

Salvation Essentials II

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SALVATION ESSENTIALS II

Be Born Again (John 3:3)

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Receive Forgiveness of Sins (Acts 26:18)

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Reconciling the World to Himself (2 Cor 5:19)

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He gave Himself as a Ransom for All (1 Tim 2:6)

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A Propitiation in His Blood (Romans 3:25)

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Word of the Cross is to us Salvation (1 Cor 1:18)

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The Gospel is the Power of God (Romans 1:16)

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God Delivers (Dan 6:27) and Translates (Col 1:13)

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The Will of God Your Sanctification (1 Thess 4:3)

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Be Born Again (John 3:3)

Adam and Eve

On the sixth day "God created man in His own image" (Ge 1:27) in "spirit and soul and body" (1Th 5:23). "It is I who made the earth, and created man upon it" (Isa 45:12). "It was Adam who was first created" (1Ti 2:13) and in Hebrew his name means "humanity." In an extended sense the word "flesh" is also humanity. The human race inherits from Adam for, "as in Adam all" (1Co 15:22), applies to everyone. "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good" (Ge 1:31). Therefore it cannot be concluded that man is inherently sinful.

When God put Adam in the Garden of Eden he "commanded the man" (Ge 2:16) "from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die" (:17). It was not said that "you will drop dead" as if it was poisonous. So to die must mean that death was not part of God's scheme of things, but it would transpire if Adam was disobedient. Later it happened that "every intent of the thoughts of . . . [man's] heart was only evil continually" (6:5). So God "was sorry that He had made man on the earth" (:6).

Much later John saw the ALamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn 1:29). Jesus "will save His people from their sins" (Mt 1:21). Your sins will be Awiped away" (Ac 3:19). How is this accomplished? It is because "Christ died for our sins" (1Co 15:3). In society there is a penalty to pay when someone has transgressed the law. It is a legal matter of "judgment" (Jn 5:24). "Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb 9:22). "The life of the flesh is in the blood . . . for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement" (Lev 17:11). God anticipated this because Christ "was foreknown before the foundation of the world" (1Pe 1:20) and

“His works were finished from the foundation of the world” (Heb 4:3). Therefore Christ became “the Lamb that was slain” (Rev 5:12) “through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb 10:10). Christ “gave himself as a ransom for all” (1Ti 2:6).

Adam’s Sin

“The Lord fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man” (Ge 2:22) and they "were both naked and were not ashamed" (:25). But when they ate of the fruit of the tree "the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they . . . made themselves loin coverings" (3:7). They had "become like one of Us, knowing good and evil" (:22). Did they know being naked as good or evil? They didn't feel shame before, but it seems they did now. They had to replace the innocence of their previous condition with a covering and God, himself, had to make "garments of skin for Adam and his wife" (:21). In Laodicea they didn't know that they were "wretched and miserable and poor and blind and **naked**" (Rev 3:17). God advises "buy from Me . . . white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your **nakedness** will not be revealed" (:18).

What had Adam done? He was "the one who sinned" (Ro 5:16). What is sin? It is a "transgression" (:15) or “offense” (:15 KJV). It is also a “trespass” (:15 RSV). You've seen signs saying "NO TRESPASSING." "God commanded...you shall not eat" (Ge 2:16-17). But Adam violated the command. "Through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners" (Ro 5:19). The result was "through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin" (:12). But others "had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam" (:14). Then "death spread to all men" (:12) because "in Adam all die" (1Co 15:22). Sin is the culprit because "the sting of death is sin" (1Co 15:56). "The wages of sin is death" (Ro 6:23). Therefore "sin reigned in death" (5:21) and "death reigned" (:17). "Death works in us"

(2Co 4:12). One might respond that everyone has to die naturally anyway. But you should consider "him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb 2:14).

Wrath

What must we be saved from? We must be "saved from wrath" (Ro 5:9). The reason for the wrath as explained to Adam is "because you have listened to the voice of your wife . . . cursed is the ground because of you" (Ge 3:17). Is God angry at the world? On the contrary, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" (Jn 3:16). It is not a matter of retribution because "God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world" (Jn 3:17). Jesus said "I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE", for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mt 9:13). "Having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent" (Ac 17:30). The Holy Spirit convicts "the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me" (Jn 16:8-9).

Consequently:

- The "Son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost" (Lk 19:10).
- God sent "the Son into the world . . . that the world through Him might be saved" (Jn 3:17).
- "Besides Me there is no savior" (Isa 43:11).
- "There is one God, and one mediator also between God and men" (1Ti 2:5).
- "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Ac 4:12).
- Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (Jn 14:6).
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Some might say that the rendition of Adam and Eve is just a metaphor because evolution proves otherwise. But consider how seriously the Bible treats Adam's disobedience.

The results are:

- "You will all likewise perish" (Lk 13:3).
- You "shall be condemned" (Mk 16:16).
- You are "dead in your trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1).

Death

"By a man came death" (1Co 15:21). Death is firstly interpreted as physical death. "Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death" (Heb 11:5). "It is appointed for men to die once" (9:27). Sin contributes to the inevitable. It is "cause and effect" because it's a "law of sin and of death" (Ro 8:2).

