

Behold the Lamb

Publications

Simply Christ

Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

Volume 16

*Thirteen Gospel Messages from our
Weekly SIMPLY CHRIST Newsletter!*

Simply Christ

The Apostle Paul spoke of a time when Christian people would *“heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”* II Timothy 4:3-4. A fable is something which is “made up.” Fables find a home in the church because they tell people what they already want to hear. Sadly, we live in an hour where the hearts of many would rather believe a fable than the record of God’s word.

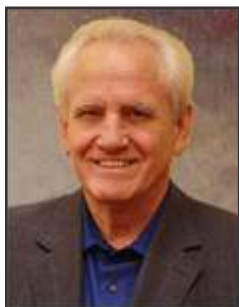
You can prove almost anything by using only the scriptures which support your belief. If you really want to know if your belief is the truth, go to God’s word to see if it can be disproved by the scripture. The truth is not afraid of the truth!

“But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

Matthew 15:9

The purpose of Simply Christ and other Behold the Lamb

Publications is to share the gospel of Christ according to what the scriptures actually say. We are not defenders of denomination, dogma, religious tradition, or the newest religious fad. We have set our heart to simply say what the word of God actually says.



Leroy Surface

As a young man I was told by an elder minister that I should just accept what the leaders of “our movement” told us was true rather than believe



Keith Surface

what I saw the scriptures to be saying. I chose to believe that the word of God is true. Anyone that will do the same will find the gospel of Christ to be a simple message with the power to make everyone who believes it ...free indeed!

Simply Christ

Gospel Insight

Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

Volume 16

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FINDING ANTICHRIST

Every American President in my lifetime has been declared to be the Antichrist by one group or another. Usually this is based on manipulation of numbers, letters, dates, or other similar theories. The same goes for every leader of the USSR or Russia, the United Nations, and of course the European Union. Finding “the Antichrist” is almost like finding the legendary American creature called “Bigfoot.” Someone is always seeing him, but does he truly exist?

Most people are surprised when we point out what the scripture actually says about “*antichrist*.” The Greek word translated as “*antichrist*” simply means “*an opponent of the Messiah*,” and it is used only five times in the Bible, and only by the Apostle John. John first introduces this word, saying, “*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.*” I John 2:18. Nineteen hundred years ago, the Apostle John declared “*even now are there many antichrists.*” He was not speaking of a single man, but was speaking of many “*opponents of Christ.*”

The next thing John tells us about “antichrist” is this: “*Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.*” I John 2:22. John understood that everyone who denied that Jesus is the Christ was an opponent of Christ, therefore they were “*antichrists.*”

The apostle then tells us, “*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.*” I John 4:3. While it is certainly true that anyone who denies that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Christ who came in human flesh does not know God, the confession of a “spirit” is different than the confession of a man. A man can speak one thing while his spirit confesses something opposite. If the “spirit” in a minister does not manifest that Christ has come into their flesh, that minister is not of God. They may speak great words, but if they walk in uncleanness and excess, the Apostle Paul said, “*...they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.*” Philippians 3:18.

Finally, John reaffirms who “antichrist” is, saying, “*For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus*

Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.” II John 1:7. These “antichrists” were religious deceivers who were already in the world nineteen hundred years ago. They have been here ever since.

The following passage written by the Apostle Paul is often referenced as speaking of Antichrist.

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.” II Thessalonians 2:3-8. Let’s take a closer look at what this passage actually says.

“...except there come a falling away first” The Greek word translated “*falling away*” means “*a defection from truth.*” This was already happening while Paul was yet alive. He told the Galatians “*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.*” Galatians 1:6. The Book of Hebrews seems to have been written because so many Hebrew believers were “*falling away*” Hebrew 6:6 from the truth of Christ back to the Law of Moses. Paul told us, “*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.*” I Timothy 4:1-2.

“...and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition...” The Greek word translated as “*man*” speaks of “*a human being.*” It can be “*man*” or “*men.*” Remember, John told us “*...even now are there many antichrists.*”

“...he as God sitteth in the temple of God...” Prophecy teachers tell us this will be fulfilled after the “*Temple of God*” is rebuilt in

Jerusalem, but they simply ignore the fact that *“the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands...”* Acts 7:48, 17:24. The same apostle who told us this *“man of sin”* would sit in the *“temple of God”* told us multiple times, ***“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God...”*** I Corinthians 3:16-17, 6:19, II Corinthians 6:16, Ephesians 2:21. There will never again be a building of wood or stone that God will accept as His temple. Even the New Jerusalem has *“no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.”* Revelation 21:22. This *“man of sin”* will be discovered sitting in *“the church”* basking in applause, praise, and worship, as though he was God.

“...the mystery of iniquity doth already work.” Just as the Apostle John said, *“...even now are there many antichrists,”* Paul told us this *“mystery of iniquity”* about *“the man of sin”* was already working nineteen hundred years ago. False teachers had already come to Corinth, Galatia, Pergamos, and Thyatira. II Corinthians 11:3, Galatians 3:1, Revelation 2:14-15, Revelation 2:20. Jude said these false teachers who *“crept in”* were *“...ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness...”* Jude 1:4.

“...only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.” The Greek word translated *“letteth”* means *“to hold down.”* This is what the Apostles were doing. They were holding back the false teachers who were creeping into the church. Paul told the Ephesians, ***“...after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock”*** Acts 20:29. The Apostle Peter wrote that ***“after my decease ...there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies...”*** II Peter 1:15, 2:1. After the apostles passed off the scene the *“antichrists”* came in like a flood and led the church into the great “dark ages.” As men exalted themselves into the place of God, Popes, Cardinals, Bishops, and Priests became rulers over the people of God. The church, which is supposed to be God’s Temple, became a place for sinful, deceitful, and arrogant men to be exalted.

Many people who are expecting a world leader called “the Antichrist” to appear, go to church on Sunday and applaud men who have set themselves up in the *“temple of God,”* speaking “fables” and *“doctrines of devils.”* I Timothy 4:1. Few understand that they are seeing the *“man of sin”* in action. He promises everything your heart desires, he assures sinful people of entrance into Heaven’s glory,

and he continually receives the tributes of “gold and silver” from the flock. As there were many antichrists nineteen centuries ago, certainly there are many more today.

