

*Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard
through the Word of Christ.
[Romans 10:17]*

Doctrinal Statement

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What We Believe

About God

God is the eternal Creator and Ruler of the universe.
He is the Father of Jesus Christ.
He is our Father and will provide for all the needs of our bodies and spirits.
He is everywhere.

About Jesus Christ

Jesus is the only begotten Son of God and is God.
He gave His life as the final perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world; salvation comes only through Him.
He arose from the dead and is alive forevermore.
He is King of kings and is victorious over all evil.

About the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is co-equal with the Father and the Son, three persons in the triune God.
He is the comforter who dwells in the hearts of all who have received Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, convincing them of the truth of Christ's teachings, and empowering them to do right.

About the Bible

The Bible is the complete, inerrant, inspired Word of God. It is our guide to show us what we should believe and how we should live. It is for everyone to read so that all may hear God speak to their hearts and minds.

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The Bible

1. Who wrote it?

The Bible was written by no less than thirty-six authors over a period of approximately sixteen hundred years. The important thing to remember is that these men wrote under the direct control of God, meaning that God guided them in writing the very words. This is what is meant by "divine inspiration."

The following Scriptures clearly teach that the Bible is solely inspired by God.

For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. [2 Peter 1:21]

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. [2 Timothy 3:16-17]

The Bible is the Word of God. It is not enough to say that the Bible contains the word of God. This might imply that parts of it are inspired and parts are not. Every word of the Bible is inspired. *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God."* [2 Timothy 3:16 NKJV]

The Bible is the only written revelation which God has given to men. In the last chapter of the Bible, God warns men against adding to the Bible or taking away from it.

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. [Revelation 22:18-19]

2. What is the subject of the Bible?

Although the Bible is made up of sixty-six books, it has one subject. Jesus Christ is the subject. The Old Testament contains many prophecies concerning Jesus Christ. The New Testament tells of the fulfillment of these prophecies.

3. What does the Bible contain?

The Bible is the record of the world from the beginning of time until the future when there will be a new heaven and a new earth.

Genesis tells of the creation of the world, the entrance of sin, the Flood, and the beginning of the nation of Israel. From Exodus to Esther we have the history of Israel up to about 400 years before the birth of Christ. The books from Job to the Song of Solomon contain wonderful poetry and wisdom. The rest of the Old Testament, from Isaiah to Malachi, is prophetic—these books contain messages from God concerning its present condition and its future destiny.

The New Testament opens with four Gospels, each of which presents the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Acts tells the story of the Christian movement in its infancy and the life of the great apostle Paul. From Romans to Jude, we find letters to churches and individuals concerning the great truths of the Christian faith, and practical instruction concerning the Christian life. Revelation gives us a glimpse into the future—to events that will yet take place in heaven, on earth, and in hell.

4. Conclusion

This Book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners and the joy of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are unchanging. Read it to be wise, believe it to be saved, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Here paradise is restored, heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is the main subject. It is designed for our own good, and to ultimately bring glory to God. Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It

is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It will reward the greatest laborer, and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents. It is the Book of books—God's Book—the revelation of God to man.

GOD

1. The existence of God

The Bible does not seek to prove the existence of God. The fact that there is a God is assumed throughout the Scriptures. The first verse of the Bible is an example:

*"In the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth."
[Genesis 1:1]*

God's existence is presented as a statement of fact that needs no proof. The man who says that there is no God is called a fool.

The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good. [Psalm 14:1]

However, even apart from the Bible, there is evidence for the existence of God.

Mankind has always believed in a universal being.

Creation must have a creator. The universe could not originate without a cause.

The wonderful design which we see in Creation demands an infinite designer.

Since man is an intelligent, moral being, his creator must have been of a much higher order in order to create him.

2. The nature of God

God Is Spirit.

God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth. [John 4:24]

This means that God does not have a body. He is invisible. However, He can reveal Himself to man in visible form. That form is in the person of Jesus Christ.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. [John 1:14]

No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known. [John 1:18]

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. [Colossians 1:15]

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. [Hebrews 1:3]

God Is a Person.

Personal names and titles are used in reference to Him.

God said to Moses, "I Am who I Am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: `I Am has sent me to you". [Exodus 3:14]

At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. [Matthew 11:25]

Personal characteristics are ascribed to Him, such as,

Knowledge: *As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. [Isaiah 55:9]*

Emotions: *The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. [Genesis 6:6]*

Will: This is how you will know that the living God is among you and that he will certainly drive out before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites. [Joshua 3:10]

Scripture clearly teaches that there is only one God.

For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. [I Timothy 2:5]

The false teaching that there are many Gods is contrary to reason. There can be only one supreme being.

The Trinity

The Bible teaches that there is one God, but also that there are three persons in the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father is omnipresent, the Son, Jesus, is the visual expression of the invisible God, and the Holy Spirit is the mind of Christ and also the third person of the Trinity.

However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"--but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may

instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ. [1 Corinthians 2:9-16]

The word "trinity" is not found in the Bible, but the truth is found in the following passages:

The baptism of Jesus

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." [Matthew 3:16-17]

The Great Commission

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. [Matthew 28:19]

The benediction of

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. [2 Corinthians 13:14]

The Father is called God

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. [Romans 1:7]

The Son is called God

But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. [Hebrews 1:8]

The Holy Spirit is called God

Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God." [Acts 5:3 4]

3. The attributes of God

It is difficult to define God—one of the best ways is to describe His certain qualities or characteristics. These are known as His attributes.

God is omnipresent. This means that God is present everywhere at the same time. *"Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?" declares the Lord. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" declares the Lord [Jeremiah 23:24].*

God is omniscient. In other words, He knows all things. He knows every thought and deed of man. *The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good [Proverbs 15:3].* He knows everything that takes place in nature, even the death of a sparrow. *Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father [Matthew 10:29].*

God is omnipotent. He has all power. He created the universe, and now controls it with His power. There is nothing that He cannot do. *Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" [Matthew 19:26].*

God is eternal. He never had a beginning, and He will never cease to exist. *Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God [Psalm 90:2].*

God is unchangeable. *"I the Lord do not change" [Malachi 3:6].*

God is holy. He is absolutely pure and sinless. He hates sin and loves goodness. The Lord detests the way of the wicked but he loves those who pursue righteousness. *The Lord detests the thoughts of the wicked, but those of the pure are pleasing to him [Proverbs 15:9, 26].* He must separate Himself from sinners, and must punish sin. *Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear [Isaiah 59:1–2].*

God is just. Everything He does is right and fair. He fulfills all His promises. *Righteous are you, O Lord, and your laws are right [Psalm 119:137].*

God is love. Although He hates sin, He loves sinners. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life [John 3:16].

Man

If we want to know the truth about man, we need to turn to the Bible. The Bible tells us about man's creation, nature, relation to other beings—as well as his fall and destiny.

1. Man's origin

It is only natural that man should be curious about his origin. He always has been. Theories have been put forward at different times by philosophers—but the most modern is the theory of evolution, which asserts that man's ancestors are the lower animals. The Bible, however, tells us: in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth . . . God created man.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. [Genesis 1:1, 27]

God says concerning His creature, man,

" . . . everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." [Isaiah 43:7]

So the old question "What is the chief end of man?" is properly answered "The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."

2. Man's nature

Anyone who has witnessed a person dying understands vividly that man has a physical body and also a soul and spirit. At one moment the person is alive . . . the next he is gone. Yet his body is still there. The life principle has departed, and the dead body remains. Man is not merely a body, but also is or has a soul and spirit.

The Bible teaches us that man exists as a threefold being— body, soul, and spirit.

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. [1 Thessalonians 5:23]

While it is hard for us to distinguish between soul and spirit, since both are in contrast with the physical body, the Bible shows that there is a difference. For instance, animals have a body and soul, but no spirit. A man has a body, a soul, and a spirit.

The soul distinguishes a living being from a dead one; but the spirit distinguishes a man from an animal. The spirit of man makes it possible for him to have communion or fellowship with God. Man is responsible to God and it is his greatest duty to find out what God wants him to do, then to do it.

3. Man's free will

God could have made a number of machines to do His will automatically. Instead He chose to create beings who could serve Him voluntarily and love Him freely.

There are other beings in the universe whom God has created. These are angels, or spirits. They do not have a human body or a soul. They were also created to serve God, but since they also had a free will, some of them fell into the sin of disobedience.

4. Man's sin

When God created free beings, able to do His will or refuse to do so, He knew that some would choose the wrong way. A great angel called Lucifer, now known as Satan, decided to set his will in opposition to

God's. He was immediately cast out of heaven, and many other angels were cast out with him. From that time on, Satan has sought to hinder the plans of God in every possible way. When man was created with a free will, Satan immediately planned to tempt him from the path of obedience. God had warned man, but Satan succeeded only too well in drawing him into sin as well. The story is found in Genesis 3.

Now God, as the moral governor of the universe, cannot tolerate in His presence any being who deliberately disobeys His commands. This is why Satan was cast out of heaven when he defied God's will. The same treatment was necessary for man, and so Adam was driven from the presence of God.

Adam's nature has been passed on to every member of the human race. We are all born with the tendency to sin. This nature responds to temptation from the world, and so we yield and grievously sin.

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does. [James 1:2-8]

5. Man's future

Just as the Bible tells us of man's origin, and of man's shameful fall, and the consequent separation from God, it also tells us that every man, woman, and child will some day stand before God to be judged. The fact of death is common knowledge and every man understands his end. The Bible adds "after this comes judgment." God has created man and revealed to him His will, and God will absolutely hold every person responsible. This life is primarily a preparation for the next one. Man does not die like the animal. His spirit must go to God, his Creator and Judge.

