only in religious circles, but also in political arenas. Just recently the current president of the United States sought to put terrorist acts committed by radical Moslems in perspective by comparing these acts of terrorism to "Christians" who in the past committed the same kind of atrocities in the name of Christ. He alluded to such events as the Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition. A popular television celebrity in dealing with the same issue stated on a talk show that Hitler was a Christian and Timothy McVey (the Oklahoma bomber) was a Christian. The fact is that there is no Biblical support to say that any of these were truly Christian.

We who live in America proudly say our nation is, or at least was, a "Christian nation." Is this true? The term "Christian" over time has lost a great deal of meaning. It was used three times in the New Testament to

identify the disciples of Jesus Christ (**Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16**). Today the term “Christian” has been broadened to the point that many people believe it defines almost anyone who regularly attends what is generally considered to be a church of the Christian faith. Though it seems to be more and more unpopular in our day, some even think “American” is an equivalent term for “Christian.” America, however, has always been a melting-pot of different cultures and religions. Some claim our country was founded upon a “Judeo-Christian ethic,” meaning basically some of the moral principles set forth in the Ten Commandments. This is based on common misunderstandings both of Judaism and Christianity with which I deal later in this book. Also, one only has to do a superficial study of the history and writings of our founding fathers to know that some of them never claimed to be Christians. Some of them were Deists who believed in an impersonal god who did not involve himself with the daily affairs of men on earth. These Deists may have respected Jesus as a religious teacher, and they may have had some respect for the moral teachings of the Bible, but they denied the deity of Jesus Christ, the Trinity (God who subsists in three Person – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), and the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible. These are all doctrines that distinguish true Christianity from other beliefs.

Consider also how many different opinions and ideas there are of what a Christian is and what a Christian is not. A lot of people claim to be Christians because they profess to “believe in Jesus” and try to live a “good life,” but they have no idea of what it really means to believe in Jesus and follow His teachings. Many are ignorant of the true teachings of Jesus Christ. Some claim to be Christians because at some time they made a profession of faith, maybe in their youth, possibly at a church revival meeting, and then “got baptized and joined the church.” They, however, may have no idea of what a true BIBLICAL Christian is. A lot of people have a multitude of reasons for calling themselves “Christian” that have nothing to do with Biblical truth. They may base this on their experience or profession, or they may claim, “I know I’m a Christian because I believe in Jesus, and I’m doing the best I can to keep the Ten Commandments or the Golden Rule.” Others claim to be Christians because they were born into a “Christian” family and perhaps baptized as infants. The sad truth is that

none of these things define the reality of what it means to be a true Christian.

It is said that in response to what he viewed as the materialism, over-indulgent affluence, prejudices and cruelty of so-called “Christian” countries, the famous Hindu leader Mahatma Gandhi once told a reporter, “I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.” It is also thought that when he was asked why he would not become a Christian, in observing and experiencing injustices committed in the name of Christianity, Gandhi replied, “I’d be a Christian, if it were not for Christians.” Whether or not Gandhi really made these statements, there are two things to consider in light of them. First, did Gandhi really know what a true Christian is? In light of what I know the Bible (the book of Christianity) teaches, I would say he did not understand what it is to be a true Christian. Sadly the history of what the world sees and knows of “Christianity” is replete with materialism, prejudice, debauchery, bloodshed, and myths created to take advantage of people’s fears. BUT THIS IS NOT TRUE CHRISTIANITY. It is “Christian” in name only. It is also true that much charity, morality, and good will (as the world sees and judges these things) have been done in the name of “Christianity.” It would be wise to consider the question, “Was and is this TRUE Christianity, or just a man-made imitation of the real thing?”

Secondly, all of this begs the question, “What is a TRUE Christian (and in essence TRUE Christianity) according to the Bible?” Many of you who read this book probably claim to be Christians. The question we must ask ourselves is this – CAN MY CLAIM OF BEING A CHRISTIAN BE SUPPORTED BY TRUTH AS IT IS REVEALED IN THE BIBLE? The sad truth is that the claims of many people are all too often supported, NOT by Scripture, but by their own personal experiences, subjective feelings, and/or judgments of other people, especially family and/or church members. The fact is that if our claim of being a Christian cannot be proven on the basis of the Word of God, then any assurance we have of being a Christian is nothing more than self-righteous presumption, even a *“refuge of lies”* which will eventually be swept away by the judgment of God (*Isaiah 28:16*). We who believe we are saved by the grace of God in Christ, we who call ourselves “Christian,” desire to have full assurance of salvation. But if our assurance is not founded upon

the Word of God in Jesus Christ, we are no better off than ***“the foolish man, which built his house upon the sand. And 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 7:26-27).***

True Christians are ***“founded upon a Rock” (Matthew 7:25)***, and that Rock is Christ Jesus as He is identified and distinguished in the Word of God. Real assurance for true Christians is derived from their union with and sole dependence upon the crucified, risen Christ and His imputed righteousness for their eternal security. It is upon this ground, Jesus Christ as ***“the Lord our Righteousness” (Jeremiah 23:5-6)***, that we who are true Christians can support our claim and have real assurance of eternal security in salvation –

Romans 8 – (1) There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Romans 8 – (33) Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. (34) Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

What, then, is a TRUE Christian? As stated, the name ***“Christian”*** and ***“Christians”*** is found three times in the Bible in the Book of Acts. First, it is found when Barnabas and Paul were ministering the Gospel of God’s grace in Antioch –

Acts 11 – (26) And when he (Barnabas) had found him (Paul), he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called CHRISTIANS first in Antioch.

Another time is when the apostle Paul was brought before King Agrippa to answer false charges from the enemies of Christianity –

Acts 26 – (28) Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a CHRISTIAN.

The apostle Peter was inspired by the Holy Spirit to use this name for believers in Christ –

1 Peter 4 – (16) Yet if any man suffer as a CHRISTIAN, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

This name obviously was used to identify those who were followers (disciples) of Jesus Christ. We can see then that one of the most basic definitions of a Christian from the Bible is as follows –

A CHRISTIAN IS ONE WHO TRUSTS AND FOLLOWS THE LORD JESUS CHRIST FOR ALL SALVATION AND WHO FOLLOWS HIS TEACHINGS.

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself defined this as He commanded His followers in what is called “The Great Commission” –

Matthew 28 – (19) Go ye therefore, and teach all nations (lit., “make disciples), baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: (20) Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

A TRUE Christian is a person who has been brought by the grace and power of God to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ. This means he or she not only believes in and follows Christ as their Lord and Savior, but also believes in and follows His teachings. For example, according to the great commission cited above, New Testament Christians are commanded by Christ to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit. This baptism is by immersion in water, and it is a true believer’s confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism is not for infants. It is for those who have been born again and brought to faith in Christ. Baptism does not save sinners, and it does not wash their sins away. Believer’s baptism is NOT a work performed by Christians in order to be saved, and baptism does not make a person a Christian. The question has been asked – Does a person have to be baptized to be a Christian? The answer is emphatically

“NO.” But a true Christian is one who desires to follow his Lord’s commandment to confess Christ in believer’s baptism. The apostle Peter explained it as ***“not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God” (1 Peter. 3:21).***

The New Testament ordinance of believer’s baptism is obedience to the commandment of Christ in which His true followers confess Him before the world. Those who baptize infants are not following the plain commandments of God’s Word. They are following the traditions of men. Those who submit to baptism as a way of salvation and cleansing from sin are denying Christ and, therefore, cannot be true Christians. Believer’s baptism is a church ordinance of confession. The only other New Testament church ordinance is the Lord’s Supper which is a continual ordinance by which believers commemorate and remember the Lord’s work of redemption in His death on the cross. The apostle Paul instructed the church at Corinth on this –

1 Corinthians 11 – (23) For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: (24) And when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. (25) After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. (26) For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till He come.

The Lord Jesus Christ instructed His disciples (His church) to participate in the memorial ordinance ***“in remembrance”*** of Him and the great work of redemption He accomplished for them on the cross. He never instructed them to keep this ordinance as a way of salvation or making themselves righteous before and/or acceptable with God. The Lord’s Supper is the true Christians confession that Jesus Christ alone is his righteousness before God and his ground of acceptance with God. For a person to be a true Christian (according to God’s Word) he or she must see and know that there is no saving power either in the waters of baptism or

in the wine and unleavened bread of the Lord's Supper. Being immersed in water in believer's baptism symbolizes the true Christian's oneness and identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. Partaking of the wine and unleavened bread in the Lord's Supper symbolizes the true Christian's faith in Jesus Christ alone as the one and only way of salvation. The wine symbolizes the pure and undefiled blood of Jesus Christ. The unleavened bread symbolizes His human body broken unto death as the complete and final payment of all the sins of His people.

There are hundreds of terms and phrases in the Bible identifying and describing Christians. We can know what a Christian is based on direct quotations from the Bible and other words and phrases we derive from the teachings of the Bible. For example, one way to define and identify a Christian is A SINNER SAVED BY THE GRACE OF GOD THROUGH THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. The people whom Jesus Christ came to save are (or will become) true Christians. The Bible tells us that ***"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15)***, and ***"He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21)***. It also tells us throughout that salvation is by grace, not by our works – ***"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9)***. We can rightly conclude that a true Christian is a sinner saved by the grace of God in and by the Lord Jesus Christ, based on the merits of His work and not our own.

Since a Christian is one who follows the teachings of Jesus Christ, and since Jesus Christ claimed to be the one and only way of salvation, then we can rightly conclude the following –

A CHRISTIAN BELIEVES THAT JESUS CHRIST IS THE ONLY WAY OF SALVATION.

John 14 – (6) Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.

Acts 4 – (12) Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

The problem people have with understanding and accepting this is that we live in an age where pluralism and relativism are the philosophies of the day. Pluralism states that even though we all may have different beliefs, we can and should live together in peace. It is true we should all live together in peace, but modern pluralism has developed into relativism which states that knowledge, truth, and morality exist only in relation to culture, society, or historical context. A relativist does not see things as absolute in any way. Relativism teaches that knowledge and truth change with individuals in different times and different cultures. The advocates of relativism, therefore, conclude that even though our beliefs may be poles apart (exact opposites), both are true because one belief may be true for one person while the opposite may be true for another. They claim, "Truth for me may not be truth for you." This kind of thinking has carried over into many people's approach to interpreting the Bible. They read a verse of Scripture and insert their own personal understanding without using any objective and responsible rules of interpretation. We often hear one say, "That is how you interpret the Bible. I interpret it differently."

An example of this kind of approach to the Bible as it applies to the subject at hand is the debate over salvation by grace vs. salvation by what some call grace but which is in reality a cleverly disguised system of salvation by works. The Bible teaches us that a true Christian is one who believes salvation totally by the grace of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Some, however, who claim to be Christian, believe salvation is by grace plus the works and/or the wills of men. These are opposing beliefs. The apostle Paul by inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote of this issue when speaking of salvation – ***"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Romans 11:6)***. Yet some today insist that one can be a true Christian and hold either belief. In fact, in our modern religious culture, one can claim to believe just about anything and still call himself a "Christian." And the modern view of religious liberty, tolerance, and love demands we accept this relativism. Anyone who would judge otherwise is rejected and ridiculed usually based on a perverted application of ***Matthew 7:1 – "Judge not, that ye be not judged."*** Many have come to think Christians are those who are supposed to love everyone so much they

would never judge the beliefs or perhaps even conduct of others to be wrong and certainly not condemnable.

It is true that under the blessing and privilege of religious freedom we should all live together in peace, no matter what our religious beliefs, as long as such beliefs do not incite or justify harming others or restricting their religious liberty. But religious freedom that gives us the right to believe what we choose does not mean that what we choose to believe is truth. We should have every right to believe what we think is true whether it is true or not. For example, I believe salvation is totally by the grace and power of God through the Lord Jesus Christ and based on the merits of His obedience unto death (His righteousness alone) without the works or the wills of men. Another person may believe salvation is by the power and grace of God through the Lord Jesus Christ plus the works and cooperation of men. I believe this is a false message, but I have neither the right nor the desire to harm any who choose to believe this, nor do I have the right to prohibit them from believing and promoting their false message.

In light of this how can we make any valid conclusions concerning the reality of what a true Christian is or is not? Some would say that both those who believe salvation totally by grace and those who believe grace plus works are both Christians. They would say we just differ in our doctrine. This kind of thinking is the product of the relativism as defined above. How far has this kind of thinking spread? Consider the words of Dr. Billy Graham who is considered by most people to be the premier “Christian” evangelist of the twentieth century. He expressed such relativism in an interview with Dr. Robert Schuller on Schuller’s television broadcast, “Hour of Power,” on May 31, 1997. Schuller asked him, “What do you think is the future of Christianity?” Read Dr. Graham’s answer –

“Well, Christianity and being a true believer, you know, I think there is the body of Christ which comes from all the Christian groups around the world, or outside the Christian groups. I think everybody that loves Christ, or knows Christ, whether they’re conscious of it or not, they’re members of the body of Christ. And I don’t think that we’re going to see a great sweeping revival that will turn the whole world to Christ at any time. I think that James

answered that, the apostle James, in the first council in Jerusalem when he said that God's purpose for this age is to call out a people for His name, and that's what God is doing today. He's calling people out of the world for His name, whether they come from the Muslim world, the Buddhist world, or the Christian world, or the non-believing world. They are members of the body of Christ because they've been called by God. They may not even know the name of Jesus, but they know in their heart that they need something that they don't have, and they turn to the only light that they have, and I think that they are saved, and they're going to be with us in heaven."

Is Dr. Graham correct? Is this the position and attitude we who call ourselves "Christian" should take? Do we have any standard by which to judge the validity of what Dr. Graham expressed, or should we just take him at his word given the fact he is so widely respected and followed? Do we have any standard by which we can know what a true Christian is and is not? I believe we do, and that standard is the Bible, God's holy verbally-inspired inerrant Word. The point of this book is to set forth what the Bible defines as a true Christian. There are many who claim to be Christians who, frankly, either do not know or do not care what the Bible says about this matter. There are others who claim to be Christians who do not believe the Bible is the verbally-inspired inerrant Word of God, and, therefore, refuse to use it as the final authority on this matter. I invite all who desire to examine themselves in these matters to read this book. It is mainly written for those who desire to test their claim of being a Christian by the standard set forth in the Bible. In my view if we claim to be a Christian, there are really two questions we need to ask ourselves:

**(1) CAN WE PROVE FROM THE BIBLE WE ARE TRUE CHRISTIANS, AND,
(2) ARE WE WILLING TO PUT THIS MATTER TO THE TEST OF HOLY
SCRIPTURE?**

If we claim to be a "Christian" not only should we be willing to test our claim with the truths of the Bible, but we should be eager to do so. God's Word commands and encourages to do so –

2 Corinthians 13 – (5) Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

1 Peter 3 – (15) But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

Would you not agree that it is for our eternal good that we put our claim to the test now? Consider those of whom the Lord spoke in the Sermon on the Mount –

Matthew 7 – (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. (22) Many 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? (23) And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

These poor souls claimed to be Christians, preaching in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, but they were sadly and tragically deceived. It may be easier simply to go on thinking of ourselves as Christian without true Biblical self-examination, but is it wise? This book is written for readers to use as a guide in truly examining themselves from the Bible to see if their claim of being a Christian will stand the test of God's judgment in His Word. I have seriously sought to fill these pages not with my own personal thoughts and opinions but with Scripture and interpretations of these according to the rules of responsible Scriptural interpretation. As you read this book, if you find you disagree with what you may see as simply my personal interpretation of particular verses and passages of Scripture, I urge you to study these within the context of the pages on which they are written. I will present several passages of Scripture defining what a true Christian is from various points of view and in different terms but which all lead to the same conclusions for a Biblical definition of a Christian. I pray

that the Lord will teach us all as we study His Word for revelation and understanding. It is my prayer that this book will be a tool used by God to aid you in self-examination so as either to confirm you in the faith of God's elect or to cause you to seek the Lord and find the salvation that only true Christians have by God's grace in Christ Jesus. It is my desire that every person who reads it turns to the Bible for right answers to all questions concerning the reality of what a true Christian is or is not. This book is not intended to replace or rival the Holy Scriptures. I wrote it to be a guide for those who wish to study the Bible in examining themselves and test the validity of their claim of being a Christian. Do not judge these issues by what you and other people naturally think or see, and please do not take my word for it. Test the things I have written here by the Word of God and learn from the Holy Scriptures what a true Christian is. All Scripture references are from the Authorized King James Bible. Throughout this book you will find there is much repetition of ideas, phrases, words, and Scripture references. This is intentional because I believe we need to be saturated with Scripture upon Scripture for us to have a Biblical understanding of truth –

Isaiah 28 – (9) Whom shall He teach knowledge? and whom shall He make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. (10) For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:

CHAPTER 1



THE UNIQUENESS OF TRUE CHRISTIANS

If we are going to engage in a serious examination of ourselves as to whether or not we are true Christians, the first thing we need to consider is what the Bible shows to be distinct and unique, even exclusive, about true Christianity and true Christians. What separates Christianity and Christians apart from other mainstream religions such as Buddhists, Hindus, Moslems, Jews, etc. along with all other religions of man? Is the difference merely social, cultural, or geographical, or is there something (or someone) that sets Christianity apart? Is true Christianity, at its very core, like no other religion? If it is, then whatever makes Christianity unique will help us define the essence of what it is to be a true Christian. If we make our claim of being true Christians solely upon Biblical truth, we cannot adhere to modern-day relativism that concedes the validity of all religions as being other ways to the same God of Christianity. Let me emphasize that as there are many doctrines and practices that identify and distinguish Christianity from all other religions, I will not be able to state all of them in one chapter of this short book. It would take several books to treat all of these unique doctrines and practices thoroughly. For the purposes of this study, I am focusing on some of the most basic doctrines of Christianity concerning with the issue of how the true and living God saves sinners by His grace through

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the Person and redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This brings us to the most fundamental of all Christian truth –

THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED, INERRANT WORD OF GOD.

2 Timothy 3 – (14) But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; (15) And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (16) All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (17) That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

Other religions may view the Bible as a “good book,” but true Christians believe it to be the final word and authority on all matters of salvation. It is literally “God-breathed” and without error or contradiction. That is why we must be diligent in what the apostle Paul stated to the young minister, Timothy – ***“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).*** This is not an easy task. I have often told Bible students that the Gospel message is a simple and single message, but the Bible is not a simple book. This is why I have written this book. As I have stated, it is my prayer and desire that all who read these pages go to the Bible to see if what I have written here is the truth. I have never intended anything I have preached or written to replace the inspired Word of God. No human book can ever replace, or even stand alongside of, the Bible. But this book is written to show what I believe the Bible teaches concerning issues of true Christianity. Everything a true Christian believes is founded upon the Bible’s teachings. If what I believe cannot be supported by the Biblical record, then it is of no use to anyone as far as salvation is concerned. Our opinions and ideas have no place here.

Someone may object that there are so many different views of what the Bible teaches that we cannot be dogmatic in our doctrinal positions. Let me state first that there are rules of Scriptural interpretation. One of the

main rules is the rule of context. So many people take words, statements, and verses of Scripture out of their context and try to prove what they believe. This is so wrong and even tragic. I have tried to keep the Bible verses I quote in this book within the confines of their context, and I urge you to study them within that context. There are other rules of interpretation, such as rules of language (word meanings and usage) and comparison (interpreting Scripture with Scripture). There is the rule of first mention which states that where truths and principles are first set down in the Bible this determines their meaning in Scripture throughout. The main rule of Scriptural interpretation is what I call THE RULE OF JESUS CHRIST, CRUCIFIED, AND RAISED FROM THE DEAD. This could also be called the rule of the Gospel or the rule of grace. It states that the whole Bible is to be read and understood with a Christ-centered view.

**THE BIBLE IS A BOOK OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE WAY
OF SALVATION BY GOD’S GRACE IN AND THROUGH HIM!**

The Bible reveals how the salvation of sinners is founded upon the work accomplished by God through Jesus Christ. It states that He has finished this work on the cross of Calvary by redeeming His people and by establishing the only righteousness by which God can justify sinners, give them spiritual life, and bring them to everlasting life in heaven. True Christians believe and rest in Christ who by Himself finished the work of righteousness for them. All other religions believe salvation is attained and/or maintained in some way by man’s efforts and works to attain righteousness through his obedience, charity, dedication, devotion, and/or self-denial. The Bible clearly shows Jesus Christ to be the one true way of salvation and all other ways as false. Jesus Christ Himself claimed to be the only way of salvation, the only way to God, the only way of righteousness for sinners – ***“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me” (John 14:6).*** How anyone can read the Bible and not see this as indisputable is beyond comprehension. Therefore, if we judge these matters strictly by Biblical truth, we have to say that Dr. Graham was totally wrong in his statement to Robert Schuller that those who have never heard of Jesus Christ can and will be in heaven with true Christians. And

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though it may sound harsh to some, according to the Bible, Dr. Graham's statement is heresy. Consider what the apostle Paul wrote –

Galatians 1 – (8) But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

A TRUE CHRISTIAN IS ONE WHO BELIEVES JESUS CHRIST CRUCIFIED AND RAISED FROM THE DEAD IS THE ONE AND ONLY WAY OF SALVATION FOR SINNERS. If we stay strictly with the Bible's definition, one cannot be a true Christian and believe there are other ways of salvation, righteousness, the forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and final glory. To believe there are other ways of salvation is to deny the Lord Jesus Christ –

Galatians 2 – (21) I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

If true Christianity is the one and only way of salvation (and it is), what then is especially unique about Christianity as a way of salvation, a belief system, and even a way of life? The simple answer is –

JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF AND WHAT HE ACCOMPLISHED FOR HIS PEOPLE TO SAVE AND PRESERVE THEM UNTO ETERNAL LIFE. SEPARATED UNTO THE GOSPEL OF GOD

Romans 1 – (1) Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (2) (Which He had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)

As a Christian the apostle Paul claimed separation from the rest of the world mainly because of the Gospel he had been brought by God to believe. This Gospel message was the benchmark and guide of his whole life as a Christian. The word “gospel” simply means “good news.” Since every religion claims to have “good news” for people, we must define specifically what the “good news” of the Christian Gospel is and what sets

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it apart from all the religions of man. In passages such as **Romans 1** the apostle was inspired by the Holy Spirit to set forth the basics of the Christian Gospel. This “good news” concerns both the Person of Jesus Christ (who He is) and the work of Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection to save His people from their sins.

Romans 1 – (1) Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (2) (Which He had promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures,) (3) Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; (4) And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

This is the foundation and heart of true Christianity, and it sets the true people of God apart from the world. JESUS CHRIST CRUCIFIED AND RAISED FROM THE DEAD IS SALVATION FOR A TRUE CHRISTIAN. Buddha, Mohammed, and even Moses claimed to KNOW the way of salvation and enlightenment. None of them claimed to BE the way of salvation. The difference between these three prophets is that Moses was a true prophet who truly DID know the way of salvation. The Lord Jesus told the Pharisees who claimed to keep the law of Moses that they had missed the true message of Moses’s writings –

John 5 – (46) For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: FOR HE WROTE OF ME. (47) But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words?

JESUS CHRIST IS THE SALVATION OF HIS PEOPLE. The name “Jesus” means “salvation,” and Jesus Christ is God’s anointed way of salvation. In true Christianity Jesus Christ IS the one way of salvation and enlightenment for His people –

John 14 – (6) Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.

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Acts 4 – (12) Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

John 8 – (12) Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

A Buddhist is one who follows the teachings of Buddha. A Moslem is one who follows the teachings of Mohammed. But a true Christian is one who not only follows the teachings of Jesus Christ, he is also one who has faith in and rests in Jesus Christ as his whole salvation. If the Christian's claim of salvation by Jesus Christ is valid, he therefore must be convinced that Jesus Christ is not only one who shows us the way of salvation from sins, but also the only One who is salvation Himself. If we are truly Christians, we must know and believe that Jesus Christ alone is able to save us from our sins. Another distinctive Christian doctrine is that true Christians can be sure of Jesus Christ as the one way of salvation and His abilities to save us from sin because of who He is. This is the truth of the Person of Jesus Christ –

JESUS CHRIST IS GOD AND MAN IN ONE PERSON

Matthew 1 – (21) And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins ... (23) Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

1 Timothy 3 – (16) And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

The Bible teaches Jesus Christ is the Son of God in His very nature, co-equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, eternal deity in every attribute of His Person. It also teaches that His human nature was conceived by the

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Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary and born into the world as Godman without sin. Isaiah's prophecy spoke of this truth and the New Testament confirms this –

Isaiah 9 – (6) For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (7) Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Matthew 1 – (18) Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

Luke 1 – (35) And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

John 1 – (14) And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Romans 1 – (3) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; (4) And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

A true Christian believes that Jesus Christ is both God and man without sin. Buddha, Mohammed, and Moses were all sinful men. Jesus Christ was and is the perfect Godman. To deny either His deity, His humanity, or His perfection denies one of the most foundational truths of Christianity. Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, call themselves Christians,

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but they deny the deity of Jesus Christ. They, therefore, deny the Biblical definition of a Christian. In the first century there was a group of Gnostics (religious mystics) who claimed to be Christian but who denied the humanity of Jesus Christ because they believe physical flesh was by nature sinful. They, therefore, also denied the Biblical definition of a Christian—

1 John 4 – (3) And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

The work that Jesus Christ was under covenant obligation to accomplish for His people required both His deity, His humanity, and His sinless perfection –

Hebrews 2 – (14) Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; (15) And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (16) For verily He took not on him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. (17) Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

Another distinct and unique feature of true Christianity and true Christians is that –

JESUS CHRIST LIVED AND DIED AS THE SURETY AND SUBSTITUTE OF HIS PEOPLE

As Surety and Substitute of the people given Him by the Father, Jesus Christ died, was buried, and rose from the dead. He satisfied the justice of God for the sins of His people imputed (charged, accounted, reckoned) to Him and established the righteousness of God imputed to

them for their justification. Both Buddha and Mohammed were prophets who died as martyrs and examples. Jesus Christ is the Prophet, Priest, and King of His people. He died as their Surety and Substitute. He lives forever to rule over and dispose of all things for the salvation of His people. Unlike other religious leaders, He is raised from the dead, and His tomb is empty. He is seated at the right hand of His Father living forever to make intercession for His people. Both Buddha and Mohammed sought to show their followers a way of righteousness by the works of men. In His obedience unto death as Surety and Substitute of His people, Jesus Christ IS the complete righteousness of His people, and He established righteousness for them on the cross –

Romans 10 – (4) For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

2 Corinthians 5 – (21) For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

This reveals another major doctrine that sets true Christianity and true Christians apart from all other religions. It is the doctrine of –

**JUSTIFICATION BEFORE GOD BASED ON
THE IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST –**

Romans 1 – (16) For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (17) For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Romans 4 – (6) Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, (7) Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. (8) Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

Every religion of man teaches how man can be made right with God (or gods) in some way to some degree by their works of obedience in

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keeping certain laws, and/or acts of charity, devotion, and self-denial. They teach these efforts of man either make up man's righteousness, or part of his righteousness, before God, or lead him to ultimate enlightenment. True Christianity alone, however, states how God can only be just and true to Himself in salvation totally by His grace based on the righteousness of another, the Lord Jesus Christ. True Christianity reveals how Jesus Christ was appointed by God the Father before the foundation of the world to be the Surety of His people. All the sins of God's elect were imputed (charged, accounted) to Jesus Christ who came to this world and became incarnate as **"the Word made flesh" (John 1:14)** for the specific purpose of dying under His Father's wrath as Substitute and Sacrifice for the sins of His people –

Romans 5 – (8) But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

Galatians 3 – (13) Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

1 Peter 3 – (18) For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

As stated, there have been religious leaders who have died for their beliefs and for their people, but only as martyrs, not as substitutes who became actually guilty and condemned for the sins of their people imputed to them. Jesus Christ was **"made sin"** for His people by taking upon Himself the debt of all the sins of all His people whom God had given Him before the world began. He paid that sin-debt in full with the price of His blood –

1 Peter 1 – (18) Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; (19) But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: (20) Who verily

was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

As the result of His obedience unto death, Jesus Christ worked out perfect righteousness based upon which God justified all His people and saves them by His grace. Jesus Christ's redemptive work is the righteousness of God freely imputed to all His people, and this is the only ground of their whole salvation. God the Father conditioned all of their salvation upon Christ who fulfilled all the conditions to save and secure them forever in glory. All other religions teach that salvation is in some way, to some degree conditioned upon men.

It is important to recognize that since the beginning of the New Testament church, there have been, and are now, false versions of Christianity which teach that Jesus Christ saves His people but only upon condition of their faith, repentance, and/or perseverance. These false versions claim Christ died and arose again only to make men savable, not to secure the salvation of all for whom He died and arose. False Christians who adhere to these teachings view Christ's death as only a mere possibility of salvation if men will meet certain conditions. The conditions vary depending upon one's particular denomination, but all of them agree that man must make the difference in salvation, usually by an act of his so-called "free will" wherein he is persuaded to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. This false belief of salvation conditioned upon man's works and/or will cannot stand the test of Scripture as to defining true Christianity or true Christians. I will deal with this issue later in this chapter when dealing the Biblical truth of man's total depravity. But we need to realize that such notions as this relegates Christianity to be in essence no different than any other man-made religion as it makes salvation ultimately conditioned on sinners rather than Christ and Him alone.

In point of fact, in the classical sense true Christianity is not a religion at all. However, to make the distinction between what is truly Christian and what is not, it has been said there are really only two religions reaching all the way back to Cain and Abel (***Genesis 4:1-8***). The religion of Cain is that of salvation by the works and wills of men symbolized by Cain's approach unto God based on the fruit of the cursed ground, the works and

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labor of his hands (**Genesis 4:3**). Every false man-made religion is in reality another form of the religion of Cain. The religion of Abel is that of salvation totally by God's grace through the Lord Jesus Christ, symbolized by Abel's approach unto God based on the blood of a lamb (**Genesis 4:4**). Abel's lamb was a type (a picture) of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God and the righteousness Christ would establish when He came into the world (**John 1:29**). God rejected Cain and his offering, but He accepted Abel and his offering. Why? It was because Cain's offering was a rejection of God's way of salvation by grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. Cain's offering glorified Cain, not God. God accepted Abel's offering because it was God's way of salvation conditioned on Christ who fulfilled all the conditions. Abel's offering glorified God and exalted the Lord Jesus Christ. Abel's offering was that of a sinner coming before a Holy God in true humility, confessing his sinfulness and the impossibility of salvation by his works or will. It was a sinner convicted in heart and mind by the Holy Spirit. It was a sinner with a broken and contrite heart believing in the Lord Jesus Christ whom Abel knew as the promised Messiah, the Lord His righteousness. Abel knew that the promised Messiah would come into the world and fulfill all the conditions for salvation. By the grace of God Abel trusted the Lord to keep His promise. Consider the following statements and Scriptural testimony revealing the distinction and uniqueness of true Christianity and true Christians. Christianity teaches:

1. **THE ONE TRUE AND LIVING GOD WHO IS HOLY, JUST, AND RIGHTEOUS, AND WHO CANNOT SAVE, JUSTIFY, FORGIVE, OR HAVE MERCY ON SINNERS APART FROM HIS LAW AND JUSTICE BEING SATISFIED.**

The fact that Christians believe in ONE GOD is not of itself unique to Christianity, but to believe in one God who must be just when He saves sinners is unique to Christianity. Other religions may claim their God must be just and righteous, but not in the same way true Christianity does. For example, people love hearing about God's love, grace, and mercy, but so many are totally ignorant of the fact that what separates the Christian God from all idols is the fact that He must be both **"A JUST GOD AND A SAVIOR"** (**Isaiah 45:21**) –

Isaiah 45 – (20) Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. (21) Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside Me; A JUST GOD AND A SAVIOUR; there is none beside Me. (22) Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. (23) I have sworn by Myself, the word is gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. (24) Surely, shall one say, IN THE LORD HAVE I RIGHTEOUSNESS AND STRENGTH: even to Him shall men come; and all that are incensed against Him shall be ashamed. (25) In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

God is a loving, merciful, and gracious God. He delights in mercy and loves to save sinners, but He cannot do so at the expense of His justice. The questions then are: (1) How can sinful man who deserves nothing but death and damnation be just with God, and (2) How can God be just and still justify sinful men? True Christianity alone has the answer to these questions –

Romans 3 – (19) Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. (20) Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. (21) But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; (22) Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: (23) For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; (24) Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: (25) Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; (26) To declare, I say, at this time His

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righteousness: that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5 – (18) And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; (19) To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. (20) Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. (21) For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

True Christianity is revealed in the Gospel message which is the revelation of Jesus Christ as ***“the righteousness of God” (Romans 1:16-17)***. This ***“righteousness of God”*** is the merit of Christ's whole work of redemption as He suffered, bled, and died for the sins of His people imputed to Him. This ***“righteousness of God”*** is that which God imputed to all His people and is the ground of the whole of their salvation including the forgiveness of sins. This ***“righteousness of God”*** in the Lord Jesus Christ is the security of salvation for all true Christians. When a sinner is brought by the Holy Spirit to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that sinner is brought to submit to Jesus Christ as the one and only way of justification before God ***(Romans 10:4,10-13)***. He sees Christ as his only righteousness and is brought to repent of any and every other way of salvation and righteousness –

Philippians 3 – (7) But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. (8) Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, (9) And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

2. THE ABSOLUTE AND UTTER SINFULNESS AND DEPRAVITY OF MAN FALLEN IN ADAM AND BORN DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND SINS AND WHO MUST, THEREFORE, BE SAVED BY GOD’S FREE AND SOVEREIGN GRACE IN CHRIST JESUS.