“...BUT I BELIEVE!”

One night in a dream I saw the second coming of Jesus Christ. I was rising to meet the Lord in the air when the dream went backwards in time to a period shortly before Jesus’ appearance in the clouds and then began to move forward again.

I found myself standing on top of one of many open-top boxcars on a train speeding down a railroad track. The boxcars were filled with people, some of which I knew. It had the appearance of a social gathering where people had glasses in their hands and snacked on “party foods.” In retrospect, I have often considered these boxcars were churches or groups of church people. As I stood there, my mind was conscience of the coming of Jesus Christ, which I had just seen. I got the attention of a man I recognized, who reached up and shook my hand. I grabbed his hand and spoke these words: “Jesus is coming! We’ve got to be real!” The man agreed with what I spoke but seemed embarrassed that I was speaking it at that moment. I knew he did not understand the urgency, so I held to his hand and repeated the statement. “Jesus is coming! We’ve got to be real!” This time the man tried to ignore my grip on his hand and attempted to continue his socializing with others in the boxcar.

It was then I reached the point where the dream initially began and Jesus appeared in the sky accompanied with a host of angels and an innumerable company of saints. I was still holding on to the man’s hand when I began to feel myself lifted up to meet Christ in the air. I loved the man and did not want to turn loose of his hand but very soon my grip broke as I was lifted away. The man’s attention was turned upward, and I saw the disbelief in his eyes as he spoke these words: “No ...but I believe!” He spoke the same words again, but the disbelief was turning to horror. “No ...but I believe!”

As I was lifted higher and higher away from the train, others in the boxcars began to notice what was happening. They all cried out with the same words: “No ...but I believe!” I watched as the train sped

down the track until the track and land ended and the train began to tumble into the abyss. Almost in unison, everyone on the train was screaming, “No ...but I believe!”

This dream ended in great horror for those who thought their “believing” would save them. Somehow, faith in Jesus Christ had been substituted for an empty mental assent. There is no doubt that we are saved *“by grace ...through faith”* Ephesians 2:8, and we also *“stand by faith.”* Romans 11:20. “Saving faith,” however, is always based upon belief of the truth of the gospel. **If just believing “anything” constitutes “faith,” then believing a lie would also be faith.** Yet Paul warned of those who received *“...strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”* II Thessalonians 2:10-12. A suicide bomber may believe his death will guarantee himself Heaven, but his firm belief is not faith. He is only believing a lie. Believing a lie never brings you into the promises of God.

True “saving faith” brings such a response from God unto the believer that the existence of such faith is evident for all to see. The Apostle John told us *“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness (evidence) in himself...”* I John 5:10. The Biblical evidence of “saving faith” is as a city set on a hill. It cannot be hidden. Let’s look at the biblical evidence of “saving faith.”

“God ...bare them witness ...purifying their hearts by faith.” Acts 15:8-9. Saving faith brings a clean heart to the believer. It is the promise of the gospel. God said, *“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you:”* Ezekiel 36:26. The Apostle told us *“the blood of Christ”* would *“purge your conscience (inner thoughts and feelings) from dead works to serve the living God”* Hebrews 9:14.

“...sanctified by faith that is in me.” Acts 26:18. Jesus went to the cross to *“that he might sanctify the people with his own blood...”* Hebrews 13:12. Through faith in Jesus Christ, sin is washed from our heart and nature by his precious blood. John reminds us that Jesus *“...loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”* Revelation 1:5.

“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness...” Romans 10:10. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we are transformed from one

who was born a sinner into one who has been made righteous by the work of Christ. Paul tells us *“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”* Romans 5:19.

Paul told us to *“examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith...”* II Corinthians 13:5. If our “faith” has not brought us what the Bible says true “faith” brings, then we should examine whether we are in the faith. Your eternity depends upon it!

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SAVED

What does it mean to be *“saved?”* Before we can answer this question, we must consider what the word “saved” actually means. The Greek word translated as *“saved”* in the Bible means *“to deliver or protect.”* Think of a person trapped in a burning building. The “savior” in this scenario might be the fireman who rescued (or delivered) them from the flames. If a person had been kidnapped, those who delivered them from the kidnappers would be the “savior” in that situation. In each of these examples, a person is “saved,” or rescued, from danger or death. Now to understand scriptural “salvation” we must discover what Jesus actually saves us from.

After John the Baptist was born, the Holy Ghost came upon Zechariah, John’s father, and he prophesied of the coming Messiah and the salvation he would bring. He said God *has “...raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us.”* Luke 1:69-71. This great *“deliverance”* from our enemies is the essence of salvation. But then, who are our enemies?

Some tell us salvation is our deliverance from God’s punishment for sin, but since salvation is *“...from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us,”* would not that then make God the enemy? Such a thought is absurd! God did not hate us. The Bible says, *“God so loved the world.”* John 3:16.

Paul gave insight into who our enemies are when he wrote, *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities,*

against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Ephesians 6:12. Our enemies are not other people. They are Satan and the powers of darkness. If you think your enemy has a human face, you have already lost the battle because *“we wrestle not against flesh and blood.”*

Our greatest enemy, however, is not Satan, but something he brought upon us through his deception and rebellion. This great enemy is called Sin. Sin is not just an act, but a spiritual power that has dominion in the heart of fallen humanity. Jesus described sin as a slave master John 8:34, and Paul also spoke of the lost person as being a *“servant (slave) of sin.”* Romans 6:17. He described sin as a power that once dwelt in him which caused him to commit the actions of sin. Romans 7:17.

Sin, Satan and the power of darkness are the great enemies which Jesus came to *“deliver and protect”* us from. This is the same message the angel gave to Joseph, saying, *“...thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.”* Matthew 1:21. The Apostle Paul describes how Jesus Christ delivered us from sin, saying, *“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”* Romans 6:6. The Bible also describes our deliverance from Satan, saying, *“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; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”* Hebrews 2:14-15.