Sin

1. What is sin?

No one can read the Bible without realizing that a great deal of attention is given to the subject of sin—its cause and cure. We often think of sin in connection with crime and murder, but sin in the Bible refers to anything short of God's perfection.

In Romans 3:23, we read, *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*

The "glory of God" includes the thought of absolute perfection. Sin is therefore falling short of the mark. All men are guilty of this. Sin is also spoken of in the Bible in the following ways:

Breaking the law of God

For before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. [Romans 5:13]

Rebellion against God, or lawlessness

Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. [1 John 3:4]

Moral impurity

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"--and you forgave the guilt of my sin. [Psalm 32:5]

Evil thoughts are sinful as well as evil deeds.

But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. [Matthew 5:28]

2. The origin of sin

The first recorded sin took place in heaven. The angel Lucifer wanted to be equal with God.

How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." [Isaiah 14:12-14]

For this sin of pride he was cast out of heaven, and became the one whom the Bible elsewhere describes as the devil or Satan. The first sin on earth is described in the third chapter of Genesis. It took place in the Garden of Eden, where God forbade Adam and Eve to eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. They were tempted by Satan, disobeyed God, and ate the forbidden fruit, thus they became sinners.

3. The results of sin

As soon as the parents of the human race sinned, they became conscious of the fact that they were naked, and they tried to hide from God: He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid" [Genesis 3:10].

The penalty of sin is death. Adam became spiritually dead the moment he sinned. By this we mean that he became separated from God, and banished from God's presence. He also became subject to physical death. He did not die immediately, but his body was doomed to die eventually.

Adam's sinful nature was passed on to all the human race. Every child born of sinful parents is a sinner by birth. Thus Adam's eldest son, Cain, was a sinner. Because all men are born sinners, they are all dead spiritually, and are all doomed to die physically some day.

Man's sin brought God's curse upon all Creation. The thorns and thistles are an evidence of this. Other evidences are mentioned in Genesis 3:14–19:

So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild

animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

Sin needs no proof as long as we have prisons, hospitals, and funeral parlors. Tears, sickness, sorrow, pain, and death are some of the results of sin.

4. The penalty of sin

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. [Romans 6:23]

God has pronounced the penalty of sin as being death. We have already seen that this means spiritual and physical death. This penalty must be paid. God must punish sin.

As long as a man lives in his sins, he is dead spiritually. If he is still in his sins when he dies, he is subject to eternal death. This means that he will forever be banished from God and will suffer for his sins in the lake of fire. This is the second death spoken of in Revelation 20:14:

Then death and hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.

5. The remedy for sin

God has provided a remedy so that men do not need to suffer everlasting punishment for their sins. He sent his Son into the world to

provide a way of escape for man. The Lord Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary. He did not inherit man's sinful nature. He was the only sinless man who ever lived. On the cross of Calvary, He willingly suffered the penalty of sin and physical death, and satisfied all God's holy demands. Since the penalty of sin has been met, God can now give eternal life to every sinner who confesses the fact that he is a sinner and receives the Lord Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

When a person trusts in Christ, he is saved from the penalty and power of sin. This does not mean that he no longer commits sin, but it does mean that all his sins past, present, and future have been forgiven. He will never be judged for them and he has the power to live for God instead of for the pleasures of sin.

Christ

1. His deity

The deity of Christ means that Christ is God. Scripture clearly teaches this important fact in the following ways:

The attributes of God are used in speaking of Christ.

His pre-existence—Christ has no beginning.

And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. [John 17:5]

His omnipresence—He is with His servants everywhere.

And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. [Matthew 28:20]

His omnipotence—He has unlimited power.

I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. [Revelation 1:18]

His omniscience—He has unlimited knowledge.

The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. [John 21:17]

His unchangeableness

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.
[Hebrews 13:8]*

The works of God were performed by Christ.

He created all things.

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. [John 1:3]

He upholds the universe.

*For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.
[Colossians 1:16]*

He raised Himself from the dead.

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." [John 2:19]

The titles of God are given to Christ.

God the Father addresses the Son as God.

*But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.
[Hebrews 1:8]*

Men called Him God, and He did not refuse their worship.

Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" [John 20:28]

Demons recognized Him as God.

"What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are —the Holy One of God!" [Mark 1:24]

He declared Himself to be God.

"I and the Father are one." [John 10:30]

2. His incarnation

The incarnation of Christ is His coming into the world as a man.

The coming of Christ was predicted in the Old Testament.

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. [Isaiah 7:14]

History records the birth of our Lord. His birth was different from all other births.

He was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. [Luke 1:35]

He was born of a virgin.

"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" --which means, "God with us." [Matthew 1:23]

Yet He was truly man,

1) possessing a body.

Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me. [Hebrews 10:5]"

2) possessing a soul.

Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." [Matthew 26:38]"

3) possessing a spirit.

Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last. [Luke 23:46]"

Christ came in bodily form in order to:

Reveal the Father.

Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? [John 14:9]"

Put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. [Hebrews 9:26]"

Destroy the works of the devil.

He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. [1 John 3:8]"

One of the foundational truths of the Christian faith is that Jesus Christ is truly God and that He came into the world as a man by the miracle of virgin birth. As a man, He was absolutely sinless.

3. His work

Under this heading, we will discuss the Lord's death, resurrection, and ascension.

His death

1) The death of Christ was necessary.

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up. [John 3:14]

It was part of God's eternal purpose.

Then I said, `Here I am --it is written about me in the scroll-- I have come to do your will, O God.'" [Hebrews 10:7]

It was necessary to fulfill Old Testament prophecies.

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. [Isaiah 53:5]

It was necessary to provide salvation for man.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace. [Ephesians 1:7]

2) The death of Christ was for others. He died as a substitute.

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. [1 Corinthians 15:3]

3) The death of Christ was sufficient. It completely meets God's claims because Christ endured and exhausted the judgment of God against sin. It completely meets man's need because it was the death of an infinite person, and therefore its value is infinite.

B. His resurrection

1) The resurrection of Christ was necessary to fulfill prophecy, to complete the work of the Cross, and to enable Christ to undertake His present work in heaven.

He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. [Romans 4:25]

2) Christ's resurrected body was real. It was not a spirit.

Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have. [Luke 24:39]

It was the same body which was crucified because it had the print of the nails and the spear.

Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."
[John 20:27]

Yet it was a changed body, with power to overcome physical limitations.

3) After His resurrection, Christ appeared to His followers at least ten times. More than five hundred reliable witnesses saw Him after He rose.

After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. [1 Corinthians 15:6]

4) The resurrection of Christ is an important truth. If there had been no Resurrection, there would be no Christian faith.

C. His ascension

1) At the end of His ministry on earth, Christ was carried up into heaven.

After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. [Mark 16:19]

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. [Acts 1:9]

2) He ascended so that He might enter into His reward, and continue His ministry for His people.

And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. [John 17:5]

4. His offices

Christ is presented in Scripture as a Prophet, a Priest, and a King.

As Prophet, He tells men what God has to say to them, and He thus reveals God to men.

No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known. [John 1:18]

As Priest, He represents believers before God.

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are --yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. [Hebrews 4:14-16]

As King, He reigns today in the hearts of those who are bought with His blood. In a coming day, He will reign upon the earth for one thousand years.

The New Birth

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, solemnly impressed upon a most religious and moral person named Nicodemus the absolute necessity for him to be born again.

In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again . . . Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit." [John 3:3,5]

The new birth is one of the three great "musts" of all humanity.

1. The "must" of death

Like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be recovered, so we must die. But God does not take away life; instead, he devises ways so that a banished person may not remain estranged from him. [2 Samuel 14:14]

Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment. [Hebrews 9:27]

2. The "must" of the judgment

So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. [Romans 14:12]

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades

gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. [Revelation 20:11-15]

3. The "must" of regeneration, or the new birth. In view of much ignorance and misunderstanding concerning this vital matter, let us first view it negatively.

What the new birth is not:

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God -- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. [John 1:12 13]

It is not of natural generation or descent. Though one may be born of Christian parents, this does not make him a Christian.

It is not of human decision. Just as a child cannot will itself to be born physically, so no one can produce the new birth by his own efforts.

It is not of a husband's will. No human being, however elevated his theological position, can impart the new birth to another. All the rights and ceremonies of any or of all organized religions can never produce the new birth.

It is not a physical change. Christ corrected Nicodemus's misunderstanding as to this, and showed him it was a spiritual change.

"How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. [John 3:4-6]

It is not a social and geographical change. The born again person is not suddenly translated to heaven, but continues to live on earth—but now to please his Lord and Savior.

Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him. Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you --although if you can gain your freedom, do so. For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to. [1 Corinthians 7:20-24]

Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. [Colossians 3:22-24]

It is not an intellectual comprehension of what it is. A person can be religiously educated, ordained to the ministry, and become a preacher without being born again. They may know that it is necessary to become a Christian, yet know nothing of it by experience.

It is not an evolutionary process. It is not a gradual development of some germ of spiritual life that is within. Sinners are described as being spiritually dead. Life cannot be developed where it does not exist!

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. [Ephesians 2:1-2]

It is not a reformation or self-improvement by which outwardly bad habits are terminated. It is not a change of manners, but of the person.

It is not a religious belief. It is possible to be sincere in one's religious convictions, be baptized, confirmed, join the church, take communion, teach a discipleship class, occupy a church office, and even be a preacher, without being born again. The necessity for the new birth

was stated to one of the most religious, sincere, and moral men of his day.

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. [John 3:1]

What the new birth is:

It is a spiritual change.

The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." [John 3:8]

This can be brought about only by God:

Children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. [John 1:13]

Why must a person be born again?

You should not be surprised at my saying, "You must be born again." [John 3:7]

You will find that the necessity for the new birth is perfectly logical and reasonable.