There is a direct relationship between how you live and its consequences:

- "If you are living according to the flesh, you must die" (Ro 8:13).
- "The outcome of those things is death" (6:21) since there "is a sin leading to death" (1Jo 5:16).
- "While we were in the flesh, the sinful passions . . . were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death" (Ro 7:5).
- "With my flesh [I serve] the law of sin" (7:25) "resulting in death" (6:16).
- "The mind set on the flesh is death" (8:6).

Paul was acutely aware of sin. "Those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh" (Ro 8:5). "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (:8). He made it clear that it wasn't just his opinion of what sin is. In fact, even though "sin was in the world . . . [it was] not imputed" (5:13) before the law. "Apart from the Law sin is dead" (7:8). "I would

not have come to know sin except through the Law" (:7). It was a "commandment, which was to result in life" (:10) by way of a "ministry . . . in letters engraved on stones" (2Co 3:7). "The Law came in so that the transgression would increase" (Ro 5:20). Therefore "the Law is spiritual" (7:14).

Sin

This behavior is explained as man's "flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal 5:24). It could be said that man's human nature is physical, sensuous and earthy. "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak" (Mt 26:41). Man's flesh is but "a wind that passes and does not return" (Ps 78:39). "All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades" (Isa 40:6-7). He continues with "the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these" (Gal 5:19-21).

Paul concludes by saying "I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh" (Ro 7:18). "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jer 17:9). He states "no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me" (:17). Sin reigns "in your mortal body" (6:12) and is a "body of death" (7:24). "The Scripture has shut up everyone under sin" (Gal 3:22) "making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members" (Ro 7:23). The "pleasures of sin" (Heb 11:25) "easily entangles" (12:1) and sin can become "master over you" (Ro 6:14). It has "lusts" (:12) and "coveting of every kind" (7:8). You can be "led into" (2Co 11:29) and "caught in any trespass" (Gal 6:1). Then you can "be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb 3:13).

"If by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live" (Ro 8:13). If you live then does that mean you won't die? That isn't the context, for another interpretation of death is that you are not alive spiritually. "You have a name

that you are alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die" (Rev 3:1-2). "I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich" (:18). "Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief" (:3) and "remove your lampstand out of its place" (2:5). God both gives and takes. Realistically speaking "to live is Christ" (Php 1:21) and "in Christ all will be made alive" (1Co 15:22). Since "Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness" (Ro 8:10).

Heaven or Hell?

People say "I'm a good person. I even believe there is a God. If there is a hell I wouldn't go there because I'm not a bad person." So where would you fit in with Romans 1:18 which says "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness"? Supposedly you wouldn't suffer God's wrath if you weren't godless or wicked. What does "godless" mean? If you didn't believe in God then that would qualify. But James 2:19 says that even "the demons also believe, and shudder." Does that qualify them as being a friend of God free from God's wrath? By definition they are not in that category even though they are familiar with God.

The goal is to get to heaven, but how? If you know the proprietor then you would be allowed entry. The key is knowing God. It must be in a personal way, otherwise, "I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME" (Mt 7:23). It is possible because Romans 1:19 talks of "that which is known about God." It is the "truth of God" (:25) and is "understood" (:20). Daniel 12:4 says in the last days "knowledge will increase." Since God "made the heavens with skill" (Ps 136:5) does man know God by intelligence and reason? That is not possible because to make the leap from the physical to the eternal requires God's revelation. "God made it evident to them . . . since the creation

of the world" (Ro 1:19-20). "His invisible attributes . . . have been clearly seen . . . through what has been made so that they are without excuse" (:20). This includes "His eternal power and divine nature" (:20). This revelation is "faith [which] comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (10:17). In Greek it is "rhema" which means the "Living Word" or God himself speaking. It operates continually for "I have drawn you with lovingkindness" (Jer 31:3).

Provision

"Since the creation . . . [God is] clearly seen" (Ro 1:20). That "they knew God" (:21) you get the impression that it was the default condition of man to know him. However, Romans 1:18-32 explains that God's wrath is directed against the unrighteous. According to Paul they didn't start out that way. Does this discuss man's downhill slide from the beginning or is it a picture of every person's potential journey established by choosing his own fate? In a negative sense it is God's wrath one would wish to avoid, but in a positive way it is being saved by Jesus' provision which insulates from wrath. The question is where is our starting point? Are we inherently righteous because it says that man knew God from creation? If that was the case then if someone didn't spoil his own inherent righteousness God would rescue him regardless even though he hadn't heard the Gospel. But the Bible doesn't say that. It says in Romans 5:19 that "through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners." If men are inherently sinful then they must be saved regardless of whether they "suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Ro 1:18) or not.

What constitutes the backsliding Paul relates which a conscientious person would endeavor to avoid? They didn't apply their knowledge since "they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks" (Ro 1:21). It was a deliberate decision because "they did not see fit to acknowledge God" (:28). They "suppress the truth" (:18). They "exchanged the glory" (:23) and "the truth

of God for a lie" (:25). In their pride they claimed "to be wise" (:22) and "worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator" (:25). By their behavior they sealed their own fate. When they "became futile in their speculations" (:21) it gave "birth to sin . . . [which] brings forth death" (Jas 1:15). Therefore God "gave them over" (Ro 1:24, 26, 28) to the desires of their hearts. "Their foolish heart was darkened" (:21) in the form of "impurity" (:24) and "degrading passions" (:26) which are acts of sexual indecency. They received "in their own persons the due penalty of their error" (:27). Finally "God gave them over to a depraved mind" (:28) and worse things happened. This would bring into question the doctrine of eternal security. If they didn't "hold fast . . . until the end" (Heb 3: 6) then they wouldn't be saved.