Now consider this: If you were trapped in a burning building and someone came to save you, would you be “saved” if they left you in the building dying in the flames? Of course not! You would only be saved if you had been delivered from the building and its flames. Why is it then that in church theology we declare that *“saved”* people are still under sin’s dominion? Isn’t that a contradiction? **There is really no such thing as a saved sinner. Either you are a sinner, or you are now one who has been saved from sin.** Yes, a person who had been saved from a burning building could return to the fire and perish in the building, but they were not saved from the fire unless they had been rescued out of it. Even so a person Christ

has saved from sin could possibly return back to the bondage of sin, but in doing so they have abandoned their salvation. Peter describes this situation, saying, ***“For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.”*** II Peter 2:20. Peter goes on to say, *“But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”* II Peter 2:22. We have been washed from our sins, but those who return to it are returning to their *“wallowing in the mire.”* If you were saved, you were delivered from sin by the blood of Christ. If you are back in sin, it is because you turned back to something which Christ had delivered you from.

“Salvation” is the work Christ accomplished upon the cross to deliver us from sin. The term *“saved”* describes those who have now been rescued from sin’s dominion; from its power; and from its presence. So, the next time you say, “I am saved,” answer this one question: “What are you saved from?”

WAS JESUS PERFECT?

How many times have you seen someone hold a newborn baby in their arms and say, “He’s (or she’s) just perfect? I sometimes ask how we can have so many perfect babies but not a single perfect man. Of course, we all know the reason for this. When we see the infant, we are looking at physical features and caught up in amazement at the wonder of this tiny life. When we look at the man, we are looking at his flaws and shortcomings. So, the real issue is, “What kind of perfection are we looking for.”

This takes us back to the title of this article. Was Jesus perfect? Well, I think we all would say, “Absolutely!” And I agree. But then was Jesus the perfect child? Before you answer this, consider a twelve-year-old boy who, with no word, just leaves his parents while they are on a journey together, causing them to search for him for over three days while fearing what might have happened to him. Jesus did this. The Bible says *“...that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.”* Luke 2:46. Mary did not think this was the

way a “perfect” child should behave. When they found Jesus, she asked, ***“Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.”*** Luke 2:48. Can you imagine the turmoil he put his mother through in this situation?

What about being the perfect preacher? What would you say about a preacher, rightfully or wrongfully, who came into your church and turned over the book tables and coffee stands, dumping everything on the floor or throwing it all out in the parking lot? Then what if he took a whip and chased half the deacons and ministers out into the street? I can hear it now. “That preacher has no love!” “He’s not Christlike at all.” “He has no respect for the house of God.” “He is so self-righteousness.” No one would call someone who did these things the perfect preacher, but Jesus did those things.

What about being the perfect Pastor? James told us, ***“If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man...”*** James 3:2. Well, Jesus certainly did not fit that description. He offended the Pharisees. He offended the Jews. He offended the multitudes. He even offended his disciples. In fact, the night before his crucifixion, he said, ***“All ye shall be offended because of me this night...”*** Mark 14:27. Jesus’ words offended so many that the thousands that followed him forsook him, including many of his disciples. Jesus certainly would not be considered the perfect Pastor, at least not by the way we judge perfection.

Those in Jesus’ day did not consider him to be perfect. He was accused of being a sinner, a wine bibber, a glutton, and having a devil. Jesus failed the Pharisee’s sin test and he most likely would have failed your “perfection” test. Yet, still, Jesus was without sin, and he was in fact perfect. It’s just that biblical perfection (completion) has little to do with our ideas of fleshly perfection. Jesus had no sin in his heart or nature and he did not sin. The Bible says he ***“...was in all points tempted (tested) like as we are, yet without sin.”*** Hebrews 4:15. The Greek word translated “tempted” in this passage means “to test.” Jesus never desired or committed sin, but he endured the same hardships, trials, and attacks which are common to all. He lived in a sinful world just like us, but never once did it have any place in his heart or life.

In the book of Hebrews, we discover that a person is completed (perfected) when both the “inner man” (your heart and nature) and the “outer man” (the life you live in your body) are cleansed from sin. This can only be accomplished only by the blood of Christ. This is why the Apostle exhorts the saints to have “...*boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, ...having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*”

Hebrews 10:19-22.

I know many men and women of God who would never meet anyone’s standard of “perfection,” but they are not sinners, neither in their heart nor in their walk. Christ has taken their sin away. They have a righteous heart, a righteous nature, and live a righteous life. They don’t get everything right. They don’t do everything like I think it should be done. And they don’t see eye to eye with me on everything. But they are not sinners! They are the children of God!

PORNOGRAPHY IS ADULTERY

Religious surveys from several years ago told us that 68% of men in evangelical churches along with 53% of the pastors regularly view pornography. You would think that exposing such numbers would cause shock and repentance, but actually the opposite is true. When people see that such a large percentage of church people are involved in such a thing, they feel consoled that they are not the only one partaking of the uncleanness. It’s as though they think if so many are doing it then it must be normal or even acceptable. This is what the Apostle Paul called “strong delusion.” II Thessalonians 2:11.

The use of pornography is adultery! The use of pornography is an act of fornication. There is no statement that is more supported by the word of God than this. Jesus himself told us, “*But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*” Matthew 5:28. What is the use of pornography but the act of looking upon an unclothed woman to stimulate and fulfill your lusts?

According to Jesus’ words, a married man that uses pornography is an adulterer before God. An unmarried man that uses pornography is what the Bible calls a “*fornicator*” or “*whoremonger*.” The same

is true for women who use pornography. If both a man and a wife use pornography together, they have what is called an open marriage. They have perverted the sanctity of marriage by bringing the uncleanness of others into their bed.

What is equally if not more shocking, is the percentage of pastors who confess to using pornography. If these survey percentages are true, then over half the pastors in evangelical churches are adulterers and they are ministering their adulterous spirit to those who hear them. Some of these pastors think because they openly admit it, they are somehow demonstrating their humility. No! These are those the Apostle Paul spoke of whose *“glory is in their shame.”* *Philippians 3:9.*

Those who tell you that adulterous lusts are normal for a child of God are lying to you. They may believe it, but it is still a lie. The Apostle Peter told us the redeemed have *“...escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”* *II Peter 1:4.* The very essence of salvation is the cleansing of our hearts from sin by the work of the blood of Christ. I do not present myself as your example, but I can honestly tell you that Jesus washed the filth out of my unclean heart over forty years ago, and has kept it clean from lusts all these years.