A person must be born again because of a spiritual nature that man naturally lacks.

Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. [John 3:6]

Here the word "flesh" refers to that sinful nature which a person receives at his physical birth. Through his sin, Adam acquired a sinful nature, and this nature has been transmitted, by birth, to each of his descendants.

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned ... Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation

for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. [Romans 5:12,18,19]

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. [Psalm 51:5]

The character of this sinful nature, called "the flesh," is described in Romans 8:5-8:

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

It is "hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law," and consequently is incapable of pleasing God. In other words, man does not naturally possess a spiritual capacity which would enable him to either desire, understand or enjoy the things of God.

The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. [1 Corinthians 2:14]

Just as a musical, artistic, or poetic capacity can be communicated to a person by a physical birth, so a spiritual capacity, by which the things of God can be appreciated, must be communicated to a person by a spiritual birth. The flesh can be educated, cultivated, and religionized; but its nature remains unchanged and unchangeable in its dislike for God, and is incapable of pleasing God.

The new birth is the impartation of a spiritual or divine nature, by which alone man can possess this spiritual capacity to understand and enjoy the things of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh."

A person must be born again because of a spiritual kingdom that man cannot naturally see or enter.

In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. " . . . Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. [John 3:3,5]

What is meant here by "the kingdom of God"? it is described as a spiritual experience. We read,

"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" [Romans 14:17]

Let us think of two kingdoms or spheres; one called "the kingdom of men" and the other "the kingdom of God" —or one called "the flesh" and the other "the spirit." All humanity enters the kingdom of men by a physical birth, which communicates to him a physical nature, which fits him for a physical sphere, peopled by men. In this sphere he lives, moves, and has his being. Now how is man to be enabled to see the value of and enter this other sphere called the kingdom of God? He must be born again, or have a spiritual birth, which will introduce him into this new realm. Through this new birth he will become possessed of a spiritual nature which will fit him to enjoy the spiritual realities that characterize the kingdom of God.

The Bible tells us that to be "born again" is to be "born from above." This shows us the source of the birth. Physical birth is of man and the earth; spiritual birth has its origin in God and is from heaven.

You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. [Romans 8:9]

Here Paul speaks to people who were no longer "in the flesh" as to their position before God; but were "in the spirit." How were they translated from one kingdom to the other? By the Spirit of God, when they accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior.

A person must be born again because man does not naturally possess a spiritual life; he by nature is described as:

1) Dead in his trespasses and sins.

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins. [Ephesians 2:1]

2) Alienated from the life of God.

They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. [Ephesians 4:18]

3) Not having life.

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. [1 John 5:11-12]

Just as a body without physical life is physically dead, so any person without spiritual life is described in the Bible as being spiritually dead.

But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives. [1 Timothy 5:6]

For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. So they began to celebrate. [Luke 15:24]

Death means separation. For a person to be separated from Christ, in whom is life, is to be dead spiritually.

In him was life, and that life was the light of men. [John 1:4]

How can this spiritual life be given to the spiritually dead? Let Christ Himself answer it.

"I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live." [John 5:25]

All who hear the Son of God, receive His Word and trust Him as their Savior receive spiritual life and are thus born again.

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. [1 John 5:13]

How can a person be born again?

Christ indicates a threefold means by which the new birth is produced. It is as follows:

1. By believing the Word of God.

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit." [John 3:5]

The "water" here is the well-known symbol for the Word of God. It has no reference to baptism. Other Scriptures make abundantly clear that the new birth comes through the Word of God.

For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever." [1 Peter 1:23-25]

Just as water when applied cleanses from our eyes the dirt that would otherwise obscure our vision, so the Word of God, when read and believed, washes from the mind of the sinner his wrong ideas of God and his salvation. The entrance of God's Word sheds light on man's lost condition. God's love is seen in His provision for man's salvation and the way by which a sinner may be saved.

2. By the indwelling of the Spirit of God.

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit." [John 3:5]

The Holy Spirit, the third person in the Trinity, was sent by Christ to use the Word of God to convict men of their sin, to lead them to put their trust in Christ, to indwell each person upon believing, to communicate to the believer a divine nature, or capacity for spiritual things, and to guide each born-again person into all truth.

But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. [John 16:7-15]

See also Ephesians 1:13; 4:30, 2 Peter 1:3-4, and Galatians 5:22-26.

As the Word of God is read or heard, the Holy Spirit applies the truth to the heart in convicting force, showing the sinner his lost, guilty, helpless, and hopeless condition. He then reveals through the Word the way of salvation through faith in Christ and His finished work. The moment the sinner trusts in Christ He seals him, by His indwelling presence, as Christ's purchased possession. This is not a question of feeling, but of fact.

3. By faith in the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ.

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. [John 3:14-16]

In these words Christ made crystal clear how this new life can come to a sinner. In answer to Nicodemus's question, "How can these things be?" Christ used an incident recorded in Numbers 21:4–9 to illustrate how the new birth could be experienced.

They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!" Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people. The LORD said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived.

Let's give it our closest and most careful attention, for it is Christ's own illustration of how the sinner can be born again.

Seven words seem to sum up the incident.

1. Sin

They spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!" [Numbers 21:5]

Just as Israel sinned, so all humanity has sinned against God in thought, word, and deed.

2. Judgment

Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. [Numbers 21:6]

As their sin brought God's merited judgment upon them, so God has revealed His wrath against all sin.

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the Godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness. [Romans 1:18]

3. Repentance

The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people. [Numbers 21:7]

Israel realized, confessed, and sought pardon for their sin. This is repentance, which consists of a change of mind, resulting in a change of attitude, which is expressed by a change of action. God demands the repentance of the sinner.

I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. [Luke 13:3]

4. Revelation

The Lord said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." [Numbers 21:8]

"The Lord said." As God revealed to Moses the way of salvation for these snake-bitten Israelites, so God has revealed in the Bible His way of salvation for us.

And how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. [2 Tim. 3:15–17]

But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart

that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. [Romans 10:8–9]

5. Provision

The Lord said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived. [Numbers 21:8, 9]

A serpent of brass was made and lifted up on a pole in full view of the camp of Israel. Now compare John 3:14:

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up.

Just as Moses lifted up the brazen serpent, so Christ must be lifted up on a cross to provide salvation for sin-bitten humanity. On the Cross He bore our sins, took our place, endured all the judgment due to our sins, and by His death, satisfied all God's demands against the sinner. God has indicated His acceptance of the substitutionary sacrifice of His Son by raising Him from the dead.

See also Isaiah 53:5–6, 1 Corinthians 15:1–4, and Romans 5:7–8.

6. Condition

The Lord said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." [Numbers 21:8]

The fact that the brazen serpent was lifted up did not, of itself, save them. Each bitten Israelite must look to live! The fact that Christ has died for our sins and accomplished all the work needed for our salvation, will not save any sinner unless he personally believes in Christ, trusts him as his own Savior, and owns Him as the Lord of his life. This is what Jesus meant when He said,

" . . . that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." [John 3:16]

Just as the bitten Israelites were not asked to pray, resolve, pay, or do good works to merit salvation, so sinners are urged to realize their need and trust wholly in the work of Christ—to receive Him by faith as their own personal Savior.

See also John 1:12, Acts 13:38–39, Ephesians 2:8–9.

7. Result

So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived. [Numbers 21:9]

"He lived." The moment a bitten Israelite [who was as good as dead] looked, he received new life. He was, as it were, born again! So the moment a guilty, lost sinner believes the gospel that Christ died for his sins, and definitely accepts Him as his own Savior, he receives spiritual or eternal life, is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and becomes a partaker of the divine nature:

Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. [2 Peter 1:4]

He is born from above, or regenerated. This is the new birth, which Christ declared was absolutely essential to entering the kingdom of God.

When can a person be born again?

The new birth takes place when a guilty sinner looks to Christ and trusts Him as his Lord and Savior

As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you. "I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation. [2 Corinthians 6:1 2]

Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." [Hebrews 4:7]

Salvation

Closely linked with the subject of the new birth is that of salvation. The former concerns itself especially with the necessity, source, and nature of the spiritual life that all men need from God. The latter emphasizes the delivering effects and scope of God's provision in Christ. We will think of seven things in connection with salvation.

1. Its definition

The word simply means deliverance. It is commonly used to describe the act by which a person is delivered from a danger which threatens him. We speak of a person being saved from drowning, or from a burning building, or from a sinking ship.

In each case, three things are taken for granted.

- 1) The person to be saved was in danger of death.
- 2) Someone saw his peril and went to his rescue.
- 3) The rescuer was successful in his mission and delivered the person from his perilous plight—saved him.

The words *save*, *saved*, *savior*, and *salvation* occur many times in the Bible and have exactly the same meaning in a spiritual sense.

2. Its necessity

The necessity for God's salvation is due to two facts which each person must face.

- 1) The fact of man's sin.

We have already discussed the spiritual condition of all men by nature, and we pointed out that each human being comes into the world possessed of a sinful nature that constitutes him a sinner by birth. This sinful nature, in time, is evidenced by sinful thoughts, words, deeds and attitude of enmity to God. The Bible makes this abundantly clear.

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned-- Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. [Romans 5:12,18,19]

[See also Romans 6:16; 8:5-8, Genesis 6:5, Ephesians 2:1-2, 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, Isaiah 53:6, Jeremiah 17:9, Mark 7:20-23, and Romans 1:21-32; 3:19-23.]

It will be evident to all from these Scriptures that man is
a sinner, needing forgiveness.

lost, needing to be found.

doomed, needing deliverance.

guilty, needing pardon.

spiritually dead, needing life.

blind, needing illumination.

Man is thus utterly helpless to save himself.