All false man-made religions teach an innate goodness and power of will in man by which through certain inducements, enticements, and motivations man is enabled to choose God and live a life noble enough to please God. They teach that man, at least in part, can earn or deserve salvation and eternal life. True Christianity as revealed in the Bible shows fallen man to be **TOTALLY DEPRAVED** and **SPIRITUALLY DEAD**. The Biblical doctrine of total depravity and spiritual death does not mean that fallen men and women are unable make right choices within the realm of human life. It does not mean fallen men and women are unable to attain great heights of religion, morality, dedication, and sincerity as man naturally judges these things. But in order to understand the reality of true Christianity we must make a distinction between man’s natural standard of righteousness and sin and God’s standard. Man’s natural standard is much lower than God’s. Man’s natural view of God is much lower than the Christian view of God, and man’s natural view of himself is much higher than the Christian view of man. True Christianity measures sin and righteousness in light of the glory of God revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ who is Himself the perfection of righteousness and who by Himself kept the righteousness of the law by His obedience unto death. It is in this revealed knowledge that God commands ***“all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30)*** –

Acts 17 – (31) Because He [God] hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.

God’s standard of righteousness is His own perfection in every attribute manifested and displayed in and through the Lord Jesus Christ who is the very righteousness of God. Thus, God’s law, as given in the Bible,

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describes His own character and constitutes the standard by which He measures righteousness. By this standard all men are sinners who deserve eternal death –

Romans 3 – (23) For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Romans 6 – (23) For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

For this reason true Christianity shows the impossibility of sinners being saved or made righteous by their own works of the law –

Galatians 3 – (10) For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

So the essence of the Christian teaching on the total depravity of man sets forth three things no other religion teaches:

(a) MAN FELL IN ADAM INTO SIN AND DEATH AND HAS NO RIGHTEOUSNESS BEFORE GOD – ***“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” (Romans 5:12).***

(b) FALLEN MAN IS BORN SPIRITUALLY DEAD AND HAS NO ABILITY TO WORK OUT A RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT WOULD MEASURE UP TO WHAT GOD REQUIRES – ***“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: ... Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:10,19-20).*** This includes man at his best – ***“Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity” (Psalm 39:5).***

(c) BEING SPIRITUALLY DEAD, FALLEN MAN HAS NO DESIRE TO SEEK OR FIND RIGHTEOUSNESS GOD'S WAY BY GRACE IN CHRIST JESUS – ***“There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. (12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Romans 3:11-12).*** This tells us the story of man's fallen, depraved will. The natural man is free to choose what he desires, but his will is fallen to such a degree that he does not desire the things that glorify and honor God in Christ. This is why the Bible tells us ***“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” (1 Corinthians 2:14).*** Sinful man wants salvation and righteousness, but he wants them his own way. He wants them so as to glory in his own works or his own will. This is pride and self-righteousness. But God's way is the way of grace, through Jesus Christ and His cross –

1 Corinthians 1 – (29) That no flesh should glory in His presence. (30) But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: (31) That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

3. SALVATION COMES TO SINFUL MEN BY GOD'S GRACE BASED ON THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST (THE MERITS OF HIS OBEDIENCE UNTO DEATH) IMPUTED AND IS APPLIED TO THEIR HEARTS THROUGH THE OPERATIONS OF THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WHO IMPARTS SPIRITUAL LIFE TO GOD'S ELECT IN THE NEW BIRTH.

John 12 – (32) And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. (33) This He said, signifying what death He should die.

John 16 – (7) Nevertheless 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. (8) And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

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Romans 5 – (18) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life ... (21) That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6 – (3) Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? (4) Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Romans 8 – (10) And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

John 3 – (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. (7) Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

John 6 – (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.

Ephesians 2 – (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.

The doctrine of justification by Christ's righteousness imputed is certainly unique to true Christianity. That this righteousness is solely merited by Jesus Christ (the Godman) as Surety and Substitute of His people is unique to true Christianity. The doctrine of the new birth (regeneration and conversion) totally by the power of God the Holy Spirit as the fruit and result of Christ's death (His righteousness imputed), is also unique to true Christianity.

**A CHRISTIAN IS ONE WHO HAS BEEN BORN AGAIN
(FROM ABOVE) BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

The new birth involves God the Holy Spirit creating within a person a new heart and a new spirit. The evidence of this new heart and new spirit is in that born-again person believing in and submitting to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and as his only righteousness before God. True Christianity teaches that fallen, sinful men by nature, of their own power and will, refuse to believe and come to Jesus Christ for all salvation. Sinful men must be born again to see and enter the kingdom of God. True Christianity, however, also teaches the responsibility of all men to seek the Lord, to seek His way of salvation through Jesus Christ. The absolute sovereignty of God in salvation, the total depravity and spiritual deadness of all men by nature, do not relieve man's responsibility to seek the Lord. Even though men cannot reconcile this in their own minds by human reasoning, it is true because –

(1) ***“The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deuteronomy 29:29).*** We are not God, and we live in this world in the realm of human existence. We cannot reason or even think beyond our capacity as human beings, even as sinful human beings. The almighty and all-wise, all-powerful God is so high above us, and ***“His ways past finding out” (Romans 11:33-36).*** God has revealed some things in His Word, and we are responsible to read and act upon them. God commands men to seek, believe, worship, and serve Him.

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(2) With the exception of those who die in infancy and those who are mentally disabled from birth, God has given every man and woman a mind, a power to reason, and a conscience by which He holds all men and women accountable – ***“For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another; In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel” (Romans 2:14-16).*** It is true that the minds, reasoning, and consciences of fallen men and women are defiled by sin, but the inability to believe in the Lord and His way of salvation is not due to the absence of these faculties. Man’s inability is due to his own sinful ignorance, pride, and self-righteousness.

(3) God created man with a natural longing for and ability to understand eternal matters. This comes out in man’s quest to understand the purpose of his own existence and to gain knowledge of life after death – ***“I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it. He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world [eternity] in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end” (Ecclesiastes 3:10-11).*** Man is the only creature who contemplates his own existence, purpose, and the possibility of life after death. This ***“travail”*** is a gift of God, but it leaves the natural man with a void in his heart. Some call this the “God-shaped void,” and sinful man by nature will try to fill this void with anything and everything except the only thing that can last into eternity – the glory of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. Man tries to fill this void with things such as materialism, false religion, human philosophy. Many times he simply falls into utter despair. But God’s Word tells us that only a saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and the assurance of eternal life and glory in and by Him will fill this void permanently.

(4) God the Holy Spirit gives all whom God chose before the foundation of the world, all whom Christ redeemed on the cross, all within whom He imparts life in the new birth, a desire to seek the Lord. This desire

can only be fulfilled in and by the Lord Jesus Christ – ***“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6).***

Even though true Christianity plainly and without apology teaches both the absolute sovereignty of God and the complete responsibility of man, it is never fatalism. It is that which holds all men, as fallen sinners who deserve nothing but God’s wrath, accountable to seek the Lord as instructed in His Word. God commands all who hear the Gospel preached to seek and find salvation only by His grace in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. WORSHIP, OBEDIENCE, AND SERVICE TO GOD MOTIVATED BY GRACE, LOVE, AND GRATITUDE, AND AIMED TOWARDS GOD’S GLORY IN CHRIST JESUS.

All religions promote acts of worship, obedience, and service either to their god or to man in some way or degree. As stated before, these things are not in and of themselves unique to Christianity. The Lord Himself in His sermon on the mount spoke of things common to all religions in acts of charity, prayer, and fasting (***Matthew 6:1-18***). He told them NOT to do these things ***“as the hypocrites”*** to be seen by men (***Matthew 6:2,5,16***). The Lord exposed the Pharisees to be hypocrites because of this – ***“But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments” (Matthew 23:5).*** Most people who call themselves “Christians” do not believe they engage themselves in charity, worship, and service to be seen of men, but we must consider the issues of motive and goal if we are to understand the reality of true Christianity.

First of all, consider that to be seen of men does not necessarily mean that one desires a public display of their religious efforts. Consider what the Lord had stated before ***Matthew 6*** in ***Matthew 5*** –

Matthew 5 – (13) Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for

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nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. (14) Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. (15) Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. (16) Let your light so shine before men, THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Is there a contradiction here? Did the Lord not say the opposite in **Matthew 6**? –

Matthew 6 – (3) But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: (4) That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly. (5) And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. (6) But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Also, consider how so many who call themselves “Christians” claim their life of obedience is their “witness before men.” I will deal more with this subject in the chapter 6, but how are we to understand these things in seeking to understand what is really unique about true Christians? There is no contradiction in what the Lord taught in **Matthew 5** and **6**. **“To be seen of men”** can be a person who merely wants to “show-off” his religion. It can be someone who simply desires the judgment of men over and above, or even as opposed to, the judgment of God in His Word. Either way his motive and goal is evil. He seeks only to exalt himself and not the Lord Jesus Christ. And those who believe their outward character and conduct is their “witness before men” are sadly mistaken as to the reality of Gospel light. With this in mind, we must consider that the true Christian’s worship, obedience, and service are different because of his motive and his goal.

There are generally only two motives and two goals found within most religions to drive and inspire people to obedience. One is evil in the

sight of the true God of Christianity. It is accepted by the idols of false religions. This motive is natural to sinful men. It is the product of ignorance and deception and a demonstration of his unbelief. The other motive is good in God's sight as it is the work of the Holy Spirit within. It is the product of God's grace in Jesus Christ and a demonstration of his faith in Christ. The evil motive can fall under the category of what we call LEGALISM. This legalism manifests itself in two ways: (1) fear of punishment, loss of reward(s), and (2) promise of earned blessings and/or reward(s). Fear of punishment and loss of reward(s) makes one a forced slave. This is legal fear, not godly fear born of faith and love. Promise of earned blessings and/or reward(s) makes one a mercenary serving God for hire. The other motive involves true godliness wherein a sinner saved by God's grace serves the Lord as he is motivated by love, grace, and gratitude –

Romans 7 – (4) Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. (5) For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. (6) But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

2 Corinthians 5 – (14) For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: (15) And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.

This godly motive also establishes the only right and acceptable goal of obedience – to glorify God and exalt Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Lord –

Matthew 5 – (16) Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, AND GLORIFY YOUR FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN.

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The **“light”** true Christians have to **“shine before men”** is not the **“good works”** themselves, but the Gospel truth that shines forth the glory of God in Christ as the one who has saved us and works in us to bring forth the fruit of godliness –

John 3 – (21) But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

Some may not agree with this or admit it, but this is one of the main things so unique to true Christianity. It is the difference between the attempts at obedience of one who is ignorant of God’s righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness and true Christians who have been brought by God to submit to Christ as their only righteousness before God (***cf. Romans 10:1-4***). One thing a true Christian wants everyone to know is that his best efforts to worship, obey, and serve the Lord, his best efforts to love his brethren and his neighbor, neither make him righteous nor make up any part of his righteousness before God. They are **“the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God” (Philippians 1:11)**. A true Christian is not an unwilling slave forced to serve God out of fear of punishment or promise of earned reward(s). He is a willing, loving bond-servant of Jesus Christ. He serves not to pay a debt or earn his keep. He serves because the Master has already paid the debt in full and has given him an eternal perfect righteous standing before God. He serves his Master because he loves Him and desires to thank Him for all grace here and all glory hereafter.

CHAPTER 2



CHRISTIANS ARE SINNERS SAVED BY THE GRACE OF GOD

One thing on which most everyone can agree is that a true Christian is a “saved” person, one saved from sin by Jesus Christ –

Matthew 1 – (21) And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS: FOR HE SHALL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS.

Another thing very clear from Scriptural testimony is that the salvation of sinners in its entirety is by God’s free and sovereign grace through the Lord Jesus Christ and based on the merits of His obedience unto death as their Surety and Substitute. The whole salvation of true Christians was and is conditioned on the Lord Jesus Christ and not on them as sinners. Therefore, another good summary statement to define true Christians is –

**TRUE CHRISTIANS ARE SINNERS SAVED TO THE UTMOST
SOLELY BY THE GRACE OF GOD THROUGH FAITH IN THE LORD JESUS
CHRIST.**

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

This salvation by God's grace in Christ Jesus shines through in every aspect of salvation both in eternity and in time. Consider the following truths as revealed in the Bible –

A TRUE CHRISTIAN IS A SINNER CHOSEN BY GOD UNTO SALVATION IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD. He is one of God's elect people, chosen not for anything done by or in him, but chosen because of God's free, sovereign grace alone (***Ephesians 1:3-11***). Many claim election is God "looking down through the telescope of time" and making His choice based upon what He foresaw what certain people would do in the way of believing and/or obeying Him. This is not Biblical as it makes election based on the works of men rather than the sovereign grace of God in Christ. True Christians are those who are chosen by God according to His election of grace and not based on anything He foresaw within them or done by them –

Romans 9 – (9) For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son. (10) And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (11) (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) (12) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. (13) As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. (14) What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. (15) For 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. (16) So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

Romans 11 – (5) Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. (6) And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

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A TRUE CHRISTIAN IS A SINNER WHOM JESUS CHRIST, AS SURETY AND SUBSTITUTE, REDEEMED BY HIS BLOOD ON THE CROSS. Having been ruined by the fall of man in Adam and fallen into sin and death (**Romans 5:12**), God's chosen people must be redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ to be saved. A true Christian is one of the redeemed of the Lord. This redemption by Christ has secured the true Christian's whole salvation unto final glory. This redemption is the establishment in time of the righteousness of God which is the entire merit of Christ's obedience unto death as the sinner's Surety and Substitute. God has imputed this righteousness to all whom Christ redeemed. Herein Jesus Christ satisfied the justice of God for the sins of His people. This is the righteousness of God, and it is the one and only ground of a true Christian's justification before God. A true Christian, therefore, is legally and objectively righteous as he stands in Christ. He cannot be charged with sin – ***"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:33-34).***

A TRUE CHRISTIAN IS A SINNER WHO HAS BEEN ADOPTED INTO GOD'S FAMILY BY THE ADOPTION OF GRACE –

Galatians 4 – (4) But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, (5) to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Ephesians 1 – (4) According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: (5) having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, (6) to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved. (7) In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

There are many who in their zeal to express belief in the Biblical truth of the unconditional electing grace of God say, "The elect have always

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been saved. The preaching of the Gospel merely tells them about it.” It is true we can rightfully think of salvation in an eternal sense as set forth, for example, in **2 Timothy 1** when the apostle Paul wrote of God’s purpose in salvation –

2 Timothy 1 – (9) Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, (10) But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:

This, however, is the eternal realm of salvation as considered in the mind and purpose of God, but not in the experience of a sinner saved by grace.¹ An elect person is one chosen of God before the foundation of the world and redeemed by the blood of Christ before he is made a true Christian by God the Holy Spirit in the new birth. The Bible teaches that such a person will without fail be brought by God to become a Christian, but the Bible also teaches that God’s elect whom Christ redeemed fell in Adam into sin and death, and consequently, they are all born dead in trespasses and sins –

Ephesians 2 – (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.

Those who are truly Christians did not begin their lives here on earth as Christians. Those who are Christ’s sheep begin their lives as LOST

¹ See Bill Parker’s book entitled What Is Salvation? concerning the four realms of salvation as revealed in the Bible.

sheep – ***“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6).*** Those who are sons of God by the adoption of God’s grace in Christ Jesus must and will receive the Spirit of adoption when they are born again – ***“And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:6).*** So a person does not become a true Christian until he is born again by the Spirit and brought to have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and repentance of dead works and idolatry. Again, a true Christian is one who believes in and follows the Lord Jesus Christ.

Those who try to disprove God’s sovereign electing grace by saying, “If I am elect before the foundation of the world, then it does not matter what I do or don’t do, what I hear and believe or refuse to hear and believe. If I’m elect, I will be saved no matter what,” are sadly mistaken. Consider the following statement carefully – “Election is not salvation; election is UNTO salvation.” God’s purpose and glory are not fulfilled simply by His choice of a people. God’s purpose and glory are fulfilled in choosing a people to redeem, redeeming them by His Son, AND bringing them to Himself as He reveals His glory in the Person and work of Jesus Christ to them and in them – ***“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6).*** God’s elect must be given spiritual life from above; they must be born again by the Holy Spirit as this is the fruit of their election before the foundation of the world and of their redemption by the blood of Christ on the cross –

John 6 – (37) All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out. (38) For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. (39) And this is the Father’s will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. (40) And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

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John 12 – (32) And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. (33) This He said, signifying what death He should die.

Ephesians 2 – (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) For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

A TRUE CHRISTIAN IS A SINNER WHO HAS BEEN BORN AGAIN BY THE HOLY SPIRIT AND BROUGHT TO FAITH IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND TO REPENTANCE OF DEAD WORKS AND IDOLATRY.

Both faith and repentance are gifts of God through Jesus Christ. They are not the results of any supposed goodness or free will exercised by sinners. All who were ruined in Adam's fall, but who were loved and chosen of God before the foundation of the world and redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross, must be and will be regenerated by the Holy Spirit. They have been given spiritual life, born again from above, brought to faith in Jesus Christ and to true repentance. They have been given the Spirit of life and truth within. They will all be brought from their natural, native darkness to the light of God's glory in Jesus Christ as the Lord our righteousness –

Colossians 1 – (12) Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: (13) Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: (14) In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

God's grace in election and the effectual work of Christ to redeem His people from their sins are not just proclamations in eternity and acts in history. They are the guarantee of the whole salvation of God's elect, including the Holy Spirit's work to impart spiritual life and faith within them.

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This is why Jesus Christ is called the Surety of the covenant and of His people. As God Himself proclaimed through the prophet Ezekiel –

Ezekiel 36 – (25) Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. (26) A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. (27) And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them. (28) And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be My people, and I will be your God.

Many people believe this promise applies only to the physical nation Israel in the land of Palestine, but this promise has never been fulfilled in the physical nation Israel as a whole. Some say it will be fulfilled in that nation in the future millennial kingdom, but the Bible teaches that the fulfillment of this promise and prophecy is in SPIRITUAL Israel made up of God's elect, both Jew and Gentile –

Romans 2 – (28) For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: (29) But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Romans 9 – (6) Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: (7) Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. (8) That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

Galatians 3 – (26) For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. (27) For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (28) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ

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Jesus. (29) And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The complete, spiritual, final fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy is found in the children of promise who are brought by God through new birth to believe the promise of salvation by God's grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. The ***"new heart"*** and ***"new spirit"*** identifies and defines those who are the true circumcision, the true spiritual Israel. Their ***"new heart"*** and ***"new spirit"*** is the fruit of God's grace in Jesus Christ and based on His righteousness imputed to them. Where Christ's righteousness is imputed, spiritual life and faith will be imparted to believe in and follow Him. This exposes one of the greatest heresies of our day, which is the heresy that it is our faith (or our decision) which makes the work of Christ on the cross effectual and powerful to save us. This makes faith to be the surety of salvation and not Christ. This is a denial of God's glory. This exalts sinners, not Christ. A true Christian is one who knows and believes that Christ alone is his Surety.

True Christians, then, are people of faith, but faith has both a solid foundation and a proper object – ***"For ye are all the children of God BY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST" (Galatians 3:26)***. Faith is not in simply believing something. It is not in believing anything one wants to believe or tries to believe. People believe a multitude of things that are not true, and this is most prominent in what has commonly but erroneously come to be called Christianity. A TRUE CHRISTIAN'S GOD-GIVEN FAITH INVOLVES BELIEVING GOD'S WORD AS IT REVEALS ALL THINGS IN LIGHT OF THE GLORIOUS PERSON AND FINISHED WORK OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. True Christian faith is validated and confirmed not by how much or how strongly a person believes, but by its foundation in the Word of God and by its object which is Jesus Christ crucified and raised from the dead as set forth in the Gospel message –

Romans 1 – (16) For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (17) For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

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Romans 10 – (17) So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Hebrews 11 – (1) Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

God-given faith is confidence of the hope of salvation and eternal life true Christians have because this hope is founded upon God's Word. Faith always leads God's people to believe and rest in the Lord Jesus Christ, ***"the Author and Finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2).*** It is the true Christian's conviction of the things he cannot see but which he knows to be true because they are revealed in God's Word. The Bible is clear –

Mark 16 – (16) He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

John 3 – (16) 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.

John 3 – (18) He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 3 – (36) He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

John 5 – (24) Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Romans 10 – (13) For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (14) How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have

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not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? (15) And 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!

The promise of salvation is only to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as He is identified and distinguished in the Gospel of God's grace. If left to his own will the natural man (who is born dead in trespasses and sins) will not believe the Gospel. True Christians, however, who are by nature natural men and women, have been born again by the Holy Spirit and given faith to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. This faith is not a condition they have met by their own efforts and wills. This faith is the evidence of their election before the foundation of the world, of their redemption by Jesus Christ on the cross, and of their regeneration by the Holy Spirit in the new birth. This faith is not their righteousness before God. This God-given faith brings them to believe in and submit to the Lord Jesus Christ as their only righteousness before God –

Romans 10 – (4) For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. (5) For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. (6) But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) (7) Or, who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) (8) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; (9) 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. (10) For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

We see then that genuine God-given faith leaves the true Christian no room to glory in himself. He can neither glory (boast) in his works nor in his own will (decision). It is God alone in Christ Jesus who gets all the glory

in salvation. The whole purpose of salvation is to glorify God and exalt the name of Jesus Christ as the salvation of His people –

Philippians 2 – (5) Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: (6) who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: (7) But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: (8) And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (9) Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: (10) That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; (11) And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This grand universal acknowledgement of the Lordship and glory of Jesus Christ will apply ultimately in the end of all things even to unbelievers as they will be forced to bow to the sovereign claims of Jesus Christ and consigned to eternal damnation. Thank God, however, this acknowledgement takes place in the hearts of God's elect as they are born again by God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit translates them from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light by bringing them to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They see how ***"God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"*** (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Although God's elect were always loved, chosen, and accepted by God in the Lord Jesus Christ, naturally they have no more knowledge of (or desire for) this great salvation than those who live and die in unbelief. Prior to God-given faith, the elect are just as totally depraved as any unregenerate, unbelieving person (***Ephesians 2:1-4***). Total depravity is the state of all unregenerate, unbelieving people showing that by nature we have no righteousness, no ability to produce righteousness, and no desire for righteousness God's way by grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. In salvation God gives His people a new heart, a new spirit, a new desire and willingness for righteousness in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation, then, comes to them personally when they are reconciled to God on this

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ground alone as revealed in the Gospel message applied to them in the power of the Holy Spirit –

2 Corinthians 5 – (20) Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. (21) For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

As God has saved His people from the PENALTY of sin by the blood of Jesus Christ, He also saves His people from the POWER of sin by the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing them to believe in Jesus Christ as their whole salvation and to submit to His righteousness imputed as the only ground of being justified before God –

Colossians 1 – (19) For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; (20) And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. (21) And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled (22) In the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprieveable in His sight: (23) If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

God's Word teaches that all of God's elect in time will be given spiritual life in the new birth. God the Holy Spirit will awaken them to see their need of salvation by the grace of God. He shows them their sin and depravity and brings them to cry with the publican of old, ***"God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13).*** He brings them to cry with the psalmist, ***"If Thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared" (Psalm 130:3-4).*** God tells them in His Word how they were unconditionally loved and chosen by Him in Jesus Christ before the world began. He reveals to them how they were powerfully redeemed by the blood of their Surety and Savior

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Jesus Christ. In salvation He brings them to cry out and call out of their need upon Him as He enables them to hear the sweet sound the Gospel and experience the power of His grace in Christ Jesus. We conclude from Scripture that a true Christian is a sinner who has called upon the name of the Lord as the Lord is identified and distinguished in the Holy Word of God and revealed in power by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, ***“whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13)***. The grand conclusion of all this for true Christians is –

TRUE CHRISTIANS SEE AND ACKNOWLEDGE THAT SALVATION IS OF THE LORD!

Salvation for a true Christian involves a stark realization that ALL of salvation, including all blessings of forgiveness, righteousness, spiritual life, and glory, are the gifts of God’s grace. They are in no way the result or reward of any sinner’s works and will. If a true Christian is one who follows the teachings of Jesus Christ, he knows all of salvation, from its initial inception in eternity past to its final culmination in glory, is by God’s grace based on the merits of Christ’s obedience unto death as Surety and Substitute for His people. The true Christian can take no glory for himself. He gladly gives all glory to Jesus Christ. He sees there is no part of salvation he can attribute to his own works and/or will, but that he had and has no part in earning or deserving the least of God’s favor and blessings. His theme and song is stated in verses like the following –

Romans 11 – (33) O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! (34) For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? (35) Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? (36) For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

Ephesians 1 – (3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

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Galatians 6 – (14) But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

Revelation 5 – (12) Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

CHAPTER 3



WHO WERE THE FIRST CHRISTIANS?

How old is Christianity? Many people, reputable historians included, believe Christianity is one of the youngest of all major world religions, claiming it is approximately a little over 2000 years old. They presume Christianity originated with the historical appearance of Jesus of Nazareth on earth. They claim Christianity was first inaugurated in time by the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus followed by the commencement of the New Testament church at Pentecost (**Acts 2**). However, if we base our knowledge of Christianity upon the Bible's revelation alone, we find in reality it is older than all other belief systems. In fact, it is older than creation itself. Although it is true the actual historical incarnation (appearance on earth), obedience unto death on the cross, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of Christianity, it is not the beginning of Christianity itself as the one and only true way of salvation. Also, even though the events that took place at Pentecost as recorded in **Acts 2** mark the beginning and initial ministry of the New Testament Christian church, the apostles and others who believed the Gospel at that time were not the first Christians. How can these assertions be supported Biblically? Consider the following points as they are taught in Scripture –

**TRUE CHRISTIANITY HAS ITS ORIGINS IN THE EVERLASTING
COVENANT OF GRACE MADE BEFORE THE WORLD WAS CREATED.**

The Gospel of God's grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ is the preaching of the terms of an eternal covenant made between the Triune Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) before the world began –

Ephesians 1 – (3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: (4) According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: (5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, (6) To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved. (7) In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; (8) Wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; (9) Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: (10) That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him: (11) In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will: (12) That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ.

The apostle Paul wrote of salvation which is of God ***“who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:”*** (2 Timothy 1:9-10). Paul also wrote of the ***“hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began”*** (Titus 1:2). The apostle Peter wrote of those who are truly saved as having been redeemed ***“with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily***

was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you” (1 Peter 1:19-20). The apostle John wrote how the names of all who believe in and follow the Lord Jesus Christ are distinguished from those who follow the beast of Satan by the following – ***“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him [the satanically empowered beast who wages war against the church], whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8; cf. 17:8).*** The inference here is clearly that all whom Christ redeemed by His blood and who by the power of God’s grace do not follow and worship the beast of Satan in the last days are those whose names ARE ***“written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8).*** When were their names written in this book? It was ***“from the foundation of the world.”***

If we read and understand the Bible correctly, we find Christianity and the way of salvation by God’s free and sovereign grace in the Lord Jesus Christ as taught by the doctrine of true Christianity (the Gospel) was no after-thought with God. It was not God’s “Plan B.” It was God’s purpose and plan from the very beginning, even before this world was created. The Gospel is older than creation, older than the fall of man. The Gospel was in force in the power of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ even before He actually came into the world to redeem His people from sin and establish righteousness whereby it is manifested that God has always been both a just God and a Savior. This glorious truth does not, as some argue, render the historical incarnation, birth, life of obedience unto death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ unnecessary or even unimportant. In fact, it makes all the work Jesus Christ accomplished in history supremely necessary for the glory of God and the salvation of His people. Everything God has done, is doing, and will do in the salvation of His people is grounded upon the glorious Person and finished work of Jesus Christ on earth about 2000 years ago. The fact that this was God’s purpose and plan from the beginning made it necessary for Jesus Christ to come into the world, introduce Himself into human history, and accomplish His great work as the Surety and Substitute of all whom the Father had given Him –

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John 6 – (37) All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out. (38) For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. (39) And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. (40) And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 17 – (1) These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee: (2) As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him. (3) And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent. (4) I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. (5) And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.

THE FIRST PROMISE OF THE MESSIAH (THE CHRIST OF CHRISTIANITY) IS FOUND IN GENESIS 3:15 IN THE PROMISED SEED OF WOMAN.

When Adam fell by disobeying God and taking sides with Eve (and with Satan), he brought the whole human family into sin and death – ***“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” (Romans 5:12).*** The Bible reveals how the whole human race fell into ruin through Adam because he was the representative of the whole human race. But, as stated before, God already had a plan in mind for the salvation and preservation of mankind by saving a people of His choice, the elect. However, God could not save any sinner apart from His holy law and inflexible justice being satisfied. Therefore, God's way of salvation had to be by His grace through a God-appointed, able, and willing substitute. The Lord Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, God the Son, was and is the only one who fits these qualifications. Therefore, we see Him revealed to Adam and Eve

as the Messiah (one anointed of God to be the Savior of His people) and the promised seed of woman. This promise was a prophecy of Jesus Christ, and it was given in God's pronouncement of the curse upon Satan –

Genesis 3 – (15) And I will put enmity between thee [Satan] and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel.

The revelation and promise of the seed of woman is the revelation and promise of the Messiah who would come into the world and save sinners from sin and death. Satan's work of bringing sin and death into the world would be completely overturned for God's elect by this person known as ***"her seed"*** (offspring), the woman's seed. This speaks of Jesus Christ who was ***"born of woman" (Galatians 4:4)***, not of man. His holy humanity was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin and united with His deity (***Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:21,23; John 1:14; Romans 1:3-4; 1 Timothy 3:16***). This Savior would be both God and man in one Person, and this would qualify Him to be the Savior of sinners (***Hebrews 2:14-16***). The success of His work to redeem His people from sin is stated in that the Savior would ***"bruise"*** (crush) Satan's head. This is the death-blow to Satan and his evil work. It is also stated that Satan would ***"bruise His heel"*** indicating how the Savior would suffer, bleed, and die, but this would not be the end of Him. What seemed like Satan's victory turned out to be Satan's defeat, and victory belonged to the Lord Jesus Christ as proven by His resurrection from the dead. As we read on through ***Genesis 3*** God sets forth in type and picture exactly how the seed of woman, Jesus Christ, would crush Satan and save His people from sin –

Genesis 3 – (20) And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. (21) Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

Until this time, Adam's wife was simply called ***"the woman."*** But now, after the fall of man into sin and death, and after the first promise of Messiah as the seed of woman, she is called ***"Eve,"*** which means ***"life"*** or ***"living."*** We must understand how her new name was directly connected

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with her **“seed”** in **Genesis 3:15**. Without Jesus Christ coming into the world as promised and prophesied to crush the head of Satan, Eve would have been the mother of all the dead, not the **“mother of all living.”** It is clearly established from the beginning that salvation from sin, spiritual and eternal life, could only come to sinners by Messiah, the woman’s seed, the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation for His people would be accomplished through His death. It is stated after this that God slew an animal (probably a lamb), and made **“coats of skins, and clothed them.”** Here are two great pictures: (1) The death of Jesus Christ as Surety and Substitute of His people to satisfy the justice of God’s law, which could only be satisfied through death (**Genesis 2:17; Romans 6:23**), (2) The righteousness which God resulting from His death which was imputed (charged, accounted) to His people for their justification. This is the very **“righteousness of God”** revealed in the Gospel (**Romans 1:16-17**). This is the Christian Gospel message of salvation by God’s grace conditioned on Jesus Christ alone, and based solely on His shed blood and righteousness imputed. This sets forth how God is both a just God and a Savior, which has always been the essence of the Christian message –

Romans 3 – (19) Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. (20) Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. (21) But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; (22) Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: (23) For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; (24) Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: (25) whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; (26) To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

From what follows in **Genesis 4** of Cain and Abel we can know that what is recorded in **Genesis 3:21** was the establishment and initiation of the sacrificial system of worship through the blood of animals. These symbolic elements typified and testified of the one and only way God saves sinners by grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. Did Abel have knowledge of Jesus Christ? Abel knew Him and trusted Him as the promised Messiah who would come in time do this great work. This is supported by the story of Cain and Abel as recorded in **Genesis 4:1-5**. Cain approached God seeking salvation, blessing, and acceptance with God based on the works of his hands. Cain was an unbeliever and, in essence, not a Christian. Abel approached God on the basis of the blood of a lamb, which typified Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God (**John 1:29**). Abel was a believer. He knew his sinfulness and depravity. By God-given faith he looked forward to the fulfillment of God's promise to send Messiah into the world to die for his sins and accomplish righteousness for him (*cf. Hebrews 11:4; 1 John 3:10-12*). Abel, in essence, was a Christian. Based on this testimony, we can rightfully conclude that the first Christians as recorded in the Bible were probably Adam and Eve, and most definitely Abel, along with Enoch, and Noah.