Those involved in pornography are in danger of eternal damnation and most do not even know it. They are dangling over the Lake of Fire, hanging only by a thread which could break at any time. Their pastors and teachers tell them they are alright, but it is not the truth. The word of God is clear, *“but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”* *Hebrews 13:4.* Paul also told us *“Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, ... shall inherit the kingdom of God.”* *I Corinthians 6:9-10.* Those who tell you differently are the ones deceiving you.

I speak these things to those involved in this perversion because I care for your soul more than I care for your admiration. Jesus Christ shed his blood to take away your sin and purify your heart. You can continue ignoring God's word, and join those of whom the Bible says, *“... God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness”* *II Thessalonians 2:11-12,* or you can be one who lays hold of Jesus Christ in repentance and faith

until he washes the uncleanness from your heart. Your eternity hangs in the balance.

A NEW NATURE

Six hundred years before Christ appeared, God laid out the terms of our covenant of redemption. He describes this “*New Covenant*,” saying, “*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.*” Jeremiah 31:33. This prophecy is used twice in the book of Hebrews to reveal the New Covenant Jesus established when he shed his blood on the cross. It shows the work of Christ as changing the very heart and nature of a person, because God’s law is written in “*their hearts*” and “*their inward parts.*” This speaks of both a new heart and a new nature.

The Apostle Paul describes this new “nature” in his epistle to the Romans. He says, “*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.*” Romans 2:14. Paul saw firsthand how this “*New Covenant*” of redemption was fulfilled in the gentile believers. The nature of these had been changed from sinful to righteous. Their righteous lifestyle did not proceed from a commandment, but from the new heart and nature Christ had imparted unto them.

Those who are born of God keep His commandments, but not because they have a list of commandments to keep. Paul said they “*do by nature the things contained in the Law.*” When Christ comes into a person, everything in their heart and nature changes. Their desires and longings are different. Sin, which they used to enjoy, is repulsive to them. As a newborn babe desires the mother’s milk, so these desire the things of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ which abides in them can be seen in their thoughts, words, and deeds. It is to such a person John writes: “*And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.*” 1 John 3:24.

Some claim the redeemed have both a righteous nature and a sinful nature, and these are in a constant battle inside a person. This teaching is truly absurd. Many an alcoholic has been found to be both gentle and violent. When they are drunk they may become aggressive and violent. When they sober up they may become apologetic and meek. Yet such a person does not have two natures. The alcohol only removes inhibitions so the violence can be manifest in their actions. When circumstances cause someone who professes Christ to engage in sinful activity, it is not because they have two natures, but because the restraints of their true nature have been torn down for a season.

There is a scriptural passage which many use to promote the theory of two natures, but it actually says the opposite of what they suppose. The Apostle Paul makes a powerful and absolute statement, saying, *“Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”* Galatians 5:16. To *“walk in the Spirit”* is to simply walk in this *“New Covenant”* of the grace of God. Anyone who does so *“shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”* Paul gives the reason for this assurance in his next words. He says, *“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”* Galatians 5:17. Many present this to mean *“the flesh”* and *“the Spirit”* are at war inside of a person, but nothing could be further from the truth. Paul is showing how opposite these are. If your walk is in the Spirit you are drawn to the things of God. If your walk is in the flesh you are drawn to the things of this world. Those who walk in the flesh, which speaks of serving God through carnal religious activity, have desires which are the opposite of those who walk in this New Covenant of Spirit and Life. This is why Paul says if you walk in the Spirit *“ye cannot do the things ye would”* (you cannot do the things you would do if you walked in the flesh.) Nothing in your heart or nature will allow you to do what those who walk in the flesh do.

If your original nature (old man) has not been *“taken away”* by the work of Christ, your religion is merely *“commandment keeping”* and you are bound and condemned to *“walk in the flesh.”* Is it not time for you to believe this gospel and trust in Christ who shed his blood to *“take away our sin”*? John 3:5.

THE DAY OF HIS POWER

The Apostle Paul described God's people as "*heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.*" Romans 8:17. This statement actually speaks of two different inheritances. Being an "*heir of God*" speaks of inheriting all the promises God declared would belong unto the redeemed. On the other hand, being a "*joint-heir with Christ*" speaks of us receiving part in an inheritance which belongs to Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the greatest promise given to Christ was spoken prophetically by David who wrote, "*The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power...*" Psalms 110:1-3. This prophecy is referenced by Jesus and the Apostles over twenty times in the New Testament writings. It speaks of what God did immediately after the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Christ came into the world and was born of a woman for one express purpose. Since it was "**...not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins**" Hebrews 10:4, the scripture records that "*...when he (Christ) cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.*" Hebrews 10:5. Christ came in human flesh so he could have a body to offer and blood to shed with the power to take away our sin.

When he finished this great work of redemption, the Bible records, "*...after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.*" Hebrews 10:12-13. Christ had accomplished all he was sent to do, now it was time for the Father to keep the promise he made over a thousand years before. He would now bring every enemy to bow before the exalted name of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul confirms this as he speaks of how Christ humbled himself to be fashioned as a man and "*...became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*" Philippians 2:5-8. Paul's next words tell us how the Father began to keep his promise to his obedient Son. Paul wrote, "**Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of**

Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Philippians 2:9-11. This again is confirmation that Christ received the exalted position God had promised, and now God would bring every name and every creature to bow *“at the name of Jesus!”*

When the lame man at the gate of the Temple was instantly healed and raised up in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Peter explains how it happened, saying, *“...the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus...”* This great miracle was an open demonstration that Jesus was sitting at the right hand of God, and everything had to bow at his name. God was showing that He had kept His promise and *“glorified His Son!”*

As word of this great miracle spread, Peter and John were arrested and brought before the Jewish High Priest and leaders who demanded to know how they had done such a miracle. *“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, **that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.**”* Acts 4:8-10. The Apostles knew the great miracles were all about God keeping His promise to make every knee bow at the name of Jesus Christ.