2) The fact of God's righteousness.

God is holy, and must deal with our sin.

And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation." [Exodus 34:6-7]

He has revealed His hatred of sin, and His sentence against all who die in their sins. This is eternal banishment from His presence.

Once more Jesus said to them, "I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come. I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am [the one I claim to be], you will indeed die in your sins." [John 8:21,24]

[See also Mark 9:43–48, Luke 16:22–31, Jude 11–13, and Revelation 20:11–15.]

The obvious conclusion is: Since man is a sinner and God is righteous, the sinner needs to be delivered or saved from the penalty of his sins. His cry should be, "What must I do to be saved?"

He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved --you and your household." [Acts 16:30, 31]

3. Its provision

The gospel is the good news that God in His wondrous grace has abundantly provided this salvation through the person and the work of His Beloved Son. Two things are clearly taught.

1) Christ came to be the Savior of sinners.

She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." [Matthew 1:21]

The Son of God, equal and eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, became incarnate in order to provide salvation.

[See also John 3:16–17, Mark 10:45, Matthew 9:12–13, and John 10:11,15–18.]

2) Through Christ's death and resurrection, this salvation has been provided to God's complete satisfaction.

As Christ willingly hung upon the cross, He assumed the full liability of our guilt and sin, bore our sins in His own body, and died as a substitutionary sacrifice on behalf of sinners. All God's judgment against sin fell on Him, and all God's righteous claims against the sinner were fully satisfied by Christ's death on our behalf. God indicated His complete acceptance of this sacrifice of Christ by raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His own right hand.

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. [1 Corinthians 15:1-4]

[See also 2 Corinthians 5:21, I Peter 2:24, Isaiah 53:5, Romans 5:6–9, and Acts 4:10–12; 5:31; 17:31.]

4. Its condition

Since Christ has accomplished, by the sacrifice of Himself, all the work needed for the sinner's salvation, what must a sinner do in order to experience this salvation?

He must repent.

Repentance consists simply of a change of mind which results in a change of attitude toward sin, self, the Savior and salvation; which, in turn, is evidenced by a change of action.

I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. [Luke 13:3]

For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead." ... I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus. [Acts 17:31; 20:21]

The sinner's indifference will give place to an earnest desire for salvation; his pride to humility; his self-satisfaction to a frank confession of his helpless, hopeless and hell-deserving condition.

He must believe the gospel which is the testimony of God, concerning the person and work of Christ.

We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. [1 John 5:9-10]

As a lost and guilty sinner he must believe that Christ died for him individually; that Christ bore his sins, took his place and by His death, accomplished all the work needed for his salvation.

However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. [Romans 4:5]

He must accept the Lord Jesus Christ, by a definite act of his will as his own personal Savior. For all time to enjoy Him as the supreme Lord of his life.

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. [John 1:12]

[See also Romans 10:9,10, John 3:16; 5:24; 6:47, and Ephesians 1:13.]

5. Its assurance

How can you know for certain that you are saved? We answer without any hesitation: by the Word of God. God declares plainly and in black and white, that every soul trusting in His Son is forgiven, saved, the possessor of eternal life, and secure forever.

Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. [Acts 13:38]

I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. [I John 2:12]

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith --and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God. [Ephesians 2:8]

And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. [1 Corinthians 6:11]

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. [1 John 5:13]

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ [Romans 5:1]

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus ... neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. [Romans 8:1,39]

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one." [John 10:27–30]

6. Its scope

Salvation has a threefold aspect—past, present, and future.

1) Past

Salvation from sin's penalty, or consequences. Since Christ alone has endured the full penalty which was due to us for our sins, the believer is delivered from its painful consequences.

I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. [John 5:24]

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. [Romans 8:1]

2) Present

Salvation from sin's power, or control. Because of the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence, plus the impartation of the divine nature, the believer is now enabled to enjoy deliverance from the dominion of sin in his life.

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own. [1 Corinthians 6:19]

[See also 2 Peter 1:3–4 and Romans 6:1–14.]

This does not mean that the believer is incapable of sin—far from it! He still possesses the sinful nature called "the flesh." It does mean that in the measure that he avails himself of the means God has provided, sin shall not be the dominating factor in his life. This present deliverance will depend on

Reading, the study of, and obedience to the Word of God.

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. [2 Timothy 2:15].

Keeping constantly in touch with God by prayer.

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are --yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. [Hebrews 4:14-16]

Yielding of one's body to God for both a righteous and useful life.

Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness ... Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God --this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will. [Romans 6:13; 12:1,2]

Prompt confession to God and the forsaking of all known sin.

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. [1 John 1:8,9]

3) Future

Salvation from sin's presence, or committal. This will take place at the coming of Christ, when He will raise the dead and change the living, so that they will have bodies incapable of sin, decay, and death. This is the final aspect of salvation that we look for.

So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. [Hebrews 9:28]

7. Its results

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will--to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment --to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession --to the praise of his glory. [Ephesians 1:3-14]

As you can see, there are many results. Here are a select few.

Peace with God

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ [Romans 5:1]

Acceptance before God in Christ

. . . to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. [Ephesians 1:6]

Joy in God as His children

For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also

rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation ... because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs -- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. [Romans 5:10,11; 8:14-17]

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir. [Galatians 3:26-4:7]

Living for God

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. [2 Corinthians 5:14,15]

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. [Galatians 2:20]

Service to God in the way of good works and testimony for Him.

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. [Ephesians 2:10]

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. [Matthew 5:16]

Worship, praise, and prayer unto God

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth. [John 4: 23,24]

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. [Hebrews 10:19-22]

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are --yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. [Hebrews 4:14-16]

An eternal home in heaven

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. [John 14:1-3]

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood

the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever. [Revelation 22:1-5]

Grace

Introduction

All God's dealings with mankind at the present time are on the basis of grace. This means that He shows men favor which they do not deserve. The word grace is found over 160 times in the Bible. Of these occurrences, 128 are in the New Testament.

God is spoken of as "the God of all grace."

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. [1 Peter 5:10]

Christ is described as being "full of grace."

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. [John 1:14]

The Holy Spirit is called "the spirit of grace."

How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? [Hebrews 10:29]

As you can see, the three persons of the Godhead are closely linked with grace.

Definition

The word used in the Old Testament carries the meaning "to bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior."

The New Testament word means "favor, goodwill, loving kindness."

The following definitions will prove helpful in explaining what grace is.

Grace is love displayed to unworthy objects. God is love, but when He bestows that love on guilty, unclean, rebellious sinners, then it is grace.

Love that looks up is adoration. Love on its own level is affection. Love that descends is grace.

Grace is God showing love and mercy when we deserve wrath and judgment. It is God bending toward us with infinite love.

Grace is seen in God giving heaven's best to save earth's worst.

Contrast

Grace is not to be confused with works. If man could obtain salvation by doing good works, then salvation would simply be his wages.

Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness ... And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace. [Romans 4:4-5; 11:6]

God does not owe anything to man. Salvation is a free gift.

Grace is not to be confused with law. Men are not saved by keeping the Law. They are saved by grace. The following will help to make this clear.

Law brings a work to do. Grace tells of a work that is done.

Law says, "do this and you will live." Grace says, "Live, and you will do."

Law says, "Love the Lord your God." Grace says, "God so loved the world" and we love Him because He first loved us.

Law condemns the best. Grace saves the worst.

Law reveals sin. Grace reveals salvation.

The need for grace

Man is a sinful rebel against God's holy law:

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God [Romans 3:23]

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. [Colossians 1:21]

Therefore, he deserves nothing but God's judgment. Man stands guilty before God, having broken God's holy law.

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. [Romans 3:19]

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." [Galatians 3:10]

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. [James 2:10]

As such, he is subject to the curse of God. Because he rejected and murdered God's Son, man has no claim on God at all.

Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die ... Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. [John 12:31-33; 3:18]

Salvation by grace

If man is to be saved it must be by God's grace, but God is holy and he cannot overlook sin. Sin must be punished.

The gospel tells us how God can save sinners by grace, and still be holy in doing so. Christ suffered the wrath and judgment of God against sin. On the basis of the work of Christ, God can forgive the sins of those who trust the Lord Jesus. Christ has finished the work. Grace only demands faith on the part of the sinner who seeks salvation

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith --and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast. [Ephesians 2:8,9]

Blessings through grace

Grace brings many wonderful results to the sinner. The following are three of the greatest results.

1. Salvation

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to unGodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and Godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope --the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. [Titus 2:11-13]

This means that a Christian has eternal life.

2. Justification

We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished-- he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. [Romans 3:24-26]

This means that God reckons a sinner who has believed on Christ as being blameless.

3. Standing before God

Through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. [Romans 5:2]

This means that a true believer can enter into God's presence by prayer. He is no longer separated from God by his sins.

Faith

You can't study the Bible very long before you begin to realize the importance of faith. A sinner cannot be saved apart from faith. Ephesians 2:8-9 says,

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith --and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast.

Therefore it is important that we should find out what this word means.

What is faith?

Faith is personal confidence. We use the word in everyday conversation, as follows, "I have complete faith in my doctor." We

mean that we trust him with our case. So, in the Bible, faith is personal confidence in God. It means that we believe what He says, and trust Him to save us and to keep us.

Where does faith come from?

As we look around us in the world, we realize that some men do not have faith in God, and, as a result, they are not saved. So, what is the source of faith? In a very real sense, this faith is a gift of God. John 3:27 says,

To this John replied, "A man can receive only what is given him from heaven.

God gives men the power to believe on Him.

But how does a man receive faith? The answer to this is found in Romans 10:17:

"Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."