Many people deny that these first Old Testament believers could have known these things concerning Jesus Christ as Messiah. Some deny this because they want to excuse their own ignorance and/or denial of the Gospel of grace in Christ. The fact is that these first Old Testament saints did not (and could not) know many things concerning the progressive revelation of God in His total plan and purpose working all things after the counsel of His own will. Many details were not revealed to these first believers. Much revelation came later and throughout the recorded history of both the Old and New Testaments. However, the basic Gospel message concerning the glorious Person and finished work of the Messiah was revealed to (and received by) them through the same power of the Holy Spirit having, the same spiritual birth from above that all Christians, then and now, experience. They were convinced by the Holy Spirit of their sin, that they were without hope and without goodness or power to save themselves or make themselves righteous before God. As with all true Christians, they were convinced by the Holy Spirit of their own sinfulness

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and of righteousness to be found only in the Messiah, based on His obedience unto death as their Surety and Substitute. The basic Gospel truths of substitution, imputation, and satisfaction were taught in the sacrifices of unblemished lambs. True Christians in the Old Testament were convinced by the Holy Spirit of judgment found in the crushing of Satan's head. They knew that because of the death of Messiah Satan's accusations against them could not condemn them. By God-given faith they looked to the future and believed Messiah would come and die for them. They believed Messiah would satisfy the justice of God and bring in righteousness for them.

As I have stated, a true Christian is one who has been brought by God the Holy Spirit to confront the reality of his sin in light of the holiness of God. The main issue in salvation for sinners, then, is the question of how a holy and just God can save, forgive, accept, and commune with sinners and still remain holy and just in all that He does. This is a Gospel issue that finds its answer only in the grace of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. This question is posed in various passages of the **Book of Job**, which some scholars believe is the oldest book of the Bible –

Job 9 – (1) Then Job answered and said, (2) I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God?

Job 15 – (14) What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? (15) Behold, He putteth no trust in His saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in His sight.

Job 25 – (4) How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? (5) Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in His sight. (6) How much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man, which is a worm?

Whether **Job** is the oldest book of the Bible or not, we can certainly see the issue confronting him and his friends was the Gospel issue that could only be solved by God's promise of Messiah as the Redeemer of sinners and the righteousness of God found only in Him –

Job 19 – (23) Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! (24) That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! (25) For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: (26) And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: (27) whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.

Job knew that sin always demands death. He knew the only remedy for sin was in righteousness from God and not from himself – the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Based on this testimony, I do not believe it is stretching the truth to say that Job himself was, in essence, a Christian. There were many details concerning how God would bring Messiah into the world not yet revealed to Job, but the kernel message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ rings forth throughout the ***Book of Job***.

Consider the New Testament commentary in ***Hebrews 11:13*** – ***“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”*** These Old Testament believers did not live to see the fulfillment of the promise of Jesus Christ in time on earth, but they saw these things ***“afar off,”*** i.e. as things to be fulfilled in the future. Abel, Enoch, and Noah, for example, did not know that Messiah would be a descendant of Abraham according to the flesh, but they did know Messiah would be God in the flesh and accomplish redemption for them.

Consider the case of Noah. One of the most common terms to describe Christians in the Old Testament is the term ***“the righteous,”*** which occurs in 165 verses. This term does not describe men or women who were made righteous by their own inherent goodness or their own works. It does not describe men or women who were better than other sinners and thereby arose above the majority to make themselves accepted with God. For example, Noah was described by God as ***“righteous before Me” (Genesis 7:1)***, but the first thing we read about Noah is ***“But Noah found GRACE in the eyes of the LORD” (Genesis 6:8)***. If Noah were righteous before God based on his own works, he would not have needed the grace

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of God. Grace is for sinners. What righteousness did Noah plead for his own salvation?

Hebrews 11 – (7) By 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.

“The righteousness which is by faith” is the righteousness of Jesus Christ revealed in the Gospel, ***“the righteousness of God” (Romans 1:16-17)***. This righteousness is the merit of Christ’s obedience unto death as Surety and Substitute of His people. This is the righteousness God imputes to His people and unto which they all submit as they believe in and trust the Lord Jesus Christ for all salvation – ***“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Romans 10:4)***; and ***“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:10)***. Grace comes to sinners and rules over them ***“through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 5:21)***. Salvation always has been and always will be by the grace of God based on the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ freely imputed and received by God-given faith. We can conclude from this that Noah was an Old Testament Christian to whom God revealed the promise of the coming Messiah for his salvation as typified by Noah’s ark. True Christians are ***“the righteous”*** among men, but their righteousness lies not within themselves and comes not from their works of morality and sincerity. Their righteousness is in Christ Jesus who was ***“made to be sin”*** for them. They are ***“made the righteousness of God IN HIM” (2 Corinthians 5:21)***.

In ***Hebrews 11***, Abraham is listed after Abel, Enoch, and Noah. Abraham knew more of the details of God’s plan of salvation, but he knew and believed the same Gospel as Abel, Enoch, and Noah. Abraham, for example, did not know the Messiah would be a descendant of the tribe of Judah and the house of David according to the flesh, but he did know Messiah would come and accomplish the ground of his justification before God. Consider the Lord’s own testimony of Abraham – ***“Your father***

Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad” (John 8:56). Genesis 15:6 states that Abraham “believed in the LORD; and He [the Lord] counted it to him for righteousness.” The apostle Paul cited this passage as a prime example of how God justifies the ungodly based on the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ (***Romans 4:1-5***). Abraham believed God’s promise to justify him based on the righteousness of the Messiah who would come in time and die for his sins. Abraham’s faith gave evidence of Christ’s righteousness imputed to him. Abraham was a believer, a true Christian.

In chapter 11 of ***Hebrews***, the writer goes on to list Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses. Read what God the Holy Spirit inspired him to write of Moses specifically –

Hebrews 11 – (23) By 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. (24) By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; (25) Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; (26) ESTEEMING THE REPROACH OF CHRIST greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence 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.

Moses also did not know many things concerning exact historical details of the Messiah’s life. These details were revealed later, but consider how the Lord told the unbelieving Jewish religionists of His day that because they did not believe in Him, they had missed the main message contained in the writings of Moses –

John 5 – (39) Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me. (40) And ye will not

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come to Me, that ye might have life. (41) I receive not honour from men. (42) But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. (43) I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. (44) How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? (45) Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. (46) For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me. (47) But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words?

The same Gospel message applies to all the Old Testament witnesses listed in **Hebrews 11**. The reason the Holy Spirit inspired the writer of **Hebrews** to write this was to encourage the Hebrew Christians in the New Testament age to persevere in the same “*faith*” as these Old Testament witnesses, which faith was the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory –

Hebrews 12 – (1) Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, (2) Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

THE OLD TESTAMENT, LIKE THE NEW TESTAMENT, IS A BOOK OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE WAY OF SALVATION BY GOD’S GRACE IN HIM.

A so-called Old Testament expert said, “It is most improbable that everyone who believed unto salvation [in the Old Testament] consciously believed in the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” Another added, “The people of the Old Testament era did not know that Jesus was the Messiah, that Jesus would die, and that His death would be the basis of salvation.” I hope that in reading this book, along with serious Bible study, you can see that both of these men are seriously in error. Clearly the Old Testament, like the New Testament, is a book of Jesus Christ

and the way of salvation, forgiveness of sin, righteousness, and eternal life by Him. Consider what Christ Himself taught the disciples after His resurrection before He ascended to the Father –

Luke 24 – (27) And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself ... (44) And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me. (45) Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, (46) And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: (47) And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

As I have shown, the whole **Book of Hebrews** is a commentary on the Old Testament proving how Jesus Christ is the perfect fulfillment of all the prophecies, promises, types, shadows, and pictures of the Old Testament. It shows how salvation and all blessings of eternal life and glory have always been by God's grace through Jesus Christ and His righteousness alone. Again, Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham all looked by God-given faith to the future in God's promise to send Messiah into the world as their Surety and Substitute. And although there was much yet to be revealed, the basic message of the Gospel of God's grace, the righteousness of God revealed in Christ Jesus, was very present and clear to them in answering the question of questions – How can a holy and just God justify, forgive, and save sinners, and still remain true to Himself?

Consider again **Hebrews 11:13** again – ***“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”*** “Faith” here is a noun, and it refers to the Gospel message of salvation conditioned on the Messiah who is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ and who fulfilled all conditions of the salvation of all God's chosen people, Old Testament saints included. All the blessings of God were applied to the Old Testament saints by promise.

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Someone may ask, “How could God apply such blessings from Christ before He actually came into the world, lived, died, and arose from the dead?” The answer is found in **2 Corinthians 1:20** – **“For all the promises of God IN HIM are yea, and IN HIM Amen, unto the glory of God by us.”** Our God is a faithful God. He has never failed to keep His promises. That salvation which was given to all His elect in Christ Jesus before the world began could never be left unfulfilled or unapplied to them, and could never be taken away from them. What God has purposed before time demands its fulfillment in time because God must be just when He justifies the ungodly. The fact that God saved His elect in the Old Testament before the Savior actually came into the world did not render the Savior’s appearance and work on earth to die for His people unnecessary. It actually made it necessary. Without the death of Christ there could be no salvation for any sinner in any time. The one true and living God says –

Isaiah 46 – (9) Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me, (10) Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure: (11) Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth My counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it. (12) Harken unto Me, ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness: (13) I bring near My righteousness; it shall not be far off, and My salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel My glory.

As we have seen, all the prophets gave witness to the truth of (and their faith in) the promise of the Messiah and His death to satisfy God’s justice for them and to bring in righteousness for their salvation. Isaiah wrote of Him (**ex. Isaiah 9:6-7; 7:14; 53**). Jeremiah identified Him as **“THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:15-16)**. These were all Christians because by faith they looked forward to the coming of Jesus Christ to save them from their sins. They trusted God to keep His promise of grace that reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord (**Romans 5:21**).

It is noteworthy to mention that every Old Testament Israelite Christian who lived in the time period from Sinai to the cross was under the Old Covenant law temporally and ceremonially, which means that as natural citizens of the nation Israel, they were obligated to participate and keep all the ceremonial laws given at Mount Sinai. But salvation and eternal life was never by the terms of the law of Moses. Spiritual, eternal salvation was always by the Lord Jesus Christ in fulfilling the terms of the covenant of grace made before the foundation of the world and reaffirmed in the promises God made to Abraham and David –

Galatians 3 – (16) Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. (17) And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. (18) For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

David was king of Israel under the Old Covenant law, but neither his works as king nor as a citizen of Israel under that law could earn his salvation or make him righteous before God. His hope of eternal salvation was in another covenant, the everlasting covenant of grace through the Lord Jesus Christ as expressed in the following –

2 Samuel 23 – (5) Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow.

Nothing was “**sure**” for King David by the law, but his whole salvation and assurance for final glory in eternity was “**sure**” because of the sovereign grace of God in what the Messiah (Christ) would come in time and accomplish in salvation for David. David understood that the Messiah was (and is) his Surety. He understood that his sins had been imputed to

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the promised Messiah, and the Messiah's righteousness had been imputed to him. As David wrote –

Psalm 32 – (1) Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. (2) Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

Romans 4 – (6) Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, (7) Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. (8) Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

Can there be any doubt that by the grace of God King David was a Christian, one who sought and found righteousness in the promised Messiah who is none other than Jesus Christ the Lord? Consider, for example, ***Psalm 16***, one of the messianic psalms of David and how the apostle Peter was inspired of the Holy Spirit to proclaim and explain David's words in light of the Gospel of God's grace in Jesus Christ crucified and raised from the dead –

Acts 2 – (22) Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: (23) Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: (24) whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it. (25) FOR DAVID SPEAKETH CONCERNING HIM, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: (26) Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: (27) Because thou wilt not leave My soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. (28) Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. (29) Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with

us unto this day. (30) THEREFORE BEING A PROPHET, AND KNOWING THAT GOD HAD SWORN WITH AN OATH TO HIM, THAT OF THE FRUIT OF HIS LOINS, ACCORDING TO THE FLESH, HE WOULD RAISE UP CHRIST TO SIT ON HIS THRONE; (31) He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption. (32) This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

WHAT ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM?

Before we leave this chapter, and in light of what we have read here, let's consider one of the most common misconceptions in defining true Christianity and true Christians. Many people believe that Christianity is a branch of Judaism, or, as some say, "Christianity has its roots in Judaism." Is this so? It is obvious in the Old Testament that God chose and used the nation Israel above all other nations to work His sovereign will in human history. From the book of **Exodus** to the book of **Malachi**, and including the four Gospels, we see the history of Israel under the Old Covenant. Add to this the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was Himself in His humanity a Jew, and the first Christians in the New Testament were ethnic Jews. Many today speak of the "Judeo-Christian" ethic, mostly referring to the Ten Commandments, and implying that Judaism and Christianity are compliments of one another. This is simply not true. The law of Moses given to the Hebrew people from Mount Sinai, (and under which they were established as a nation according to the promise God gave to Abraham 400 years prior), was not given as a way of eternal salvation. It was given to them for many reasons, but for the purposes of this book, we will focus on the main reason it was given to them. God gave them the law as a means of conviction of sin to show them how salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life could never be gained or maintained by their works under the law –

Romans 3 – (19) Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. (20) Therefore

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by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Romans 5 – (20) Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

Galatians 3 – (19) Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

The law was given to turn them away from seeking salvation by their works and turn them to God's way of salvation by grace through the merit of the righteousness of the promised Messiah –

Galatians 3 – (22) But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. (23) But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. (24) Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

The unbelieving Jews did what all of us by nature in our sinfulness and depravity do according to God's revelation. They perverted the law –

Romans 9 – (31) But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. (32) Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; (33) As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence [Jesus Christ]: and whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.

This is not stated to single out the Jews particularly, as if to say they are greater sinners than the rest of us. We are all great sinners and all equally in need of salvation by the sovereign grace of God in Christ. None of us measure up to the righteousness of the law required to justify us. We all, as sinful human beings, can be held responsible for participating in the

death of the Lord Jesus Christ (**cf. Acts 4:26-28**). The death of Jesus Christ ultimately was the sovereign purpose and work of our sovereign God (**Acts 2:23; 4:28**), but the hatred of both Jew and Gentile for Jesus Christ and expressed in crucifying Him is representative of the hatred of all natural men and women for Christ as He is revealed in the Gospel. This includes all of us by nature. Also, pointing out that the Jews perverted the law of Moses is not intended to foster, promote, or excuse antisemitism, hatred, or any act of violence against Jews. No true Christian has ever had a mandate (or liberty given) from Christ and His teachings to hate or hurt Jews or any other ethnic or religious group or individual. In fact, no true Christian has any mandate or liberty from Christ and His teachings to hate or hurt any individual or group. Those who use the Bible to support such wickedness are perverted in their thinking and consumed with self-righteousness and pride. Any who justify sinful prejudices or acts of violence against any ethnic or religious group have no Biblical basis for their sin. No religious leader, king, president, or government has any Biblical justification for harming or persecuting others on the basis of their race, nationality, or religious beliefs.

True Christians have every right to defend themselves, their families, their country, and their freedom. True Christians are commanded to voice their opposition to all sin (both in themselves and others), but they have no license to take personal vengeance upon anyone for any reason – ***“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Romans 12:19)***. If we are truly Christian in heart, we cannot condone or promote sin in ourselves or others, and we cannot condone or promote any false religion or false gospel. We must adamantly oppose these, but our opposition to these sins never gives us leave to wage physical warfare with physical weapons nor to commit physical violence or harm on anyone because they disagree with us in religious beliefs or because of the color of their skin –

2 Corinthians 10 – (3) For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (4) (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) (5) Casting

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down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

Our warfare with ourselves (the flesh), the world, and the devil is a spiritual warfare waged on the battlefield of the hearts and minds of men and women. Our weapons are the Gospel and the truth of Almighty God wielded in prayer and in the power of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ our Lord. He is our Captain, our Ensign, and our Victor. And if we define and distinguish true Christianity as defined in the Bible (not from human history), we must see that every battle waged, every atrocity committed in the history of the human race by any nation, group, or individuals in the name of Christianity (for anything other than self-defense) was (and is) a perversion of Christianity and the product of Satan's lies. This includes the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, and the Salem witch trials, just to name a few.

One may raise an objection to this by citing from the Old Testament where the nation Israel was commanded by God to conquer the land of Canaan and sometimes involving the complete destruction of their enemies (***Deuteronomy 20:10-18, for example***). Although these are difficult things for us to understand, we need to know and trust that God is just in all His ways and commandments. This was God's judgment upon those nations for their sin and idolatry. But we also need to see that this was not Christianity. This was God commanding the nation Israel under the Old Covenant. This was God preserving His chosen people in a hostile and barbaric land where power-hungry and blood-thirsty enemies would have destroyed them if not for God preserving them and bringing judgment upon their enemies. We must see this separate from true Christianity and the spiritual warfare Christ commands His disciples to wage through the preaching of the Gospel.

It is true that the nation Israel perverted the law of Moses (***Romans 9:31-33***). But what the children of Israel did in perverting the law is no more than what all of us by nature do if left to ourselves in our own natural ignorance and self-righteousness. The point is this – True Christianity is not rooted in (nor is it a branch of or complement to) Judaism or Jewish

legalism. True Christianity is God's eternal truth predating creation itself. The Jews as a nation, then and now, reject Jesus Christ as the one true Messiah. This certainly does not bar any individual Jew from being a true Christian. The apostle Paul wrote of this in **Romans 11** when he cautioned Gentile believers not to boast in their own salvation over and above the Jews, because salvation (for both Jew and Gentile) is by God's grace alone through Jesus Christ alone. The Jews were rejected because of unbelief, and by nature we are all unbelievers. If we believe in Jesus Christ, as all true Christians do, we have nothing in which to boast in and of ourselves. It is all (including our faith) the gift and power of God's grace through Jesus Christ the Lord. Paul also wrote how God still had a remnant of His elect people out of the Jewish nation –

Romans 11 – (1) I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. (2) God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, (3) Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. (4) But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. (5) Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. (6) And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

Romans 11 – (26) And so ALL ISRAEL SHALL BE SAVED: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: (27) For this is My covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

I believe it is clear from the whole context of **Romans** and other Scriptural passages that “**all Israel**” is spiritual Israel made up of God's elect out of every tribe and nation, including the Jewish nation. However, even though the Lord God used them greatly, and we who are Christians should

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be thankful to God for them, the believing Jews were not the first Christians. The first Christians are found in the book of ***Genesis***. If we are true Christians, we should never look upon any nation and exclude them from any possibility of salvation by the grace of God. We should also pray for and seek the salvation of all people through the witness and preaching of the Gospel of God's grace in Jesus Christ, as God provides us with opportunities to do so.

CHAPTER 4



CHRISTIANS ARE UNITED TO JESUS CHRIST

There is no Biblical basis for considering anyone to be a true Christian until he or she gives evidence of having been born again by the Holy Spirit and brought to God-given faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This new birth will also result in true repentance of sin and a God-given desire to obey God from new motives of grace, love, and gratitude to God. A true Christian is a believer, a disciple (follower) of the Lord Jesus Christ. A true Christian believes the true Gospel of Christ and follows the teachings of Christ. A true Christian has been reconciled to God legally on the basis of the merits of the death of Christ – ***“And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven” (Colossians 1:20)*** – and spiritually within his heart by faith in Christ – ***“And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in His sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister” (Colossians***

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1:21-23). A true Christian has the hope and assurance of salvation seeing it is in no way conditioned on anything done by or in himself, but conditioned totally on the Lord Jesus Christ, crucified and arisen from the dead. He is forgiven of all his sins by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is justified (not guilty and righteous) before God, not by works of righteousness he has done, is doing, or promises to do, but by the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed (charged, accounted) to him. He has been spiritually raised from the dead as evidenced by his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for all salvation.

**A TRUE CHRISTIAN, THEN, IS A SINNER WHO HAS BEEN
BROUGHT BY THE POWER AND GRACE OF GOD INTO A PERSONAL UNION
AND
RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST, AND THIS IS BY MEANS OF GOD-
GIVEN FAITH.**

All of this describes a true Christian's subjective (personal and inward) union with Christ. Along with this aspect of a believer's union with Christ, we will also consider a Christian's objective union with Christ. OBJECTIVE union describes a Christian's legal, positional union with Jesus Christ. SUBJECTIVE union describes the spiritual union a person experiences within by the new birth. This is the work of the Holy Spirit imparting spiritual life from Jesus Christ to a spiritually dead sinner. It is a work of the heart (mind, affections, and will) described, for example, in the Old Testament by the prophet Ezekiel –

Ezekiel 36 – (26) A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. (27) And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

It is described, for example, in the New Testament by the apostle John and the apostle Paul –

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John 16 – (8) And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: (9) Of sin, because they believe not on Me; (10) Of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more; (11) Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

Romans 6 – (17) But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. (18) Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

These passages of Scripture are just a few examples describing what the Lord Himself called being born again by the Holy Spirit --

John 3 – (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. (7) Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

So to put things in their proper order and perspective concerning a Christian's union with Jesus Christ, consider the following --

(1) OBJECTIVE UNION WITH JESUS CHRIST involves both (a) God's sovereign election of His people IN JESUS CHRIST before the foundation of the world, and (b) Christ's redemptive work on the cross for His people to save them from sin. It involves Christ by Himself acting for them as their REPRESENTATIVE, SURETY, and SUBSTITUTE. In the everlasting covenant of grace before the foundation of the world, CHRIST was appointed by God to be the REPRESENTATIVE of the whole election of grace. A true Christian, therefore, is one who was chosen by God before the foundation of the world in Christ Jesus and whose name was ***“written in the book of life of***

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the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8). The Bible describes a true follower of Jesus Christ as one who was united to Christ by God the Father in divine electing grace even before God created the world. Obviously, this took place before he was born and before he ever knew anything about this union that would be revealed to him in the future in God’s Word through the preaching of the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ Jesus –

Ephesians 1 – (3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: (4) According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: (5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, (6) To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved. (7) In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace;

Based on Biblical truth, therefore, Christians are the only ones who can accurately be called ***“God’s elect” (Romans 8:33).*** It is prideful and presumptuous for anyone who does not believe in and follow the Lord Jesus Christ to make this claim. Before they are brought by the Holy Spirit to trust Christ, God’s elect are fallen, ruined, spiritually dead sinners, lost in their sins and in unbelief. The apostle Paul described God’s elect before their new birth and before being brought to faith in Jesus Christ as no different by nature than ***“the children of wrath”*** –

Ephesians 2 – (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.

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God's electing grace which united them to Christ objectively and positionally had nothing to do with their character or their works, seen or foreseen. It was all of grace. The apostle Paul illustrated this using the example of Jacob and Esau –

Romans 9 – (11) (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth;)

Many unbelieving men and women hate this truth and try to use it to accuse God of being unjust and unfair. The apostle Paul anticipated this objection –

Romans 9 – (14) What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. (15) For 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. (16) So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

God's Word shows us that if it were not for God's electing grace in choosing His people and placing them IN CHRIST no sinner would be saved. The whole race of fallen man would perish in sin.

Another facet of this objective union is seen in Jesus Christ's office as the true Christian's SURETY. According to the terms and conditions of the covenant of grace, Jesus Christ was appointed by God to be the Surety of His elect. God determined to save His chosen people, sinners who deserve the just punishment of eternal death. God could not save them apart from His holy law and inflexible justice being satisfied. He appointed His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to be Surety for His people, meaning He imputed (charged, accounted) their sin-debt to Jesus Christ. This made Jesus Christ responsible for their whole debt to God's law and justice. Some of you may have read or heard the following quotation concerning the death of Jesus Christ – "Christ paid a debt He did not owe; We owed a debt we could not pay." If we understand the reality of a true Christian's objective, legal union with Jesus Christ, we know the reality of Christ being

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our Surety, which involves the imputation of our sins to Him and the imputation of His righteousness to us, does not support such a statement.

The truth is this – In the death of Jesus Christ for the sins of His people, He paid a debt He DID owe. Granted it was a debt He did not create. We as sinners are responsible for the debt of sin. But the debt of all of God's elect was imputed (charged, credited, accounted) to Jesus Christ, and that debt actually became HIS debt. By imputation Jesus Christ actually owed that debt as their Surety, and He paid that debt in full as their Substitute. It is true He knew no sin and did no sin. He was and is the perfect Godman. When He suffered and died upon the cross of shame, He remained perfect, innocent, uncontaminated, and uncorrupted by their sin. He who died for their sins (including the sin of unbelief) and who was made sin for them had no sinful thoughts or motives within Himself. But do not be mistaken about this – That debt of sin was truly and justly HIS by imputation. Based on sin imputed to Jesus Christ as the Surety and Substitute of the elect, God who is just and holy in all His ways remained perfectly holy and just in punishing and pouring His wrath down upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Some have said, "God could not justly impute sin to Jesus Christ until He was somehow made sin." That is not so. Jesus Christ was made sin by imputation alone. This was a sovereign work of God for the salvation of His people, and as a result, we who are IN HIM become the righteousness of God IN HIM by the imputation of His righteousness to us.

For the glory of His Father and the salvation of His people, Jesus Christ voluntarily agreed to be their Surety and pay their debt in full. He agreed to do what was necessary to work out a perfect righteousness whereby God could act consistently with His own character as both a just God and a Savior of sinners. This involved His whole work as the SUBSTITUTE of God's elect in His obedience unto death to redeem His people from sin. This whole work of redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ as the Surety and Substitute of His people is ***"the righteousness of God"*** revealed in the Gospel of God's grace (*cf. Romans 1:16-17*). The ***"righteousness of God"*** is the merit of Christ's obedience unto death which is imputed to all of God's people. THIS ***"RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD,"*** IMPUTED TO ALL WHOM GOD CHOSE AND WHOM CHRIST REDEEMED, IS THE ONE AND ONLY GROUND OF SALVATION AND JUSTIFICATION BEFORE

GOD. This is the true Christian's legal union with Christ through God's redeeming grace. The apostle Paul described this union in several passages of Scripture –

Romans 5 – (6) For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. (7) For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. (8) But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

Romans 6 – (3) Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? (4) Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (5) For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

2 Corinthians 5 – (21) For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

Ephesians 2 – (4) But 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, (by grace ye are saved;) (6) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: (7) That in the ages to come He might shew 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) For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

The writer of **Hebrews** described this legal union in speaking of Christ, ***“who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He***

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had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:3); and, “By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament” (Hebrews 7:22); and again, “For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14).

All of this took place in the Person of Jesus Christ as the Representative, Surety, and Substitute of His people, but we who are true Christians knew nothing of this subjectively and experientially until we were brought by God the Holy Spirit in the new birth to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Before this, as we fell into sin and death through Adam as our representative in the Garden, we were by nature spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, unbelievers, and could not accurately be called Christians at all. Who then are God’s elect, and for whom did Jesus Christ die on the cross? The Bible’s answer is all who in time are born again by the Holy Spirit and brought to believe in and trust the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

The objective aspect of a Christian’s union with Jesus Christ (God’s election of grace in Christ Jesus and the redemption of grace through the death of Jesus Christ) insures and demands the subjective aspect of salvation through the work of the Holy Spirit. Here is where we must understand what the Bible reveals of a true Christian’s union with Jesus Christ as concerning (1) the work of Christ FOR His people and (2) the work of Christ IN His people. Christ’s work FOR His people (His full payment of their debt to the justice of God and by working out a perfect righteousness whereby God could be just and Justifier) was a work done by Christ without any help or involvement from His people – ***“when He had BY HIMSELF purged our sins” (Hebrews 1:3).*** The righteousness He accomplished through His obedience unto death, which was imputed to all His people, is the only ground of salvation. Christ’s work IN His people through the work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth is the FRUIT of His work for them. The work of the Holy Spirit in them is not the cause or ground of their salvation. God’s love is the only cause of salvation, and Christ’s work on the cross is the only ground of salvation –

1 John 4 – (10) Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

THE TRUE CHRISTIAN'S RIGHTEOUSNESS BEFORE GOD IS THE IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS OF JESUS CHRIST. A true Christian is righteous, not in himself, but IN JESUS CHRIST. He is still a sinner within himself, and sin still contaminates and corrupts all that he thinks, says, and does (***cf. Romans 7:14-25***). This is why even his best efforts to love and obey God, to love his neighbor and his brethren, can only be accepted with God through the intercessory work of Jesus Christ, i.e. by being washed clean in the blood of Jesus Christ –

1 Peter 2 – (5) Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, ACCEPTABLE TO GOD BY JESUS CHRIST.

A true Christian knows it is not the work of the Holy Spirit within that makes him righteous before God. It is the work of Christ for him. He knows it would be not only foolish and futile, but also evil to present his best works before God as making him righteous –

Philippians 3 – (7) But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. (8) Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, (9) And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

Titus 3 – (4) But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, (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; (6) Which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; (7) That being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

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(2) THE SUBJECTIVE (SPIRITUAL) UNION WITH JESUS CHRIST, then, involves the sovereign, powerful, invincible work of the Holy Spirit imparting spiritual life and knowledge in the new birth as the fruit and result of the work of Jesus Christ for His people. All for whom Christ died shall be born again by the Holy Spirit. Where righteousness has been imputed, life, knowledge, and faith are given to receive Christ. Both the work of Christ FOR His people and the work of Christ IN His people are necessary for their salvation. No one will enter the glory of eternal life who has not been redeemed by the blood of Christ and also regenerated by the Holy Spirit. A spiritual union with Christ would be impossible without a legal union with Him. Sin demands death; righteousness demands life. A legal union without a spiritual union would make no sense and would not glorify the Lord. The work of the Holy Spirit within is necessary to make a person a Christian and bring him to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to submit to the righteousness Christ established for him as the only ground upon which God justifies His people –

John 12 – (32) And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. (33) This He said, signifying what death He should die.

John 17 – (7) Nevertheless 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. (8) And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: (9) Of sin, because they believe not on Me; (10) Of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more; (11) Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

Romans 10 – (4) For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

When sinners are brought by the grace, power, and goodness of God to be convicted of sin under the Gospel, they come to see their utter depravity and sinfulness to the point of having no hope in and of themselves or based upon their best efforts to work righteousness. They are brought

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to faith in Christ and to submission to God's way of salvation through Him and based solely upon His righteousness imputed. Then and only then can they truthfully be identified as Christians according to God's Word. This is the power of God unto salvation. This is a sinner saved by grace who is united to Jesus Christ by faith –

Romans 5 – (1) Therefore being justified, by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: (2) By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Romans 6 – (17) But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. (18) Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

Romans 7 – (4) Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

Philippians 3 – (7) But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. (8) Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, (9) And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

The command of God to sinners then is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." The Bible tells us, "***For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved***" (Romans 10:13). A true Christian has called "***upon the name of the Lord,***" i.e. Jesus Christ as He is identified and distinguished in the revelation of Scripture. There are some who conclude that because of the objective aspects of salvation (God's election of grace and Christ's redemption of His people by grace), and

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because the new birth is not the result of faith but the cause, there is no reason for us to seek the Lord. This is sinful, human reasoning that goes against the commands of Scripture. We know from Scriptural testimony that in our natural state none of us will seek the Lord of our own choice (**Psalm 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Romans 3:10-12**). We know from Scriptural testimony that God makes His people willing to seek Him in the day of His power (**Psalm 110:3; Jeremiah 31:31-34**). We know also from Scriptural testimony that all men everywhere are commanded to repent and seek the Lord, and that all who follow this command shall be saved (**Acts 17:30-31; Romans 10:13**). The fact that we cannot reconcile in our minds all matters of God's sovereignty, man's natural inability, and man's responsibility has no bearing on these facts. There are things only God knows, and there are things He reveals to us – ***"The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law"*** (**Deuteronomy 29:29**). For anyone to deny our responsibility to seek the Lord because of what the Bible reveals of God's absolute sovereignty and man's utter depravity and inability is the equivalent of trying to "play God." It is man seeking to be wiser than God, and exalting himself to a plane of existence and knowledge only God can occupy.

If we understand the Bible, we will see that a true Christian, even though ruined by the Fall, is chosen of God before the foundation of the world and redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. How then can any of us know if we were chosen of God and redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ? The Bible tells us we know our election and redemption by our calling –

2 Peter 1 – (10) Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

1 Thessalonians 1 – (4) Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. (5) For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

2 Thessalonians 2 – (13) But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: (14) Whereunto He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A true Christian, then, has been called into union with the Lord Jesus Christ by the powerful, invincible, irresistible calling of the Holy Spirit through the preached Gospel, the good news of salvation by God's grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. Another Biblical proof of this is that a true Christian is identified as a member of Christ's church. The word "church" means "called out ones," or those who have been called out of the world to Jesus Christ. To the true Christian, having been called by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel, Jesus Christ and Him crucified is the wisdom and power of God –

1 Corinthians 1 – (18) For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. (19) For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. (20) Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? (21) For 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. (22) For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: (23) But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; (24) But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

This calling is the true Christian's entrance into a personal union with Christ by faith in Him. This union is evidenced by the continual indwelling of the Holy Spirit who keeps the true Christian looking and clinging to Jesus Christ by faith. It is by the revelation of Christ and His great work of redemption for His people that the Holy Spirit brings sinners to know Christ as both "***the power of God, and the wisdom of God.***" This is a

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real knowledge of Christ's **"power"** to save sinners both by His objective work as Surety and Substitute in putting away their sins (producing righteousness for them), and His subjective work to create and impart spiritual life to change their hearts and their wills. It is also knowledge of Christ Himself and His great work as the **"wisdom"** of God in freely providing the only way He can be both a just God and a Savior (justifying the ungodly). In this knowledge we see that a Christian is one who by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God has the living Christ within his heart –

Galatians 2 – (20) I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.