When we look closer at this great promise to Christ, it becomes evident how God’s people become *“joint-heirs with Christ”* in its fulfillment. First, it was promised *“The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion.”* Psalms 110:2. The Apostles were very clear that *“Zion”* refers to the church of Jesus Christ. The book of Hebrews tells us that we are not come to a mountain in the wilderness, *“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven...”* Hebrews 12:22-23. It is through the church (Zion) that God promised to send *“the rod of his strength”* and bring every enemy to bow before Christ. God does

this by filling His people with the Holy Ghost and stretching forth His hand through them.

When God made Christ this promise concerning *“the day of thy power,”* He said, ***“Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power...”*** Psalms 110:3. The Hebrew word translated as *“willing”* means *“spontaneity”* and is almost always translated as a *“freewill offering.”* There were many sacrifices and offerings which were required under the sacrifice system of the Law. A freewill offering, however, was not based upon a requirement, but it was offered voluntarily as a gift from the heart of the person who brought it. Many people serve God because they simply do not want to be lost. Others minister because they have received a calling and know they must fulfill it. Even the Apostle Paul said, *“necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”* I Corinthians 9:16. Jesus spoke of those whose service to him is only fulfilling a requirement or responsibility, saying, *“So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.”*

Luke 17:10.

No one will be a *“joint-heir with Christ”* who is merely doing their duty. God promised Christ that *“in the day of His power”* His people would be as a freewill offering. They would give themselves fully to the Lord because it was the true desire of their heart. These are those God promised to fill with His Spirit and work through them to bring every enemy to bow at the name of Jesus. These *“enemies”* include all sin, sickness, disease, demons, bondage, circumstance, and impossibility.

The first-century church saw *“the day of Christ’s power”* manifested in a mighty way. The first half of the twentieth century also saw a great outpouring of God’s Spirit accompanied by great miracles, healings, and deliverance. Sadly, the last fifty years have been given more to showmanship, hype, and sleight of hand by those who seek their own glory. Those with spirits of divination and witchcraft now occupy positions of honor in places where once the hand of God was stretched out. Such a church will never know *“the day of Christ’s power.”* God, however, is still ready to make every knee bow at the name of Jesus Christ, but He will not do it without

a people who give themselves solely to him as a freewill offering. This is the promise he made to His Son!

CIRCUMCISION AND BAPTISM

Several years ago, the owner of a local sandwich shop followed me into the parking lot of his business, screaming that I was on my way to Hell because I denied that water baptism was required for salvation. In this man's belief, a person had to be baptized with certain exact words spoken over them or they would be eternally lost. Perhaps what infuriated him the most was that I quoted the words of the Apostle Paul, who said, ***“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.”*** I Corinthians 1:17.

I am not anti-baptism, but I am strongly opposed to anyone trusting in water baptism as the basis or confidence of their salvation. The Apostle Paul dealt with a similar issue which arose during his ministry. Circumcision had been instituted by God as sign that a person believed in God. Yet, to the Jews, circumcision became more than a sign. It became the cause and proof of their righteousness, which in fact was only self-righteousness.

Circumcision was part of the religious *“flesh”* that Paul once trusted in before coming to Christ. Philippians 3:4-7. After coming to Christ, Paul not only realized that circumcision had never added anything unto him, but his trust in it had been a great detriment to his soul. Anything that you trust in for salvation or righteousness other than Christ alone is actually a tool Satan uses to blind your heart to the truth of Christ. Paul told the Galatian believers, ***“Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.”*** Galatians 5:2. It wasn't that a circumcised person could not be saved, but these Galatians were saved people who were trying to complete their salvation through a religious ritual. This ritual was in fact taking the place of faith in Jesus Christ thereby causing ***“Christ to become of no effect unto them.”*** Galatians 5:4.

Paul knew that such things were just *“flesh”* and needed to be exposed as such. He said, ***“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.”*** Galatians

6:15. Circumcision has no more power to save than uncircumcision does. Neither one can deliver a person from sin and cause them to be born again a new creature. Paul told us that when a person is made a new creation, *“old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”* II Corinthians 5:17. This is not just a pronouncement in Heaven; it is a present reality that changes everything. Only through believing the gospel of Christ can such a glorious work be accomplished in a person. According to the words of Paul, if what you have trusted in has not made you a new creature, the thing you have trusted in has done nothing for you at all.

Jesus told us, *“It is the spirit that quickeneth; **the flesh profiteth nothing**: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”* John 6:63. Any and every ritual, ordinance, sacrament, or ceremony that one person can administer to another is nothing more than *“flesh.”* Some of these may carry great gospel symbolism and even be public demonstrations of faith in Christ, but none of these impart grace or have the power to save a single soul. ***“It is the spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing.”***

There is no such thing as baptismal regeneration. The scripture records that Cornelius and those who were with him had their hearts purified by faith in Jesus Christ and received the baptism of the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues simply through hearing and believing the gospel of Christ. It was only after the Jewish believers saw that Cornelius and his household were already saved that they baptized them in water. Baptism was only an acknowledgement of what God had already done. Acts 10:44-48, 15:7-9.

The confidence of salvation multitudes hold to is that they were baptized in water. If that is your confidence, your spiritual walk is built upon a fallacy. Those who trust in the ritual have their faith in a dead religious work and not in Christ Jesus. I am not saying that a person who believes strongly in baptism cannot be saved. I am saying that if their faith is in the ritual they are trusting in something that cannot save a single soul.

There can be little doubt that the early church baptized new believers as a public testimony of their faith in Jesus Christ. But Paul’s words ***“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel”*** were spoken as a warning to those who were confused about where the

power of salvation was found. God chose *“the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”* I Corinthians 1:21. True gospel preaching always turns all our faith to Jesus Christ and the work of redemption He accomplished upon the cross. Any religious thing you trust in short of the crucified and risen savior robs you of the riches of His grace and could even cause the damnation of your soul.

ANOINTED BY ANOTHER

Many in our generation try to make out that the apostles were sinful men who were also crowned with the glory of God. Nothing could be further from the truth. The apostles of Christ were manifestations of the gospel they preached. Paul said they *“...renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.”* II Corinthians 4:2.