Judgment

Is God's judgment complicated because there are so many different people and religions? Perhaps it can be simplified to just the Jew and the Gentile. God "desires all men to be saved" (1Ti 2:4). It is evaluated when we all "appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2Co 5:10). "All the nations will be gathered before Him" (Mt 25:32). It is "on the day when . . . God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus" (Ro 2:16). God has clearly revealed his divinity and power such that it is obvious and "they are without excuse" (1:20) if they don't concur. This is at the "great white throne" (Rev 20:11). "The dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds" (:12). "He will separate them from one another" (Mt 25:32) and "say to those on His right, 'Come . . . inherit the kingdom'" (:34) and "those on His left, 'Depart from Me'" (:41). "Those who did the good deeds [will go] to a resurrection of life, [and] those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment " (Jn 5:29). We know God is fair because he "does not show partiality" (Dt 10:17) and

"in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him" (Ac 10:34-35).

Judgment and reward are synonymous because "My reward is with Me" (Rev 22:12). God will "render to every man according to what he has done" (Rev 22:12). He will "search the heart, . . . test the mind . . . [and] give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds" (Jer 17:10). Each will "be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done" (2Co 5:10). There are principles God judges by. "Whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life" (Gal 6:7-8).

Consequences

How do you qualify to get to heaven? "Not everyone . . . will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father" (Mt 7:21). God will give "to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life" (Ro 2:7). "The judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things" (2:2). There is "the truth of God" (1:25). Therefore following the truth is essential. What do you think the destiny of those who "suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (1:18), "exchanged the truth of God for a lie" (:25), and "do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness" (2:8) will be? There will be "wrath and indignation . . . tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil" (:8-9). You take the wrong direction when you don't "honor Him as God or give thanks" (1:21). When you claim "to be wise" (:22) yourself and do "not see fit to acknowledge God any longer" (:28) you become "selfishly ambitious" (2:8). "It flatters him in his own eyes . . . [and] he has ceased to be wise and to do good" (Ps 36:2-3). You serve instead "the creature rather than the Creator" (1:25) and your "heart was darkened" (:21). "You are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of . . . the righteous

judgment of God" (2:5). Their "end will be according to their deeds" (2Co 11:15). But if you go the right direction there will be "glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good" (Ro 2:10).

The Jew has the Law, so you might say God judges them that way since "the doers of the Law will be justified" (Ro 2:13). Also, "all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law" (:12). Then, Gentiles who do not have the law but "have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law" (:12). In addition, "if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?" (:26). What about a person who does NOT "suppress the truth (Ro 1:18)", has NOT "exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image" (:23), and has NOT "exchanged the truth of God for a lie" (:25)? They would be Gentiles who "do instinctively the things of the Law . . . [which are] a law to themselves" (Ro 2:14). It would "show the work of the Law written in their hearts" (:15). When "God made it evident to them" (Ro 1:19) it was to their heart. "God has allotted to each a measure of faith" (Ro 12:3). Even Paul recognized that he "received [his revelation] from the Lord (1Co 11:23)" and he "received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:12). Therefore "choose for yourselves today whom you will serve" (Jos 24:15). You don't receive salvation by osmosis. Be careful because "the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2Co 4:4).

Born Again

Two characters in the Bible were concerned about the consequences of what they had heard. Nicodemus was "a ruler of the Jews" (Jn 3:1) and Jesus concurred saying he was a "teacher of Israel" (:10). The Jews had the Torah but "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Heb 10:4). Jesus said to him "unless one is born again he

cannot see the kingdom of God” (Jn 3:3). Jesus also had a rich young man come to him and ask “what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (Mk 10:17). He was like Nicodemus and said “I have kept all these things from my youth up” (:20). But Jesus’ solution was “go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” (:21).

There are specific instructions to accomplish this. You must:

- “He who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion” (Pr 28:13).
- “Repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away” (Ac 3:19).
- Be “converted and become like children” (Mt 18:3).
- “He who humbles himself will be exalted” (Lk 18:14).
- “Him who orders his way aright I shall show the salvation of God” (Ps 50:23).
- “Depart from evil and do good, so you will abide forever” (Ps 37:27).
- “He who practices the truth comes to the Light” (Jn 3:21).

Salvation is available because:

- “Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).
- “He who believes in the Son has eternal life” (Jn 3:36).
- “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved” (Mk 16:16).
- “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Ac 16:31).
- “Everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins” (Ac 10:43).
- “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name” (Jn 1:12).

Gospel

Yard sales are popular. You hear about them in the newspaper or from signs on the street. Salvation is popular, but unless you hear about it, you can't find it. "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Ac 4:12). Therefore "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED" (Ro 10:13). For if they don't know about Jesus Christ then they can't call upon his name, and since there is "no other name" (Ac 4:12) they can't be saved and go to heaven. In fact the gospel "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Ro 1:16). Without access to it, salvation is scripturally impossible.