A true Christian is one who is faithful to Christ, but his faithfulness is not the cause, source, or power of his salvation. It is Christ alone to whom he is united by God-given faith. He lives spiritually and eternally by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ to save and preserve him. He is united to Christ and continues in the truth of Christ's doctrine. His faith is not yet perfect. He still has struggles with sin and with doubts. He can and will stray for awhile, but he will always be brought back in repentance and godly sorrow over sin. He is kept by the power of God who loved him and gave Himself for him – ***"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen" (Jude 24-25).*** I have devoted a whole chapter (chapter 9) to this point as expressed in the following verses –

1 John 2 – (19) They went out from us, but they were not of us; FOR IF THEY HAD BEEN OF US, THEY WOULD NO DOUBT HAVE CONTINUED WITH US: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

2 John – (9) Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. HE THAT ABIDETH IN THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST, HE HATH BOTH THE FATHER AND THE SON.

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The way then to determine if we are one of “God’s elect,” one for whom Jesus Christ died and arose from the dead, one who has been born again by the Holy Spirit, is to determine if we have been called of God by the Holy Spirit. The way to determine whether or not we have been called of God by the Holy Spirit is to know, based on the Scripture, our convictions? What are my beliefs and persuasions concerning who God is and who the Lord Jesus Christ is, concerning who I am and my sins. What do I believe concerning salvation and all of its blessings and benefits? What do I believe about how salvation comes about? What is it founded upon, and what really makes the difference between “saved” (a true Christian) and “lost” (a non-Christian)? So consider the ensuing reality for one who has a personal union and relationship with Jesus Christ. The true Christian will believe in, receive, trust, and love the Lord Jesus Christ for ALL salvation. He will live a life in and by Him to the praise of the glory of God’s grace, ***“looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2).*** We who are true Christians gain assurance then of truly being called unto salvation, not by looking at ourselves or our works, but by continually looking to and resting in Jesus Christ alone for all salvation, including the forgiveness of sin, righteousness, eternal life, and glory. How, then, does one become a true Christian? Consider the following verses –

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

A person becomes a Christian by receiving Christ. Receiving Christ is a matter of faith, believing in Him as the whole of salvation. This faith does not come from within man by his own power, supposed goodness, or so-called “free will.” If left to ourselves we would never receive Christ (***cf. John 6:44; Romans 3:10-12***). Spiritual life and faith are gifts from God that come to sinners through Jesus Christ –

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Ephesians 2 – (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.

Therefore a sinful man or woman cannot accurately be personally identified and distinguished as a true Christian until he or she is brought by God through faith into this personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Modern-day evangelistic methods state this as a sinner “accepting Jesus as his or her personal Savior,” but this is misleading. This deceptive appeal is most always based on common fallacies concerning the death of Christ and the so-called “free-will” of man. It comes from the false teaching that Jesus Christ died for all the sins of all people without exception, but secured the personal salvation of no one. It is suggested that one must accept Him personally or else His death is not effectual for that person. So many people today who claim to be Christians believe that their faith (their decision for Christ) is what made His death effectual and successful in their salvation, not the other way around. FIRST, the Bible does not teach that Jesus Christ died for all without exception, saving them only upon the condition of their believing. If that were the case then all would perish. The Bible teaches the death of Jesus Christ secured and insures the complete salvation of all for whom He died. His death insures the work of the Holy Spirit within them and the faith that unites them to Him. This is actually what ***John 3:16*** teaches within its context. Keep in mind as you read these verses, Christ had already told Nicodemus, ***“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).***

John 3 – (14) And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: (15) That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (16) 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. (17) For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. (18) He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 3:14 speaks of the death of Jesus Christ for the sins of His people. As all of God's elect were RUINED BY THE FALL OF MAN IN ADAM, they must be REDEEMED BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST. Redemption means they are bought and owned by Jesus Christ. He calls them His own, His sheep, His brethren. Because they were born dead in trespasses and sins, they must be REGENERATED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, i.e. given spiritual life from Christ. This spiritual life includes faith to receive and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. **John 3:15** speaks of the fruit of Christ's death, not the way sinners empower His death for their salvation. The Lord said in another place, ***"I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep" (John 10:11)***, and then He said to those who refused to believe, ***"But ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand" (John 10:26-28)***.

The **"world"** in **John 3:16-17** is not every individual without exception. It is not, as some interpret it, setting forth the idea that "God loves you and is doing his best to save you if you will just let him." The word **"world"** is κόσμος (*pronounced ko'-smos or cosmos*), and it is a word for God's creation, the created universe. Sometimes it is used to describe the fallen world under the dominion of Satan (**1 John 5:19**). In other verses it refers to the world of unbelievers (**John 15:18**). In **John 3:16** it describes God's creation and means that God did not create this **"world"** simply to destroy it. He created it for His glory, and His glory will be realized in the salvation of sinners which finds its source in His sovereign, unconditional love towards His people in the Lord Jesus Christ. Who are the objects of God's sovereign, redemptive love in Christ? They are described by ***"whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16)***. This would include God's elect out of every tribe and nation, Jew and Gentile, who are brought by God through faith into a personal union with Jesus Christ.

SECONDLY, included in this fallacy mentioned above is the false teaching that man by nature has some spark of goodness whereby he can exercise his "free will" to rise above the rest of stubborn, rebellious humanity and accept Jesus Christ. But, as we have stated before, the Bible

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does not teach that fallen, sinful man has a “free will.” The Bible teaches that man’s will is in bondage to the darkness and deception of sin. Man is free to choose what he desires, and in that sense he can be called a “free agent,” but he does not and will not desire the things that honor and glorify God in Jesus Christ –

John 3 – (19) And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (20) For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. (21) But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

Romans 3 – (10) As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: (11) There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. (12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

1 Corinthians 2 – (14) 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.

Consider who these verses describe. Is this all of us as sinners fallen in Adam, by nature born dead in trespasses and sins, or is this some segment of society more evil and depraved than the ones who choose of their own “free-will” to believe and “accept Jesus as the personal Savior”? If I, or you, truly receive Christ as Lord and Savior, is it because we are less sinful, less stubborn and rebellious, even better and more humble than those who refuse? If this is the case (and it is not) then let’s stop talking about salvation by grace. If we have been truly convicted by the Holy Spirit of the reality of our own sinfulness, and if we know the truth of the Bible, we have to admit that these verses describe all of us by nature. This is what we are at our best and what we will remain to be if left to ourselves and our own choices. If any sinner receives Christ as Lord and Savior, it is because he has been born again by the Holy Spirit. He has been given a new heart, a new spirit which includes spiritual eyes and ears to see and hear and

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desire the things that honor and glorify God in Jesus Christ. These things leave sinners no room for boasting. If we are true Christians we cannot even boast in our decision to believe in and receive Christ, because we know if left to ourselves we would have never believed in and received Him. The true Christian's personal relationship and union with Jesus Christ by faith is a true miracle of God's sovereign power and grace. Again we see –

John 1 – (12) But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: (13) Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Romans 9 – (16) So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

CHAPTER 5



I'D RATHER SEE A SERMON THAN HEAR ONE

"I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day;
I'd rather one should walk with me than merely tell the way."

This is the first two lines of a poem written by the American folk poet Edgar A. Guest who lived and wrote in the early 1900's. The first line is often quoted by people in keeping with their assessment of what they think it means to be a true Christian. Ideas and expressions like this have become very popular among many who call themselves "Christian." It is not uncommon to hear people say things like, "One act of love says more than a thousand sermons," or, "Don't tell me you are a Christian. Show me." A friend of mine who claims to be a Gospel preacher once argued that we should not present Biblical truth and doctrine to lost people because we may offend them. He sought to support his position with the following statement – "People need to see we love them before they will listen to our doctrine." First, we must face the fact that the Bible teaches that lost people will always find the truth of the Gospel of God's free and sovereign grace in Christ offensive –

John 3 – (19) And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (20) For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. (21) But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

Whenever we preach or witness the Gospel to lost people, by the very nature of this message, we present a challenge to their hope and ground of salvation. This is especially true of lost religious people. We expose any hope of salvation other than the hope that is based solely upon the doing and dying of Jesus Christ (His righteousness imputed) to be a false refuge of lies. This is offensive to unbelievers. The apostle Paul called it ***“the offence of the cross” (Galatians 5:11)***. Secondly, we most certainly should be careful and vigilant not to be offensive in our personalities and manner of approach as we witness the truth to the lost. We who are Gospel witnesses of Christ and His truth should approach people in godly humility and treat them with respect, kindness, love and concern for their souls. We should never present truth in a proud, harsh, unkind, uncaring, or malicious way. We must always be compassionate towards the lost because we know it is only by God’s sovereign mercy and grace that we are not as offended by the truth as they are. We believe only because God has been gracious and merciful to us. Thirdly, we also need to realize that the Bible teaches us that no matter how compassionately and kindly we present the truth of the Gospel, the natural man will not recognize it as a display of love or even as good news apart from the Holy Spirit’s working in the power of regeneration. Lastly, we must be careful not to give people false hope and assurance of salvation by telling they are saved (or by receiving them in fellowship as brethren) in the absence of any indication of their believing the true Gospel of God’s grace in Christ. No matter how kindhearted and loving we try to be, the truth remains, ***“He that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16)***.

One of the more popular sayings today is, “You are the only Bible some people read.” It is certainly true that we who claim to be Christians should and must strive to live our lives in line with the teachings of the Bible

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in areas of love to our neighbors, our brethren, and love to Jesus Christ Himself. We are to be diligent, even zealous, in following Jesus Christ, not only in doctrine, but in character, conduct, attitude, motives, goals, and in our relationships with others. We are to be persistent to show love to our neighbors, our brethren, and express this love in helping all whom we can help without compromising the truth as it is in Jesus Christ. We are to seek to be conformed to the image of Christ in our daily lives. We are to cultivate within ourselves what the Bible calls ***“the fruit of the Spirit”*** which is ***“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Galatians 5:22-23)***. We are to ***“follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14)***. This means true Christians are to be people who promote peace and good will but not at the expense of the truth of the Gospel in order to gain and/or maintain friendships, followings, and the admiration of people. Compromise of the truth in matters of salvation is never an act of love and compassion. It is self-love and lack of conviction.

All Christians are to fight the warfare of the flesh and Spirit, and not give way to fulfilling the remaining influence of all natural, sinful desires ***(Galatians 5:16-26)***. Those who claim to be Christians but who totally ignore or deny these things are hypocrites and certainly not true Christians. This is what James wrote in ***James 2:14-25*** showing how our claim of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ can only be proven genuine by its evidences of godly works and a godly life. So, there is no serious Scriptural debate on this issue. We are not to be Christ-like in our talk and the opposite in our walk. When it comes to proving our faith in and love for Jesus Christ (and our love for one another) it can truly be said, “Actions speak louder than words” ***(cf. James 2:17-20; 1 John 3:16-18)***. There are, however, many problems with this when people misuse it to try to define and identify the reality of what a true Christian is or is not. Let’s consider some of these problems.

PROBLEM 1 – TRUE CHRISTIANITY CANNOT BE DEFINED AND IDENTIFIED MERELY BY OUTWARD CHARACTER AND CONDUCT. Consider how Jesus of Nazareth was and is rejected by the world in spite of His character and conduct which were perfect and without any contamination of sin. His character and conduct were above reproach and the absolute

pinnacle of perfection. No one could question His perfect love and His perfect obedience to every minute precept of the law of God (**cf. Matthew 5:17-18**). Yet in spite of all His righteousness, sinful men called Him a devil in the service of Satan, a wine-bibber, a blasphemer, and a criminal (**Matthew 11:19; 12:24; John 18:30**). The truth is that the world by nature can neither recognize the true Christ nor true Christians. The apostle John stated this –

1 John 3 – (1) Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore THE WORLD KNOWETH US NOT, BECAUSE IT KNEW HIM NOT.

The “**world**” here is the unregenerate, unbelieving world made up of what the Bible calls “**natural**” men and women. This describes all of us by nature as we are born into this world as fallen, sinful, depraved creatures. We are by nature spiritually dead and cannot discern the things of God –

1 Corinthians 2 – (14) 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.

This is why the Lord Himself told us we MUST BE BORN AGAIN else we cannot “**see**” (spiritually understand and discern) or “**enter into the kingdom of God**” (**John 3:3,5**). As has been stated before, we who have been ruined by the Fall must be redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and, thus, we must be regenerated by the Spirit of God in order to know, understand, believe, and love spiritual things. This includes the reality of what it means to be a Christian. The apostle Paul went on to describe this–

1 Corinthians 2 – (15) But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. (16) For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.

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We must always remember how the Lord instructed His disciples as recorded in **John 7:24** – ***“Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”*** The Greek word translated ***“judge”*** means to separate, distinguish, evaluate. We must ask, “How can we who are so sinful and even ignorant when it comes to matters of the heart ***‘judge righteous judgment’***”? Many people fall back on a misinterpretation and misapplication of **Matthew 7:1** – ***“Judge not, that ye be not judged,”*** as if the Lord here forbids all judgment in all matters. It is common, when it comes to judging someone to be a Christian or not a Christian, for them to say, “We don’t judge.” But the truth is that we DO judge. We form opinions and make judgments about most everything. For example, when we hear a preacher claim to speak the Word of God, we must judge whether or not he is telling the truth. We are commanded by God to test all who claim to preach God’s Word (**1 John 4:1-3**). If someone tells us they do not believe in God or in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is not wrong for us to judge that person to be lost and not a Christian. What the Lord forbade in **Matthew 7:1-5** is self-righteous judgment based on wrong grounds and self-righteous standards. For example, if we judge others to be lost simply because they are sinners, we have condemned ourselves because we too are sinners. So, how can we ***“judge righteous judgment.”*** We can only do so as we make our judgments based on GOD’S WORD ALONE.

How does all this apply to the subject at hand, “What is a Christian?” We who are truly Christians are commanded by our Lord to receive in love and fellowship all other true Christians and to reject religious fellowship with all who are not true Christians. Rejecting them does not in any way give us leave to be cruel or unkind, or even consign them to hell. We are to love them enough to pray for them and seek their salvation by telling them the truth, but we cannot receive unbelievers into the fellowship of faith. Consider what the apostle John wrote –

2 John – (9) Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. (10) If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him

God speed: (11) For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

This does not mean that we are to set ourselves up as judges of men's hearts as if we can always know who is saved and who is lost. We can only go by what we hear people say as to whether or not they believe or reject the Gospel message of Christ crucified and raised from the dead. The foundation for fellowship begins with the ***"doctrine of Christ."*** Consider how this was described in God's Word as pertaining to the early church –

Acts 2 – (41) Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. (42) And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

We must also realize that many who profess the TRUE ***"doctrine of Christ"*** may later prove to be false professors (***cf. 1 John 2:18-19; Matthew 13:19-22***). This is why one of the continual prayers of true Christians is, "Lord, keep us in Your grace, looking to Christ continually." It is not, however, our responsibility to separate sheep (God's elect) from goats (the non-elect). It is our personal responsibility to follow the command of God – ***"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Corinthians 13:5).*** We who are true Christians are not chosen by God to be the grand examiners and inquisitors of others, but we are to make judgments in matters of truth and fellowship so as to show our love to our brethren in Christ and to show our love to our neighbor in desiring his salvation. When men speak peace apart from the Gospel of God's grace in Christ, and when they compromise the truth in the name of love, rest assured it is an act of self-love. It is not the love which God sheds abroad in the hearts of His people (***Romans 5:5***). Those who profess faith in Christ according to the ***"doctrine of Christ"*** revealed in the Word of God, and whose life-styles give evidence of that faith are to be received in fellowship by other true Christians.

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How do we reconcile the fact that men by nature cannot know or recognize true Christians with verses like **John 13:35** where the Lord Himself stated, ***“By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another”***? This verse does not mean that when men see how true Christians ***“have love one to another”*** that they as unregenerate, unbelievers, will recognize and know what a true Christian really is and is not. It means they will recognize and acknowledge that true Christians stand together in the truth against the world. It is the same as stated in **Acts 4:13** when the Jewish religious leaders heard Peter and John preach the same Gospel Jesus of Nazareth preached –

Acts 4 – (13) Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

These unbelieving Jews recognized Peter and John as Christians (followers of Jesus Christ), but they did not admire or agree with Peter and John. They hated Peter and John just as they hated Jesus of Nazareth. However, true Christians stand together in the faith of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. True Christians love those whom the world hates –

1 John 3 – (13) Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. (14) We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

Unbelievers may admire the character and conduct of a true Christian, and the Lord may use this admiration to bring them under the preaching of the Gospel. But know this, the natural man does not know or recognize the reality of what it is or means to be a true Christian until God the Holy Spirit gives him spiritual life from Christ and brings him to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and repentance of dead works and idolatry.

PROBLEM 2 – IT WAS NOT THE ACTIONS AND CONDUCT OF JESUS CHRIST AND HIS FOLLOWERS THAT BROUGHT ON THE HATRED OF THE

WORLD. IT WAS THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL. I have stated this earlier, but it bears repeating. The message of the true Gospel of God's free and sovereign grace in salvation by Jesus Christ is offensive to us as natural men and women because it exposes us for what we are by nature. It shows that by nature we are deserving of God's wrath for our sin, and that we are totally depraved, unable and unwilling to seek, believe in, worship, and serve the Lord (**Romans 3:9-20**). It also exposes all false grounds of salvation that we as natural men and women trust. The Gospel message takes everything man by nature holds in high esteem as contributing to his salvation or recommending him unto God and calls it "**abomination**" (detestable things that pertain to idolatry) –

Luke 16 – (15) And He said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

It takes everything of which the natural man is proud (including his works and religious efforts), and exposes it as self-righteous works in the light of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. It counts all these things as loss in light of the truth of righteousness in and by Christ freely imputed and received by faith –

Philippians 3 – (7) But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. (8) Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, (9) And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

Consider again a verse quoted earlier. The Lord Himself stated this when He spoke to a religious Pharisee named Nicodemus –

John 3 – (19) And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds

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were evil. (20) For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

The “**light**” is the “**light**” of Jesus Christ Himself who is the “**light**” (**John 8:12**), and the truth of salvation in Him alone and based on His shed blood and righteousness imputed without man’s works. Salvation by God’s free and sovereign grace not only excludes all the efforts of men to obey the law, but it also shows such efforts to be “**evil**” and “**fruit unto death**” (**John 3:19; Rom. 7:5**). Such efforts of unregenerate man are “**evil**,” not because they are immoral in the sight of men, but because they are opposed to the glory of God in salvation, the preeminence of Jesus Christ, and the humility brought about by God’s grace revealed in salvation. They deny Christ and His righteousness (**Galatians 2:19-21**). The Lord told His disciples that the reason the world hated Him and would eventually hate them was because of this message of salvation by God’s grace without the works and efforts of men –

John 15 – (18) If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. (19) If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. (20) Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. (21) But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me. (22) IF I HAD NOT COME AND SPOKEN UNTO THEM, THEY HAD NOT HAD SIN: BUT NOW THEY HAVE NO CLOKE FOR THEIR SIN. (23) He that hateth me hateth my Father also. (24) If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. (25) But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

We need to understand that if Jesus of Nazareth had proclaimed throughout Judea that He was just another prophet sent from God, even

one who was endowed with the power to do miracles, if He had done no more than heal the sick and even raise the dead, He would have been accepted among the Jews. But He came proclaiming that He was the one and only way of salvation. He boldly claimed to be the only way of forgiveness of sins. He stated often how He is the only way of righteousness, eternal life, and glory. He told His hearers that there was no other way (**John 14:6**) and that all other ways were evil, idolatrous, and would lead to eternal death and damnation.

PROBLEM 3 – THE SCRIPTURE TEACHES THAT GOD HAS ORDAINED THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL AS THE MEANS OF SALVATION, NOT OBSERVING THE DAILY WALK OF A CHRISTIAN.

Romans 1 – (16) For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (17) For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

The ***“Gospel of Christ”*** is ***“the power of God unto salvation”*** so that this ***“Gospel of Christ”*** must be communicated in some way through preaching. Some may argue that when people observe our godly lives and character, they will be drawn to listen to the Gospel we believe. That may or may not be true. We certainly do not want an ungodly lifestyle and character to hinder people from hearing the Gospel we believe. But understand that what we are dealing with here is what a true Christian is or is not. We are going to see that true godly lives and character can only be known within the context of godly truth and doctrine. Lost sinners must hear and believe ***“the Gospel of Christ”*** wherein ***“the righteousness of God”*** is ***“revealed”*** in the power of the Holy Spirit. The ***“righteousness of God”*** is the merit of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on the cross to work out ***“righteousness”*** for His people. This is the righteousness which is imputed (accounted, charged) by God to them. This truth is not communicated to people by a Christian’s outward character and conduct. It is communicated in the preaching of the Gospel –

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1 Corinthians 1 – (17) For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. (18) For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. (19) For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. (20) Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? (21) For 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. (22) For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: (23) But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; (24) But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

If we consider what the Bible teaches on this matter, it is impossible to ignore or even diminish the necessity of preaching the Gospel –

Romans 10 – (13) For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (14) How 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? (15) And 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! (16) But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? (17) So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.)

Again, it must be emphasized that godly character and conduct must accompany the preaching and witness of the Gospel else people will scoff and/or distrust our claim of salvation and the power of God's grace. We who are truly Christians must strive to avoid the same trap into which King David fell when by his sinful behavior he gave the enemies of God an excuse to blaspheme (**2 Samuel 12:14**).

In the New Testament there are generally two Greek words translated in English as "word." The most common is λόγος (transliterated

as *logos* and pronounced *lo'-gos*). God the Holy Spirit inspired the apostle John to use this word for the Lord Jesus Christ who is Himself the Living Word of God –

John 1 – (1) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (14) And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Logos is also translated as “**saying**” or “**speech**” –

John 8 – (51) Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my SAYING, he shall never see death.

John 8 – (43) Why do ye not understand my SPEECH? even because ye cannot hear my word.

The other word is *ῥῆμα* (pronounced *rhā'-mä*), and it means the spoken or uttered word –

Matthew 4 – (4) But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every WORD that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

1 Peter 1 – (25) But the WORD of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the WORD which by the gospel is preached unto you.

In light of these and other Scriptures we can see the following truths:

1. Jesus Christ Himself is the living and incarnate Word of God (***John 1:1,14***).
2. The Bible is the written word of God (***2 Timothy 3:15***).
3. The preaching of the Gospel is the spoken word of God (***1 Peter 1:25***).

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The witness of true Christianity involves all three of these. It is preaching the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ with the authority of the Bible. Consider what the Lord Himself taught in His famous Sermon on the Mount—

Matthew 5 – (16) Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Many people mistakenly think of “**light**” here to be the same as the “**good works**,” but this is not so. The “**light**” is the “**light**” of Christ Himself and the glory of God revealed in Him as the Savior of His people. The “**light**” is the Gospel of God’s grace in Jesus Christ. This “**light**” shines forth to reveal the “**works**” of men either to be the work of God, His power, goodness, and grace, or the self-righteous efforts of sinners seeking to establish a righteousness of their own. This “**light**” glorifies God, not the man or his works. It draws attention to the glory of God in Christ, not to any man. The “**good works**” are only “**good**” because they are the fruit of God’s power and grace in the Lord Jesus Christ, and they are washed in the blood of Christ to be accepted with God. It takes the “**light**” of the Gospel to reveal this reality about our works. The “**light**” makes clear that these “**good works**” do not save us or make us righteous before God. Christ Jesus alone is our salvation and righteousness before God. The testimony of the “**light**” gives evidence of true Christianity.

PROBLEM 4 – ACTS OF CHARITY, DEVOTION, SELF-DENIAL, AND ATTEMPTS AT OBEDIENCE ARE NOT EXCLUSIVELY “CHRISTIAN.” All true Christians are to be diligently engaged in the obedience of faith, but Christianity is not the only religion that promotes obedience and morality. And even though there are some religions that make allowances for hatred, prejudice, and murder in the name of their god, on the whole most reputable religions teach their followers to be charitable towards those in need, devoted in prayer and worship to their god(s), and promote humility, teaching them to participate in some form of self-denial as a means of getting closer to their god(s). Christ Jesus Himself recognized this when He taught the people in matters of alms-giving, prayer, and fasting in **Matthew**

6:1-18. He taught them to do these things but not *“as the hypocrites”* to be seen of men (**Matthew 6:2,5,16**). We must also admit that among men some of the most well-known philanthropists were and are atheists. The point is that we can neither judge nor conclude that one is a true Christian simply because he gives money to the poor, constantly prays, and/or denies himself the luxuries of this life in devotion to a supreme being.

As stated before, the Bible says *“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”* (**1 Corinthians 2:14**). The *“natural man”* describes all of us as we are born of Adam and spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. It describes unregenerate unbelievers. But even though the *“natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God,”* he can be religious, dedicated, and moral according to man’s natural standard of morality. Consider the false preachers of **Matthew 7:21-23**, or the Pharisee described in **Luke 18:11-12**. Consider Saul of Tarsus as the apostle Paul described himself in **Philippians 3:4-6** before his conversion to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works. There are multitudes of Moslems, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, and as mentioned before even atheists who strive to be loving, kind, and generous towards their fellow man. Many unbelievers successfully rise above the immoral, selfish, self-serving, and perverted people of the world. Many unbelievers achieve great heights of morality and charity, but this gives us no true gauge of what a Christian is or is not.

Sad to say, another fact we must face (because it is revealed in the Bible and in experience) is that even true Christians do not always act as Christians ought to act. Christians are in a daily warfare against the temptations of remaining sin in the flesh, and they at times give in to these temptations. God in grace always preserves them and recovers them in Godly sorrow over sin and true heart repentance (**2 Corinthians 7:8-11; Galatians 6:1-2**). The God of all grace will not allow His true children to go all the way into the damning depths of their remaining sin and depravity (**Jude 24-25**). He will always bring them to a fresh realization of the fact that they are saved by His grace and washed in the blood of Jesus Christ so as never to be condemned for their sin(s) (**Romans 8:1,33-34**). When God the Holy Spirit brings this to their minds and hearts, this is what brings them

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to a real confession and repentance of their sin(s) and to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The fact is that acts of charity, devotion, and self-denial for true Christians are different than what they are for non-Christians. The difference lies neither in the amount they give, nor the frequency or regularity of their acts of devotion, nor even in their sincerity. Unbelievers can be just as charitable and sincere as true Christians. Some even moreso, but simply giving to the poor, praying to a god, and fasting does not constitute a “Christian” act or work. What does constitute a true “Christian” work? It is a work done by a true Christian who can be identified by:

(1) Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as He is identified and distinguished in the Scriptures as the one true Savior of sinners, by whose blood alone all sins are forgiven, and by whose righteousness imputed alone we are fully justified before God and cannot be charged with sin or condemned for sin. Just as in Noah’s day, ***“without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6).***

(2) Repentance of dead works, realizing that they as sinners can do nothing to pay their debt of sin to God’s law and justice, that they can do nothing to work out and/or make themselves righteous before God. Just as in David’s day, ***“If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared” (Psalm 130:3-4).***

(3) Being energized by the Holy Spirit as He motivates them by God’s free, unconditional, unearned love, and by His grace to save them through the Lord Jesus Christ without their works. He establishes within their hearts the motives of grace, gratitude, and love whereupon He works in them the fruit of the Spirit, and the obedience of love and faith. Just as in Paul’s day, ***“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).***

The works and obedience of a true Christian are not done in his own power, goodness, or will, but in the power, goodness, and will of God –

Galatians 2 – (19) For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. (20) I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me. (21) I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

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

Hebrews 13 – (20) Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, (21) Make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Jesus Christ is the Vine, and true Christians are the branches (***John 15:1-11***). All good fruit is fruit of the Holy Spirit (***Galatians 5:22-25***). The true Christian's power or will is not the source or cause of salvation or good works. All good works, all acceptable acts of obedience, are the fruit of God's power and grace through the Lord Jesus Christ who works in true Christians by the Holy Spirit and by His Word to motivate and energize them to live in His glory and grace.

In light of the main point of this chapter, how can the heart motives of any act of morality, charity, or devotion be known? It is certainly not by observing the outward act. It is only by hearing the foundation and goal of one's hope of salvation. If one believes in salvation by the works of men, his/her motive is either legal fear of punishment or mercenary promises of earned rewards. If one believes in salvation totally by God's grace based on the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ imputed and received by faith,

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his motive his grace, love, and gratitude. Does this mean that a true Christian's motives are always pure and perfect? No! A true Christian struggles within himself even to have and maintain the right motives and goal of obedience. He must struggle daily against his remaining legalism, pride, and self-righteousness. The true Christian's motive is grace; his goal is the glory of God. This is what the Holy Spirit continually emphasizes in the believer's heart. People who observe a true believer's actions can neither see his motive nor his inward struggle, but both are present within his heart.

CHAPTER 6



TRUE CHRISTIANS DESCRIBED IN ONE VERSE- PHILIPPIANS 3:3

There are many passages of the Bible we could study in our effort to understand the Biblical definition of a true Christian. The following chapters of this book deal with a few of the Bible passages that I believe are among the best to define true Christians fully and concisely. Much of what you will read throughout each chapter is repetitious because the same truths are stated in these various passages, but they simply use different terms and view the matter from different perspectives. This repetition is intentional as I believe it to be a valuable learning aid, particularly as it pertains to truth which may run contrary to that which we have been taught or had naturally assumed. The original idea for writing this book first came to me through a series of messages I preached on the following verse of Scripture –

Philippians 3 – (3) For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

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This verse, which God the Holy Spirit inspired the apostle Paul to write, is one of the most concise statements in the Bible defining a true Christian. In preaching from this verse I dealt with each of the four phrases individually, but keep in mind that they go together. Although they can be distinguished for the purposes of this study, they cannot be separated in forming a Biblical definition of a true Christian. I assure you that I deal with this passage within its context. Again, I urge you to study the whole of Scripture concerning these truths. It is my prayer that the Lord God will be pleased to reveal the truth to all who search the Scriptures as this book directs them.

PART 1

CHRISTIANS ARE THE TRUE CIRCUMCISION

“FOR WE ARE THE CIRCUMCISION”

The first phrase that defines a true Christian is ***“For we are the circumcision.”*** Obviously we must understand what the apostle means by ***“the circumcision.”*** ***“The circumcision”*** was a name sometimes used to refer to ethnic Jews. This name comes from their physical connection with Abraham by whom God instituted the physical rite of circumcision as an identifying mark upon all male Jews. It was a physical sign of the covenant God had already made with Abraham. This covenant had temporal, physical promises for the physical nation Israel, as well as eternal, spiritual promises for the spiritual nation Israel, which is the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many object to this interpretation of Scripture claiming that it spiritualizes the Bible and ignores literal truth. They say, “When the Bible uses the term ‘Israel,’ it always refers to the literal, physical nation Israel and no more than that.” If we, however, are to understand the Bible correctly, we must interpret it with a Christ-centered view (***John 5:39-47***), and we must seek to know the truth of all the types and pictures of the Old Testament. The Hebrew types and pictures concerning the salvation of God’s elect, both Jew and Gentile, find their fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ and His church. In light of this, we will see that there are times when the term “Israel” in Scripture refers to the physical nation of those who are natural (physical) descendants of Abraham. There are other times when the term “Israel” refers to the spiritual nation made up of all true believers, Jew and Gentile, also known as the church. The context determines which “Israel” is intended, and it is stated clearly in the New Testament in passages such as ***Philippians 3:3***.

When we interpret the term “Israel” as being the SPIRITUAL seed of Abraham rather than the PHYSICAL seed, some object to this by labelling it “replacement theology,” thinking this label will prove it false. They claim that we believe the church has replaced the nation Israel as God’s chosen people. It is not “replacement theology.” It is FULFILLMENT theology. The true church (spiritual Israel) is the fulfillment of what the physical nation Israel typified and pictured. The physical nation Israel was never intended

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to continue in its state under the Old Covenant law. Under that law covenant the people failed miserably to meet its conditions. But God had always intended to form a spiritual, eternal nation of sinners (Jew and Gentile) saved by grace through Jesus Christ the Lord of glory.

All types and pictures in the Old Testament are limited as to their portrayal of the ante-type, the reality and fulfillment of that which they symbolized. For example, we can certainly see how the Passover lamb portrays many things concerning Jesus Christ, ***“the Lamb of God” (John 1:29)***, as the Surety and Substitute of His people. On the other hand, we can also see how there are many things that could be said of the actual lamb that cannot be said of Jesus Christ. This is obvious in that we can all see how Jesus Christ was never a literal four-legged animal. He was literally, however, a sacrifice without spot or blemish who died in the place of His people. To say that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the type is not a denial that there were literal sacrificial lambs slain in Egypt by the Hebrew people and throughout the time of the Old Covenant. Christ, the true Lamb of God, did not replace all the animals slain on Jewish altars. He fulfilled those types, and they are no longer necessary.

The same can be said of the nation Israel. As a nation they were God’s chosen people in a limited sense for a limited time and for a particular purpose. They were physically redeemed by the power of God out of bondage in Egypt. Neither their election nor their physical redemption guaranteed eternal salvation for any individual Israelite. However, God’s electing grace through the redemption in and by Jesus Christ does guarantee the eternal salvation of all spiritual Israelites, Jew and Gentile. By the same token, physical circumcision of the male Jews was a sign of their physical connection with Abraham and of their place in the nation Israel in the covenant God made with Abraham. As stated, the covenant promises given to Abraham were both spiritual and physical, but the main thrust of that covenant was spiritual as its terms were fully accomplished by the finished work of Jesus Christ. We need to understand that in order to accomplish the SPIRITUAL promises of eternal salvation for God’s elect, God gave the physical nation Israel earthly promises with inferior privileges to be enjoyed for a fixed period of time. That physical nation was God’s instrument on earth through which He would send the Messiah in the flesh.