Therefore, if a man doesn't have faith in God, he should read the Bible. As he reads, he should pray somewhat as follows:

"God, if this book is your Word, if Jesus Christ is your Son, and if He died for me, then show me these things as I read the Bible."

God has promised that any man who wishes to do His will, will come to a knowledge of the truth.

If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. [John 7:17]

What is the true object of faith?

Faith must have an object. This object may either be a person—such as a relative, or a friend—or it may be an inanimate thing, such as an airplane, or an elevator.

It is not enough to have faith, as the world considers faith. Faith must be placed in a trustworthy object. A man may have faith in his automobile to take him to a certain place, but if the automobile is badly in need of repairs, he will soon find that his faith has been misplaced. The Bible sets forth the Lord Jesus Christ as the true object of faith.

I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus. [Acts 20:21]

The important thing is not how much faith a man has, or what kind of faith he has, but whether or not his faith is in Christ. If it is, then the man is saved. A man may believe all that the Bible says about Christ and yet not have faith in Him. You may believe that a certain train will leave the railroad station at 11 A.M. and that it will arrive at a distant city at 5 P.M. You may believe all the facts about the train; yet you do not really believe in the train until you get on board, and trust the train to take you to your destination.

So you may believe that Christ was born in Bethlehem, that He died on Calvary, that He rose again and ascended into heaven. But you have not really put your faith in Him until you trust Him to save you from your sins and take you to heaven.

Examples of faith

The scriptures are filled with examples of faith. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews has been called the "honor roll of faith," because it lists some outstanding men and women who had faith.

Two other instances might be cited: the first is the faith of the centurion in Matthew 8:5-10:

When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering." Jesus said to him, "I will go and heal him." The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to

my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.

The centurion believed that Christ could heal his servant by merely saying the word.

The other is the faith of the woman of Canaan in Matthew 15:22–28:

A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession." Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." "Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

She pleaded that the bread reserved for the chosen Jews should be given to her, a Gentile. Her faith was humble and persistent.

The reward of faith

Faith never goes unrewarded. No one has ever trusted God in vain. Every seeking sinner who has repented of his sins and who has put his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ has been saved.

All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. [John 6:37]

Heaven & Hell

Men have always had a sincere interest in the future. This interest has aroused questions such as: Does death end all? Where are the dead?

What can we know about heaven and hell? First, we'll consider the question

1. What happens to a man at the time of death?

At the outset, we need to remember that man is composed of three parts—body, soul, and spirit.

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. [1 Thessalonians 5:23]

The first part is material being, the other two are non-material. With a spirit, man is capable of self-consciousness. Only God's Word can divide between the soul and the spirit.

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

Now, at the time of death, the soul and spirit leave the body. The body is put into the grave. In the case of believers, the body is described as sleeping.

While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep . . . Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. [Acts 7:59,60; 8:2]

While the unsaved person's body is spoken of as dead. The soul and spirit never sleep. If the person who died was saved, the soul and the spirit go to a place of joy and happiness—heaven.

We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. [2 Corinthians 5:8]

Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask. Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. [Philemon 1:21,23]

If the person was unsaved, the spirit and soul go to a place of sorrow and punishment—hades. In Luke 16:19–31, our Lord clearly teaches that those who have died are conscious.

"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, `Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' "But Abraham replied, `Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' "He answered, `Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' "Abraham replied, `They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' " `No, father Abraham,' he said, `but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' "He said to him, `If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

2. What do we know about hell?

As we have already noted, the spirit and soul of an unbeliever wing their flight to hades at the time of death. The revised version correctly used hades for hell in Luke 16:23. The soul in hades is spoken of as a person, having eyes, tongue, ears, fingers, and memory. There is full knowledge of the conditions there.

Is punishment for sin eternal? In the Book of Revelation, the phrase forever and ever is used to describe the misery of the lost.

And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name." [Revelation 14:11]

Can a God of love allow men to go to hell?

God does not want men to perish. He provided for man's salvation through the work of His Son on Calvary's cross.

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the unGodly ... But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. [Romans 5:6,8]

If men reject the Savior, they go to hell by their own choice.

God is a God of love.

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. [1 John 4:8]

But God is also holy, for it is written:

"Be holy, because I am holy." [1 Peter 1:16.]

God must punish sin.

Men do not hesitate to put sick people in hospitals, criminals in jail, or corpses in the cemetery. This does not indicate a lack of love on their part.

What about those who have never heard of the gospel? Like the rest of mankind, heathens are lost sinners, and only Christ can save them. They can tell that there is a God through

The works of creation

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities --his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. [Romans 1:20]

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. [Psalm 19:1]

Their own consciences

Since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them. [Romans 2:15]

If they live up to the light which they have, God will give them more light.

[See also Cornelius, Acts 10 & 11.]

3. What do we know about heaven?

The Scriptures clearly teach that there is a place of bliss for all who know and love our Lord Jesus Christ. Heaven is a place. The word is used in the Bible in three different ways.

1) First of all, the region of the clouds is called heaven.

God called the expanse "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning - the second day. [Genesis 1:8]

2) Then the area where the stars are located is known as heaven.

God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth [Genesis 1:17]

3) Finally, the word is used to describe God's dwelling place. Paul calls this the "third heaven" and "paradise."

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know --God knows. And I know that this man --whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows--was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell. [2 Corinthians 12:2-4]

Heaven is always mentioned as being "up." Satan said, he would ascend into heaven in Isaiah 14:13-14:

You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."

We know that our Lord is in heaven today. After He rose from the dead, He ascended in a body of flesh and bones. He carried glorified humanity into heaven.

He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. [Luke 24:38,39,51]

Who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand --with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him. [1 Peter 3:22]

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. [Hebrews 1:3]

There is a great host of believers in heaven, for when the true Christian dies, he is present with the Lord.

We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. [2 Corinthians 5:8]

These believers are enjoying the presence of Christ which is far better.

What is heaven like? The writers of the Scriptures could not find language that would describe it. In Revelation 21:10-27, John describes the foundation, wall, gates, and street of the heavenly city. Our hearts are attracted by its beauty. We know that there will be no sickness, sorrow, tears, pain, or death in that fair place.

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." [Revelation 21:4]

But best of all, the Lord Jesus Christ will be there, and He will be the supreme delight of every believer's heart.

Future Events

Every Bible student is thrilled to be able to read about events that are still future. Only in the Bible is the future unfolded. Here we will consider some of these events.

1. Christ's coming for His saints

The next event to occur is the coming of Christ to take His people home to heaven. Christ will descend from heaven. The bodies of believers who have died will be raised. Living believers will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. Note the following facts about the coming of Christ.

It may happen at any moment.

"Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book." [Revelation 22:7]

Only those who are truly saved will participate.

But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. [1 Corinthians 15:23]

It takes place instantly.

In a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. [1 Corinthians 15:52]

Not all believers will die but all will be changed.

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed. [1 Corinthians 15:51]

They shall be like Christ.

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. [1 John 3:2]

[See also Romans 8:16–25.]

2. The Tribulation

Sometime either before or after the coming of the Lord, the earth will experience a period of great suffering and sorrow known as the Tribulation. During this period, the Jewish people will return to the land of Palestine in unbelief. A great evil ruler will arise known as the Antichrist [meaning against Christ]. He will demand worship from the people. It will be a time of such great suffering that unless the days were shortened, no life would survive. However, God will preserve those people who have been faithful to him.

3. Christ's coming to reign

Toward the end of the tribulation period, the Lord Jesus Christ will come back to the earth in great power and glory. He will destroy his enemies, including the Antichrist, and judge those nations which persecuted faithful saints.

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. [Revelation 20:1-3]

Satan will be bound in the bottomless pit for 1,000 years.

4. The Millennium

When His work of judgment has been completed, Christ will set up His kingdom on the earth. He will reign upon the earth for a thousand years. This period is known as the Millennium. It will be an era of peace and happiness. We read that nature will be entirely different, for the lion will lie down with the lamb. The desert will blossom like a rose.

5. The judgment of the Great White Throne

At the end of Christ's 1000-year reign, the judgment of the Great White Throne will take place. This is the judgment of the wicked dead. No saved persons will be involved. The graves will give up the bodies of unbelievers, and hades or hell will give up their souls. They will then stand before Christ to be judged. Because their names are not found in the Lamb's Book of Life, they will be found guilty and sentenced to the lake of fire to suffer conscious and eternal punishment.

6. Eternity

The final picture of the future is the eternal state. The earth as we know it will have been destroyed by fire. Time, as we know it, will have ceased. All true believers will be enjoying endless happiness in heaven. All who have rejected the Savior will be suffering in the blackness of darkness forever. The question that faces each one of us is "Where will I spend eternity?"

The Christian Life

The results of regeneration

What actually happens when a person is born again? First, the person realizes that he is a lost sinner and that he deserves to spend eternity in the lake of fire. [Only the Holy Spirit can make anyone realize this.] He then repents of his sins, that is, he acknowledges to God that he is a sinner and that he needs a Savior. He accepts Jesus Christ as his

Lord and Savior, and at that moment he is born again. His sins are forgiven. He receives eternal life from God.

But that is only a small part of the story. It is just the beginning. We learn from the Bible that many other wonderful things occur when God saves a man.

1. The believer is accepted through Jesus Christ.

To the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. [Ephesians 1:6]

This means that he stands before God in all the acceptability of His beloved Son. God sees him in Christ:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! [2 Corinthians 5:17]

It also means that the Christian is welcome in God's presence as long as Christ is welcome, and that is clearly forever.

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. [Ephesians 2:6,7]

2. Also, he becomes a child of God.

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God [John 1:12]

You can imagine how honored you would feel if you were the child of some world-famous ruler. How much greater honor it is to be the child of the mighty Maker of the universe, before whom angels bow!