One might say that this is easier said than done. Even Jesus said "it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 19:23). The disciples responded, "Then who can be saved?" (:25). Jesus replied, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (:26). Jesus instructs "Go; it shall be done for you as you have believed" (Mt 8:13. "All things are possible to him who believes" (Mk 9:23).

Romans 10:8-18 summarizes Paul's message. The fact that "the word is . . . in your heart" (Ro 10:8) is equivalent to being "within them" (1:19). "The word of faith which we are preaching" (10:8) has gone to "the ends of the world" (:18). The verse quotes "the heavens are telling of the glory of God" (Ps 19:1). God's "invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature . . . [are] understood through what has been made" (Ro 1:20). According to Paul it is now "their voice" (10:18) and "their words" (:18) instead of the heavens doing the preaching. So if someone has "never heard" (10:18) the message he will not have the "faith" (:17) to "call upon the name of the Lord" (:13). If you have the message and "if you confess . . . and believe . . . [in Jesus] you shall be saved" (:9).

You must hear:

- It is “the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation” (Eph 1:13).
- “If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching” (Jn 7:17).
- “All Scripture is inspired by God” (2Ti 3:16).
- It has been “written so that you may believe” (Jn 20:31).
- It is the “power of God for salvation” (Ro 1:16).
- He has “brought us forth by the word of truth” (Jas 1:18).
- It is the “living and enduring word of God” (1Pe 1:23).

Believe

There’s a saying “seeing is believing.” However, Jesus said “you have seen Me and yet do not believe” (Jn 6:36). “He who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Heb 11:6). “Believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Ro 10:9). How do you hear with your heart? “If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him” (Rev 3:20). Communication is “inspired by God” (2Ti 3:16). “The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit” (Ro 8:16). When Peter heard, Jesus said, “flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven” (Mt 16:17). It is by “faith which comes through Him” (Ac 3:16). “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Ro 10:17). Therefore it is “by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Eph 2:8-9). But when you hear the sayings you must “act on them” (Mt 7:26). Otherwise you will be like “those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved” (Lk 8:12).

Believing is positive and not passive. It reflects that you are a “new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new

things have come" (2Co 5:17). You have been delivered from "the domain of darkness, and transferred . . . to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col 1:13). It is essential that it be expressed. "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God" (1Jn 4:15). Confession is made "resulting in salvation" (Ro 10:10). "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven" (Mt 10:32).

By a deliberate decision you "believed" (Eph 1:13), "received" (Jn 1:12) and were "reconciled to God" (Ro 5:10). You have "redemption through His blood" (Eph 1:7). Redemption is the price paid to ransom you from slavery to sin. The Father "will pass over you" (Ex 12:13) and "you were sealed in Him" (Eph 1:13) because you profess dependence upon the "covering@ of the blood of Christ for your life. You are no longer bound by your tendency to commit sin. You "have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb 10:10) and "reconciled to God through the death of His Son" (Ro 5:10).

Reconciliation

"All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way" (Isa 53:6). Since man couldn't help himself God decided to solve the problem. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" (Jn 3:16) as a propitiation. He was "revealed" (1Ti 3:16) and sent "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Ro 8:3), "has come in the flesh" (1Jn 4:2), and was made "in the likeness of men" (Php 2:7) as a "descendant of David" (Ro 1:3). He "was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification" (Ro 4:25). God "made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf" (2Co 5:21) and he was "offered once to bear the sins of many" (Heb 9:28). "He died to sin once for all" (Ro 6:10) and "condemned sin in the flesh" (8:3). Therefore "consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ

Jesus" (6:11). We are "always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body" (2Co 4:10). Because of what Christ accomplished "the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God" (Gal 2:20). Paul said "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (:20).

It appears as though you're leading a double life. But that's not a good thing because "a double-minded man, [is] unstable in all his ways" (Jas 1:8). Therefore you have to stay focused. "The mind set on the Spirit is life and peace" (Ro 8:6). "Set your mind on the things above" (Col 3:2). "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Ro 12:2). "As He is, so also are we in this world" (1Jn 4:17) and, of course, He is in heaven. To put it into practice we "present yourselves to God . . . as instruments of righteousness" (Ro 6:13). "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men" (Col 3:23). Even the twenty-four elders didn't take credit for what they did because they "cast their crowns before the throne" (Rev 4:10). It is a matter of perspective giving credit to God who created it all. John said "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn 3:30). "If we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord" (Ro 14:8).

Promise

How God justifies today is based upon how he declared "Abraham righteous. God promised Abraham "in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Ge 22:18). God referenced the stars and stated "'So shall your descendants be'" (Ge 15:5). "Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness" (:6). His hope was in the promise and his faith was in "the assurance of things hoped for" (Heb 11:1). Abraham had "the faith . . . that he might be the father of all who believe" (Ro 4:11). He believed that God was

“able also to perform” (:21) it. Then God’s ability produced Isaac and Abraham became “heir of the world” (:13).