In this way they were used by God to accomplish His eternal promises to all for whom Christ would die on the cross and who believe in Him for all salvation. We can conclude from Scriptural testimony then that the promises of the Abrahamic covenant were of a mixed kind. They were both natural towards the physical nation Israel and spiritual towards God's elect out of every nation, known as spiritual Israel. This was necessary because the preservation of the natural seed (physical Israel) resulted in the bringing in of the spiritual seed – Christ Jesus and all who are saved in and by Him –

Galatians 3 – (16) Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. (17) And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. (18) For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

Another significant fact is that physical circumcision of the Jews did not translate into eternal salvation and spiritual life. It did not guarantee true faith and obedience. PHYSICAL CIRCUMCISION WAS A TYPE OF SPIRITUAL CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART WHICH IS THE NEW BIRTH IN AND BY JESUS CHRIST. Spiritual and eternal salvation were always evidenced not by physical circumcision but by circumcision of the heart –

Deuteronomy 10 – (16) Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.

Deuteronomy 30 – (6) And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

Leviticus 26 – (41) And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity:

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Jeremiah 4 – (4) Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.

Jeremiah 4 – (14) O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?

The apostle Paul made this fact very clear in the New Testament when he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write –

Romans 2 – (28) For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: (29) But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

The evangelist Stephen recognized the need for it in the unbelieving Jews when they rejected the message of the Gospel of God's free and sovereign grace in Christ Jesus the Lord –

Acts 7 – (51) Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

Understanding this distinction between physical circumcision (meaning the physical Jews) and spiritual circumcision (meaning true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ), we must therefore recognize how the term ***“the circumcision”*** in many passages of Scriptures DOES refer to physical, national, ethnic Jews. Always remember that the meaning of this term can only be understood by its usage and from the context in which it is found. Consider, for example, how Luke described Jewish believers in this way –

Acts 10 – (45) And they of THE CIRCUMCISION which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Both Luke and Paul described unbelieving Jews this way –

Acts 11 – (2) And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of THE CIRCUMCISION contended with him, (3) Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.

Titus 1 – (10) For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of THE CIRCUMCISION:

Galatians 2 – (9) And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto THE CIRCUMCISION.

There were many Jews who claimed to have been converted to Christianity but who insisted on retaining the rite of physical circumcision and certain elements of the Old Covenant law insisting on these things as being part of the ground of a sinner's salvation. They contended especially with Paul over the salvation of the Gentiles who had not been circumcised. We see this debate appearing first in Jerusalem –

Acts 15 – (1) And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. (2) When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. (3) And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. (4) And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. (5) But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. (6) And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. (7) And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them,

Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. (8) And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; (9) And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. (10) Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? (11) But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

As recorded here, it was settled in the minds of the apostles and of all true Christians that God saves both Jew and Gentile in the same way – by His free and sovereign grace in Christ Jesus and based on His righteousness alone which born-again sinners are brought to receive by God-given faith –

Romans 3 – (30) Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

The apostle Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to use Abraham, through whom the covenant of circumcision came to the Jews, as the prime example of how God justifies sinners. God justifies both Jew and Gentile based on the righteousness of Christ freely imputed (charged, accounted) and which results in God-given faith. Physical circumcision has absolutely no part in this salvation –

Romans 4 – (9) Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. (10) How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. (11) And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: (12) And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the

circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

It was also established that those who claimed to be “Christian” but who preached circumcision as part of the ground of salvation or justification before God, or as part of the righteousness by which sinners are justified, were not true Christians at all. They preached what Paul called ***“another gospel”*** –

Galatians 1 – (6) I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: (7) Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. (8) But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. (9) As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

Paul was adamant that to preach circumcision, or any other work of the flesh, as part of the righteousness by which God justifies His elect is to deny the Gospel, and, thus, deny true Christianity –

Galatians 5 – (1) Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. (2) Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. (3) For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. (4) Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. (5) For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

Why, then, does Paul write in ***Philippians 3:3***, ***“We are the circumcision”***? To understand this we must go to the context –

Philippians 3 – (1) Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. (2) Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

“Dogs,” “evil workers,” and “the concision” are terms Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to use in describing unbelieving Jews who claimed to be Christians but who sought to impose circumcision, works, and ceremonies of the Old Covenant law upon Gentile believers as necessary for righteousness and salvation. The term ***“dogs”*** described persons who were shameless, impudent, malignant, dissatisfied, and contentious. Paul used it to describe the Jews who would constantly trouble true Christians over these issues of circumcision and law. He also called them ***“evil workers”*** because their doctrine and influence was opposed to the glory of God in the salvation of sinners by grace through the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must understand that any work that does not glorify God, no matter how it appears to men, is considered ***“evil”*** in God’s sight (***cf. Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 16:15; 18:9-14***). Such works are ***“evil”*** because they exalt man, not God, and they deny Jesus Christ and the righteousness He alone worked out for the complete salvation of His people.

The term ***“concision”*** is a play on words to show how God holds in contempt any notion of circumcision for the wrong reasons. It literally means ***“cutting off”*** or even ***“mutilation.”*** Paul was not disparaging circumcision as it was originally commanded by God and imposed upon Jewish males under the Old Covenant. His purpose was to expose the unrighteous and unlawful use of circumcision as promoted by these Jewish false Christians. They believed salvation depended upon it, and therefore proved they were not depending totally upon Jesus Christ for all salvation. Their circumcision had no meaning or significance for true Christians, and it was nothing more than mutilation of the flesh.

WHAT WAS THE TRUE MEANING OF CIRCUMCISION?

As stated, circumcision in the Old Testament was a type (picture, symbol) of the new birth which is the same as circumcision of the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus told Nicodemus, a Jew who had

already been circumcised in the flesh, ***“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).*** Though he was ***“a master (a respected teacher) of Israel” (John 3:10),*** Nicodemus did not understand this –

John 3 – (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. (7) Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

Recall again Stephen’s words to the unbelieving Jews who rejected the Gospel – ***“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye” (Acts 7:51).*** The Bible tells us ***“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” (1 Corinthians 2:14).*** We are all born spiritually ***“dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1),*** and this is why we must be born again (quickened by the Holy Spirit) to have spiritual life, spiritual eyes and ears, new hearts and minds, to behold the glory of God in Christ. This is true spiritual circumcision of the heart. The Lord Jesus taught this distinction to His disciples when He began to speak in parables –

Matthew 13 – (10) And the disciples came, and said unto Him, Why speakest Thou unto them in parables? (11) He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. (12) For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. (13) Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. (14) And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: (15) For this

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people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. (16) But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. (17) For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

The apostle John described the difference between unbelievers and believers –

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

Both the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel spoke of this new birth, this spiritual circumcision of the heart, in their prophecies of the New Covenant

Jeremiah 31 – (31) Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: (32) Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: (33) But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. (34) And they shall teach no more every man his 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.

Ezekiel 36 – (26) A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. (27) And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

By inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, the apostle Paul put all of this in perspective to show the spiritual meaning and eternal significance of circumcision. He did this in the first two chapters of the *Epistle to the Romans*, when he proved how both Jew and Gentile were in need of righteousness by the grace of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. He brought both Jew and Gentile in guilty before God to prove that no fallen, sinful son of Adam could be justified before God based on deeds of the law

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Romans 2 – (17) Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, (18) And knowest His will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; (19) And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, (20) An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. (21) Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? (22) Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? (23) Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? (24) For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written. (25) For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. (26) Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? (27) And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?

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He wrote that physical circumcision of the Jews meant absolutely nothing as to a sinner's salvation and justification before God **UNLESS THAT PERSON KEEPS THE WHOLE LAW PERFECTLY**. Paul expressed this same truth in the *Epistle to the Galatians* –

Galatians 5 – (2) Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. (3) For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.

Simply put, “If physical circumcision can make you righteous before God or contribute to your salvation, you will gain no benefit from Christ because you don’t need Him or His grace. But understand that physical circumcision can only profit you if you keep the whole law perfectly.” The impossibility of any sinner keeping the law perfectly, and the reality of spiritual death common to all who fell in Adam and are born in sin, proves the necessity of the new birth (circumcision of the heart) –

Romans 2 – (28) For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: (29) But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Just as the circumcision of the male Jews was an identification of their citizenship in the physical nation Israel, **SPIRITUAL CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART IS AN IDENTIFICATION OF THE BELIEVER’S CITIZENSHIP IN THE SPIRITUAL NATION ISRAEL**. Therefore, when the apostle wrote **“WE are the circumcision,”** which includes believing Gentiles as well as Jews (THE TRUE ISRAEL OF GOD), his point was to show how all who have come to faith in Jesus Christ for salvation are the **TRUE SPIRITUAL SEED OF ABRAHAM** –

Galatians 3 – (26) For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. (27) For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (28) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ

Jesus. (29) And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Just as the nation Israel was God's chosen people in a physical (earthly) and temporary covenant, true Christians are God's chosen people in a spiritual and eternal covenant –

Ephesians 1 – (3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: (4) According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: (5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, (6) To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.

1 Peter 2 – (9) But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light:

As the Hebrew children were redeemed out of Egypt by the power of God under the emblem of the blood of the Passover lamb, true Christians are those who have been redeemed out of the bondage of sin by the precious blood of Jesus Christ who is our Passover Lamb –

1 Corinthians 5 – (7) Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:

Having been RUINED BY OUR FALL IN ADAM, God's elect had to be REDEEMED BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST. The ransom price had to be paid in full because God had to be both a just God as well as a loving, gracious Savior and Father. Just as the Lord said to the Hebrews in bondage, ***"When I see the blood I will Passover you," (Exodus 12:13)***, the same word of God is spoken to true Christians as they are under the blood of Jesus Christ Himself in a spiritual, eternal way. True Christians then are identified

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and described as ***“the redeemed of the Lord”*** (*Psalm 107:2; Isa. 51:11; 62:12*) –

Galatians 3 – (13) Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

1 Peter 1 – (18) Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; (19) But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

Revelation 5 – (9) And 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;

Revelation 14 – (3) And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

Revelation 14 – (4) These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

Someone may ask, “Could we say that the Hebrews were redeemed eternally out of bondage when brought out of Egypt based on the blood of the Passover lamb?” The answer is found in God’s Word – ***“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins”*** (*Hebrews 10:4*). The blood of animal sacrifices could only ***“sanctifieth to the purifying of flesh”*** (*Hebrews 9:13*). This means that such sacrifices could only set them apart in a physical and ceremonial way. The cleansing they accomplished was only outward in the flesh but not legal in a way of

justification before God. Animal sacrifices could never make them righteous in the court of God's justice. The blood of animal sacrifices also had no power to give spiritual life or a new heart and new mind. But the blood of Jesus Christ sanctifies His people in justification before God and in regeneration by the Holy Spirit – ***“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:14).***

As stated, having been RUINED BY THE FALL IN ADAM and born spiritually dead, and having been REDEEMED BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST, it was and is necessary that God's elect be REGENERATED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. This is where we see the new birth (spiritual circumcision) as one of the blessings of God's free and sovereign grace that comes to His chosen people through the Lord Jesus Christ and based on His righteousness imputed. His righteousness imputed is the only ground of salvation for His people. Spiritual circumcision of the heart in the new birth (the impartation of spiritual life and all the blessings, gifts, and evidences of spiritual life) is the fruit of His righteousness imputed. The apostle wrote, ***“And if Christ be in you, the body (our physical body) is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness (the imputed righteousness of Christ)” (Romans 8:10).*** The Lord Jesus said,

John 6 – (37) All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out. (38) For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. (39) And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. (40) And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 6 – (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. (45) It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me.

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When God the Holy Spirit gives spiritual life to a dead sinner, it is a literal resurrection from the dead in which that sinner is given a new heart, a new spirit, along with new motives, desires, and goals. This is when he ceases to be the natural man who, because of self-righteousness and stubbornness, refuses to receive the things of the Spirit of God. This is when he becomes the spiritual man who believes in Christ and repents of his sin, including dead works and idolatry. This is spiritual circumcision of the heart. When Paul wrote, ***“We are the circumcision,”*** he was identifying Christians as the true spiritual children of God. Christians are the true Israel of God and the elect of God (***Galatians 6:14-16; Colossians 3:12; 1 Peter 1:2***). Christians are the true spiritual seed of Abraham, evidenced by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance from dead works, and obedience motivated by love, grace, and gratitude (***Romans 9:6-9; Galatians 3:25-29***).

PART 2

CHRISTIANS WORSHIP GOD IN THE SPIRIT

“WHICH WORSHIP GOD IN THE SPIRIT”

One of the marks of a true Christian as shown in the Bible is that he is a worshipper of God. He worships God in truth. He worships God in heart and mind. He worships God sincerely. He worships God in and by faith according to God’s revelation of Himself in His Word. He sees the glory of God in the Person and finished work of Jesus Christ. Unless he is providentially hindered, he worships God publicly in assembling with other true Christians under the reading of God’s Word, preaching of the Gospel, participation in the Gospel ordinances of believer’s baptism and the Lord’s Supper, corporate prayer, and singing hymns. He worships God privately in an attitude of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and gratitude to God for His free and sovereign grace. In worship a true Christian praises God for all that He is and thanks God for all that He has freely given him in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. In true worship a Christian acknowledges all that God reveals of Himself through the Lord Jesus Christ. As the apostle Paul wrote in ***Philippians 3:3***, true Christians ***“worship God in the spirit.”***

One point of dispute among translators of the original text of the New Testament is the simple letter “s.” It has to do with the word “spirit” as it appears in many, many verses. The dispute is whether or not the “s” in the word “spirit” should be upper case, indicating the Person of God the Holy Spirit, or lower case, indicating the believer’s new spirit as the blessing of spiritual life within. In many of these verses context will determine the issue without argument. For example, there is no doubt the Lord was speaking of the Holy Spirit (the third Person of the Holy Trinity) when He said, ***“Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you” (John 16:13-14)***. The apostle Paul wrote of both God the Holy Spirit and the spirit within believers when he wrote, ***“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:” (Romans 8:16)***.

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As it applies to the translation in **Philippians 3:3** arguments can be made for both upper case “S,” referring to God the Holy Spirit, and lower case “s,” referring to the believer’s spirit within. The Authorized King James Version shows the lower case “s.” This would fit the context as Paul identifies true Christians as those who have been born again by the Holy Spirit and, thus, have spiritual life imparted to them. This is a new spirit within whereby they worship God in heart and in truth. Unlike the unregenerate, natural man, true Christians are spiritual and have the spirit of life and truth within. Several other translations, however, interpret the word as referring to God the Holy Spirit. For example, the English Standard Version translates it, “*worship by the Spirit of God.*” This could also fit the context as it is the Holy Spirit Himself who performs the operation of spiritual circumcision in the new birth by bringing God’s elect to conviction of sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Rather than attempt to settle the matter in this book, I will use both translations as both are necessary in identifying and defining what true Christians are and are not. True Christians “**worship God in the spirit,**” and they “*worship by the Spirit of God.*”

We have already seen how A TRUE CHRISTIAN IS ONE WHO HAS BEEN REGENERATED, BORN AGAIN, BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. Again, this is the meaning of “***we are the circumcision.***” Christians are the TRUE ISRAEL OF GOD. The name “*Israel*” literally means “those who have prevailed with God.” True Christians are those who have prevailed with God, not because of any goodness, power, will, or wisdom of their own, but because of God’s grace in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. What are the evidences of having been circumcised in heart by the Holy Spirit? What is the first evidence of being one of God’s elect, of having been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ? The Bible tells us plainly –

1 Thessalonians 1 – (4) Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. (5) For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

2 Thessalonians 2 – (13) But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: (14) Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE FIRST EVIDENCE OF A PERSON BEING A TRUE CHRISTIAN IS FAITH IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND REPENTANCE OF DEAD WORKS AND IDOLATRY. Neither faith nor repentance is the cause or ground of salvation or of being a true Christian, but they are EVIDENCES of being a true Christian. Why then does Paul state first the evidence of true godly worship – ***“we worship God in the spirit”***? It is because true godly worship is the first evidence of God-given, Holy Spirit-wrought faith in Christ and true repentance. Many people think of ***“worship”*** as “going to church” or some other daily or weekly ritual. Although true Christians are to assemble with brethren in the faith in public worship (***Hebrews 10:24-25***), worshipping ***“God in the spirit,”*** is not simply “going to church.”

SPIRITUAL WORSHIP IN TRUTH IS THE TRUE CHRISTIAN’S LIFE AND ATTITUDE

The point of this is to show how TRUE CHRISTIANS WORSHIP GOD SINCERELY, HUMBLY, FROM THE NEW HEART, THE HEART CIRCUMCISED BY GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT AND CLEANSED BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST. This is the heart of faith. This is the heart broken and contrite over sin as God the Holy Spirit has brought a person under conviction of sin. The worship of God by a true Christian is not simply attending a service one or more days a week. It is not outward show or ceremony, perhaps accompanied by visual aids and entertainment that reduce worship to nothing more than a ritual and even idolatry. True Christians worship God in the truth as revealed to them by the Holy Spirit who continually indwells them for their growth in grace and in knowledge of Jesus Christ. Christians worship God by faith in Jesus Christ whom they know by revelation of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. Genuine worship is based on knowledge given and revealed as they are taught of God in His Word.

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Worship, as well as true faith, is knowing God as He reveals Himself in His Word in and by Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of His people. The Lord Jesus Himself said, ***“As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him. And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:2-3).*** There are many things true Christians do not know. They are not “know-it-alls.” Sometimes their ignorance of things, especially in providence, seems so prevalent they may wonder if they know anything at all. But the Bible tells us that true Christians do not believe in God and worship Him in ignorance. In matters of faith in God and in worshipping God ignorance is equivalent to idolatry. The Lord Jesus spoke of this when dealing with the Samaritan woman in ***John 4***. This woman, though an infamous adulteress, claimed to worship the true and living God. The Lord exposed her worship as nothing more than ignorance

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John 4 – (19) The woman saith unto Him, Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet. (20) Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. (21) Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. (22) Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. (23) But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. (24) God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Consider what the prophet Isaiah said of idolatrous worship – ***“Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save” (Isaiah 45:20).*** The apostle Paul noted this when he preached in Athens on Mars Hill – ***“For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you” (Acts 17:23).***

When men worship in ignorance, they do not worship the true and living God but rather a false god of their own imagination. These gods of man's imagination are not like the true and living God. They are like the sinful men who created them – ***“These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes” (Psalm 50:21).*** Worship in spirit and in truth begins with believing what God says of Himself no matter how it fits (or does not fit) with our own understanding. When we deny the things God reveals of Himself in His Word, or when we insist on believing things about God which are not in His Word, we reduce our worship to idolatry. Consider the example of what was displayed on a sign outside a particular so-called “Christian” church. The sign read as follows:

“That God who hates, we don’t worship him either.”

Now it is common today for those who call themselves “Christian” to deny God’s hatred for anyone. It is simply not tasteful or popular to believe in and worship a god who could hate anyone. Preachers tell people that God loves everyone and that Christ died for everyone. Some try to modify any statement of God’s hatred by saying, “God loves the sinner, but hates the sin,” or by the ridiculous statement, “God loves some sinners less.” However, the Bible says, ***“The foolish shall not stand in Thy sight: Thou hatest all workers of iniquity” (Psalm 5:5).*** The reason the natural man cannot accept the thought of a God who hates sinners is because the unbeliever is deceived in matters of God’s holiness and justice. He is also deceived about the reality of his own sin and depravity. The natural man views God’s hatred as being on the same level as his own. Hatred in sinful men is sinful hatred born of self-righteousness, self-love, and sinful pride. Hatred in God is His righteous indignation and just aversion to all sin. It is not unfair or unjust for God to hate any of us, but it is pure mercy and grace for God to love any of us.

The Bible is clear – God hates ***“all workers of iniquity.”*** This is why no sinner can be justified before God based on his works. ***“Iniquity”*** is that which does not measure up to God’s standard of righteousness. Our best works always miss that mark of righteousness (***Romans 3:23***). How then

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can God love any of us? Are we not all ***“workers of iniquity”***? Here is the good news of God’s grace and love for His people in Christ. All for whom Christ died have no iniquity charged to their account because the Lord Jesus Christ was charged with their iniquities. Jesus Christ was crushed unto death for their iniquities (***Isaiah 53:5***). We who are IN CHRIST, for whom He stands as Surety and Substitute, we who are washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness imputed, can honestly say, “We have no iniquities.” This does not mean that we are not still sinners and that our works now reach the mark of righteousness. If we are genuine Christians, even as sinners saved by grace, we still cannot say we have no iniquity within ourselves. While living in this present world Christians still fall short of the perfection of righteousness in everything they do (***cf. Romans 7:14-25***). It is only as a saved sinner stands IN CHRIST legally that he can honestly say, “I have no sin.” God’s hatred then is never aimed against His people in Christ! They have been (and are) objects of God’s love from eternity (***Jeremiah 31:3; 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 John 4:10***).

The wrath of God has never been upon God’s elect personally because Christ as Surety of the covenant of grace has borne the debt of their iniquity. In time Christ was brought under God’s wrath to pay that debt in full. If we are truly saved by grace, we will readily admit that in ourselves we deserve nothing but God’s hatred and wrath. This is why God’s love for sinners in Christ Jesus is such an amazing reality for those who have been brought by the Holy Spirit to see the exceeding sinfulness of their sin. God redeemed those He loves with the precious blood of His Son. God justified those He loves, and sin cannot be charged to their account. All of their sins were charged to Christ (***Romans 8:33-34***). God’s love for His elect was (and is) never earned or deserved by them, but it is freely and unconditionally given to them in Christ (***1 John 4:9-10***). All conditions were fully met in and by Christ. God loved them with an everlasting love, and nothing can separate them from God’s love in Christ (***Romans 8:35-39***). So what is the hope of any of us finding God’s love? The answer is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” All who do believe find in God’s Word that they were loved of God in Christ with an everlasting love before the foundation of the world. True Christians do not believe in Christ in order to cause God to love them in return for their

faith. True Christians believe in the Lord Jesus Christ BECAUSE God loved them first and sent His Son to the propitiation for their sins (***John 3:16; 1 John 4:10***). God's free, unconditional love for His people is the cause of their salvation, including their faith.

Here is a perfect example of how true Christians worship God in spirit and in truth, i.e. as God reveals Himself in His Word through Jesus Christ our Lord. True worship is an act of God-given faith where a repentant sinner is brought before God to seek salvation, blessings, and help from God based solely on the merits of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Without this understanding of faith in Christ there can be no true worship. The Lord Himself spoke of this by exposing the vain, idolatrous worship of the Pharisees. He quoted the prophet Isaiah through whom God brought the following indictment against the people of Israel – ***"But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9)***. Their worship was not in line with God's Word, His commandments and instructions on how sinners can and must approach a holy God. God told them that they could not approach Him except on the basis of the merits of a God-appointed, qualified substitute who was willing and able to redeem them from their sins. It had to be one who could establish righteousness for them whereupon God was able to justify and accept them.

This was established at the very beginning of God's Word and illustrated for us in the example of Adam and Eve as well as Cain and Abel. First, consider how it is recorded that after the ruination of man in Adam, ***"And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons" (Genesis 3:7)***. There was no doubt that Adam and Eve were physically naked and ashamed, but nakedness in the Bible is also a metaphor for being exposed to the wrath of God – ***"Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame" (Revelation 16:15)***. This verse also shows us that salvation is often described by the metaphor of putting on a garment. ***"His garments"*** describe ***"the garments of salvation"*** as in ***Isaiah 61:10*** – ***"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of***

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righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.” This ***“robe of righteousness”*** is the righteousness of Christ imputed, and those clothed with His righteousness have all the blessings of salvation that come by God’s grace in Him.

Adam and Eve’s fig-leaf aprons can be rightly said to represent man’s efforts to cover his shame and shield himself from God’s wrath. It is a metaphor of lost men and women seeking salvation by their works and religious efforts. God then revealed the only way of salvation from His wrath through the promised Messiah who was identified as the seed of woman – ***“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel” (Genesis 3:15)***. He then revealed the only way of salvation in the killing of an animal – ***“And Adam called his wife’s name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them” (Genesis 3:20-21)***. God had told Adam, ***“for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:17)***. Fig-leaf aprons, the coverings and trappings of man’s efforts and religion, will not satisfy the justice of God for sin. The only thing that will satisfy God’s justice is the death of a substitute who meets three qualifications:

- (1) He had to be appointed by God;
- (2) He had to be able to pay the penalty; and
- (3) He had to be willing to pay that penalty.

The only one who meets all of these qualifications is the Lord Jesus Christ, and He is typified in that sacrifice of ***Genesis 3:21***. It is not stretching the truth to say that the Lord not only revealed the one way of salvation (i.e. by His grace based on the blood of Jesus Christ) by this typical sacrifice, but He also established and instituted the sacrificial system of faith and worship which ran throughout the Old Testament.

After Adam and Eve, we have the next illustration of this truth in the record of Cain and Abel (**Genesis 4:1-7**). As I have explained previously², Abel approached God as one who worshipped God ***“in the spirit”*** (**Philippians 3:3**). Abel approached God as a sinner confessing his sins and seeking mercy from God based on the blood of a lamb which typified Christ. By faith Abel looked to the promise of the future coming of the Messiah to put away his sins and work out perfect righteousness which was imputed to Abel. Abel believed the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ Jesus. Abel was a Christian. On the other hand, Cain sought salvation and favor from God based on works of the flesh. Cain was not a Christian. The Lord told Cain, ***“If 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”*** (**Genesis 4:7**). God had already revealed and established what it meant to do ***“well”*** when He dealt with Adam and Eve on the basis of blood sacrifice to illustrate Jesus Christ and Him crucified. “Doing well” is not a sinner seeking to work his way into God’s favor or trying to establish his own righteousness before God. “Doing well” is a sinner begging for mercy from God in Christ. “Doing well” is believing God and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to His righteousness alone as the one way of salvation. It is coming to God pleading the blood of the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a true Christian.

“WHOSOEVER SHALL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD”

The Bible says, ***“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”*** (**Romans 10:13**). No one who reads and claims to believe the Bible would dispute that a Christian is one who has called upon the name of the Lord and who is saved. A true Christian continually calls upon the name of the Lord. It is not a one-time act. Calling upon the name of the Lord is a vital part of worshipping God in spirit and in truth. These two things are interconnected. The Bible also tells us specifically what it means to call upon the name of the Lord –

² Chapter 1, “The Uniqueness of True Christians,” page 15; Chapter 3, “Who Were the First Christians?”, page 36

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Romans 10 – (13) For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (14) How 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? (15) And 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! (16) But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? (17) So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

The Lord's name is that which identifies and distinguishes Him from all idols and counterfeits. It involves what the Bible calls the Gospel of God's grace and the doctrine of Christ (*cf. Acts 20:24; 2 John 9*). For a sinner to call upon the name of the Lord that sinner must be given spiritual ears to hear and embrace the truths that identify and distinguish the Lord. How does the Lord identify and distinguish Himself from all idols? We have already seen this in the examples of Adam and Eve along with Cain and Abel. Consider how God revealed Himself to Abraham as another example of this same truth. God revealed Himself to Abraham as one who ***"justifieth the ungodly"*** (*Romans 4:5*). How does God do this and still maintain His honor and glory as a just and righteous God? The answer is by His grace in the salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ based on the merits of the death of Christ as the Surety and Substitute of His people. This is called ***"the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ"*** (*Romans 3:22*). Jesus Christ as Surety took the place of His people under the justice of God and suffered unto death for their sins imputed (charged, accounted) to Him. God the Father was just to punish His holy Son based on the sins of His elect imputed to Him. By His obedience unto death for His people, Jesus Christ worked out a perfect righteousness that has been imputed to His people –

2 Corinthians 5 – (21) For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

Galatians 3 – (13) Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.

God the Father is just to save, accept, and bless His people based on Christ's righteousness imputed to them. God identifies and distinguishes Himself here as both ***"A JUST GOD AND A SAVIOR" (Isaiah 45:21)***, the only true and living God who is both a righteous Judge and a merciful, loving, and gracious Savior. He commands sinners to look to Him for salvation – ***"Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:22)***. This is the only ground of salvation and the only basis for acceptable worship. As this was revealed and established in ***Genesis 3*** to Adam and Eve, it has been the case ever since for the salvation and acceptable worship of God's people. It was the case with Abraham and with King David –

Romans 4 – (6) Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, (7) Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. (8) Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. (9) Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. (10) How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. (11) And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: (12) And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

This is further supported in Scripture when we see how Abraham approached God in worship as he called upon the name of the Lord. After the Lord revealed Himself to Abraham as the God of the covenant of grace

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from whom Messiah would come, it is written that Abraham ***“builted an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD” (Genesis 12:8b)***. The ***“altar”*** was the place of sacrifice where God revealed Himself to sinners as both ***“a just God and a Savior”*** based on the blood of sacrifice which typified Christ, the Lamb of God. A true Christian is one who worships God in the glory of this revelation of God in Christ. A true Christian is one who knows and believes that worship is acceptable to God only as it is consistent with justice and equity. Therefore, a true Christian is one who knows and believes that worship is acceptable with God only as it is an act of faith in Jesus Christ, the Lord our Righteousness, and only as it proceeds from the heart of faith in sincerity and truth.

The apostle Paul exposed the false worship of the Athenians by exposing their ignorance of the true and living God. He recognized ***“the city wholly given to idolatry” (Acts 17:16)***, and ***“then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you” (Acts 17:22-23)***. Paul preached the truth of God and called them to repentance. Notice the issue Paul raised for them to understand the reality of repentance – ***“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because He hath appointed a day, in the which HE WILL JUDGE THE WORLD IN RIGHTEOUSNESS BY THAT MAN whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31)***. God’s dealings with sinners in faith, worship, and obedience must be on the basis of righteousness through the Lord Jesus Christ. We see another example of this in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican –

Luke 18 – (9) And He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: (10) Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. (11) The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. (12) I fast twice in the week, I give

tithes of all that I possess. (13) And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. (14) I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

The Pharisee expected his prayers (his worship) to be acceptable to God on the basis of what he imagined God had enabled him to be and do. There is nothing inherently sinful about anything the Pharisee presented, and he began his prayer by thanking God for these things. The problem was that none of these things measure up to the righteousness required by God. When anything other than the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed is presented to God by a sinner as the ground or cause of salvation and acceptance, it is iniquity. It does not equal righteousness, therefore, a holy and just God cannot accept it. To receive anything less than perfect righteousness as the ground of a sinner's salvation and approval would dishonor every attribute of God's character. It would cast shame and reproach upon His glorious name. It is, in essence, NOT calling upon HIS name as both a ***"just God and a Savior."*** It is the equivalent of calling upon the name of an idol, a false god of man's wicked, self-righteous imagination.

The publican, on the other hand, approached God as a sinner seeking mercy. He knew he had no righteousness within or by himself (with or without the help of God). He knew he had nothing to recommend him unto God. He knew that if God were to judge him on the basis of anything done in or by him, he would be condemned to eternal death. His plea for mercy shows that he understood his need of the grace of righteousness from God. The word ***"merciful"*** here is the Greek word for ***"propitious."*** It is a form of the word ***"propitiation"*** found three times in the New Testament –

Romans 3 – (25) Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

1 John 2 – (2) And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

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1 John 4 – (10) Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

“Propitiation” in the New Testament describes a sin-bearing substitute and sacrifice who satisfies God’s justice. This can only refer to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Surety and Substitute of His people. The point of the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican is that God saves and accepts sinners on one ground alone – the Lord Jesus Christ crucified and raised from the dead. It is His shed blood as the full payment for all the sins of all God’s elect from among the ***“whole world”*** – Jews and Gentiles. It is His righteousness imputed and received by God-given faith. A true Christian then is not simply one who calls out to God, but one who as a sinner calls upon the name of the Lord on the basis of Jesus Christ, the Lord our Righteousness. A true Christian is not simply one who “goes to church,” prays, sings hymns, and tries to live a moral life. A true Christian worships God in spirit and in truth as evidenced by the ground upon which he prays and worships –

Hebrews 4 – (14) Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. (15) For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. (16) Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 10 – (19) Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, (20) By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; (21) And having an high priest over the house of God; (22) Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

PART 3

CHRISTIANS GLORY IN CHRIST JESUS

“AND REJOICE IN CHRIST JESUS”

A true Christian is a sinner who has been brought by God Almighty through the miraculous and powerful work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth (regeneration and conversion) to have complete confidence in Jesus Christ alone for all salvation. This includes faith exclusively in the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of all sins, for all righteousness, eternal life, and final glory. The word ***“rejoice”*** in ***Philippians 3:3*** is not the same Greek word translated ***“rejoice,”*** for example, in ***Philippians 3:1*** – ***“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord,”*** or in ***Philippians 4:4*** – ***“Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.”*** The word in ***Philippians 3:1*** and ***4:4*** is the Greek word χαίρω (pronounced “khī-rō”), which means “to be glad” or “joyful” in the Lord. We see another form of the word χαίρω translated ***“joy”*** in ***Romans 14:17*** – ***“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and JOY in the Holy Ghost,”*** and ***Romans 15:13*** – ***“Now the God of hope fill you with all JOY and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.”*** It is certainly true that Christians are those who abound in gladness and joy in the Lord. This is part of the ***“fruit of the Spirit”*** as recorded in ***Galatians 5:22***.