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus [Galatians 3:26]

3. He is justified by God.

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ... And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified ... Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. [Romans 5:1; 8:30,33]

God, the judge, declares the believing sinner to be "not guilty" and looks upon him as if he had never sinned. He can do this because Christ has died as a substitute and has borne all the punishment which the Christian should have borne. Thus the Christian stands without guilt in God's sight, and he will never be punished for his sins.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus [Romans 8:1]

4. He becomes indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? [1 Corinthians 6:19]

The Bible plainly teaches that God, the Holy Spirit, actually dwells within each believer.

We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. [1 John 4:13]

The body of the Christian is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Because of this sacred privilege, the child of God should be careful what he says, what he does, and where he goes.

5. He becomes a member of the true Church.

For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body --whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free --and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. [1 Corinthians 12:13]

The Church is described as "the body of Christ."

And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might

have the supremacy ... Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. [Colossians 1:18,24]

It is composed of all true believers in the Lord Jesus.

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. [Acts 2:47]

There is no greater honor on earth than to be a member of the true Church.

6. He becomes an heir of God.

Now if we are children, then we are heirs --heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. [Romans 8:17]

God is the Creator of the universe and He owns all things. God's children are promised that they will one day reign with Christ over all the earth, and they will then possess all things.

7. He becomes a saint!

To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. [Romans 1:7]

Those who are saved are spoken of in the Bible as "saints." A saint is one who has been set apart for God by the Holy Spirit.

Know that the LORD has set apart the Godly for himself; the Lord will hear when I call to him. [Psalm 4:3]

In God's sight every saint is holy, because God sees him in Christ, and Christ is absolutely holy.

To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ --their Lord and ours [1 Corinthians 1:2]

8. He is complete in Christ.

And you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. [Colossians 2:10]

The Christian has a perfect standing before God. He is as near and as dear to God as Christ is. When a person has Christ, he has all that he needs for a happy life and a happy eternity.

9. He receives the divine nature.

Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. [2 Peter 1:4]

He will soon notice that he has new desires, new ambitions, a new hatred for sin, and a new love for his fellow Christians. When the divine nature is encouraged by the believer himself, he will become more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. [Colossians 3:10]

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. [2 Corinthians 3:18]

This is God's purpose for every one of his children.

10. He immediately begins to enjoy the constant protection of God.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. [Romans 8:28]

Even trials and tests work for his spiritual benefit.

Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and

character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. [Romans 5:3-5]

In view of these marvelous provisions which God has made, every Christian should show his appreciation in at least two ways.

He should never cease to worship God for salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ.

He should give his life in willing service to the One who gave His life on Calvary's cross.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God --this is your spiritual act of worship. [Romans 12:1]

Sure Salvation

1. How can a person know for certain that he is saved?

The Bible is God's Word. It is absolutely true. You can trust it.

The Bible says if you repent of your sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you are saved!

Now the question is, Have you come to Christ as a lost sinner, and asked Him to save you? Have you accepted Him as the substitute who bore the penalty of your sins?

If you have, then God tells you in the Bible that you are saved. In other words, assurance of salvation comes through the Scriptures. This truth is clearly taught in 1 John 5:13:

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

John wrote to those who had believed on Christ so that they might know that they had eternal life. If you have believed on Christ, you are saved. The Bible says so.

The trouble with so many is that they depend on feelings rather than on the Bible. They say, "I don't feel saved." They expect some mysterious emotional experience, and when they do not receive it, they doubt that they were ever saved. The person who bases his assurance of salvation on his feelings is certain to have difficulty because feelings change from moment to moment. God's Word, however, never changes. Trust the Bible and not your feelings.

But perhaps someone will ask, "Shouldn't a person feel happy when he is saved?" The answer is definitely "yes." However, one must know he is saved before he can feel happy. Assurance comes first, then feelings follow. We know we are saved because the Bible says so. We feel happy because we know we are saved.

In addition to the Scriptures themselves, there are other means of assurance for the believer.

2. Three marks of a saved person

1) The person who is saved loves his fellow Christians.

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. [1 John 3:14]

2) The person who is saved has the witness of the Holy Spirit within him.

Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. [1 John 5:10]

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. [Romans 8:16]

The witness of the Spirit is the inner joy and peace which is given to those who believe the Word of God when it says that all who believe in Christ are saved. The Spirit witnesses to Christians through the whole Bible.

3) The person who is saved hates sin and loves what is right. Although a Christian can and does sin, sin no longer controls his life.

For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. [Romans 6:14]

He no longer lives in the continual practice of sin.

As a believer grows in the Christian life, his assurance will become stronger and stronger. There are at least three definite steps which he may take to help in this direction:

- 1) Read the Bible regularly and believe it with all his heart.
- 2) Pray to the Lord to strengthen his faith as he reads His Holy Word.
- 3) Tell others about the One who has saved him from sin.

Permanent Preservation

Can a saved person ever perish?

If a person has been truly born again, he can never perish. The believer is safe and secure forever. Seven passages of Scripture are listed here as evidence of this glorious truth, though many more could be given.

1. John 10:27-29

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

Notice these words of Christ, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish." Plant your feet on that. This is the promise of Christ without any conditions attached. No sheep of His will ever perish! Notice, too, that both Christ and the Father hold you securely.

2. John 5:24

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."

Here again the Lord Jesus Christ is speaking. He promises that the person who hears His Word and believes on the One who sent Him has everlasting life, and will never come into condemnation, or judgment. If one believer were ever lost, then the Son of God would have failed to keep His promise.

3. John 3:36

"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

Notice that it does not say, "He will have everlasting life". He has it at the present time.

4. Romans 8:38–39

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The apostle Paul announces that neither death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height nor depth can separate the Christian from the love of God. And lest any child of God might worry that he might separate himself from the love of God, Paul adds, "nor any other creature." The believer is as safe as God can make him.

5. 2 Timothy 1:12

That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

Paul here expresses his confidence that Christ is able to keep what Paul had committed to Him—that is, his soul. In John 6:39, we learn that God has entrusted Christ with the preservation of all believers.

And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

6. Jude 24

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy.

The Lord Jesus is the One who is able to keep Christians from falling, and to take them safely home to heaven. Christians are no more able to keep themselves saved than they were to save themselves in the first place, but Christ is able.

Who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. [1 Peter 1:5]

7. Romans 8:30

And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Every saved person is glorified. Although Christians do not yet have their glorified bodies, yet it is so certain that God speaks of it as an accomplished fact. If you are justified, then, as far as God is concerned, you are glorified too. In other words, the Christian is just as sure of heaven as if he were already there.

In connection with the subject of the Christian's security, the following facts should be remembered:

A Christian does not lose his salvation when he sins.

Christ has already paid the penalty for all his sins—past, present, and future. God will not demand payment twice. Since Christ has died for my sins, I will never have to die for them. God, the righteous Judge, forgives the sinner who believes on Christ.

But when a Christian does sin, he displeases his heavenly Father.

The happy family spirit that should exist between the child and his Father remains broken until that sin is confessed.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. [1 John 1:9]

Notice clearly that there is a big difference between God, the Judge, dealing with a sinner, and God the Father dealing with an erring child. In the former case, the penalty for sin is death and the lake of fire. In the latter case, the result of sin is broken fellowship.

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense --Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. [1 John 2:1,2]

Even the Christian cannot sin cheaply.

If a child of God wanders away from his Father, he can expect to be corrected.

Because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? [Hebrews 12:6,7]

The Father might use sorrow or suffering to bring him back. In some cases, God even takes the believer home to heaven—his body dies, but his soul is saved.

Hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord. [1 Corinthians 5:5]

While a Christian can and does commit acts of sin, no true child of God lives a life of continual sin.

"A Christian is not sinless, but he does sin less." If a person can keep on sinning without being brought back to fellowship with God through discipline, it is a sure sign that he was never born again. Our security must not be an excuse to sin, but rather an incentive not to sin.

There are several verses in the Bible which might seem to indicate that Christians can be lost again.

However, if you examine them carefully, you will find that they refer to those who merely pretend to be Christians, or to those who have known the way of salvation and have rejected it. Nowhere do the Scriptures say that a truly born-again person can perish.

Triumph Over Temptation

How can a Christian resist sinful temptation? Whenever a person is saved, a great struggle begins. He still has the old nature—the sinful nature of Adam—which will try to drag him into sin all the time. But he also has the new nature, the life of God, which hates sin and wants to do what is right. The two natures fight against each other continually.

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. [Galatians 5:16,17]

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and

peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. [Romans 8:5-8]

The old nature is incurably bad. It cannot be improved, and it will not be removed until the Christian goes home to heaven. God condemned it when Christ died on the cross, and He wants Christians to treat it as if it were dead.

Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature. [Romans 13:14]

The new nature inspires the Christian to do good. It should be encouraged and fed.

This is how the Christian resists temptation—by saying "no" to the flesh, his old nature, and by nourishing the new life that is within. The following is how this is done.

1. Read the Bible!

Study it! Memorize it! Meditate on it! Obey it! Notice Psalms 119:9, 11

How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word ... I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Here we learn that the Word of God helps to keep us from sinning. Be sure that you set aside a definite time each day for the reading of God's Word.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. [Colossians 3:16]

2. Pray without ceasing!

Whenever you are faced with temptation, ask God for help.

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. [Hebrews 4:16]

He will give you the strength to overcome.

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. [1 Corinthians 10:13]

If you try to resist by your own strength, you will surely fail.