There is more to this promise than meets the eye. It was also made to “your seed,’ that is, Christ” (Gal 3:16). “Scripture . . . preached the gospel beforehand” (:8) in the Old Testament which was a “covenant previously ratified by God” (:17). That is why it is not a blanket promise to heirs of the Jewish race as “to seeds” (:16) but rather to “the seed [who] would come to whom the promise had been made” (:19). The promise is the “blessing of Abraham which might come to the Gentiles” (:14). “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise” (:29). The promise is “given to those who believe” (:22). “It is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham” (:7), “blessed with Abraham, the believer” (:9), and ultimately “sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (:26). This is the promise of the gospel which says “he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and . . . has passed out of death into life” (Jn 5:24). We therefore “receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal 3:14). The righteousness of God is revealed “through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe” (Ro 3:22). This results in justification and being written in the “book of life” (Rev 20:15).

Justification

What is justification composed of? You are “justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness” (Ro 3:24-25). Christ gave “His life a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28) and therefore “in Him we have redemption through His blood” (Eph 1:7). If you believe that he is the “propitiation for our sins” (1Jn 2:2) then “by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not as a result of works” (Eph 2:8-9). You become “the righteousness of God in Him” (2Co 5:21). God justifies you

by declaring you righteous because you believe that Christ accomplished something for you since you couldn't do it yourself. To him who "believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness" (Ro 4:5). Crediting is an accounting term denoting transferring value to someone's account. God deposits Christ's righteousness to your account if you believe which results in justification. In addition, just as Abraham was circumcised "having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph 1:13). God "gave to us the Spirit as a pledge" (2Co 5:5). The goal becomes being "conformed to the image of His Son" (Ro 8:29). This is accomplished "through sanctification by the Spirit" (2Th 2:13). "To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God" (Rev 2:7).

Receive Forgiveness of Sins (Acts 26:18)

Image of God

"God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image'" (Ge 1:26). "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him" (:27). "In the image of God He made man" (9:6). An image in a mirror reflects a form which is why it is called a "mirror image." The word in Greek is morpha which means shape. A form of something is an accurate representation of it such that it resembles the object. In a material sense it is the outward expression of man's holistic, physical-spiritual unity. God created man "according to Our likeness" (1:26). "In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God" (5:1). A likeness is a similitude of something in figure or pattern and could be said to be a synonym of image. "Male and female He created them" (1:27, 5:2). Man "is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man" (1Co 11:7). The husband is to show his wife "honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life" (1Pe 3:7). God said, "'Let them rule'" (Ge 1:26) and "'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule'" (:28). Therefore, rule or dominion is considered an aspect of man's image of God. "You have made him a little lower than God, and You crown him with glory and majesty! You make him to rule over the works of Your hands" (Ps 8:5-6). But just because you're in God's image doesn't mean you're omniscient, omnipresent, or omnipotent. Scripture does not specify what attributes constitute man's image of God. In Jesus' example "God sent forth His Son, born of a woman" (Gal 4:4) and he was "found in appearance of a man" (Php 2:8). "He existed in the form of God" (:6) but took upon himself "the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (:7). "He had to be made like His brethren in all things" (Heb 2:17). But simultaneously "He is the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15) and "the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of

His nature" (Heb 1:3). He had the inner character of God as well as the real characteristics of a human being.

Tree of Knowledge

"The Lord God commanded the man, saying . . . 'But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat of it you will surely die" (Ge 2:16-17). This was a command. Also, there was no explanation and only the consequence of death was stated. It was a matter of trusting God and obeying and "surely" dieing made the result clear. One would assume that when taking care of the animals in the Garden of Eden it was noticed that they died when reaching end of life, so death would not be unfamiliar. Also, you would think they'd be cognizant of God's wisdom and authority inherent in this command. Furthermore, they should have been aware that disobedience would produce a serious result. In a hockey game there are rules, and breaking them leads to a penalty that is served in the penalty box, which in this instance is death. In the game, the length of the penalty depends on the seriousness of the infraction, but in God's command, no time is stipulated. It is a principle based on the Creator's standards. Moses later explained it to Israel saying, "It shall come about, if you do not obey the Lord your God, to observe and do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you" (Dt 28:15). "See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity" (30:15). "Keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live" (:16). "But if your heart turns away and you will not obey . . . you shall surely perish" (:17-18). If disobedient "the Lord will send upon you curses, confusion, and rebuke, in all you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken Me" (28:20). It would be rebellion against a

holy God. It would be equivalent to breaking God's law because "everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness" (1Jn 3:4). If breaking the law was condoned then it would be a slight against God's character. God said regarding Judah's transgressions, "I will not revoke its punishment because they rejected the law of the Lord and have not kept His statutes" (Amos 2:4). "All souls are Mine . . . [and] the soul who sins will die" (Eze 18:4). "So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died" (Ge 5:5). One could argue that these are only isolated cases. However, "the Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one" (Ps 14:2-3). "If a man has committed a sin worthy of death . . . and you hang him on a tree . . . you shall bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God)" (Dt 21:22-23). "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us-for it is written, 'cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'" (Gal 3:13).