However, the word ***“rejoice”*** in ***Philippians 3:3*** is another Greek word, καυχάομαι (pronounced “kau-khä’-o-mī”), and it means “to glory” or “to boast.” It means “to have confidence in someone or something.” The King James translators used four English words in interpreting this one Greek word. Consider the following examples –

Romans 2 – (17) Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy BOAST of God,

Romans 5 – (1) Therefore being justified, by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: (2) By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and REJOICE in hope of the glory of God.

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Romans 5 – (3) And not only so, but we GLORY in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

Romans 5 – (11) And not only so, but we also JOY in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

1 Corinthians 1 – (29) That no flesh should GLORY in His presence. (31) That, according as it is written, He that GLORIETH, let him GLORY in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 3 – (21) Therefore let no man GLORY in men. For all things are yours;

Galatians 6 – (14) But God forbid that I should GLORY, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

Ephesians 2 – (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.

As you can see, in all these verses except two (***Romans 2:17*** where the self-righteous, unbelieving Jews are rebuked for having confidence in their works of the law, and ***Ephesians 2:9*** where boasting in our works is forbidden as opposed to salvation by grace), we are told that all true Christians ***glory, boast, rejoice, and joy*** with confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ and not in their own selves or works. This is characteristic of the God-given faith of all true believers. By the grace of God through the work of the Holy Spirit we who are true Christians have the utmost confidence of salvation because our confidence is not in ourselves, neither in our works nor our wills, but in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Lord our Righteousness. Our confidence of being justified before God is in Christ and based upon His righteousness imputed alone –

Romans 8 – (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. (29) 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. (30) Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified. (31) What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? (32) He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? (33) Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. (34) Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Consider again what it means to be “**justified**” before God. It means to be not guilty in the court of God’s justice. A Christian is one whose sins have been purged or cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ (**cf. Hebrews 1:3**). A Christian is one whose sins cannot be charged (accounted, imputed) to him because all his sins have been charged to Jesus Christ, his Surety and Substitute – **2 Corinthians 5:21a** – “**For He hath made Him to be sin for us.**” As David wrote, “**Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile**” (**Psalms 32:1-2**). To be “**justified**” before God also means to be declared righteous in the sight of God based on the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ imputed. When David wrote **Psalms 32:1-2**, this is exactly what he had in mind. How can we know David’s mind in this matter? God the Holy Spirit tells us by the apostle Paul in **Romans 4** –

Romans 4 – (6) Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, (7) Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. (8) Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

A TRUE Christian is one who is righteous before God. He is not righteous by any merit of his own works but by the merit of the work of

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Jesus Christ imputed to him – ***“For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).*** A TRUE Christian is a sinner who cannot be condemned because ***“there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1).*** A TRUE Christian is one who has confidence and security of mind and spirit because he stands before God in Jesus Christ as his Advocate – ***“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:1-2).***

A genuine Christian, therefore, is one who by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit knows to some degree the exceeding sinfulness of his own sin. He knows that if God were to judge him based on his best efforts to obey the law, he would be condemned to eternal death – ***“If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” (Psalm 130:3).*** He knows his only hope of salvation and eternal life and glory is the grace of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what David meant when he wrote the phrase, ***“and in whose spirit there is no guile” (Psalm 32:2).*** ***“Guile”*** refers to the darkness and deception of sin because of pride and self-righteousness. When God the Holy Spirit imparts spiritual life and knowledge, He convicts us of the reality of our sin, showing us that we by nature have no righteousness to recommend us unto God. He shows us we are not able to produce such righteousness even through our best efforts to obey the law of God. He shows us that by nature we do not desire righteousness God’s way – totally by His grace in Christ Jesus. This is described by the apostle Paul in the following –

Romans 3 – (10) As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: (11) There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. (12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. (13) Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: (14) whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: (15) Their feet are swift to shed blood: (16)

Destruction and misery are in their ways: (17) And the way of peace have they not known: (18) There is no fear of God before their eyes. (19) Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. (20) Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Many read Scriptures such as these and imagine that the apostle is speaking of someone other than themselves. They reason he must be describing some segment of society marked by the most immoral sinners. The fact is that here he describes all of us in our natural fallen state under the law of God. When God the Holy Spirit by way of conviction brings a sinner to be a genuine Christian, He gives that sinner an accurate knowledge of God's holiness, a right knowledge of the sinner's own sinfulness, and a saving knowledge of GOD'S WAY of salvation by grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is through this revealed knowledge, as we are taught of God, that He gives us a fervent desire to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and cling to Him by faith as our only way of salvation and righteousness. Hereby Christians come to ***"rejoice in Christ Jesus"*** and forsake themselves and every other way of salvation man may imagine. This is when genuine believers in the Lord Jesus Christ deny themselves and take up their cross to follow Him ***(Matthew 16:24–25; Mark 8:34–35)***. This is the essence, basis, and object of God-given faith in Christ Jesus. This is when a sinner is brought from his own natural ignorance and brought to submit to Jesus Christ as the Lord his righteousness ***(cf. Jeremiah 23:5-6)***. The apostle Paul desired this kind of faith for unbelieving Israel –

Romans 10 – (1) Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. (2) For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. (3) For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. (4) For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

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Throughout their existence under the Old Covenant law the majority of the nation Israel stubbornly remained in unbelief. They rejected God's way of salvation by grace revealed in His promise to send the Messiah to establish the only righteousness by which God could justify sinners. This unbelief continued and still continues throughout the New Testament age as described by the apostle Paul in the following –

Romans 9 – (1) I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, (2) That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. (3) For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: (4) Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; (5) Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

Paul went on to assure true believers that Israel's rejection of Christ the Messiah and His righteousness did not change God's purpose, will, and power to save His elect out of that nation. In fact, throughout their history as a nation in each generation there was always a ***“remnant according to the election of grace” (Romans 11:1-5)***. The prophet Isaiah, for example, spoke of a ***“small remnant”*** in his day (***Isaiah 1:9***). God the Holy Spirit inspired the apostle Paul to explain this –

Romans 9 – (6) Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: (7) Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. (8) That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

The ***“children of the promise”*** are those whom God has brought to ***“rejoice in Christ Jesus.”*** They are the ***“true Israel of God”*** –

Galatians 6 – (14) But God forbid that I should GLORY, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and

I unto the world. (15) For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. (16) And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

“Rule” here is the canon or doctrine by which one’s profession is measured as to whether or not it is truly “Christian.” That ***“rule”*** is expressed in the statement, ***“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,”*** which expresses true God-given faith in Jesus Christ and the work He accomplished in redeeming His people from sin. Those who believe, live, and walk by this ***“rule”*** (i.e. who ***“rejoice in Christ Jesus”***) are true Christians. They are ***“the true Israel of God,”*** the true ***“children of the promise”*** who ***“are counted for the seed”*** (accounted, reckoned by God to be His true children). They are also described as the true, spiritual ***“seed”*** (offspring) of Abraham, ***“and heirs according to the promise”*** –

Galatians 3 – (26) For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. (27) For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (28) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. (29) And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The ***“promise”*** is the same God gave to Abraham concerning salvation, eternal life, and glory by the grace of God based on the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. As did all Old Testament believers, Abraham saw and believed this promise by faith looking forward to the Messiah to come. True believers today see and believe this promise by faith looking back to the Messiah who has already come and accomplished His work of redemption.

To understand something of the magnitude of a true Christian’s confidence in Christ Jesus contrast the freedom of access to God that New Testament believers have through Jesus Christ to the prevention of access into the Holy of Holies within the Tabernacle for the people of Israel under

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the Old Covenant. Under the Old Covenant only the high priest of Israel went into the holiest of all once a year on the Day of Atonement. He was a type of Jesus Christ our great High Priest. But now that Christ has come, accomplished redemption for His people through His death, and established a perfect righteousness that has been imputed to them, they all as true believers who have complete confidence in Jesus Christ (glorying in Him), have free, unhindered access to the holy presence of God in a spiritual, eternal way –

Hebrews 10 – (19) Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, (20) By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; (21) And having an high priest over the house of God; (22) Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

“Boldness” here means “liberty” which is a freedom given genuine Christians based on the merits of the blood of Jesus Christ. Believers can ***“draw near with a true heart,”*** which is the new heart cleansed by the blood of Christ as evidenced by faith in Him. This is another way of stating that true Christians ***“glory in Christ Jesus.”*** The ***“evil conscience”*** refers to the guilty, condemned, and legal ***“conscience”*** evidenced by unbelief and legalism (trying to establish one’s own merit to qualify for God’s acceptance and presence). The heart of a Christian has been cleansed from that ***“evil conscience”*** in the sense that he has confidence in Christ who has completely removed all guilt and condemnation – ***“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1).*** Remember, walking ***“after the Spirit”*** describes the life of a believer as he continually glories in Christ Jesus. Having ***“our bodies washed with pure water”*** refers to the legal cleansing of a Christian’s person by the blood of Christ and the spiritual cleansing of his heart as God the Holy Spirit applies the blood of Christ to his conscience. What a peace and comfort true Christians have as they ***“glory in Christ Jesus.”***

PART 4

CHRISTIANS HAVE NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH

“AND HAVE NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH”

As the phrase ***“rejoice in Christ Jesus”*** describes God-given faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the phrase ***“and have no confidence in the flesh”*** describes God-given repentance. A true Christian is one who has been brought by God the Holy Spirit to repentance. Many have debated as to which comes first, faith or repentance. This debate, however, should never be an issue if we understand what the Bible teaches on this matter. The Bible teaches that faith and repentance come together. Faith is receiving and trusting Christ for all salvation. Repentance is turning away from everything and anything else that would rival Christ as the only way of salvation. One cannot turn to Christ for salvation without turning away from that which would deny Christ. We can say without debate that the Bible teaches that faith is the foundation grace –

Hebrews 11 – (5) By 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. (6) BUT WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE HIM: for he that cometh to God must believe that His, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

We can all agree that true godly repentance is pleasing to God –

Psalms 34 – (18) The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

Psalms 51 – (17) The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Any repentance before faith in Christ is no more than natural conscience, legal conviction that inspires sinners to look for salvation in themselves. True repentance is the product of the work of God the Holy Spirit bringing the heart to be broken and contrite over sin in light of God’s

grace in Christ Jesus. Apart from this conviction man's heart is ***"an evil heart of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:19)***. So without question, the Bible teaches that faith and repentance come together in the new birth of a sinner.

We also need to understand the true nature and essence of Godly repentance. Many view it as no more than "feeling sorry for our sins." Some would add "feeling sorry for our sins to the degree that we try to change our way of life." Although it is true that Godly repentance does and should include a deep-felt sorrow within us for our sins and a sincere desire to fight sin and live in obedience to the glory of God, this is not the essence of true repentance. The essence of what the Bible calls ***"repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18)*** lies in a great change of heart within a sinner under Holy Spirit conviction. Consider the Greek word for repentance, *"μετανοέω"* (pronounced "me-tä-no-e'-ō"), which means "to change one's mind." Many are not satisfied with this definition because they argue it indicates a mere mental change and not a deep-rooted change of heart. But we need to understand that the Biblical truth of repentance has to do with a change of mind that is so powerful that it reaches the whole person. The "heart" in Scripture involves the mind, the affections, and the will. It is the whole person, the inner man, not only the intellect. When God the Holy Spirit brings a sinner to repentance, the change within involves much more than simply knowing some facts (doctrine) he did not know prior to repentance. It is truly a change of heart that results in a change of life – ***"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:26-27)***. As we have seen before, it is circumcision of the heart, and this involves the mind, the affections, and the will.

A sinner being brought by God the Holy Spirit to ***"have no confidence in the flesh"*** was typified and symbolized in the Old Covenant by physical circumcision which is the cutting away of the filth of the flesh. We therefore must understand the true spiritual meaning of the filth of the flesh to understand repentance. Obviously the spiritual filth of the flesh is not a physical matter that can be cut away by a surgeon or washed away with soap and water. It is not a ceremonial issue that can be remedied

through ceremonial washings and baptisms. The filth of the flesh defines all sin in the hearts of natural, fallen human beings. It includes the most immoral and perverted desires, motives, and goals of the sinful human heart –

Galatians 5 – (19) Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, (20) Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, (21) Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Romans 1 – (22) Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, (23) And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. (24) Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: (25) Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. (26) For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: (27) And 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 recompence of their error which was meet. (28) And 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; (29) Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, (30) Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, (31) Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: (32) Who 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.

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The filth of the flesh also includes the most moral, sincere, and religious efforts of sinful men to work their way to salvation and God's favor by seeking to establish their own righteousness before God. Consider repentance as described by the apostle Paul –

Philippians 3 – (4) Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: (5) Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; (6) Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. (7) But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. (8) Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

Consider what the Lord told the lost, unbelieving but religious Jews of His day –

Luke 13 – (1) There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. (2) And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? (3) I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. (4) Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? (5) I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Even as natural and sinful people we can by nature come to see the need for repenting of what society and our own consciences see as immoral and decadent. What we cannot see by nature is the necessity of repenting of our best moral and religious efforts to earn God's salvation, favor, and blessings. The Bible certainly teaches that man at his worst is in need of salvation and in need of repentance. It also teaches that man at his best is just as much in need of salvation and in need of repentance – ***“verily every***

man at his best state is altogether vanity” (Psalm 39:5). It teaches that we have all ***“sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).*** It shows that if God were to give any of us what we have earned or what we deserve it would be eternal damnation and death – ***“If Thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” (Psalm 130:3).*** The Bible reveals that there are no exceptions to this state of sin to be found among fallen, sinful men –

Romans 3 – (9) What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; (10) As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: (11) There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. (12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. (13) Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: (14) Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: (15) Their feet are swift to shed blood: (16) Destruction and misery are in their ways: (17) And the way of peace have they not known: (18) There is no fear of God before their eyes. (19) Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. (20) Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

The reality of the revelation of sin by which God the Holy Spirit brings men to repentance is that the best efforts of the best of men with the best of intentions in their most sincere and honest endeavors are sinful in the sight of God WHEN AIMED AT THE GROUND OF SALVATION. Why is this so?

(1) Because such efforts deny the glory of God in salvation. This glory is found only in the merits of Jesus Christ and His work of redemption to make ***“reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17).***

(2) Because such efforts deny the preeminence of Jesus Christ and the necessity of His great work of redemption to establish righteousness for

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His people – ***“I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Galatians 2:21).***

(3) Because such efforts are the product of unbelief which is an insult to God – ***“But without faith it is impossible to please” God (Hebrews 11:6).***

(4) Because such efforts give men room to boast in their own will and works. Salvation is ***“not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:9).***

Here is where we begin to understand the real essence of repentance for a true Christian. It comes by the power of the Holy Spirit when He brings God’s elect to understand the holiness and justice of God, the sinfulness and depravity of their own hearts, and the only way of salvation whereby God is glorified by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance first involves a change of mind and heart concerning how God saves sinners. It involves a change of mind and heart concerning the ground of salvation which is in Christ Jesus alone. It involves an understanding of sin and righteousness as set forth in the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Consider the example of the apostle Paul in his own conversion. Here was a very religious man, Saul of Tarsus, who was doing his best to please God, to establish his own righteousness before God in the best way he knew as he had been taught in the Jews’ religion. Saul was so zealous in his religion that he sought to arrest and kill Christians whom, before his conversion, he viewed as heretics. He described it in ***Galatians*** –

Galatians 1 – (13) For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: (14) And profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

Saul hated the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth and the doctrines of Christianity because such teachings exposed his own works to be evil, unrighteous deeds –

John 3 – (19) And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (20) For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

If Jesus of Nazareth and His followers had only preached against sins of open immorality and perversion, Saul of Tarsus would have had no problem with them. In fact, he would have lined up with them as the “moral majority” in seeking to be ***“blameless” “as touching the righteousness which is in the law” (Philippians 3:6)***. But then a great and powerful miracle of God’s grace happened in Saul’s life while he was traveling on the Damascus Road to arrest Christians. The historical record is found in ***Acts 9***. The apostle Paul also described it in ***Galatians 1:15-16*** in the following way – ***“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and CALLED ME BY HIS GRACE, TO REVEAL HIS SON IN ME, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.”*** He described it further in ***Philippians 3*** –

Philippians 3 – (7) But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. (8) Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, (9) And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: (10) That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; (11) If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

This is a radical change of mind and heart that literally turned his world upside down. The works in which he had previously boasted as

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recommending him unto God, he now counted as ***“loss,”*** even as ***“dung”*** in light of God’s glory revealed in the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was brought by God the Holy Spirit to have confidence only in Christ Jesus and ***“no confidence in the flesh.”*** His heart was circumcised; he was born again from above by the Holy Spirit. He was literally raised from the dead spiritually as God the Holy Spirit imparted spiritual life, knowledge, desires, motives, and goals to him. As described long before by the prophet Ezekiel, he was given ***“a new heart”*** and ***“a new spirit.”*** His natural hard ***“stony heart”*** was removed and replaced with ***“an heart of flesh”*** (one that is broken and contrite over sin, one that bows to and submits to Christ) (***Ezekiel 36:26***). He was brought by God to be ashamed of that which he had previously been so proud. He was brought by God to be proud of that which he had previously been so ashamed. He was brought to hate that which he had loved and love that which he hated. Before conversion, he was in the bondage of legalism – trying to serve God in fear of punishment and through mercenary promises of earned reward. After conversion, he became a willing, loving bond servant of Jesus Christ, seeking to serve God as motivated by love, grace, and gratitude. Before conversion he lived and walked after the flesh. After conversion, he lived and walked after the Spirit in ***“newness of spirit”*** (***Romans 7:4-6***) and ***“newness of life”*** (***Romans 6:3-4***).

Before his conversion Paul lived in ignorance of the judgment of God. He sought judgment from God based on his works of the flesh. But as God revealed the realities of sin, righteousness, and judgment (***John 16:8-11***) to Paul’s heart, he saw that he was no better off than the lost, ignorant Gentiles in the Old Testament. The commandment of God for sinners to repent was just as binding upon Paul as anyone. And this commandment to repent, to have ***“no confidence in the flesh,”*** could only come in light of the glory of God’s grace in the salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ and based on His righteousness alone –

Acts 17 – (30) And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: (31) Because He hath appointed a day, in the which HE WILL JUDGE THE WORLD IN RIGHTEOUSNESS BY THAT MAN whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.

We need to understand that even though in many ways Paul's situation and experience was not (and is not) the same for all who are brought by the Holy Spirit to faith and repentance, the essence and nature of the experience of all true Christians is the same. The apostle himself wrote to his fellow-laborer Timothy –

1 Timothy 1 – (16) Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a PATTERN TO THEM WHICH SHOULD HEREAFTER BELIEVE ON HIM TO LIFE EVERLASTING.

God brings all His elect people to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and repentance of dead works and idolatry in the same way that He brought Saul of Tarsus. The circumstances, culture, time, and many other particulars are not the same, but it is the same Holy Spirit and the same Gospel of God's grace. God the Holy Spirit powerfully and invincibly applies the same Gospel message to bring all of God's people to the same Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Some are delivered from lives of open rebellion and immorality. Others are delivered from the darkness of false religion and false refuges. But God the Holy Spirit will bring all of God's elect without exception to see their sinfulness, to see the Lord Jesus Christ in the glory of His Person and power of His righteousness. He will bring them to believe that Christ's righteousness alone justifies them and entitles them to all blessings and benefits of salvation. He will convince them that their sins cannot defeat or hinder salvation by God's sovereign grace through the blood of Jesus Christ. He will show them that all their works and efforts to obey God, when aimed at attaining or maintaining any part of salvation, were dead works and fruit unto death. He will bring them to have ***“no confidence in the flesh”*** a distinguishing mark of all true Christians.

CHAPTER 7



CHRISTIANS HAVE EXPERIENCED HOLY SPIRIT CONVICTION

The Bible teaches that a true Christian is one who has been radically changed by the grace and power of God. This grace and power is through the work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth, and involves both regeneration (imparting spiritual life) and conversion (imparting spiritual knowledge and desires). It all falls under the heading of true Holy Spirit conviction. The Lord Himself states, ***“Ye **MUST** be born again”*** (from above) (***John 3:7***), else we cannot ***“see”*** (know and understand) or ***“enter into the kingdom of heaven”*** (***John 3:3,5***). The new birth (spiritual birth) results in a sinner turning away from sin and idolatry to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for all salvation. The way the Holy Spirit brings God’s elect to conversion is through the power of conviction. The Lord taught His disciples –

John 16 – (7) Nevertheless 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.

The ***“Comforter”*** here is God the Holy Spirit who comes to do His work of giving spiritual life from the Lord Jesus Christ to each and every one

of God's elect in each successive generation. The Lord made it clear that this subjective (inward) work of the Holy Spirit is the fruit and effect of His objective (legal) work for His people – ***“And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness” (Romans 8:10).*** In the new birth the Holy Spirit, by the Word of God, establishes Christ within the hearts of His people. The apostle Paul spoke of this in describing his own calling and conversion – ***“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:” (Galatians 1:15-16).*** Every true believer can say that Christ resides within his heart by the Spirit and by the Word. This new birth is a literal spiritual resurrection from the dead. The apostle John described it as having ***“passed from death unto life” (1 John 3:14)*** and evidenced by love of the brethren. So this new birth is the fruit of Christ's death on the cross to establish righteousness for His people. As sin demanded death, even for God's elect, Christ's righteousness imputed (charged, accounted) to them demands salvation and eternal, spiritual life for them –

Romans 5 – (21) That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6 – (23) For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Lord Jesus Christ said, ***“All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).*** Then He said, ***“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” (John 6:44).*** In ***John 12:32*** He said, ***“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.”*** John wrote, in the next verse, ***“This He said, signifying what death He should die.”*** All for whom the Lord Jesus Christ died and arose again will be DRAWN to Him. The Greek word ***“draw”*** in both ***John 6:44*** and ***12:32*** is *helkō* (ἔλκω), which means “to draw, drag off.” It means

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“to draw by inward power, lead, or impel.” It refers to the drawing power of the Holy Spirit in the new birth as He makes the Gospel **“the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16)** for God’s elect as He brings them to faith in Christ. The Bible teaches that it takes the power of God to bring a sinner to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It states clearly that no natural born man or woman will come to Christ for salvation or believe in the Lord Jesus Christ by their own will or power –

Romans 3 – (10) As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: (11) There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. (12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

1 Corinthinans 2 – (14) 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. (15) But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

The **“natural man”** describes all men and women by nature, born of Adam, fallen and spiritually **“dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1)**. **“He that is spiritual”** describes all men and women who have been born again from above by the Holy Spirit. They did not become **“spiritual”** by their own power, goodness, or will. They are not **“spiritual”** because they made a better choice or decision than those who stubbornly refused. This strikes at one of the most popular heresies of modern-day false Christianity. Many, many people who claim to be “Christians” believe they were born again as the result of their believing. They believe the new birth came by their decision for Christ, or as many say, “accepting Jesus as their personal Savior.” This is the essence of modern-day “free-willism” and the belief that salvation is in some way conditioned on man’s works and/or man’s decisions. This heresy denies the reality of man’s sin and depravity as revealed in the Bible because it teaches that every man, though fallen, still has some spark of goodness whereby he can be motivated to choose Christ. The Bible, however, teaches that the new birth is not by the works or the wills of men –

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John 1 – (11) He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. (12) But as many as received Him, to them gave He power [right] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: (13) Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will [works] of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Romans 9 – (15) For 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. (16) So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

The Bible teaches that man's natural will is in bondage to sin. For a sinner to be willing to believe in and submit to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, that sinner has to be convicted by the Holy Spirit in the new birth. Does this mean that God forces people to come to Christ for salvation against their wills? And does this mean that some people may be willing to come to Christ but God will not let them because they are not His elect? The answer to both these questions is emphatically "NO!" God never brings a sinner to Christ against that sinner's will. God changes that sinner's will. God never turns away a sinner who comes to Christ for salvation. All who come to Christ for salvation have been drawn by the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit conviction is the irresistible and invincible grace and power of God in bringing His elect to Himself through Jesus Christ.

The reason all of this is so important is that it goes to the heart of what a true Christian is and is not. A TRUE CHRISTIAN IS ONE WHO HAS BEEN BROUGHT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT TO TRUE CONVICTION IN THREE SPECIFIC AREAS: (1) SIN, (2) RIGHTEOUSNESS, and (3) JUDGMENT –

John 16 – (7) Nevertheless 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. (8) And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: (9) Of sin, because they believe not on Me; (10) Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see Me no more; (11) Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

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The way God the Holy Spirit makes a person a Christian is by giving that person spiritual life and drawing that person in true conviction to believe in and trust the Lord Jesus Christ for all salvation. As stated, this is the invincible and irresistible calling of the Holy Spirit. It is the ***“holy calling” (2 Timothy 1:9)*** under the preaching of the Gospel which every one of God’s elect experiences at some time in their lives (*cf. 1 Corinthians 1:18-24*). People may ask in light of this, “Does God force us against our wills to believe in Jesus Christ?” One very popular so-called Bible scholar (name withheld) even went so far as to write the following –

“Irresistible force used by God on his free creatures would be a violation of both the charity of God and the dignity of humans. God is love. True love never forces itself on anyone. Forced love is rape, and God is not a divine rapist!”

There are so many things wrong with this man’s reasoning. First, the Bible never describes fallen, sinful human beings as “free creatures.” It states that we are all by nature spiritually dead and in bondage to sin. Man is a free moral agent, which simply means he is free to choose that which he desires. But the Bible tells us that as fallen, sinful, spiritually dead creatures we will only choose evil instead of good. This does not mean that spiritually dead human beings cannot choose morality according to man’s standard of goodness, or that we cannot be religious and sincere. It means that if left to ourselves we will not choose that which glorifies God alone in Jesus Christ. Secondly, where in the Bible do we find anything about “the dignity of humans”? It is not in the Bible. The Bible paints a true picture of man by nature without Christ, without grace, and without righteousness – ***“For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Ecclesiastes 7:20).***

Thirdly, “forced love” is not rape, because rape is in no way any form of love. Rape has to do with power and control coming out of an evil heart of self-love. Consider this – When we force our children to do things that are good for them, and force them not to do things that are bad for them, is this rape? ABSOLUTELY NOT! It is the highest form of true love we can show them. Likewise, what God does for sinners in bringing them to

Himself by His irresistible grace and power is for His glory and their good. The rapist does not do what he does for his glory but for his own evil self-pleasure. Even he knows it is wrong else he would not hide from the law and the public. He would stand proudly and publicly proclaim his deed as being something that endears him to men. And what he does is certainly not for the good of his victims. It leaves them scarred and demoralized. What God accomplishes brings glory to Him in the highest as both a loving, merciful Father AND as a just and righteous Judge in the Lord Jesus Christ. What God does for His elect most certainly is for their good, spiritually and eternally. It leaves them elevated to the highest honor as they stand in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, the question remains – Does God force His people against their wills to believe in Jesus Christ? The answer is emphatically, “NO!” He does not force them against their wills. He graciously and powerfully changes their wills. How does God do this? Read the following –

Jeremiah 31 – (33) But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. (cf. Hebrews 8:10)

Ezekiel 36 – (26) A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. (27) And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

John 6 – (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. (45) It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me.

In the new birth God the Holy Spirit gives God’s elect a new heart, a new spirit, and makes them willing to come to Christ. He does this not by

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compulsion of force against their wills. He does this by compulsion of grace and love that makes them willing in the day of His power (***Psalm 110:3; Proverbs 20:12***). This is accomplished by true Holy Spirit conviction which brings them to the Lord Jesus Christ for all salvation, forgiveness of sins, righteousness, and eternal life. Consider three aspects of Holy Spirit conviction as stated in ***John 16:8-11***. ***“And when He is come, He will reprove [convince, convict] the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:” (John 16:8).***

“OF SIN, BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE NOT ON ME;” (JOHN 16:9)

A CHRISTIAN IS ONE WHO HAS BEEN BROUGHT BY GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT TO FACE THE REALITY OF HIS OWN PERSONAL SIN IN LIGHT OF THE HOLINESS OF GOD AND THE CROSS OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. Salvation is for SINNERS, not for the righteous. This is much more than merely admitting we are less than perfect or have made some mistakes. It involves the revelation of our natural total depravity as described in the following –

Romans 3 – (10) As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: (11) There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. (12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

It is the revelation of the Holy Spirit in showing us our complete and utter sinfulness in light of the truth of the glory of God revealed in the salvation of sinners through the Lord Jesus Christ. This includes the sin of unbelief (the root of all sin) and further shows us that without Christ we can do nothing but sin in the eyes of God. He shows us that without Christ the best we can do falls short of righteousness and must be judged as iniquity by the Lord God. He shows us that even at our best we can deserve and earn nothing but eternal damnation. He convinces us that there is absolutely no hope of salvation, including the forgiveness of sins and justification before God, without Jesus Christ. Without Christ there is not a shred of goodness or righteousness in any human being born of woman – ***“What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman,***

that he should be righteous?” (Job 15:14), and “How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?” (Job 25:4). The Holy Spirit causes us to agree with God against ourselves and cry with Isaiah, ***“Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isaiah 6:5).*** He convinces us ***“there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Ecclesiastes 7:20).*** All this is not a judgment based upon our feelings or how we compare to other men but how we compare to Jesus Christ the righteous.

The Holy Spirit convinces us that our sin is not merely in what we do or fail to do, but it lies within our very hearts, our thoughts, motives, and desires. Sin is the natural bent of fallen human nature, so much so that we cannot do the things which please and glorify God –

Romans 7 – (8) But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. (9) For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. (10) And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. (11) For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. (12) Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. (13) Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

The Holy Spirit convinces us of what the Lord Himself taught when He spoke of sin as a matter of the heart – it is ***“not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man” (Matthew 15:11),*** and ***“an evil heart of unbelief” (Hebrews 3:12).*** He convinces us that sin even reigns over our wills so that our natural desires are not for the glory of God but for the glory of self. This describes the total depravity of man. As stated before, the doctrine of total depravity does not teach that we are all as bad as we could be. God restrains the depravity of human nature in so many ways, keeping us from totally destroying ourselves and each other. For example, even totally depraved

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sinner can be moral, religious, and sincere according to man's standard. What is it that identifies a totally depraved sinner and what he cannot do?

1. He has no righteousness before God and no goodness within himself as measured by God's standard of righteousness and goodness.
2. He cannot make himself righteous and good by his best efforts in morality, religion, or obedience to God's law.
3. He does not desire righteousness and goodness GOD'S way which is the way of sovereign grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. He wants these things his own way, by works of the flesh, whereby he can boast and exalt himself.

God the Holy Spirit convinces all of God's elect (whom Christ redeemed) that there is absolutely no hope of salvation within themselves or by their own works. This is what it means to be ***"poor in spirit"*** – ***"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"*** (Matthew 5:3). All men by nature are spiritually poor (bankrupt), but only those who are convinced of sin by God the Holy Spirit know and see their spiritual poverty. Man by nature thinks he is rich with goodness and righteousness. This is why the Lord said, ***"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"*** (Luke 5:32). The question we should ask ourselves is "Have we been brought to see the true reality of our sin and sinfulness? Have we been brought to see our spiritual poverty, that we are bankrupt and have no hope of salvation in ourselves?" There are many who claim to have believed in Jesus as their Savior but who also believe they themselves made the difference in their salvation by believing. Such persons have yet to be convinced of sin, because sin reaches to the heart, the mind, and the will of the fallen sinner. This leaves sinners imagining there is something they can do or contribute toward gaining salvation for themselves. Sincere professions notwithstanding, this describes those who do not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for all salvation and who have yet to be convinced of sin. Consider now the second aspect of Holy Spirit conviction as stated in ***John 16*** –

"OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, BECAUSE I GO TO MY FATHER, AND YE SEE ME NO MORE;" (JOHN 16:10)

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A CHRISTIAN IS ONE WHO HAS BEEN BROUGHT BY GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AS THE ONE AND ONLY WAY OF SALVATION, THE WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS BEFORE GOD. Most people judge salvation and righteousness by what they do and do not do, and by how they compare to others. God the Holy Spirit convinces God's people how righteousness can only be measured by the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ in His obedience unto death for His people –

Acts 17 – (31) Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.