Just recently, someone sent me a video of a world-famous preacher who was explaining why those who are greatly anointed of God may go out immediately and commit fornication. He claimed the Spirit that was upon them had nothing to do with the Spirit that was within them. His teaching was that you could be very immoral or even demon possessed, yet the Spirit of God would come upon you and anoint you to do the mighty works of God. It honestly seemed that this man was justifying the condition of his own heart. When asked by the one who sent me the video what I thought of it I did not mince words. I simply replied, “The man is reprobate.”

After God rejected Saul from being King over Israel, the Bible says *“...the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.”* I Samuel 16:14. Saul had rebelled against the word of God, so God turned him over to an evil spirit. What is astounding about this is that when the evil spirit came upon Saul he prophesied, just like he had when the Spirit of God came upon him. The difference is that now an evil spirit was the source of his prophesies. King Saul had fallen from being an instrument of God and became the instrument of an unclean spirit. It was while the evil spirit was upon Saul to prophesy that he attempted to kill David with

a javelin. I Samuel 18:10-12. A minister who is unclean at heart may indeed have supernatural manifestations, but you can be certain their “manifestations” are not coming from God, but from the same spirit which works uncleanness in them.

The Apostle John was very clear when he said, *“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil...”* I John 3:7-8. A man or woman may be renowned as an anointed prophet or miracle worker, but if they are sinful in heart or action, their “anointing” is not of God.” As John clearly tells us they are *“of the devil.”*

When the Apostle Paul told us *“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God”* Romans 8:16, he was declaring that the Spirit of Christ within a child of God and the Spirit of God upon them speak in unison. A child of God is an open book *“known and read of all men.”* II Corinthians 3:2. Their spirit and life will manifest Christ, and they are vessels the Spirit of God can come upon to give an even more powerful witness. However, if Spirit within them is unclean, the Spirit that comes upon will not be of God.

Peter warned of those who come *“Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices...”* II Peter 2:14. These ministers are very practiced at getting your money, but they have *“eyes full of adultery”* and they *“cannot cease from sin.”* Their words sound wonderful but their anointing is not of God. You should not fear nor follow them.

FAITH IN THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

What did the Apostle Paul mean by faith in the blood of Christ? Romans 3:25. This actually speaks of believing what the Bible says concerning what the blood of Christ was shed to accomplish, and trusting Christ to do that work in you. You cannot have saving faith without both believing and trusting. Many people believe a doctrine of redemption, but far less actually trust Christ to do that work in

them. The remainder of this article is given to show by the scripture what the blood of Jesus Christ was shed to do in and for you. We will share only what the scripture says, because anything else is merely a fable. II Timothy 4:4.

We have faith in the blood of Christ for forgiveness. The Bible tells us that God gave Christ as a sacrificial victim, “...*through **faith in his blood**, to declare his righteousness **for the remission of sins that are past**, through the forbearance of God;*” Romans 3:25. The Greek word for “*remission*” in this passage is *paresis* which speaks of “*passing by without taking notice or making mention.*” The Greek word translated “*that are past*” means “*to be already, that is, have previously transpired.*” This passage is declaring God’s forgiveness for sins that are in our past. There is nowhere in the Bible which tells us God forgives our sins “past, present, and future.”

We have faith in the blood of Christ to wash us from sin. John wrote, “*Unto him that loved us, and **washed us from our sins in his own blood.***” Revelations 1:5. The blood of Christ washes us from the contamination and stain of sin, not only in our heart, but also upon our body. The Apostle told us to “*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.*” Hebrews 10:22. The “*water mingled with blood*” which flowed from the side of Christ is God’s complete answer for the sin and sinfulness of mankind.

We have faith in the blood of Christ for cleansing from sin. The Bible says, “*But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and **the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.***” I John 1:7. Cleansing is not the same as forgiveness. John tells us “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” I John 1:9. Jesus rebuked those whom he said “*make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.*” Matthew 23:25. The cup represents us. The outside speaks of the actions of our body. The inside speaks of the content of our heart. Jesus said, “*cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.*” Matthew 23:26. The blood of Christ will cleanse both.

We have faith in the blood of Christ to purge our conscience from sin. The Bible says, “*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. The word “*conscience*” speaks of your innermost thoughts and feelings. This is the source of sin and it is what Christ shed his blood to purge from sin. The Apostle continues, telling us, “*...the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.*” Hebrews 10:2. When the blood of Christ purges your innermost thoughts and feelings, sin will no longer dwell in your “*conscience.*”

We have faith in the blood of Christ to sanctify us. It is an error to teach or believe that sanctification is the work of the Holy Ghost. The Bible says, “*Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.*” Hebrews 13:12. Our sanctification is the express purpose of the shed blood of Christ. Sanctification is not a process. It is a work Christ finished upon the cross and it becomes our reality when we believe the truth. Through faith in the blood of Christ, we are delivered from sin and made holy. Paul said, “*...we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*” Hebrews 10:10.

We have faith in the blood of Christ to make us righteous. The Bible says, “*Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*” Romans 5:9. Being “*justified by his blood*” is much more than what Abraham experienced. Christ died upon the cross to deliver us from sin and make us righteous. Paul verifies this, saying, “*For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*” Romans 5:19.

We have faith in the blood of Christ for redemption. The Apostle Peter said you were “*redeemed from your vain conversation with the precious blood of Christ.*” I Peter 1:18-19. The Greek words translated “*vain conversation*” literally mean “*unprofitable behavior.*” The Apostle Paul told us “*we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.*” Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14. It is important to understand that the Greek word *aphesis* which was translated as “*forgiveness*” in these passages literally means

“freedom.” Redemption through the blood of Christ makes us free from all iniquity! Titus 2:14.

We have faith in the blood of Christ to work in us the works that please God. The Apostle said, *“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, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ...”* Hebrews 13:20-21.

The work of the blood of Christ makes us perfect (complete) in every good work to do his will.” Pleasing God is not just a condition God works in our heart. He also works it in our works through the power of the blood of Christ.