Fruit of Tree

One day Adam and Eve were near the tree of knowledge of good and evil and a serpent appeared and "said to the woman, 'You surely will not die!'" (Ge 3:4) if you eat the fruit of the tree. It was a contradiction of God having said "you will surely die." (2:17). Eve could see "that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes" (3:6). But how would she know it "was desirable to make one wise" (:6)? Then the serpent casted doubt on God's credibility saying, "'For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened'" (:5) which is another appeal to eyesight. Also, eating is referred to several times in these dialogs which points to the senses. Furthermore, the serpent said "you will be like God, knowing good and evil"

(:5) which would imply that God was keeping something from them. It's interesting that Satan himself said "I will make myself like the Most High" (Isa 14:14). They proceeded to eat the fruit and "the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked" (Ge 3:7). They were created in the image of God but the serpent tempted them saying "you will be like God" (:5) which insinuated that they were lacking somehow. However, Jesus shows he is not depriving anyone saying, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself" (Jn 17:19) and prayed for those "who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us" (:20-21). "We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (1Jn 3:2). However, in the garden "the Lord God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever (Ge 3:22). Therefore, God "drove the man out" (:24) of the garden all meaning to many, that it represents separation from God and spiritual death.

Cross of Christ

God then asked them what they had done and Adam responded that the woman God had provided him offered him the fruit, as if he had no choice. Eve said the serpent had deceived her, as if deception neutralizes critical thinking. Consequently God told Eve that she would have difficulty bearing children and told Adam he would have problems farming. Then God concluded saying how Adam had been created from the earth and would return to it at death. It sounds like they had been deprived of their image of God too. Also the penalty of disobedience seems permanent and that man can't extradite himself. Freedom of choice has cause-and-effect consequences. But is there ever any allowance for making mistakes? Fortunately Christ "was foreknown before the

foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you" (1Pe 1:20). But only those will be helped whose name has "been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain" (Rev 13:8).

Sin entered and things got worse. Man was on his own since "your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear" (Isa 59:2). The status quo is, "No one is good except God alone" (Mk 10:18). "There is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins" (Eccl 7:20). "There is no one who does good, not even one" (Ps 14:3). "There is no man who does not sin" (1Ki 8:46). Also, someone cannot do penance to correct the violation "because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight" (Ro 3:20). "Who can say, 'I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from my sin'?" (Pr 20:9). Therefore Christ was sent "under the Law so that He might redeem those who were under the Law" (Gal 4:4-5). "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness" (1Pe 2:24). It works when we "put on the new self who is being renewed" (Col 3:10) as we are "being transformed into the same image from glory to glory" (2Co 3:18). It seems that man's image of God was not completely obliterated and that it can be restored in a scriptural way.

Covenant with Israel

"Adam began serving his penalty for disobedience without an end in sight. He also forfeited the rule he had been authorized to have. "You make him rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet" (Ps 8:6). Was God just going to go with the status quo? He judges sin but plans forgiveness. After the flood God told Noah, "I establish My covenant with you" (Ge 9:11). God initiates the covenant

"which I am making between Me and you" (:12). There is even evidence where "I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth" (:13). The pattern is "I will establish My covenant between Me and you" (Ge 9:11, 17:1, :7, :19). The covenant is also permanent, as with circumcision which will "be in your flesh" (17:13) as an "everlasting covenant" (17:7, :13, :19). It is a personally presented obligation as when "God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him" (9:8). "God said to Abram" (15:13) and "on that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying" (:18). "The Lord appeared to Abram and said to him" (17:1). All the parties are to fulfill the covenant as God explained, "Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations" (:9). There are specific promises as when God told Abram, "To your descendants I have given this land" (15:18). God would confirm it to "your descendants . . . to be God to you and to your descendants after you" (17:7). "You shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations" (:9). For God's part he said, "Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him" (:19). "I will greatly multiply your descendants" (16:10). However God also said, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years" (15:13).

God delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage citing, "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself" (Ex 19:4). "Moses entreated the Lord his God, and said, 'O Lord, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom you have brought from the land of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?' (32:11). God had told them, "If you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own

possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is mine" (19:5). God initiated it saying, "This month shall be the beginning of months for you" (12:2) and "You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight" (:6). "Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it" (:7). This was reiterated at Mount Sinai when God called to Moses "from the mountain, saying, 'Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob'" (19:3) and that "these are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel" (:6).

Ordinances of Covenant

At Mt. Sinai God explained to Moses what his provision and expectations would be. Moses repeated them to Israel and "all the people answered together and said, 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do!'" (Ex 19:8). "Then God spoke all these words" (20:1) which began with the Ten Commandments. Next, God met with them at Mt. Sinai and "all the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking . . . [and] then they said to Moses, 'Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die.'" (20:18-19). "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, you yourselves have seen that I have spoken to you from heaven'" (:22). Then God proceeded to provide the details of his requirements to Moses saying, "Now these are the ordinances which you are to set before them" (21:1).

To make their journey through the wilderness successful God said, "I am going to send an angel before you to guard you along the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared" (23:20). Since it was a covenant, God commanded, "You shall not make other gods besides Me; gods of silver or

gods of gold, you shall not make for yourselves" (20:23). "Be on your guard; and do not mention the name of other gods, nor let them be heard from your mouth" (23:13). "You shall not worship their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their deeds" (:24). "They shall not live in your land, because they will make you sin against Me" (:33). Many years later "they made Him jealous with strange gods; with abominations they provoked Him to anger. They sacrificed to demons who were not God, to gods whom they have not known" (Dt 32:16-17). "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers with demons" (1Co 10:20). "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons" (:21).