The Holy Spirit convinces us that no amount of works we could ever seek to perform could cleanse us from sin and make us righteous before God –

Romans 3 – (19) Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. (20) Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

I have already stated how the Holy Spirit convinces God's elect of the exceeding sinfulness of sin by showing us how we all fell in Adam. He shows us how we are born dead in trespasses and sin and worthy of eternal damnation. He shows us how we have no ability to produce the righteousness God requires for our salvation and justification. If this is the case (and it is), how then can there be any way of salvation? How can a sinful person be just before God? This is where the Holy Spirit brings God's elect to Jesus Christ for all salvation, righteousness, eternal life, and glory. Here is where He shows us the only way of righteousness in the obedience unto death of Christ as the Surety and Substitute of God's people. The Lord Jesus Christ went unto His Father as the One Who redeemed His people

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from their sins by establishing the only righteousness by which God could justify them –

Romans 3 – (21) But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; (22) Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: (23) For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; (24) Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: (25) Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; (26) To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Romans 10 – (4) For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

A true Christian, then, is one who has been brought to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ as his only righteousness before God. He knows himself to be totally corrupt and unable to meet such a high standard, so he can find no peace or comfort in anything but Jesus Christ crucified and risen. He has been made hungry and thirsty for righteousness, and this hunger and thirst can only be filled by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord our righteousness (***Matthew 5:6***). Lastly, consider the third aspect of Holy Spirit conviction as stated in ***John 16 –***

“OF JUDGMENT, BECAUSE THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD IS JUDGED.” (JOHN 16:11)

A CHRISTIAN IS ONE WHO HAS BEEN BROUGHT BY GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT TO REST ASSURED IN THE REALITY OF JUDGMENT AS HE STANDS IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. A true Christian lives life here on earth in the reality of final judgment – ***“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27)***. He knows that in the end we must stand before God and give an account – ***“So then every one of us shall***

give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12). He knows if God were to judge him at any time based on his works, that if sins were ever imputed (charged) to him, he would not be able to stand the test of God’s righteous judgment – ***“If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” (Psalm 130:3).*** He knows his only hope to pass the test of God’s righteous judgment is to somehow stand before God without being charged with sin. His desire is the same as David of old – ***“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile” (Psalm 32:1-2).*** He knows his only hope is to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ, having HIS righteousness imputed to him –

Romans 4 – (6) Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, (7) Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. (8) Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

The true Christian’s account before God at final Judgment is neither in how many sins he has committed nor in how many good works he has performed. No amount of good works can wipe away sin or make him righteous before God. THE TRUE CHRISTIAN’S ACCOUNT BEFORE GOD AT FINAL JUDGMENT IS HOW HE STANDS BEFORE GOD IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST –

Philippians 3 – (8) Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, (9) And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

The true Christian’s acceptable standing before God lies in the fact that all his sins were charged to Jesus Christ who died to pay the penalty due unto God’s justice in his place and on his behalf. It lies in the fact that he stands before God having Christ’s righteousness charged to his account

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to the praise of the glory of God's grace – ***“That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 5:21)***. Why was the apostle John inspired by the Holy Spirit to connect this conviction of judgment with ***“the prince of this world”*** being judged? ***“The prince of this world”*** refers to Satan. The reason is that Satan was instrumental in bringing about the fall of man into sin and death (***cf. Genesis 3***), and Christ's work on the cross is the casting out or judgment of Satan –

John 12 – (31) Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. (32) And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. (33) This He said, signifying what death He should die.

When Christ brought in righteousness for His people, He accomplished in time on the cross the defeat of Satan who is called ***“the accuser of our brethren ... which accused them before our God day and night” (Revelation 12:10)***. The defeat of Satan is seen in that his accusations against God's elect, all for whom Christ died and established righteousness, have no power to condemn them. Because of Christ's work of redemption, they cannot be charged with sin –

Romans 8 – (33) Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. (34) Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us.

This is how true Christians can be said to have ***“boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4:17)***. It is because, having been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ, they stand before God without any charge of sin. Having been justified based on Christ's righteousness imputed, they stand before God as righteous in Him. A true Christian, then, is one who by God-given faith pleads now what he or she will plead at judgment – the merits of Christ's obedience unto death, His righteousness imputed.

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It is truly amazing that in the wisdom of God we can see in these few short verses of Scripture the essence and heart of true Holy Spirit conviction. We are not left to speculate and wonder as to whether or not the Holy Spirit has done a wonderful, miraculous, and powerful work of grace within our hearts, i.e. given us a new heart. Holy Spirit conviction is a specific work that brings God's people to a real sorrow but not despair over sin. This conviction simply shows us that even in their sorrow and remorse over sin, true Christians will always find salvation, righteousness, forgiveness, peace, and assurance in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. They cannot be satisfied or settle with anyone or anything else.

CHAPTER 8



CHRISTIANS ARE SANCTIFIED PEOPLE

When you hear or read the word “saint,” what does it mean to you? You may have heard some people claim, “I’m a Christian, but I’m no saint.” This comes from a false view both of what a true Christian and a true saint really are. Many think of a saint as some kind of “super Christian” who by great acts of obedience, prayer, and self-sacrifice have attained a higher level of spirituality, goodness, or holiness to which most Christians either cannot or do not attain. Others think of a saint as one who has accomplished these things along with performing a number of miracles so that the Pope of Rome canonizes him or her and thereby “makes him a saint.” The fact is none of these things are true. They are the human inventions of false, self-righteous, man-exalting religion that teaches salvation is obtained in some way, at some stage, and to some degree by the works and/or wills of men. These false notions are not Biblical and have nothing to do with TRUE Christianity or TRUE Christians. The Bible describes a saint as one who has been sanctified by the grace of God in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, if our thinking is in line with the Bible and the definition of a saint revealed therein, we must know and believe that –

**EVERY TRUE CHRISTIAN IS A SAINT,
AND EVERY SAINT IS A TRUE CHRISTIAN,
MADE SO BY THE GRACE OF GOD IN JESUS CHRIST!**

CHRISTIANS ARE SANCTIFIED PEOPLE

In the Bible all true Christians are addressed as “saints” nearly a hundred times. Consider further what a saint actually is according to the Bible. A saint is one who has been SET APART IN SALVATION AND SERVICE BY THE GRACE OF GOD THROUGH THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. A saint, therefore, is a sinner saved by the grace of God based upon the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. A saint is one who has been sanctified (set apart) by God in three ways:

First, he has been SANCTIFIED BY GOD THE FATHER IN ELECTING GRACE –

Jude – (1) Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.

Ephesians 1 – (3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: (4) According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love:

Secondly, he has been SANCTIFIED BY GOD THE SON INCARNATE IN REDEEMING GRACE –

Hebrews 10 – (10) By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all;

Hebrews 10 – (14) For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Thirdly, he has been SANCTIFIED BY GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT IN REGENERATING GRACE –

2 Thessalonians 2 – (13) But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and

belief of the truth: (14) Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1 – (2) Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

We can see from God's Word that a true Christian's justification (his righteous standing before God) AND sanctification (his being set apart by God and for God's glory) are both by the grace of God and founded upon the righteous merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. A Christian's works and efforts to obey God neither justify him nor sanctify him nor make him holy. We who are truly Christians are set apart totally for the glory of God in Christ Jesus. Righteousness and holiness come by no merit or effort of our own but only that which we are and have in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord our Righteousness –

1 Corinthians 1 – (30) But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: (31) That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

This is especially important considering some of the misconceptions that prevail as they pertain to the doctrine of sanctification. The popular term "progressive sanctification" (sometimes called "progressive holiness") seems to mislead many people. Some use this term to describe a supposed process they believe Christians experience by getting "better and better" in the sense of growing in moral purity and becoming less and less sinful within themselves. For example, some forms of modern Pentecostalism teach sanctification as a work of God's grace in which sin within a Christian is eventually totally eradicated to the extent that they can then claim they are no longer sinners. According to the Bible, such a view is blatantly false. The Bible teaches that the only way true Christians can claim any sinless perfection is as they legally and objectively stand in Christ, having been washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness imputed. Even though

genuine Christians are still sinners within themselves, God cannot and does not charge them with their sins because the Lord Jesus Christ has been charged with those sins and paid their debt to God's justice –

Romans 8 – (33) Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

(34) Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

There are some who consider sanctification nothing more than improvements in attitude, character, conduct, and even what they see as separating themselves from the world. Some see this separation in their observance of what the apostle Paul called, ***“taste not, touch not, handle not” (Colossians 2:21)*** wherein holiness is measured by what they do and/or abstain from doing. Others measure their separateness by their religious practices. Seventh-day Adventists, for example, claim separation from the world by their practice of worshipping on Saturday rather than Sunday. All of this is no more than self-righteous legalism. The apostle Paul wrote that true Christians are not to allow or promote others to judge them by such things –

Colossians 2 – (16) Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: (17) Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

There is no argument that true Christians are to be separate from the world –

Romans 12 – (1) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (2) And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

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There are things true Christians should both do and abstain from doing. For example, there are appropriate ways for Christians to dress and act so as not to bring reproach and shame upon their standing in Christ and their profession of the truth of the Gospel. We need to understand, however, that observance of these things make up no part of the righteousness by which true Christians are justified before God. The Christian's righteousness is Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead. We also need to understand that observance of these things does not make any person righteous and holy in the way of moral perfection. Righteousness and holiness do not come by our efforts to obey and separate ourselves from the world.

For a Christian this separation (nonconformity) includes being separate not only from the world's immorality but also from the world's false religion and legalism. True Christians know that their righteousness and holiness are neither by their works nor measured by their personal improvements in character and conduct. Their sanctification is to be measured neither by what they wear or eat nor by what they refuse to wear or abstain from eating. Their sanctification is to be measured by their faith in (and love for) the Lord Jesus Christ who is their righteousness and holiness.

There is a large segment of those who are identified as "reformed Christians" who teach that "progressive sanctification" involves a believer attaining greater degrees of holiness through his good works and efforts until he reaches a point where he is ready and qualified for heaven. The Bible teaches that true Christians indeed are ready and qualified for heaven, not because they have worked hard and achieved great heights of personal holiness, but because of their present holy standing before God in the Lord Jesus Christ. Although there is growth in grace and in knowledge for true Christians, this is not what makes a Christian ready and qualified for heaven. It is the God of all grace, through the Lord Jesus Christ, who makes a Christian ready and qualified for heaven. Some people use the term "progressive sanctification" to refer simply to a Christian's growth in grace and in knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Either way at best the term is confusing. At worst it is heresy. But we cannot deny that true Christians

are to grow in grace and in knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle Peter wrote –

2 Peter 3 – (17) Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. (18) But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

A large part of a true Christian's sanctification does involve his growth in grace and in knowledge of the Lord. However, he does not claim that his personal growth sanctifies him, but rather that his personal growth is sanctified (set apart) by grace and knowledge in the Lord Jesus Christ. His growth in grace, however, in no way means that he is becoming "holier" as if he is becoming more and more perfect or righteous and less and less sinful within himself. In fact a major part of growing in grace and in knowledge of Christ includes a saved sinner becoming more and more aware of his own sinfulness so as to see a greater degree than before his need of Jesus Christ for all righteousness and holiness. The one who has been a Christian for many years and who has grown in grace and in knowledge must still say with the psalmist and with the apostle Paul –

Psalms 130 – (3) If Thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

***Romans 7 – (24) O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?
(25) I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.***

The Christian life is a process of growth in grace and in knowledge. It is a continual warfare of the Spirit against the flesh. Over time Christians do seek to improve themselves in every area of life. This growth and improvement is all by God's grace and power. None of it can be attributed to the Christian's goodness and power. But every true Christian must admit

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that if God were to judge him at any time based on his best efforts to obey and serve God or based on his best areas of improvement, he would be eternally damned and without hope. THE TRUE CHRISTIAN'S RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HOLINESS BEFORE GOD, NOW AND FOREVER, ARE BY JESUS CHRIST CRUCIFIED AND RAISED FROM THE DEAD –

Philippians 3 – (8) Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, (9) And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

As stated before, the words “sanctify” and “sanctification” mean “to set apart,” or “to be set apart.” When we speak of Christians being sanctified by God, it means they are “set apart” by God in sovereign grace for salvation and for service to God alone. The Bible tells us that Christ spoke of sanctifying Himself (i.e. “set Himself apart”) to be the Savior of His people and to do the work which the Father gave Him to –

John 17 – (19) And for their sakes I SANCTIFY MYSELF, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

“Sanctify” and “sanctification” also mean to be “set apart” in the sense of being regarded as holy. We are to “**sanctify the Lord God**” in our hearts (**1 Peter 3:15**). We do not and cannot MAKE God holy, but we are to recognize Him to be holy and regard Him as such –

Isaiah 8 – (13) Sanctify the LORD of hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread.

True Christians are to be regarded as holy, not because of their works, but as they stand in the Lord Jesus Christ and are cleansed from all their sins by His blood alone –

Hebrews 3 – (1) Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

The word “sanctify” can also mean “to make something or someone holy” in the sense of a change within. This would refer back to what is described as “***sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth***” (***2 Thessalonians 2:13***), and involves the new birth where God the Holy Spirit gives God’s elect a new heart and new spirit. This is NOT a moral perfection within or even a perfection of nature. This is an unregenerate, lost, rebellious, unbelieving sinner being changed within by the life-giving work and power of God the Holy Spirit who brings him to faith, repentance, and submission to Christ for all salvation. This is the new birth wherein a sinner is cleansed within by the powerful application of the Word of God –

John 17 – (17) Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.

2 Thessalonians 2 – (13) But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: (14) Whereunto He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Titus 3 – (3) For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. (4) But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, (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; (6) Which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

1 Peter 1 – (22) Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: (23) Being born again, not

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of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

In short, all of this shows the sanctification of a true Christian who looks to, rests in, and follows the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, including all of its blessings and benefits. There is no perfection within because the true Christian still struggles with the remaining influences and contamination of sin (***cf. Romans 7:14-25***), but he is “set apart” within as He is brought continually to run and cling to Christ for forgiveness, righteousness, and life –

Hebrews 12 – (1) Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, (2) LOOKING UNTO JESUS THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER OF OUR FAITH; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider another passage of Scripture that defines the true Christian as being one who is sanctified by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

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1 Peter 2 – (9) But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light:

“BUT YE ARE A CHOSEN GENERATION”

This describes God’s electing grace wherein before the foundation of the world God sovereignly and unconditionally chose a people to save and gave them to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. In this election of grace, God conditioned the whole salvation of His chosen people upon the Lord Jesus Christ as their Surety and Substitute –

Ephesians 1 – (3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: (4) According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: (5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, (6) To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.

This is why true Christians are sometimes described in the Bible as “*the elect*” (*Matthew 24:22,24,31; Mark 13:20,22,27; Romans 8:33; Colossians 3:12; 2 Timothy 2:10; Titus 1:1*). Many people believe that “*the elect*” refers only to the Jewish nation, but this is not so. Their election was temporal and lasted only up until the Messiah came into the world. The “*election of grace*” (*Romans 11:5*) describes all, both Jew and Gentile, who come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are all who were “set apart” by God in the Lord Jesus Christ. This election was totally unconditional towards those whom God chose. It was all conditioned on Jesus Christ and Him alone, and He fulfilled all conditions required to save and secure all for whom He died.

“A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD”

Christians are those who have been “set apart” as priests unto God

—

Revelation 1 – (5) And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, (6) And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 5 – (9) And 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

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tongue, and people, and nation; (10) And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

The whole body of Christ, all true Christians, is a kingdom of priests in that they all equally have free, unhindered access into the holy presence of Almighty God through the blood of Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest –

Hebrews 10 – (19) Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, (20) By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; (21) And having an High Priest over the house of God; (22) Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

This means Christians are “set apart” by God’s grace through Christ so that they can approach God in prayer, worship, and service, and be accepted with God on the basis of the righteousness of their Great High Priest –

Hebrews 4 – (14) Seeing then that we have a Great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. (15) For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. (16) Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

“AN HOLY NATION”

This refers to the “**nation**” of SPIRITUAL ISRAEL, the true people of God, set apart by God in electing, redeeming, regenerating, and preserving grace through Jesus Christ.³ They are “**an holy nation**,” not in that they are morally perfect within themselves, but as they are “**holy**” and righteous in the Lord Jesus Christ. They look to Him alone for all salvation and

³ See chapter 6 – “Christians are the True Circumcision.”

righteousness. Remember, this is HIS righteousness that has been imputed (charged, accounted) to them. They are the ***“Israel of God”*** and the spiritual seed of Abraham –

Galatians 3 – (26) For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. (27) For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (28) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. (29) And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Galatians 6 – (14) But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. (15) For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. (16) And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

Combined with believing Jews under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ believing Gentiles are just as much a part of this ***“holy*** [sanctified] ***nation”*** –

Ephesians 2 – (11) Wherefore 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; (12) That 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: (13) But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. (14) For He is our peace, Who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; (15) Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; (16) And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: (17) And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to

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them that were nigh. (18) For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. (19) Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; (20) And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; (21) In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: (22) In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

“A PECULIAR PEOPLE”

This does not mean that Christians are weird or strange people, although some may be. The word translated ***“peculiar”*** means a “purchased” or “obtained” people. It is the same word translated ***“purchased possession”*** in ***Ephesians 1:14***. This is the part of a Christian’s sanctification showing that he is “set apart” from the world in that he was redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and does not belong to himself. He belongs to Christ. Read what the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church –

1 Corinthians 6 – (19) What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and YE ARE NOT YOUR OWN? (20) For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.

A true Christian is a willing and loving bondservant of Jesus Christ. The law of bondslavery was given to the nation Israel under the Old Covenant law. It was recorded in ***Exodus 21:1-6***. If a man ran up a debt he could not pay, he could become a servant to the one he owed the debt, serve him six years to pay the debt, and go out free on the seventh year. If he loved his master and desire to stay in the master’s service, he could do so, but not under obligation of a legal debt. He could remain with his master and serve out of love and gratitude. This law of bondslavery was beautiful picture of the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, those who are true Christians. They belong to the Master and serves Him, not by obligation of

legal debt, but by motivation of love, grace, and gratitude. His service is not to earn his Master's favor and blessings. It is to glorify the Master and honor Him as the one and only Lord and Savior. The great difference between the law of bondslavery in the Old Covenant law and being a bondservant of the Lord Jesus Christ is the following – Under the law, the debtor served the master six years to pay the debt. Under the Gospel of grace, Christ (the Master) served in the place of the sinner in debt to the law, and Christ paid that debt in full. Having been bought with the price of the blood of Christ, the true Christian's whole being (body, soul, and spirit) belongs to God and is to be used for the glory of God in the Lord Jesus Christ and for the good of others. As stated before –

Romans 12 – (1) I beseech you therefore, brethren, BY THE MERCIES OF GOD, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (2) And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Having been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit, a true Christian has been ***“transformed by the renewing”*** of his mind in the sense that he is now consumed with the love and grace of God in Christ. This being the case, the Holy Spirit within drives Christians to desire to be living testimonies to the glory, grace, power, and goodness of God. This sets true Christians apart from the world.

“THAT YE SHOULD SHEW FORTH THE PRAISES OF HIM WHO HATH CALLED YOU OUT OF DARKNESS INTO HIS MARVELLOUS LIGHT”

Another major indication of the true Christian's sanctification by the grace of God is manifested by his God-given desire, not to glorify and boast in himself, but to glorify God and boast in the Lord Jesus Christ –

Matthew 5 – (16) Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.⁴

I dealt with this verse briefly in Chapter 5, but it bears repeating that the ***“light”*** here is not the same as ***“your good works.”*** The ***“light”*** is the Gospel of God’s grace in the salvation of sinners through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is the ***“light”*** of God’s glory and honor as both a just God and a Savior as seen in God’s way of saving sinners based solely on the merits of Christ’s obedience unto death as their Surety and Substitute. It is that ***“light”*** by which Christians ***“shew forth,”*** both in their doctrine and in their walk, ***“the praises of Him who hath called [them] out of darkness into His marvellous light.”*** Because they are sanctified by God in Jesus Christ and called by the Holy Spirit ***“out of darkness into His marvelous light,”*** they have a God-given desire to point other sinners, not to themselves, but to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, and life. This is the essence of the sanctified life of true Christians as they live for the glory of God in Christ Jesus. This was summarized by the apostle Paul when he wrote –

2 Corinthians 5 – (14) For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead: (15) And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.

The Lord Jesus Christ ***“died for all”*** His chosen people. This is proven by the fact that when He died, they all died in Him – ***“then were all dead.”*** I have already stated how this is the true Christian’s sanctification by the death of Jesus Christ. All this was accomplished, not that Christians would ***“live unto themselves”*** (for their own selfish gains and goals), but that they should live ***“unto Him which died for them, and rose again”*** (for the glory of God in Christ Jesus). This describes a truly sanctified person, a true Christian who has been set apart from the world by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

⁴ See chapter 5 – “I’d Rather See a Sermon Than Hear One?”

CHAPTER 9



CHRISTIANS PERSEVERE UNTO THE END

PART 1

THE BIBLICAL TRUTH OF THE ETERNAL SECURITY OF THE SAVED

One of the most debated issues amongst many who claim to be “Christians” is the issue of the security of salvation or the eternal security of the saved, the true believer. Is a person who is saved by the grace of God eternally secure in that salvation, or can that person lose salvation either by sinning in some way or by unbelief? This also begs the question – Can a Christian have real lasting assurance of salvation? If so, upon what ground can such assurance be based? It is common for some to claim boldly, “I’m as sure for heaven as if I were already there?” Others dismiss such boasts as being nothing more than presumption arguing that it contradicts true godly humility. They may go so far as to assert that it is a godly virtue for true Christians to spend their lives wondering whether or not they are really saved. We must also consider the familiar phrase commonly linked with most Baptist denominations, “once saved always saved.” Is this a true

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statement? I know from my own personal experience that many of its advocates have an unbiblical view of security.

In this chapter I hope to show from Biblical testimony that Christians are saved AND eternally secure in the grace of God through Jesus Christ. One of the marks of true Christians, therefore, is that by the grace of God they will persevere (continue, endure) to the end (final glory). Those who fail to persevere to the end were never saved at all. Their claim of salvation was false. Many deny this because they believe that salvation (in some way, at some stage, to some degree) is conditioned on sinners and not totally upon Jesus Christ alone. They believe in a “conditional salvation,” and, thus, a “conditional security.” This is the belief that sinners who are saved are kept secure in salvation upon the condition of their continuing in the faith. Some will add other conditions such as obedience and good works, but either way, it is “conditional security.” This describes a false Christian who believes a false gospel. It is a more subtle version of the age-old heresy of salvation by the works and/or the wills of men. For those who embrace this error salvation is not secured by the work of God alone through Christ Jesus. It is imagined to be a cooperative effort of “God doing his part, and the sinner doing his part.” It is not uncommon to hear preachers who hold this view give an invitation such as, “Jesus has done all he can do. Now the rest is up to you.”

Another reason many deny the eternal security of the saved is because they judge salvation, NOT by God’s Word alone, but by personal experience and/or reformations of character and conduct. They go through religious experiences that result in great moral or religious reformations and conclude that such changes could not be possible if they were not the result of a real salvation experience or true faith. It goes without saying that we should encourage people who are openly immoral and/or totally unconcerned about spiritual matters to repent of such behavior and attitudes. The fact is that many, many people can and do experience such reformations and never come to salvation. True Christianity may be accompanied by such outward moral reformations, but it cannot be judged properly by such changes. As stated in Chapter 5, “I’d Rather See a Sermon Than Hear One,” other religions can and do produce outwardly moral and religious reformations. True Christianity can be properly evaluated and

measured only as it begins with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and adherence to His teachings. What about a person who claims to be a Christian, experiences a reformation of life as described above, but then later totally forsakes his profession of faith in Christ? According to the Bible, we must conclude NOT that he has lost his salvation, but that he was never saved.

There are basically two unbiblical but commonly held views that cause many to believe one can be saved and then lost. First is the view that Christ's death on the cross did not secure the complete salvation of any particular sinner but only made sinners savable if they would cooperate in faith and obedience. Second is the view that though man is fallen and sinful, he still retains a free will with which he is able to choose good over evil. All this comes from man's sinful way of reasoning which says that Jesus Christ, in His death on the cross, merely put us in a position where we could be saved if we make the decision to accept Him and follow Him. I hope to show you from the Bible that the death of Jesus Christ not only demands the salvation of all for whom He died, but it secures complete salvation for them, including their obedience in faith, repentance, and perseverance unto final glory. Also, we need to recognize that the Bible does not teach that we as fallen, sinful people have free will. The Bible teaches that we are free moral agents. We are free to choose what we desire. We can choose morality over immorality, responsibility over irresponsibility. We can choose religion over no religion, and we can choose sincerity over insincerity. The Bible, however, teaches the total depravity of all mankind as fallen in Adam. By Adam's sin we all fell into sin and spiritual death, and we are born spiritually dead. This spiritual death manifests itself in three ways:

1. WE HAVE NO RIGHTEOUSNESS TO JUSTIFY US BEFORE GOD – ***“What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:9-10).***
2. WE HAVE NO ABILITY TO PRODUCE RIGHTEOUSNESS BY OUR WORKS AND EFFORTS, NOT EVEN OUR BEST – ***“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.***

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Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:19-20).

3. WE HAVE NO WILL OR DESIRE TO RECEIVE RIGHTEOUSNESS GOD'S WAY –
"There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Romans 3:11-12).

In our natural state we cannot choose the things that truly glorify God in Jesus Christ because we do not desire those things –

1 Corinthians 2 – (14) 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.

Even as spiritually dead and sinful people we can desire salvation and to be forgiven of our sins, but by nature we desire neither of these God's way. First, our view of what it takes to be saved and our understanding of what it takes to have forgiveness are far lower than God's. Secondly, our way of salvation and forgiveness always leave us some room to boast in ourselves. God's way glorifies Himself in Christ Jesus and leaves us no room to glory. Our way will always exalt ourselves above others because it will always cause us to think that the difference between saved and lost is ultimately what we do by way of faith and/or obedience, not what solely owing to what Christ has done. This kind of thinking forms the view of many concerning the security of salvation. Men logically reason, "If I can will myself into salvation, I can will myself out of it." This, however, is not the way of the Lord. The Bible teaches that God makes His people willing in the day of His power (***Psalm 110:3***) by giving them a new heart and a new spirit (***Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:24-27***). God said, ***"but I will put my fear in their hearts, THAT THEY SHALL NOT DEPART FROM ME" (Jeremiah 32:40).*** Consider the following statements concerning the eternal security of the saved and the ground of Godly assurance:

1. GOD SAVES AND PRESERVES HIS CHILDREN UNTO FINAL GLORY IN HEAVEN BY HIS GRACE THROUGH THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

True Christians are saved by grace, preserved by grace, and they persevere in faith, repentance, and obedience by grace. They will all come to the perfection of final glory by grace. While on this earth, those who are truly saved and secure in Christ are still sinners. They must fight sin and struggle to be conformed to the image of Christ. Their struggle with sin and efforts to obey God, however, are not the source, cause, ground, or power of their security. God's grace through the Lord Jesus Christ is the source, cause, ground, and power of their security and assurance.

John 10 – (27) My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: (28) And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. (29) My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. (30) I and my Father are one.

The Lord Himself states that His sheep (God's elect for whom Christ died) will most certainly hear His voice. By the power of the Holy Spirit they will all hear the Gospel call and follow Christ. They do this NOT to earn their salvation – ***“And I GIVE unto them eternal life”*** – but because they are His sheep. Christ owns them – ***“All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).*** He died for them and paid the full price of their redemption. And so He says, ***“they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.”*** Consider also what the apostle Paul wrote –

Romans 8 – (35) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (36) As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. (37) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. (38) For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, (39) Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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Upon what ground is the security and assurance of a Christian based? ***“My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are one” (John 10:29-30).*** The Father’s love and the Son’s righteousness (the merits of His obedience unto death as the Substitute and Surety of His sheep) is the perfection (completion) of this salvation – ***“For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14).*** A true Christian, therefore, is one who is preserved unto final glory by the grace and power of God based on the merits of Christ’s righteousness alone.

2. GOD’S GRACE AND POWER THROUGH THE LORD JESUS CHRIST INSURES AND ENABLES A TRUE CHRISTIAN, NOT ONLY TO BEGIN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WALK BY BELIEVING IN CHRIST UNTO SALVATION, BUT ALSO TO PERSEVERE IN THAT FAITH UNTO HEAVEN’S GLORY.

In showing the difference between false Christians and true Christians, the writer of Hebrews wrote, ***“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Hebrews 10:38-39).*** These false Christians had forsaken their profession of faith in Christ and turned back to Jewish legalism. But true Christians by the power of the Holy Spirit continually ***“live by faith,”*** i.e. looking to and resting in Jesus Christ for all salvation. If this is truly our case, i.e. justified in Christ and endowed with the Holy Spirit, we are ***“not of them who draw back unto perdition”*** (eternal destruction). We are of those who ***“believe to the saving of the soul.”***

The apostle John wrote virtually the same thing in showing the contrast between false professors who apostatized (fell away) from the faith and true believers who continue in the faith. Of false professors who had apostatized John wrote –

1 John 2 – (19) They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

Of true believers, he wrote, ***“But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things” (1 John 2:20)***. This ***“unction from the Holy One”*** is the power of the Holy Spirit who comes forth from Christ to give spiritual life to His people in the new birth. He brings about such a miraculous and powerful change (the new birth) within God’s elect that they cannot help but believe in Christ, repent of their sins, and follow Him in love, grace, and gratitude. Knowing ***“all things”*** here certainly does not mean that Christians know all that there is to know. It simply means they know ***“all things”*** necessary to bring them to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. God the Holy Spirit teaches them and brings them to Christ past the point of no return. They cannot and will not turn back and totally forsake or leave Christ.

3. THE REALITY OF REMAINING SIN AND CORRUPTION WITHIN A TRUE BELIEVER PROVES WE CANNOT SAVE OR PRESERVE OURSELVES UNTO GLORY BY OUR OWN POWER AND WILLS.

Those who believe attaining final glory is conditioned upon the believer’s continuance in the faith do not know the reality of their own sin. We have written much of the reality of sin as it dominates people before conversion. All of us were ruined with Adam in the fall, and consequently we are born spiritually dead in trespasses and sin. So it is clear we cannot be saved by our best efforts to do anything pleasing to God, but what about after conversion? The apostle Paul described this in ***Romans 7:14-25*** showing that due to the remaining corruption, influence, and contamination of sinful flesh, while on this earth a true believer can never attain his desired goal of being perfectly conformed to Jesus Christ in character and conduct. Even born-again Christians are unable to produce the righteousness God’s requires to save them. Christ Jesus is still all righteousness for a sinner saved by grace. There is a spiritual warfare going on within every born-again person, so much so that, as Paul states, even for sinners saved by grace nothing they do can be counted as measuring up to perfect righteousness. They must all cry with the apostle –

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Romans 7 – (22) For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: (23) But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (24) O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (25) I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

The point of this is that not only can sinners not save themselves, but they cannot keep themselves saved. The continuation and final glory of a saved sinner is solely owing to the work of God's power, goodness, and grace in Christ. Although a true Christian is one who is miraculously brought to submit to God by believing, repenting, and obeying Christ, this obedience of faith is never the ground, cause, or source of his eternal security. True Christians must say with the psalmist that if at any time in their Christian lives God would mark their iniquities, they could not stand the test – ***"If Thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" (Psalm 130:3).***

4. GOD COMMANDS AND BRINGS HIS CHILDREN TO REST IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST FOR ALL SECURITY AND ASSURANCE OF SALVATION.

Hebrews 6 – (16) For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. (17) Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: (18) That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: (19) Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; (20) Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

True Christians are neither commanded nor encouraged to seek security and/or assurance of salvation based on their own efforts, power,

or goodness. ALL SECURITY AND ASSURANCE COMES BY GOD-GIVEN FAITH ***“LOOKING UNTO JESUS, THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER OF OUR FAITH” (Hebrews 12:2)***. A man who relished in promoting sinful doubt as humility once told me, “I don’t doubt Christ, but I doubt myself.” We need to understand that the Gospel commands us NOT to look to or have faith in ourselves. We are to look away from self and to Jesus Christ. If we are looking to self or within ourselves for assurance we indeed should doubt our salvation because we are still sinners. Security and assurance of salvation come by looking to Jesus Christ, the Lord our Righteousness. Paul wrote, ***“for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that HE IS ABLE TO KEEP THAT WHICH I HAVE COMMITTED UNTO HIM AGAINST THAT DAY” (2 Timothy 1:12)***. We cannot even look to our faith for assurance. The issue of security and assurance is not how much faith we have or how great our faith is. The issue of real security and assurance is in Christ, the object of our faith, and His ability to save us to the uttermost. If the object of our faith did not secure us in salvation unto final glory, then there will be uncertainty, and there should be. Assurance founded upon anyone or anything but Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead is no more than unbelief and self-righteous presumption. It is like the house built upon sand rather than the Rock Christ Jesus ***(Matthew 7:24-27)***. The point of this is expressed very well in the old hymn *“The Solid Rock”* –

“My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.
On Christ the solid rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand;
All other ground is sinking sand.”⁵

5. SECURITY AND ASSURANCE OF SALVATION BY THE GRACE OF GOD IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS THE BASIS AND MOTIVATION FOR ALL GODLINESS, OBEDIENCE, AND GOOD WORKS.

⁵ “The Solid Rock;” Edward Mote, 1834

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What distinguishes the morality, dedication, and zeal of a true Christian from the world in all its moral and religious efforts? It is not in the acts themselves. It is not even in a true Christian's sincerity and zeal. Many unbelievers are just as sincere and zealous as Christians. A true Christian, for example, may give money to help the poor, but an unbeliever can do the same. What is the difference? The difference is found, first, in the true Christian's righteous standing before God in the Lord Jesus Christ and, secondly, in the state of his heart as evidenced by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The true Christian knows he has one righteousness before Holy God, the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ – ***“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Romans 10:4).*** An unbelieving Jew, for example, may seek to establish his own righteousness before God by trying to keep the Ten Commandments. The true Christian is one who also should seek to obey the commandments of Jesus Christ as set forth in the New Testament (***John 14:15; 15:10***). Both are trying to be obedient servants, but what is the difference? The true Christian's heart has been established with God's grace. The unbelieving Jew's heart is established in works-based religion wherein he tries to earn his way into God's favor and blessings. The motivation to obey God for a true Christian is one of grace, love, and gratitude. As stated in a previous chapter, he has been made a willing, loving bond-servant of Christ.⁶ He serves his Master, NOT as a legalist trying to do enough to remove God's disfavor and wrath, and NOT as a mercenary seeking to establish his own righteousness before God so as to earn his salvation and reward. He is not trying to pay a legal debt to God, but he obeys out of a new heart that brings him continually to believe, rest in, and look to Jesus Christ as His Savior who has paid his debt in full. His obedience, as motivated by the Holy Spirit, guided by the Word of God, and as washed in the blood of Jesus Christ, is aimed toward the glory of God in Christ. It is the fruit of the Vine which is Christ (***John 15:1-8***). Good works and perseverance in the faith are not the fruit (or result) of his own goodness or so-called “free will.” It is the fruit of God's grace in Jesus Christ. Christ Himself stated that those who do not bear fruit, who do not ***“abide in”*** Him, are ***“cast forth AS a branch”***

⁶ Chapter 8, “A True Christian Is Sanctified,” page 117

(John 15:6). This means they were never true branches filled with the life of the Lord through the Holy Spirit. The true Christian's good works and perseverance is **"fruit unto God" (Romans 7:4)**. It is all to the glory of God who created him **"in Christ Jesus unto** [not because of] **good works" (Ephesians 2:8-10)**. This cannot be the case for any who are trying to earn their own salvation or the security thereof.