3. Seek the companionship of fellow believers and not of non-Christians.

My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them. If they say, "Come along with us; let's lie in wait for someone's blood, let's waylay some harmless soul; let's swallow them alive, like the grave, and whole, like those who go down to the pit; we will get all sorts of valuable things and fill our houses with plunder; throw in your lot with us, and we will share a common purse"-- my son, do not go along with them, do not set foot on their paths; for their feet rush into sin, they are swift to shed blood. [Proverbs 1:10-16]

It is often necessary to work and live with unbelievers, and in such cases we should witness to them both with our lips and by our lives. But we should not join with them in their worldly pleasures and amusements.

Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. [Ephesians 5:11]

4. Confess your sins immediately!

As soon as you are conscious that you have grieved God by a sinful thought, word, or deed, ask His forgiveness immediately. Do not wait until evening or until the end of the week.

He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy. [Proverbs 28:13]

5. Keep busy for the Lord!

Someone has said that idle time is the devil's workshop. Give your body to the Lord to use it as He desires!

I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. [Romans 6:19]

There is plenty of work to be done, and you will be serving the best of masters.

6. Engage in some physical exercise and eat healthy!

For physical training is of some value, but Godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. [1 Timothy 4:8]

Because the believer's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, he should use reasonable means in maintaining his body in good health and strength.

7. Starve the old nature!

Be occupied with Christ! When you are thinking about Him you cannot be thinking about sin.

And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. [Colossians 3:10-14]

This is really the secret of holy living—occupation with Christ. It is a fixed rule in life that we become like the object of our worship. 2 Corinthians 3:18 teaches us that we become like the Lord Jesus as we behold Him in the mirror [glass] of His Word.

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

One final word . . .

You will notice that deliverance from temptation is not a once-for-all experience, but a continual process of depending on God. No matter how old we get, or how much we may learn about the Bible, we are still in danger of yielding to temptation if we take our eyes off the Lord.

Christian Conduct

How can a Christian know what he may or may not do? Is it all right for a believer to go to r-rated movies, to smoke, to drink, to listen to secular music, or to participate in other pleasures and amusements?

Many young Christians are troubled by questions similar to the above. They find that certain practices are clearly condemned in the Bible, but that there are many others which are not mentioned. Here is a series of standards which may help to decide whether or not we should engage in a questionable activity.

1. Is it distinctly forbidden by the Lord for believers today?

If it is, avoid it as you would a deadly plague. If you do not know, don't do it until you have had a chance to find out.

Avoid every kind of evil. [1 Thessalonians 5:22]

2. Is there any glory for God in it?

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. [1 Corinthians 10:31]

Before you engage in the activity in question, can you honestly ask for God's blessing upon it, believing that He will be honored through your participation?

3. Is it "of the world"?

If it is, then it is not "of Christ." He said concerning His disciples,

"They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. " [John 17:16]

He was not "of the world" at all. He was in it, but not of it.

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world --the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does - comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever. [1 John 2:15-17]

4. Would the Lord have done it?

He has left us an example that we should follow His steps.

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. [1 Peter 2:21]

5. Would you like to be found doing it when the Lord returns?

Someone has wisely remarked, "Don't do anything, say anything, or go anywhere that would cause you shame if the Lord should come!"

And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming. [1 John 2:28]

6. Can you feel free to do it when you remember that God the Holy Spirit dwells within you?

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body. [1 Corinthians 6:19-20]

7. Is it fitting conduct for a child of God?

When a king's son acts in an unworthy manner, he brings disgrace on his father's name. So does the Christian who behaves in an unbecoming way.

As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." [Romans 2:24]

And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God. [Colossians 1:10]

8. What effect will your conduct have on others?

Will it be a good testimony to the unsaved, or will they decide that there is really no difference between a Christian and an unbeliever?

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! [2 Corinthians 5:17]

Also, will it cause someone who is young in the faith to stumble? The apostle Paul warned.

Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. [Romans 14:13]

9. Is there the least bit of doubt in your mind about it?

But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin. [Romans 14:23]

In connection with this subject of what a Christian may or may not do, it is well to remember.

For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! [Romans 6:14,15]

This does not mean that we may do as we like, but rather it means we want to do what God likes because He has done so much for us. We do not avoid worldly pleasures and amusements because we have to, but because we want to. The reason we want to is because Christ died for us, and now our ambitions are to live in a manner that will please Him.

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. [2 Corinthians 5:14,15]

God does not say, "If you keep away from sinful pleasures, you will be a Christian."

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. [Ephesians 4:1]

It is possible that a Christian may forget his position, and go for the things of the world. In such a case, God will bring wandering sheep back by placing His crook around its neck.

Buried In Baptism

What is baptism, and who should be baptized? Before the Lord Jesus ascended to heaven, He gave this great commission to His disciples:

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." [Matthew 28:19,20]

It was the Lord's desire that, as His servants went throughout the world with the gospel, they should baptize those who received the message. Baptism is an ordinance instituted by the Lord Himself. This raises two questions. First, how is the ordinance of baptism carried out? Second, what is the meaning of baptism?

In order to find a true answer to the first, we will turn to Acts 8:26-39. There we find a servant of the queen of Ethiopia riding along in his chariot, and reading the book of Isaiah, chapter 53, in the Old Testament. This man was a sincere seeker of the truth, and so God instructed His servant, Philip, to speak with him. Philip told him how the Lord Jesus had died on Calvary so that sinners might be saved. The traveler believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and then asked Philip if he could be baptized. Inasmuch as the man had truly believed in Christ, Philip agreed to baptize him. The chariot was therefore halted near a body of water. Now notice verses 38 and 39 carefully.

And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

What is the true significance of this ceremony which was carried out so simply along that eastern highway many years ago, and which continues to be performed to this very day?

1. It is an act of obedience to the expressed will of the Lord Jesus

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit [Matthew 28:19]

Its purpose is not to put away the filth of the flesh, but rather to give the Christian a good conscience toward God, knowing that he has obeyed the Lord's will.

And this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also --not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, [1 Peter 3:21]

Only those who have heard and believed should be baptized.

Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized. [Acts 18:8]

2. It is a symbol or picture of a spiritual truth.

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. [Romans 6:3-5]

The water is a picture of judgment and death.

Since Christ died as a substitute for the believer, it is equally true that the believer died with the Lord Jesus. In other words, when Christ died, I died. When He was buried, I was buried. When He arose, I arose.

The Christian has died to all that he was by nature, and from now on God no longer sees him in his sins, but sees him in Christ, risen from the dead, and possessing the resurrection life of Christ.

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. [Galatians 2:20]

When a Christian is baptized, he is making a public confession that he has taken his place with Christ in death and burial, and he will seek to show to all that he possesses the life of Christ.

Having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead ... Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. [Colossians 2:12; 3:1,2]

The truly baptized person is the one who has not only been baptized in literal water, but whose life shows that the flesh, or old nature, has been put in the place of death. Baptism must be a matter of the heart, as well as an outward profession.

The Church

A person is joined to the true Church at the very moment of his conversion. This Church is made up of every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, regardless of nationality, color or culture. Members of the Church are found throughout the world, though the entire Church has never yet been assembled in one place. In the early days, the Christians met in their own homes.

Greet also the church that meets at their house. Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia. [Romans 16:5]

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. [Acts 2:42]

Now it is very obviously the Lord's will that Christians should meet together regularly as members of the Church. Hebrews 10:25 contains a warning,

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another --and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Great portions of the New Testament are devoted to teaching believers their privileges and responsibilities as members of the body of Christ.

[See also I Corinthians 12.]

Our understanding of what the Church is comes from God's Word alone. Traditions and customs of men must be tested by its teachings on this subject.

To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn. [Isaiah 8:20]

1. We acknowledge the Holy Bible as the inspired and infallible Word of God.

The Scriptures are the final authority in all matters of faith and practice. It is not enough to say that the Bible contains the word of God. It is the Word of God. Therefore it is absolutely true, and we must believe and obey it:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. [2 Timothy 3:16,17]

2. We believe Jesus is God.

Nothing less than this will do.

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.
[Colossians 2:9]

3. We believe Scripture teaches that the Lord Jesus lived a sinless life.

He voluntarily died for our sins on the cross of Calvary, was buried, rose again, and ascended into heaven. He is now seated at the right hand of God.

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this

gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. [1 Corinthians 15:1-4]

Salvation is obtained solely by faith in Him and quite apart from any works or human merit.

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel--which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned! [Galatians 1:6-9]

In addition to meeting the above three primary tests, one should be sure that the local church does not contradict, by work or by practice, the following important truths concerning the body of Christ.

4. Christ is the head of the Church.

And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him [Colossians 1:18,19]

And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. [Ephesians 1:22,23]

No man may claim this position. Christ is the head. This Church will look to him for direction and guidance.

5. All believers are members of the body of Christ.

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body --whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free --and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. [1 Corinthians 12:12,13]

All true children of God should therefore be welcome into the fellowship of the Church.

There are, however, two exceptions to this rule. Those who are unsound in doctrine [2 John 10], or who are living in sin [1 Corinthians 5:13] should be excluded until they have been restored to the Lord.

6. All believers are priests.

You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ ... But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. [1 Peter 2:5,9]

In the New Testament, there is no distinction as to priest and people. All Christians may now enter by faith into the presence of God, bringing sacrifices of praise and worship and service. In the early church all the members were students of the word, all were soul-winners, all were busy for God.

7. The authority of the Holy Spirit is to be recognized.

Whether in worship or in service, ministry or discipline, there is liberty for the Holy Spirit to direct. His guidance and authority is not limited by man-made ceremonies or human organization.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. [2 Corinthians 3:17]

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. [Ephesians 4:3]

Knowing God's Will

Every Christian should be interested in knowing God's will for his life. Unless the Lord's plan is known and obeyed, then our lives are wasted.

The Scriptures are emphatic in teaching that God reveals His will to those who desire to know it.

If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. [John 7:17]

It is a privilege which should be the normal experience of every believer.