We have faith in the blood of Christ to make us overcomers. The Bible says, *“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”* Revelations 12:11. Overcoming victory over every work and device of Satan is found through simple faith in the shed blood of Christ. Many people go through a lot of religious activity which profit them nothing. Satan was defeated by the shedding of Christ’s blood, and we walk victorious today through faith in that same blood.

It is a mistake to seek to explain the purpose of Christ’s blood by referring to the sacrifices which were offered under the Law of Moses. The Apostles were very clear: Jesus Christ died on the cross to do *“what the Law could not do”* Romans 8:3 because *“it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”* Hebrews 10:10. Yet, that is exactly why Jesus Christ shed his blood for you!

NO CONDEMNATION

The Bible tells us *“by one man sin entered into the world.”* Romans 5:12. That man was Adam, and all the death, destruction, misery, and iniquity of human history is connected to his great disobedience. Adam’s transgression did not merely bring sin into the world, but his actions caused all of those who were born thereafter to be sinners. The Apostle Paul told us, *“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners...”* Romans 5:19.

Added to the horrors of sin itself was something which accompanied the sin Adam brought in. That something was called “*death*.” The Bible says, “*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. We know that physical death entered as a result of sin, but the “*death*” spoken of in this passage is much more than this. It is a sentence of eternal death, or, damnation. The Apostle Paul calls this death sentence “*condemnation*.” He wrote, “*Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation;*” Romans 5:18. The Greek word translated “*condemnation*” means “*an adverse sentence*.” This “*condemnation*” is the sentence of damnation which came upon every person because of sin.

In the 6th chapter of Romans, the Apostle Paul reveals how Jesus Christ delivered us from this death sentence by fulfilling it upon our “*old man*” of sin. He writes, “*Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, (Christ) that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.*” Romans 6:6-7. Through faith in Jesus Christ, the death sentence we were under is carried out upon the sinful nature which entered our hearts through Adam’s transgression. Consider the power in this one gospel passage. Our old man is crucified! The body of sin is destroyed! And we no longer serve sin because “*he that is dead is freed from sin!*”

You cannot kill a dead man again. Since, through faith in Jesus Christ, the sentence of death has been fulfilled upon our old man of sin, we are no longer under condemnation. Just as Christ “*died unto sin once*” and “*death hath no more dominion over him*” Romans 6:9-10, damnation has no claim on those who are already dead with Christ. The word of God is clear: The redeemed are in fact “*dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” Romans 6:11.

Paul confirms this deliverance from the sentence of death, saying, “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus...*” Romans 8:1. The same death with Christ which delivered us from sin also delivered us from damnation. Many people claim deliverance from damnation but reject deliverance from sin. They do not understand that our deliverance from

condemnation was accomplished by fulfilling our death sentence upon “*our old man*” of sin. If a person is not dead to sin with Christ, neither are they free from condemnation.

Paul again explains how we are delivered from both sin and its condemnation, saying, “*For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, **condemned sin in the flesh.***” Romans 8:3. The Law of Moses could kill the sinner, but it could never kill the sin which was in the sinner. This is exactly what Christ did upon the cross. He “*condemned sin in the flesh!*” The death sentence, which was due the sinner, Christ fulfilled upon the sin that dwelt in their heart and nature, and, in doing so, he not only delivered us from sin, but from damnation also.

THE SPIRITS OF JUST MEN MADE PERFECT

As Jesus was being interrogated and railed upon by the chief priests, elders, and high council of the Jews, Peter was denying that he even knew him. On the first occasion Peter simply denied that he knew Jesus. On the second occasion Peter swore an oath that he did not know Jesus. Finally, on the third occasion, Peter began “*...to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man.*” Matthew 26:74. It seems that Peter not only took an oath that he did not know Jesus, but pronounced a curse on either those who accused him of knowing Jesus, or, more likely, upon Jesus Christ himself.

Only hours before, Jesus had told Peter that he would deny him three times. Luke 22:34. Peter could not believe that he would do such a thing, but Jesus said, “*Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: **and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.***” Luke 22:31-32. With these words, Jesus was looking past Peter’s denial to the hour of Peter’s conversion. **For over three years Peter had been a disciple, but it was only after Jesus’ resurrection that Peter became a born-again child of God.**

All my life I have heard ministers use Peter’s denial, David’s adultery, or Abraham’s deception of Pharaoh as proof of the sinfulness every child of God still possesses. It is though they are

completely ignorant of the great change and redemption that was brought in at Calvary. While it is true there is much we can learn from those who walked with God before Christ appeared, they (including Peter before he was converted) are not examples of what it is to be the redeemed of the Lord.

While the book of Hebrews reminds us of the exploits the great men and women of old did through believing God, it says, ***“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them...”***

Hebrews 11:13. As great as these men and women of faith were, they spent their lives persuaded of and looking for the promise of redemption which they could never receive in their lifetime.

As the writer of Hebrews concludes his record of the great men and women of faith, he says, ***“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”*** Hebrews 11:39-40. Each of these obtained a witness of righteousness by faith, but they could not receive in their lifetime the completion of salvation that we receive through Jesus Christ.

The words *“made perfect”* as used in Hebrews means *“to complete.”* This *“completion”* is described as having our inner man purged from sin by the blood of Christ. The Bible says, *“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 8:14. The *“conscience”* is speaking of your *“innermost thoughts and feelings.”* The sacrifices and ritual of the Law could sanctify the outside of a person but could never wash sin from the heart. The Bible says, *“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”* Hebrews 10:4. The sacrificial system of the Law left the person very *“incomplete”* before God because sin still remained in their heart and nature.

Jesus Christ came to *“take away the sin”* John 1:29 that dwells in the human heart. This is what it means to be made complete. Yet, no one could receive this *“completion”* until Christ died and rose again from the dead.