PART 2

BIBLICAL REASONS THE TRULY SAVED ARE SECURE

In this section I have listed from the Bible nine reasons that prove a true Christian cannot possibly lose salvation. I will repeat much of what I have already written above, first, because I want you to consider these things often and study them as they are found in the Bible. This is easier to do if we view them in outline form. Secondly, these things most certainly bear repeating because they are matters of eternal life and eternal death. It is my prayer that each of you will study these issues one by one from the Bible and that God the Holy Spirit will burn them into your heart for the glory of God in Christ Jesus.

REASON #1

TRUE CHRISTIANS CANNOT LOSE SALVATION BECAUSE OF THE GLORY OF GOD AND THE PREEMINENCE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

The Bible teaches that the main issue in the salvation of sinners is the glory of God. The main issue in the glory of God is the preeminence of the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Surety of His people. He is the one Mediator between God and men (**1 Timothy 2:5**). God's glory is the revelation and honor of His attributes. His attributes are characteristics of the nature of God which identify and distinguish Him as the one true and living God as He exists and as He works to save His people by His grace through Jesus Christ the Lord. It would take several books to list and describe all that the Bible reveals of God's character attributes. For our purposes it is sufficient to say that every attribute of God is engaged in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ and in His redemptive work to save His people from sin and bring them to final glory. This is summarized in the following verses –

Colossians 1 – (16) For by Him [the Lord Jesus Christ] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: (17) And He is before

all things, and by Him all things consist. (18) And He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence. (19) For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; (20) And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

Colossians 2 – (9) For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. (10) And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power:

The ***“fulness of the Godhead”*** is the complete glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit dwelling in the Person of Jesus Christ as Godman. As stated, this glory shines forth both in the Person of Christ and in the redemptive work He accomplished on behalf of His people to make them ***“complete in Him.”*** This completeness is the security and perfection of their whole salvation unto their final glory. This completeness was and is suspended, not upon sinners, but solely upon the Lord Jesus Christ crucified, raised from the dead, and seated at the right hand of the Father ever living to make intercession for His people (***Hebrews 7:25***).

2 Corinthians 4 – (6) For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 5 – (18) And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; (19) To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

All things in the complete salvation of God’s chosen people as they have been redeemed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and given spiritual life by the Holy Spirit are –

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Ephesians 1 – (6) To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved. (7) In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; (8) Wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; (9) Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: (10) That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him: (11) In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will: (12) That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ.

One phrase that summarizes all of God's attributes engaged to save His people fully in and by the Lord Jesus Christ is found in the ***Book of Isaiah***—

Isaiah 45 – (20) Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. (21) Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; A JUST GOD AND A SAVIOUR; there is none beside Me. (22) Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

This glorious description of God, ***“A JUST GOD AND A SAVIOR,”*** corresponds to the great question of questions answered only by the revelation of God in the Gospel of His grace. That question of questions is, ***“How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?” (Job 25:4).*** The issue in salvation is how can a holy and just God (who therefore must punish sin) save, forgive, and bring sinners into His holy presence and still remain true to His immutable character as a just and holy God. The answer is found in the revelation of the glory of God in Jesus Christ. God is just to justify sinners by His free and sovereign grace

through the Lord Jesus Christ and based on the righteousness He accomplished in His obedience unto death as Surety and Substitute of His people –

Isaiah 45 – (23) I have sworn by Myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. (24) Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to Him shall men come; and all that are incensed against Him shall be ashamed. (25) In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

To seek salvation or even the security of salvation based on our faith, repentance, and/or perseverance is to dishonor God and deny the Lord Jesus Christ – ***“I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Galatians 2:21)***. By the same token, to say that one of God’s elect, one whom Christ redeemed, one whom the Holy Spirit has given life and brought to Christ, could fail to be preserved unto glory dishonors and denies God’s glory and denies Christ’s place of preeminence as the complete Savior of His people. God’s glory in Jesus Christ, His glory as both ***“a just God and a Savior,”*** insures the complete salvation of all His chosen people. For Christ to lose even one of them would be the end of God’s glory in salvation. God’s glory is in the Lord Jesus Christ, and He is the security of salvation for His people.

REASON #2

TRUE CHRISTIANS CANNOT LOSE SALVATION BECAUSE GOD IS ALWAYS FAITHFUL TO HIS PROMISES, AND ALL THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE SURE IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

This goes back to God’s glory in that His honor is at issue in the salvation of His people. God has engaged His own reputation in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ to save and bring His elect to final glory. He must fulfill all His promises for His own honor, and, therefore, none of His promises of grace are conditioned upon sinners. For God to condition any of His promises upon sinful men would only insure dishonor for Him.

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All of His precious promises of grace are conditioned upon Jesus Christ alone, and there never was or is any possibility of failure because of the power of God's grace in Christ –

2 Corinthians 1 – (19) For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea. (20) FOR ALL THE PROMISES OF GOD IN HIM ARE YEA, AND IN HIM AMEN, UNTO THE GLORY OF GOD BY US. (21) Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; (22) Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

Hebrews 10 – (21) And having an high priest over the house of God; (22) Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. (23) Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised;)

God will never take back what He has given His people in Christ Jesus. Some argue, "Yes, but you can refuse to take what God has given." The Bible tells us that God's elect will come to a point in their lives where they will not and cannot refuse what God has given because, as we have stated, He will give them ***"a new heart"*** and ***"a new spirit"*** when in the new birth He takes away ***"the stony heart"*** (the natural unwilling and unbending heart) and gives them ***"an heart of flesh"*** (***Ezekiel 36:26***). He also promises that He will put His ***"Spirit"*** within them, cause them to walk in His ***"statutes,"*** and they ***"shall keep"*** His ***"judgments, and do them"*** (***Ezekiel 36:27***). God is faithful to all these promises to His people, and He thereby receives honor and glory –

Lamentations 3 – (22) It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. (23) They are new every morning: GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS.

REASON #3

TRUE CHRISTIANS CANNOT LOSE SALVATION BECAUSE THE GRACE AND POWER OF GOD

THROUGH THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS THE GRACE AND POWER OF THEIR PRESERVATION UNTO GLORY.

As stated before, the Lord Himself said –

John 6 – (37) All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out. (38) For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. (39) And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. (40) And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 10 – (27) My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: (28) And I give unto them eternal life; and THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. (29) My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. (30) I and my Father are one.

The apostle Paul wrote –

Romans 8 – (31) What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? (32) He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? (33) Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. (34) Who is he that comdemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. (35) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (36) As it is written, For your sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. (37) No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that

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loved us. (38) For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, (39) Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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

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

Hebrews 13 – (20) Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, (21) Make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The eternal security of salvation lies in the abilities of the Lord Jesus Christ and Him alone –

2 Timothy – (12) For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.

Hebrews 7 – (24) But this man [Jesus Christ], because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. (25) Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Jude – (24) Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, (25) To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 13 – (5) Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

REASON #4

TRUE CHRISTIANS CANNOT LOSE SALVATION BECAUSE OF THE NATURE AND

TERMS OF THE EVERLASTING COVENANT OF GRACE OF WHICH JESUS CHRIST IS SURETY.

If you claim to be a Christian, ask yourself this question – “Who is surety of your salvation?” Today we normally think of a surety as one who co-signs a loan for another person, promising that if the person cannot pay the debt, the surety will pay it. In the Bible Jesus Christ is revealed to be the one and only Surety of God’s elect who were given to Him before the foundation of the world –

John 17 – (1) These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee: (2) As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him. (3) And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent. (4) I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. (5) And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.

From the beginning it was revealed that Jesus Christ as Surety of His people was always responsible and accountable to pay their debt of sin to God’s law and justice. There was never a time that it could be said that we as sinners could pay that debt. It was purposed and planned by God from the beginning that Jesus Christ, as Surety and Substitute of His people, would pay their sin-debt –

2 Timothy 1 – (8) Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; (9) Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

All the sins of God's elect were imputed (charged) to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Surety, and all the merit of His perfect satisfaction to His Father's justice (His righteousness), which would be accomplished in time by Christ on the cross, was imputed to them. This is why He came into the world –

Hebrews 2 – (14) Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; (15) And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (16) For verily he took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. (17) Wherefore in all things it behoved Him [lit., "He was indebted"] to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

All the conditions and requirements of the covenant of salvation were conditioned upon Jesus Christ as Surety of His people. All those conditions and requirements were fully met by Him as the Substitute of His people. In this work He secured their eternal salvation and all blessings of salvation for them. If we claim to be Christians, the question we must all consider is what was stated before – "Who is surety of our salvation?" For any who believe that Jesus Christ died for all without exception, even dying for those who never believe and repent (meaning those who die and are eternally damned), they must concede the fact that Jesus Christ CANNOT be surety of their salvation. By default this means someone else is their surety, whether they admit it or not. They must consider that they themselves stand as their own surety, because it is they, not Christ, who

made the difference in their own salvation. According to their presumed salvation, Jesus Christ did the same thing for them that He did for those who perish. If Jesus Christ did not secure their salvation, then who did? They may claim to be “Christian” and say that Christ’s death satisfied justice (brought in righteousness, put away all sin, and paid the sin-debt in full), BUT they still believe that all His work really had no power to save them unless they believed and/or repented. They may not realize it, but they have just declared themselves, not Christ, to be the surety of their salvation. If the death of Christ did not insure and secure the complete salvation of all for whom He died, then He is not the surety of salvation and cannot rightfully be considered the Savior.

A true Christian’s salvation and security is founded upon Jesus Christ as his Surety and Substitute. This is taught in the Old Testament prophecies of the New Covenant. The New Covenant is the establishment in time of all the terms of the everlasting covenant of grace made before time. Christ was set up in the everlasting covenant of grace to be the Surety of that covenant – ***“By so much was Jesus made a Surety of a better testament” (Hebrews 7:22)***. The Bible tells us that all of its promises were placed upon Him alone –

Isaiah 9 – (6) For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (7) Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

“The government shall be upon His shoulder” means that the salvation, establishment, growth, prosperity, and victory of the whole church of God would be upon Jesus Christ to accomplish it. It was and is all upon Christ as Surety. Jeremiah prophesied of this and made a distinct contrast between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant –

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Jeremiah 31 – (31) Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: (32) Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: (33) But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. (34) And they shall teach no more every man his 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.

As I have referenced before, Jeremiah also prophesied of this covenant of grace and how it includes the provision and certainty of God never forsaking His people and His people never departing from Him –

Jeremiah 32 – (40) And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.

So true believers are part of an everlasting covenant of grace where all conditions were placed in the hands of Jesus Christ as the Surety of this covenant. This is how King David could express personally and confidently the assurance of his salvation and the certainty of his final glory in heaven as the time of his death drew nearer –

2 Samuel 23 – (5) Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the ***“Surety of a better testament”*** (covenant) (***Hebrews 7:22***), ***“wherefore He is able also to save them to the***

uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25). True believers are not self-saved, self-preserved people. They are the creation of God in Christ, the fruit of what Christ accomplished on Calvary.

This shows a great contrast between the physical nation Israel under the Old Covenant, the blessings of which were conditioned upon them, and true Christians, spiritual Israel, under the New Covenant, the blessings of which are conditioned upon Jesus Christ. The nation Israel under the Old Covenant departed from the Lord. The covenant under which they lived for nearly 1500 years was a conditional covenant towards that nation. And because that nation, like all men by nature, was made up of sinful people, that covenant of law was destined to be broken as the people were destined to fail to meet its conditions. Why was it given?

Romans 5 – (20) Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: (21) That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Old Covenant law was given to Israel to show them their sinfulness and their need of salvation and preservation by God’s grace in Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah. These needs cannot be met by sinners under a covenant of law. It can only be satisfied FOR sinners under the covenant of grace. The terms of this covenant of grace were fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ who saves His people and keeps them from departing and falling away. True believers will continue in the faith of Jesus Christ. They will never totally forsake Christ. They can and sometimes do stray and lose sight of the reality of faith and grace for a while, but they cannot totally apostatize (fall away) from the faith.

WHAT ABOUT “IF”?

Many who insists that the Bible teaches the possibility of losing salvation cite certain passages of Scripture that contain “if” clauses. Each of these must be interpreted and understood within its context. For

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example, one of the most popular verses quoted by those who seek to prove conditional salvation and security is found in **2 Chronicles** –

2 Chronicles 7 – (14) If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

Some believe this promise applies to America (as well as other countries) today, but it does not. Now it is true that any nation who would ***“humble themselves, and pray, and seek [God’s] face, and turn from their wicked ways”*** would be greatly blessed of God, but the whole point of the Old Covenant law was to show that no sinful nation would do this. This was an Old Covenant conditional promise of God made to the nation Israel to prove their sinfulness and rebellion. The nation Israel did not ***“humble themselves, and pray, and seek [God’s] face, and turn from their wicked ways.”*** This is a glaring testimony to the sin and depravity of all earthly nations because earthly nations are made up of sinful people as described in **Romans 3:9-20**. It is only pride and self-righteousness that would make us as Americans think we would or could do any better than Israel of old? The fact is that we are all sinners, and if left to ourselves we would never humble ourselves, pray, seek God, and turn from our wicked ways. This is why salvation always has been and always will be by God’s grace. This is why God’s grace in Christ Jesus provides for all salvation including the new birth of His people and their eternal security in Christ. An example of an “if” clause in the New Testament is found in **Colossians 1** –

Colossians 1 – (21) And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled (22) In the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in His sight: (23) IF YE CONTINUE IN THE FAITH grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister.

The “*if*” here is not conditional in the sense of something believers must do in order to attain or maintain salvation. This “*if*” is EVIDENTIAL in the sense of proof and confirmation of a state that already exists. In other words, continuing in the faith is evidence of true salvation already freely given and attained by God’s grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not a condition sinners must meet in order to be saved or continue to be true Christians. It is an EVIDENCE of being saved and a true Christian rather than a false professor.

How do we know the difference between a CONDITIONAL “*if*” and an EVIDENTIAL “*if*”? The answer is simple. We must determine the covenant to which each statement or promise applies. Is it a covenant of works or a covenant of grace? All the Gospel promises, commands, and encouragements issued from God to His true people under the covenant of grace are fruits and evidences of sinners who have been saved by grace in the Lord Jesus Christ and who are secure in salvation by Him. Whatever conditions were placed upon the nation Israel under the Old Covenant proves the failure of all sinners to attain or maintain God’s favor and blessings by their works. Israel lost their land, went into captivity, and was finally destroyed and dispersed. Would we do any better under such a conditional covenant? No. Therefore we have no justifiable right to look down on the nation Israel as if we were better than they. Their failure proves that if eternal salvation and blessings were conditioned upon our obedience, our faith, our repentance, our perseverance, we would all fail miserably. Recall how the unbelieving Jews thought they were better than the Gentiles. In light of this, the apostle Paul wrote, ***“What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin” (Romans 3:9)***. Are we as Gentiles now to find salvation and security in thinking we are better than the Jews? No. If we think we would keep the law any better than the Jews under the Old Covenant, listen to the words of Scripture – ***“Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?” (Galatians 4:21)***. Do you not realize that if salvation or any part of it were conditioned upon us (sinners) in any way, at any time, to any degree, we would perish just like the nation Israel? Thank God for His grace in Christ Jesus!

REASON #5
TRUE CHRISTIANS CANNOT LOSE THEIR SALVATION BECAUSE THEY
CANNOT BE
CHARGED WITH THEIR SINS; THEY ARE CHARGED WITH THE
RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD HIMSELF.

Those who are truly saved (truly in Christ) cannot be charged with sin because Christ has already been charged, found guilty, cursed, and has taken the punishment of all those sins as their Surety and Substitute –

2 Corinthians 5 – (21) For He [God the Father] hath made Him [God the Son incarnate] to be sin for us, who [Christ] knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

Based on the great legal exchange of the sins of God's elect imputed to Him, the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross gave His life ***"a ransom for many"*** (***Matt. 20:28***), the ***"many"*** whom the Father had given Him before the foundation of the world. Having their sins charged to Him, these sins cannot be justly charged to any of God's elect –

Romans 8 – (33) Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. (34) Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

This does not mean that while on this earth true Christians are no longer sinners. But even though there is much sin in them and done by them, God cannot and will not charge them with sin or condemn them for sin. The Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to destroy, purge, remove, and take away all the sins of all His people, and He has accomplished this great work. All the sins of God's elect were laid upon Christ. He bore them in His own body on the tree, endured and satisfied the wrath of God for them and bore them away. As the prophet Daniel stated concerning the work of the Messiah, He finished their transgressions, made an end of their sins, made reconciliation for their iniquities, and brought in everlasting

righteousness for them (**Daniel 9:24**). Christ redeemed His people from the curse of the law (**Galatians 3:13**). Through the effectual, redemptive work of Christ, God Almighty has so thoroughly blotted out the sins of His elect that He does not hold the debt of these sins against them. As I mentioned before, King David wrote of this when he wrote of the non-imputation of sin. He was deeply convicted of his own personal sin and corruption, yet he rejoiced in the forgiveness of his sins when he wrote –

Psalm 32 – (1) Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. (2) Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

The apostle Paul was inspired by God the Holy Spirit to give the full meaning of David's words concerning the non-imputation of sin –

Romans 4 – (6) Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, (7) Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. (8) Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

This shows us the full meaning of the non-imputation of sin for a true Christian:

(1) It means his sins have been imputed to Jesus Christ. The forgiveness of sins by covering refers to the mercy-seat in the tabernacle where the high priest sprinkled the blood of a lamb. This was a picture of Christ dying for the sins of God's elect imputed to Him – ***“To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, NOT IMPUTING THEIR TRESPASSES UNTO THEM; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:19)***. This is how Jesus Christ was made sin for His people – ***“For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21a)***. God is just, and He must punish all sin with death. He could not simply refuse to impute sins to those He determined to save and remain consistent with His holy and just character as God. He had to

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impute them to His Son who willingly took them upon Himself as the Surety of God's elect and who suffered unto death to pay the penalty.

(2) It also means Christ's righteousness (the merits of His obedience unto death) has been imputed to God's elect. God not imputing sin to His people did not leave them in some neutral state. God imputed righteousness to them. This is the justification of all God's people. Because Christ took their guilt, they are not guilty. Because Christ paid the full penalty of all their sins, they are righteous before God in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is their righteousness. This is how God's people are ***“made the righteousness of God IN HIM” (2 Corinthians 5:21b).***

(3) It means spiritual life will be freely given and imparted to all for whom Christ died – ***“in whose spirit there is no guile” (Psalm 32:2).*** ***“Guile”*** does not mean sinless perfection within a believer. It describes the natural darkness, deception, and dishonesty of unbelief that rules all spiritually dead (unregenerate) people. It is that which keeps sinners from being honest about their sins and keeps them from seeing their urgent need to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for all forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and glory. All to whom God does not impute sin (and to whom God imputes righteousness) will without fail be born again by the Holy Spirit. They will be convinced in their new hearts that there is no hope of salvation for them but by the grace of God in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. By God-given faith they will run to Christ and cling to Him for all salvation.

REASON #6

TRUE CHRISTIANS CANNOT LOSE THEIR SALVATION BECAUSE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS BY WHICH THEY ARE JUSTIFIED IS THE IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS OF JESUS CHRIST, THE VERY RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.

One thing true Christians are brought by the Holy Spirit to know and understand is that the very best of the righteousness of man can never save or preserve him. First, we have already seen that fallen, sinful man actually has no righteousness at all. But we need to see also that even when man was righteous, he could not save or preserve himself. When was man ever

righteous? Adam was righteous in the Garden of Eden before he fell and brought the whole human race into sin and death. Even though Adam was righteous, it was by virtue of human righteousness which is mutable because man is a created being. Eternal God, the Creator, is the only one who is immutable in His nature and essence. Given the opportunity to exalt himself and become equal with God, Adam chose to disobey and, as a result, lost all his righteousness. This is recorded in **Genesis 3**, but it is also recorded how God promised to send the Messiah (revealed as the seed of woman – **Genesis 3:15**) to save His people from sin. This speaks to the nature of His Person as Godman (**“Immanuel ... God with us” – Matthew 1:23**) and as the salvation of His people (**Matthew 1:21**). God would send His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to establish righteousness for His people, but not the righteousness of a mere man. It is the very **“RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD”** –

Romans 1 – (16) For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (17) For therein is THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

The righteousness of God which is by Jesus Christ is a perfect, eternal, unchangeable righteousness which God will never take away. It cannot be removed or even contaminated with sin. It is the righteousness of God in Christ as it is the merit of Christ the Godman and His work of obedience unto death –

Romans 3 – (24) Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: (25) Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; (26) To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

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Romans 10 – (4) For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Some may argue that this righteousness only benefits those who believe. This is true, but the question is this – Does our believing result in righteousness by which we are justified, or does righteousness imputed by which we are justified result in our believing? The Bible teaches us that the perfect, spotless righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to His people results in their believing as even faith is the gift of God's grace (***Ephesians 2:8-10***).

REASON #7

**TRUE BELIEVERS CANNOT LOSE SALVATION BECAUSE
THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS THEIR MEDIATOR, ADVOCATE, AND
INTERCESSOR.**

The Lord Jesus Christ ever lives to make intercession for His people, and He will never cease to do this on their behalf –

Isaiah 53 – (12) Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He hath poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Romans 8 – (34) Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us.

Hebrews 7 – (25) Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.

1 John 2 – (1) My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus

Christ the righteous: (2) And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

We need to note that verses such as the above cited **1 John 2:1-2**, where Christ's propitiatory work for His people is described as ***"for the sins of the whole world,"*** do not mean every individual in the world without exception. Another example where we can see that this term (***"the whole world"***) does not mean every individual without exception is found in **1 John 5:19** – ***"And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness [lit., the wicked one]."*** The distinction here is between the true people of God and the children of the devil who are so connected to the fallen world that they have no interest in the things that glorify God in Christ Jesus. It is important that we see this distinction in dealing with the salvation and security of a true believer because if the Lord Jesus Christ were ***"the propitiation"*** for every individual in the world without exception, then every individual without exception would be saved and secure in Christ. We know this is not the case because the Bible teaches us that multitudes have and will die in unbelief and perish in their sins. The ***"whole world"*** in **1 John 2:1-2** has reference to God's elect people over the whole world (the ones whom God chose out of every tribe and nation over the whole world). In other words, salvation is not just for the Jews but also for God's elect among the Gentiles.

All of the verses cited above show us that as long as the Lord Jesus Christ stands to make intercession for the people He redeemed, they can never be lost or condemned. The righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ (the Advocate of His people) has everlasting merit to justify them before God. His blood ever pleads for them as their complete righteousness before God. For them to lose their salvation, Christ would have to cease or suspend His intercession for them, and He would have to be removed from His throne. God's Word tells us that this can never happen. Christ lives forever to make intercession for His people, and this is part of His everlasting love for them. The apostle John wrote that ***"when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end"*** (**John 13:35**). This means His love for His people was of such magnitude that He was

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determined to finish what He began – their complete redemption and salvation unto heaven's glory. He died for those whom He loves, and He intercedes for them forever. As stated earlier, nothing can separate them from God's love in Christ Jesus (**Romans 8:35-39**).

REASON #8

TRUE CHRISTIANS CANNOT LOSE SALVATION BECAUSE OF THE CONTINUAL INDWELLING PRESENCE AND POWER OF GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT.

John 14 – (16) And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; (17) Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

2 Corinthians 1 – (20) For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. (21) Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; (22) Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

Ephesians – (10) That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him: (11) In Whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will: (12) That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ. (13) In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in Whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, (14) Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.

This is the reality of Christ Himself dwelling within His people BY HIS SPIRIT and BY HIS WORD –

Galatians 2 – (20) I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me.

Romans 8 – (9) But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. (10) And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. (11) But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.

When He brings about their new birth, God the Holy Spirit Himself enters and permanently indwells each one of God's people. He will never leave nor forsake the true children of God. Many object to this by quoting what King David prayed in one of his penitent psalms – ***Psalms 51 – (11) Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.*** But we must understand that David was not expressing here his theological or doctrinal position. He was expressing his feelings and experience as a sinner in need of God's comforting presence in Christ. David had not lost his salvation, but he lost the "JOY" of that salvation (***Psalms 51:12***). Even though he felt as if the Spirit of God had left him, this was not the case. True believers can "grieve" the Holy Spirit, which is a way of expressing God's displeasure over sin, but they cannot lose the presence of the Holy Spirit – ***"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, WHEREBY YE ARE SEALED UNTO THE DAY OF REDEMPTION" (Ephesians 4:30).*** True believers can "quench" the influences of the Holy Spirit when in their Christian walk and warfare they disregard His truth (***1 Thessalonians 5:19***), but they cannot be totally forsaken by the Holy Spirit. When a true Christian strays from his walk of faith, rest assured that the Lord will not let him totally leave the faith. God will bring that saved sinner back to Himself by the power of the indwelling presence and influence of the Holy Spirit through the graces of repentance and Godly sorrow over sin.

REASON #9

**TRUE CHRISTIANS CANNOT LOSE THEIR SALVATION BECAUSE
GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE NEW BIRTH HAS GIVEN THEM A NEW
HEART AND A NEW SPIRIT.**

1 John 2 – (18) Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. (19) They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. (20) But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

1 John 2 – (24) Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. (25) And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. (26) These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. (27) But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him.

One of the most difficult and misunderstood passages of Scripture in the Bible is found in **1 John 3**. Read the following portion of this chapter keeping in mind that the apostle is writing of the difference between (1) those who are false Christians and who had fallen away from the faith revealing they were never saved, and (2) true children of God who could not and would not fall away but who would continue by the grace of God to believe, follow, and cling to Christ. I have added some commentary to help you in reading and understanding –

1 John 3 – (4) Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. (5) And ye know that He [Jesus Christ] was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. [In Christ

personally there is no sin, but the point here is that as believers are considered and stand in Him as their Surety and Substitute, they have no sin charged to them.] **(6) Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him.** [All who continue in Christ, clinging by faith to Him, do not sin in the sense they do not forsake Him. All who forsake Christ have never seen Him with the eye of faith and have never known Him savingly. – cf. 1 John 2:18-19] **(7) Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. (8) He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. (9) Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin;** [Those born of God do not forsake Christ] **FOR HIS SEED** [Christ's offspring, God's true children] **REMAINETH IN HIM:** [continue with Christ] **and he cannot sin,** [A true child of God cannot totally forsake Christ.] **because he is born of God.** [Because he is born again by the Spirit.] Having been born of God by the Holy Spirit, true believers can never be lost again. They can never totally forsake the Lord Jesus Christ unto apostasy (damnation). As stated before, they are all kept (preserved) by the grace, power, and goodness of Almighty God through the Lord Jesus Christ who is their salvation.

PART 3

MISUNDERSTOOD PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE

There are passages of Scripture that many often quote in their attempts to prove one can be saved and then lost. Two of them are found in *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. Let's consider each one.

Hebrews 6 – (4) For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, (5) And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, (6) 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.

Some claim this could only describe a truly saved person falling away from the faith and being lost, even after having been saved. This is far from the truth of the whole of Scripture and the truth of salvation by God's grace in Christ. Even though to some this text may seem to teach that a true believer can lose salvation, this view cannot hold under the scrutiny of the whole of Scripture that teaches that once a sinner is saved by grace he is secure in grace unto final glory. Also, if this passage teaches that sinners can be saved but lose that salvation by falling away, then it also teaches the impossibility of sinners ever regaining salvation. Others believe this text does not teach a loss of salvation but rather a loss of rewards in heaven for believers. Again, such a view can neither stand the test of the whole of Scripture nor the test of the immediate context of ***Hebrews 6***. The ***Book of Hebrews*** was written to a group of Jews who professed belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who were being tempted under threat of persecution to deny Christ and return to Judaism.

There are two views of this text that, unlike the ones mentioned above, do not deny the Scriptures and the Gospel of complete salvation by God's grace through Jesus Christ. The first view is what some call the hypothetical view which asserts that the author is writing of something that cannot happen but uses it hypothetically as a warning and encouragement for true Christians to press on in the faith. This view stresses to the true

believer that there is no hope of salvation apart from believing in Jesus Christ and repenting from dead works and idolatry. Those who are truly saved can never fully and finally apostatize from the faith, but if it were possible to do this (which it is not), they could not be recovered from that state of apostasy. There would be no hope for them.

The second view is that this passage describes false professors of the true faith. They had all the external benefits and advantages of being under the preaching of the true Gospel. They claimed to believe it unto salvation, but not having been born again by the Holy Spirit, their claim was merely intellectual agreement but without true heart faith and repentance. After having ***“tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,”*** because of some other allegiance or crisis, they fell away rejecting Christ, calling Him accursed. This revealed their true colors (*cf. Matthew 13:20-22; 1 John 2:18-19*). People may have some difficulty with this because the words of ***Hebrews 6:4-5*** seem to describe true believers, but we if we interpret these verses in light of the whole of Scripture, we can only conclude that once a sinner is saved by God’s grace in Christ, that sinner is eternally secure in Christ.

Another frequently misunderstood passage on this matter of the eternal security of the saved is also found in the ***Epistle to the Hebrews*** –

Hebrews 10 – (26) For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, (27) But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. (28) He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: (29) Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

Again, the writer is dealing with Jews who professed to believe in Jesus Christ for all salvation. Some of them, however, had begun to fall away by not holding firm to ***“the profession of our faith” (Hebrews 10:23)*** and by ***“forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” (Hebrews 10:25).***

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

They were refusing to confess Christ publicly in order to avoid persecution. The writer of *Hebrews* teaches us that these are the first steps towards final apostasy which expose that one's profession of faith was never true salvation. He writes, "***For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth,***" i.e. willfully and knowingly reject God's way of salvation by Jesus Christ, "***there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,***" but only God's wrath in Judgment. This does not teach that a true believer can lose his salvation. It teaches that those who have made a profession of faith and have associated themselves with the church are in danger of God's eternal judgment if they turn back to Judaism, which is a denial of salvation by God's grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. These people outwardly seem to be born again, but they are not truly so. To abandon Christ and His sacrifice (His blood and righteousness) and to return to Judaism would show that they had never truly trusted Christ in the first place.

To summarize – The Bible teaches that a true Christian, a truly saved person, has been brought in the power of the Holy Spirit from spiritual death to spiritual life as evidenced by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, by repentance of dead works and former idolatry, and by their obedience in perseverance unto final glory. A true Christian is one whom God has brought by His grace past the point of no return. He has a new heart and a new spirit within himself as created and given by God the Holy Spirit in the new birth. The law of God has been written on his heart, and he cannot deny Christ, for Christ is his only hope of salvation.

CONCLUSION

As I stated in the beginning, my hope and prayer for all of you who have read these pages is that you will use the information herein as a tool to study the Word of God and examine yourselves in the light of what God has revealed concerning His great glory in the salvation of sinners by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe this should be a top priority for everyone who claims to be a Christian as there is so much deception, ignorance, and confusion in the world concerning this subject. Self-examination has become a lost art, so to speak, as so many today simply take their claim of salvation and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ for granted. Please allow me to emphasize the words of commandment in the Bible given to all who claim faith in Christ –

2 Corinthians 13 – (5) Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

We are to test ourselves and our claim of salvation (of being a Christian) by the proper standard set down within God’s verbally inspired Word (the Bible). God has given us clear definitions and distinctions whereby we test ourselves. He has not left us to our own ways and thoughts. The commandment here is to examine ourselves as to whether or not we are ***“IN THE FAITH.”*** Notice, this is not an examination as to whether or not faith is in us or as to whether or not we have enough faith. No one has faith IN themselves or has enough faith if their faith is not founded on the truth of the Bible and fixed on the proper object of faith which is the Lord Jesus Christ and His work of redemption for His people. The apostle Paul wrote that the necessity of this self-examination should be impressed upon us because it is vital to our eternal well-being – ***“except ye be reprobates,”*** i.e. totally disqualified and rejected as true believers. But notice what he was inspired to write in ***verse 6*** –

2 Corinthians 13 – (6) But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.

It was not Paul's desires, nor is it my desire, simply to point out what is wrong and exposes everyone as false Christians. It was Paul's desire, and it is my desire, that in going through the Biblical process of self-examination all who read the Word of God will emerge from this with a greater assurance of salvation (of being a true Christian) based on the proper foundation of God's Word. For this to be our experience, we must be inspired and guided by God the Holy Spirit through the means of God's Word as He leads us more than ever to look to and depend upon the Lord Jesus Christ and Him alone for all salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and final glory in heaven. May the Lord be with us all as He brings us to be submitted to Him in His Word.