Book of the Covenant

"Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice and said, 'All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do!'" (Ex 24:3). "Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord" (:4). "Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!'" (:7). "Now the Lord said to Moses, 'Come up to Me on the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandment which I have written for their instruction'" (:12). Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible which are referred to as the Old Covenant. When God "had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God" (Ex 31:18). "The tablets were God's work, and the writing was God's writing engraved on the tablets" (32:16).

"On the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. And to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of

the glory of the Lord was like a consuming fire on the mountain top" (Ex 24:17-18). "Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights" (:18). But there was a problem in the camp and the Israelites had sinned. Moses then interceded for them and God modified what he was going to do. Moses said, "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever'" (Ex 32:13).

The New Covenant

The Law became the foundation for Israel's purposes. But when the New Covenant arrived "by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight" (Ro 3:20). The Old Covenant had validity but it culminated in the new because the old functioned only temporarily as a type. Christ had been sent "under the Law so that He might redeem those who were under the Law" (Gal 4:4-5). Now "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Ro 10:4). "The promise to Abraham . . . was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith" (4:13). "Apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested . . . even the righteousness of God through all those who believe" (3:21). "He is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter" (2:29). "The blood of Christ . . . [will] cleanse your conscience from dead works" (Heb 9:14). This testimony has been presented over the centuries "by the Law and the Prophets" (Ro 3:21) and is not just an afterthought.

"When He comes into the world, He says . . . a body You have prepared for Me" (Heb 10:5). "God sent forth His Son, born of a woman" (Gal 4:4). "Since the children share in flesh and

blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same" (Heb 2:14). He was "born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh of the will of man, but of God" (Jn 1:13). "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" (3:16). "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory" (1:14). "I am the Lord, I have called You in righteousness, I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You, and I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations" (Isa 42:6). "Behold, I have come to do Your will" (Heb 10:9). "Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of Me. I delight to do Your will, O My God; Your Law is within My heart" (Ps 40:7-8). He "emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, being made in the likeness of men" (Php 2:7). "The Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak" (Jn 12:49). "I lay it [my life] down on My own initiative . . . this commandment I received from My Father" (10:18).

Problem of Sin

Some Bible students cite a "law of first mention" which means that a word representing a theme occurs first at the beginning of the Bible and is developed more throughout the remaining books. Furthermore, "these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction" (1Co 10:11). If sin is the subject, then logically a reference to it early in the Bible could help define what it means. For instance, Moses asked two of the tribes, "Why are you discouraging the sons of Israel from crossing over into the land which the Lord has given them?" (Nu 32:7). He referred to them as "sinful men" (:14) and if they disobeyed God he would abandon them in the wilderness again (:15). Moses told them, "If you do not do so, behold, you have sinned against the Lord, and be sure your sin will find you out" (:23). Sin, therefore, would be disobeying God's command which is what happened when "she took from

its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate" (Ge 3:6). Isaiah told them "your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear" (Isa 59:2). "Every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty" (Heb 2:2). We've all heard "fire and brimstone" sermons which seem to imply we are all guilty because "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Ro 3:23). But God's character requires him to confront sin because permitting it without judgment would be condoning it. God proclaimed he was, "Compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin, yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished" (Ex 34:6-7).

What condition is the world in? "There is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and never sins" (Eccl 7:20). "They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one" (Ps 14:3). "Like Adam, they have all transgressed the covenant" (Hos 6:7). Even though they "had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam" (Ro 5:14) "there is no man who does not sin" (1Ki 8:46). In addition, "the wages of sin is death" (Ro 6:23). "By a man came death" (1Co 15:21), "in Adam all die" (:22) and "death reigned from Adam until Moses" (Ro 5:14). "The person who sins" (Eze 18:20) and "the soul who sins will die" (:4). How is this turned around or rectified? "The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ro 6:23) "who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father" (Gal 1:4).

Solution to Sin

The source of sin can be mental or physical. With the first it

can be from being "alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds" (Col 1:21). It can be "iniquity . . . and wickedness" (Eze 18:20), "unrighteousness" (Ro 6:13), or "transgression and disobedience" (Heb 2:2). In the second case it can be due to the "sinful flesh" (Ro 8:3) with "its passions and desires" (Gal 5:24). It is in our "mortal body" (Ro 6:12) in "our body of sin" (:6) so that we "obey its lusts" (:12) and are "slaves to sin" (:6). Then the Law was given and "through the Law comes the knowledge of sin" (3:20). Paul said that "the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage of sin" (7:14). But "by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight" (3:20). However, "the Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (5:20). "What the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh" (8:3). Therefore "do not let sin reign in your mortal body . . . [or] go on presenting the members of your body to sin" (6:12-13). "Sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace" (:14).

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Ro 5:8). "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2Co 5:21). He "gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed" (Titus 2:14). He was "offered once to bear the sins of many" (Heb 9:28) and was "delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification" (Ro 4:25). "If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness" (8:10). "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed" (1Pe 2:24). "Our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we

would no longer be slaves to sin" (Ro 6:6). "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only but also for those of the whole world" (1Jn 2:2). Jesus said, "This is the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:28).