Those believers who lived before Christ came, died in faith without receiving the promises, but they were not lost. The Bible verifies this in the following chapter of Hebrews, telling us that when we come to Jesus we are also coming ***“to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.”*** Hebrews 12:22-23. They were not made complete before they died, but they received that completion when Christ rose from the dead. They were righteous men while they lived, but now they are ***“the spirits of just men made perfect.”***

For those who are alive today, it is a dangerous fallacy to believe that they also will receive the promised cleansing from sin after death. This was true for Abraham, David, and others because they believed God even though Christ had not yet come. Today, Christ has come! Jesus was very clear. It is only those who do not believe him who die in their sins. He said, ***“...for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.”*** John 8:24. Your deliverance from sin and Satan is not after you die. Today is the day of salvation! After you die, it will be too late!

FALLING STARS

Recently, a minister asked for my thoughts concerning a continuous stream of well-known ministers being exposed for sexual sins. I had no immediate thoughts, but for the next two days in my spirit I heard the record John gave when the sixth seal was opened, saying, ***“And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.”*** Revelation 6:13. I then understood that a great wind from God is blowing through the American church and casting many religious ***“stars”*** to the ground.

None of us are exempt from the words of Jesus, who said, ***“...if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.”*** John 8:24. This was not spoken to the prostitute or street vandal, but to those who thought they were the elect of God. Although they had climbed to the top of their religious system, all their religious activity and wisdom would end up failing them. Why? The answer is simple. They refused to believe that Jesus was the Christ whom God promised would come into the world. These same people had spent their lives looking for one who would fulfill the prophecy of ***“Messiah the Prince,”*** which was given to the prophet Daniel. At the heart of this prophecy was

the declaration that Messiah would come to “...*make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness...*” Daniel 9:24. While the religious leaders of that day believed Christ would make an end of sins when he came, they rejected that Jesus of Nazareth was in fact the Christ. In rejecting Jesus, they were rejecting the deliverance God had prepared for them. All their religious efforts and wisdom would change nothing. Their religious devotion could not make them free, so they died in their sin.

Today, there is a similar but opposite condition in the American church. Jesus is believed upon and extolled, but the work of deliverance God promised he would accomplish is rejected. Few accept or believe that Jesus died to “*make an end of sin*” in anyone. In fact, the greatest boasting of religious leaders seems to be that we are all sinners and sin every day. It is then no great wonder that these religious “stars” end up proving it to us over and over through their shameful deeds.

You do not have to live or die in sin. The Apostle John told us, “*And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.*” I John 3:5. The truth, which Jesus said, “*shall make you free*” John 8:32 is the knowledge that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, and that on the cross he truly did “...*make an end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness...*” This same work is what he will do today in the heart of anyone who will actually believe him.

John the Baptist described Jesus as “*the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*” John 1:29. If I offered to take away your money, you would not be confused about what I meant. Yet, people revolt at the assertion that Jesus actually takes sin away. But he does! He takes it out of your heart, out of your life, and out of your nature! Jesus is the Christ; therefore, this is his purpose; this is his promise; this is what he has done!

The great religious “stars” will continue to fall. They do not have to die in their sin, but they will if they continue to reject the work Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross to make them free. Every time a religious “star” falls in shame, it is evidence that what they taught and believed has not worked. If it had, they would not be in the

darkness of sin. We must remember, however, that for anyone who will believe the truth and trust in Christ, there is a Savior who ***“is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy...”*** Jude 24.

SPIRITUAL CHAMBER POTS

Chamber pots were vessels used as inside toilets before modern plumbing was available. These vessels spared the user from making a trip to the outside latrine. Such vessels served a distinct purpose and were very different than the vessels used for dinnerware. The dinnerware would be cleaned and stored in the food preparation area while the chamber pots would be stored with the other “less honorable” vessels.

Paul uses the example of these different vessels when he explains the need for the people of God to be separated from the workers of iniquity. He said, *“But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.”* II Timothy 2:20-21.

The *“vessels unto honor”* which Paul speaks of, are those Christ has washed from sin. The *“vessels unto dishonor”* are those who, although religious, still walk in sin and darkness. Their hearts harbor such things as pornography, adultery, covetousness, and deception. They may be the ministers Paul warned of who *“speak lies in hypocrisy”* I Timothy 4:2 to manipulate God’s people, or false prophets who *“with feigned (fictitious) words make merchandise of you.”* II Peter 2:3. All such things have been washed from the *“vessels unto honor”* by the precious blood of Christ.

A child of God is not an unclean vessel. They are the *“cups and platters”* Jesus spoke of Matthew 23:25-26 which have been washed from the defilement of sin. This message of washing the believer fills the pages of the Bible. When Paul spoke of unrighteous types of people who *“shall not inherit the kingdom of God,”* he reminds the saints ***“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by***

the Spirit of our God.” I Corinthians 6:9-11. The word of God tells us that Christ’s blood was shed to “*purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*” Hebrews 9:14. Purge means to purify. Those whom Christ has purified are then encouraged to draw near to God “*having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*” Hebrews 10:22. We all were once unclean vessels, but the pollution of sin has been washed from our hearts by faith in Jesus Christ. As the scripture says, “*...we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*” Hebrews 10:10.

When I hear a minister tell the saints that “We are all sinners and sin every day,” I consider that he or she must be very confused. They seem to forget that the people of God are “*vessels of honor*” and not chamber pots. I mean, it is normal for a chamber pot to have a bit of “dung” in it, but why would that ever be found in a drinking glass? Some may say, “Well, we all get a little dust on us sometime.” That may be true, but pornography, adultery, manipulation, greed, and such things are not dust. It is the dung of Satan, and God will never pour “*living water*” into a vessel that contains such things.

Paul instructed the “*vessels of honor*” to purge themselves from the “*vessels of dishonor.*” You cannot fellowship in a nightclub where reveling, lusts, greed, and lies abound. Neither can you fellowship in a church where the same things are excused or spiritualized. Christian unity is not the same as fellowshiping darkness. God gave an eternal call to his people, saying, “*Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.*” II Corinthians 6:17.

When Christ took away your sin, he did not leave a little “devil’s dung” in you. He washed you completely. I’ve heard ministers who tell of the profanity of their own mouth, the immorality of their heart, and the covetousness of their spirit. Then they assure you that you are the same as they. Forgive my plainness of speech, but such ministers are nothing more than hirelings in a spiritual latrine, and they are trying to keep you there also. But, if you are a vessel of honor, it is not where you belong. You are not a chamber pot!

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