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is --his good, pleasing and perfect will. [Romans 12:2]

Whether you are seeking guidance as to a momentary problem or as to a life career, there are five steps to be followed. These may be summarized as follows: yield, confess, pray, study, and wait.

1. Yield

To yield is to present yourself to the Lord. It means to lay aside personal hopes, ambitions, and desires. It means to want His way supremely. Paul yielded when he asked, "What will you have me to do?" Isaiah yielded when he said, "Here I am; send me." Isaiah yielded and willingly offered himself to the Lord.

2. Confess

If we want to be in the center of His will, we must confess and forsake any sins which we cherish. Remember the words of the psalmist,

If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. [Psalm 66:18]

We should also confess our own helplessness and inability, and depend on His power.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. [Psalm 139:23,24]

3. Pray

This simply means that we must come before the Lord regularly, asking for His direction. We should claim His promise for guidance, asking Him to do as He has said. Our prayers should have His glory as their chief aim.

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding ... Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. [Colossians 1:9; 4:12]

4. Study

Spend time in the Word of God. Read it while you are on your knees, asking God to speak to you through it. Read it slowly. Read it thoughtfully. Read it expectantly.

Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul ... Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground. [Psalm 143:8,10]

5. Wait

If God does not answer immediately, wait.

Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken. [Psalm 62:5-6]

If you have prayed for direction and no answer comes, then God's guidance is for you to stay where you are. If you are really trusting in the Lord, you will not be in a hurry.

"So this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed." [Isaiah 28:16]

God reveals His will to us in several different ways. He may use one, or a combination, of the following methods.

Guidance through the Bible

The Scriptures give direction in two ways. First of all, they definitely prohibit certain courses of action. For instance, if a Christian were praying for guidance as to whether he should marry an unsaved girl, he could get God's answer in 2 Corinthians 6:14:

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?

On the other hand, God often uses other verses of Scripture to guide us to take a certain definite course of action. A verse that you had never noticed before may take on new meaning because it tells you what to do at the very time you are praying for direction.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. [Psalm 119:105]

Guidance through Christians

It is sometimes helpful to seek the advice of mature, spiritual Christians. Their experience and counsel can often save a younger Christian from serious pitfalls.

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith ... Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as

men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. [Hebrews 13:7,17]

Guidance through circumstances

Since God controls the entire universe, He can and often does plan the circumstances of our lives to reveal His will. A letter, for instance, may arrive at just the right time with just the information needed to point the way.

Guidance through the Holy Spirit

The Spirit of God can influence our convictions, our desires, or our inclinations in such a way as to make God's will clear. In such cases, the guidance is so obvious that to refuse it would be the same as disobedience.

The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man's house ... Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. [Acts 11:12; 16:6,7]

One more thing . . .

When God gives light, walk in it.

So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. [Acts 26:19]

Guidance must be obeyed to be continued. Obedience is the basis of a life of true happiness and lasting value.

Prayer & Praise

There can be no progress in any part of the Christian life without prayer. It is therefore important for the young believer to know what the Bible teaches about this subject.

1. Why pray?

Because the Bible commands us to do so.

I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing. [1 Timothy 2:8]

The Lord Jesus was a man of prayer. If He felt the need of it, how much more should we!

Pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. [1 Thessalonians 5:17,18]

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. [Ephesians 6:18]

2. How often?

It is a good plan to pray upon arising in the morning and upon retiring at night. Then during the day, we should look to the Lord when problems arise, when help is needed, or when we want to thank Him for something.

3. In what position?

Daniel kneeled when he prayed.

Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. [Daniel 6:10]

So did the Lord Jesus.

He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, [Luke 22:41]

Nehemiah, on the other hand, prayed while he was standing before the king.

The king said to me, "What is it you want?" Then I prayed to the God of heaven. [Nehemiah 2:4]

In general, sometimes Christians kneel and sometimes we speak to God while walking along the street or engaging in our daily activities.

4. For what?

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. [Philippians 4:6]

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone-- for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all Godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior. [1 Timothy 2:1-3]

Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. [Matthew 9:38]

There is nothing too small and nothing too great for prayer.

Where your requests are specific, you will see specific answers. On the other hand, if you pray for people in general, without naming them, you will have no way of knowing whether your prayers are answered.

5. Conditions for answered prayer

If we abide in Christ, our requests will be answered.

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. [John 15:7]

Our prayers should be according to His will.

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. [1 John 5:14]

Since the general outline of God's will is found in the Bible, our requests should be Scriptural.

Our requests should be offered in the name of Christ.

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. [John 14:13; 16:23]

When we truly ask in His name, it is making the request of God.

Our motives must be pure.

When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. [James 4:3]

If our motives are selfish and sinful, we cannot expect an answer.

6. Dangers of prayer

Don't pray to be seen.

And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. [Matthew 6:5,6]

Don't ask God to do something you can do yourself. No sane Christian would step into the path of an oncoming auto and then ask God to take him back to the sidewalk. God gave him legs to take himself back.

Don't ask for something you know you shouldn't have!

So he gave them what they asked for, but sent a wasting disease upon them. [Psalm 106:15]

Avoid meaningless repetitions.

And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. [Matthew 6:7]

Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few. [Ecclesiastes 5:2]

Being A Witness

Winning souls to Jesus Christ is one of the greatest occupations in the world today.

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise. [Proverbs 11:30].

Although there are no hard and fast rules to insure success in this work, yet there are some general principles which will prove extremely valuable.

1. He must first be spiritually healthy.

He must feed constantly on the Word. He must spend much time in prayer. He must yield to God. He must confess and abandon any cherished sins. By walking in the Spirit, the Christian will find that the Lord will provide opportunities for effectual witness. This is undoubtedly the golden rule of soul-winning:

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."
[Matthew 4:19]

2. Start out each day by asking the Lord to lead you to those whom He wants us to contact.

It is obvious that we cannot speak to everyone we see. It is also clear that we have no way of knowing by ourselves which souls are "ripe" for salvation. But if we let the Lord lead us, we will work more efficiently, and reap more fruit for Him.

3. During the day, we should seize opportunities to speak for Christ.

Religious subjects often come up in conversation; we should make the most of them. Then again we do not always have to wait for opportunities; we can make them for ourselves.

4. Use the Bible as much as possible.

It is a living Word.

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

It has power to reach souls far beyond any words we could ever utter. It is the sword of the Spirit, and every good soldier of Jesus Christ should use this, the greatest of all weapons.

5. Follow up each contact.

Not many persons are saved the first time they hear the gospel.

6. Don't press for quick decisions.

A false profession is not only worthless, but it may deceive the individual himself, and may do untold harm to the cause of Christ. Be faithful in sowing the seed, and God will be faithful in giving the increase.

7. If you find it difficult to speak to others about the Lord, tell the Lord about it!

Ask Him to give you strength and courage to witness for Him. If you really want it, He will give it.

8. The joy of leading a person to Christ is indescribable!

In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents. [Luke 15:10]

9. You will have a heavenly greeting!

How much greater will be the joy in heaven when someone greets you with these words, "It was you who invited me here!"

10. Jesus confesses you before the Father!

Finally, how thrilling it will be when the Lord Jesus Christ openly confesses you before the Father of heaven:

Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. [Matthew 10:32]

Searching The Scriptures

Bible study must be carried on in full dependence on the Holy Spirit. He is our teacher, and we should constantly seek His guidance:

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you ... But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. [John 14:26; 16:13]

There is no quick easy way to learn the Bible. It involves hard work for everyone.

And if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the

knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones. Then you will understand what is right and just and fair --every good path. [Proverbs 2:4-9]

Yet it is also true that the more knowledge of it that we gain, the easier it is to gain additional knowledge.

The great goal of Bible study, of course, is to put into practice what you have learned. We should allow the Word to rebuke us, to correct us, to make us more like the Lord Jesus:

When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God Almighty. [Jeremiah 15:16]

Remember when you study the Bible you are studying an eternal book. Everything you learn about it is an investment for eternity. So give it your best shot!

The Life That Counts

How can a Christian make his life count? Although a believer cannot lose his salvation, it is certainly true that he can waste his life so that it will not count for eternity. To avoid the tragedy of a wasted life, the Bible counsels every Christian as follows.

1. Count the cost of being a disciple of Christ.

All believers are children of God, but not all are disciples. The terms of discipleship are found in Matthew 10:16–42 and Luke 14:25–35. Sometimes, to be a disciple means giving up comforts and earthly security. Rather than simply a life of self-denial, it is a life of fulfilling God's purpose. Sometimes it means the enmity and ridicule of the world. It means forsaking all and following the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Make a deliberate commitment of your life to Him.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God --this is your spiritual act of worship. [Romans 12:1]

Come to that point of decision where you yield your body as a living sacrifice to God. This is the only reasonable thing to do in view of all that He has done.

3. Abandon your life for Christ.

Jesus said,

"For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it." [Matthew 16:25]

In other words, if you want to know the full joy and happiness of life, you should live to please the Lord Jesus Christ. The one who lives selfishly is a miserable, unhappy person.

4. Don't be sidetracked.

So many start off well but then they lose the vision and slip back into the old routine. Jesus said,

"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." [Luke 9:62]

5. Live to serve!

. . . the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. [Matthew 20:28]

True greatness lies in serving others. Don't try to be on the receiving line.

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." [Acts 20:35]

6. Crown Him Lord of all!

If Christ rules in your life, your days will really count for eternity.

Christianity is not a pleasant pastime, but a passionate quest. It is not an easy life, but a struggle. It costs nothing to become a Christian, but it costs everything to be one. It is not popularity but persecution. It is the best life. You serve the best of masters. Your rewards are wonderful, both now and in eternity.

Amen!