Gave His Life for Us

Christ was "foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you" (1Pe 1:20) as a "testimony given at the proper time" (1Ti 2:6). It was prophesied, "Behold, I come to do Your will" (Heb 10:9) because "I delight to do Your will . . . [since] Your law is within my heart" (Ps 40:8). He "gave Himself for our sins . . . according to the will of our God and Father" (Gal 1:4). "This commandment I received from My Father" (Jn 10:18). Therefore "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory . . . full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14). "Since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same" (Heb 2:14) and "emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men" (Php 2:7). He "was made a little while lower than the angels" (Heb 2:9). "In appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death" (Php 2:8) "so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous" (Ro 5:19).

Jesus explained, "I am among you as the one who serves" (Lk 22:27) and "did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mt 20:28). "Whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave" (:27). "I lay down My life" (Jn 10:17) "on My own initiative . . . [and] I have authority to take it up again" (:18). "I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth" (Jn 17:19). It was by "suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by

the grace of God He might taste death for everyone" (Heb 2:9). "He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf" (2Co 5:15). "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (:21). "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us" (Gal 3:13) for "he who is hanged [on a tree] is accursed of God" (Dt 21:23). Therefore, "I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity" (30:15) and "a blessing and a curse" (11:26). A "blessing, if you listen" (:27) and a "curse, if you do not listen" (:28). He who "executes My ordinances, and walks in My statutes; he will not die . . . [but] will surely live" (Eze 18:17). "The righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself" (Eze 18:20).

Blood of Covenant

God's purpose "now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus" (2Ti 1:10). He said "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Mk 10:45). Also, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10). He "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2Ti 1:10). "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (Jn 1:4-5). "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world" (1Jn 2:2). A propitiation is the satisfaction of a judgment as if a fine had to be paid as a penalty for breaking the law. Similarly, if "blood pollutes the land [then] no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it" (Nu 35:33). "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed" (Ge 9:6). Expiation is similar to propitiation in that a price is owed to the authority that requires that a recompense be paid.

Man's offense was so serious such that if he "has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree" (Dt 21:22) "one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb 9:22). Therefore Jesus explained, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:28). This covenant was anticipated, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement" (Lev 17:11). Atonement is the price paid to satisfy the penalty due from the offense of the violation. "How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb 9:14). "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth" (Jn 17:19). "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you" (15:3).

Died on a Cross

Paul instructed to "walk in love, just as Christ also loved you" (Eph 5:2). It is "faith working through love" (Gal 5:6). "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" (Jn 3:16). "God demonstrates His own love toward us . . . [since] Christ died for us" (Ro 5:8). "For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died" (2Co 5:14). It is what "God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh" (Ro 8:3). "For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed" (1Co 5:7). "He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Php 2:8). "How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

(Heb 9:14). A death took place which was "to purify for Himself a people for His own possession" (Titus 2:14). "When He had made purifications of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High" (Heb 1:3).

Christ was "delivered over because of our transgressions" (Ro 4:25). "The Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him" (Isa 53:6). "He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening of our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed" (Isa 53:5). He prophesied this saying, "'The Son of Man must suffer many things . . . and be killed'" (Mk 8:31). John the Baptist proclaimed Christ as he "who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn 1:29). God "made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf" (1Co 5:21). He "gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God" (Eph 5:2). He was "offered once to bear the sins of many" (Heb 9:28). "One died for all" (2Co 5:14) and "the death that He died, He died to sin once for all" (Ro 6:10). "A death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions" (Heb 9:15). "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed" (1Pe 2:24). "What the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did" (Ro 8:3). We "were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ" (7:4). "Having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Col 2:14). "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death" (Ro 8:2). It is so that he "might set free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives" (Heb 2:15). "He who has died is freed from sin" (Ro 6:7). "The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (:23). "Creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption" (8:21).

Raised from the Dead

"Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father" (Ro 6:4). It was "the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead" (8:11). "The Father raises the dead and gives them life" (Jn 5:21). Christ "was raised because of our justification" (Ro 4:25). "Through Him [we] are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead" (1Pe 1:21). Since "we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him" (Ro 6:8). Therefore we "consider [ourselves] to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (:11) because "the life that He lives, He lives to God" (:10). We have "concluded this" (2Co 5:14) "that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf" (:15). It is "so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (:21) being that "the spirit is alive because of righteousness" (Ro 8:10). "He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you" (:11). "The Son also gives life to whom He wishes" (Jn 5:21). He said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (14:6).

"Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again" (Ro 6:9). The case is closed. "How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" (:2). Christ has "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2Ti 1:10). It is a clear cut case which speaks for itself. Paul understood the situation because he was sent to "preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void" (1Co 1:17). He would not promote anything except "the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal 6:14). He "determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1Co 2:2). However, "to Jews [it is] a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness" (1:23). "For

the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (:18).

You are redeemed "with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ" (1Pe 1:19). Every believer has "been baptized into Christ Jesus" (Ro 6:3) and is part of "the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Ac 20:28). Furthermore, we "have been baptized into His death . . . [and] buried with Him through baptism into death" (Ro 6:3-4) as well as "united with Him in the likeness of His death" (:5). That is why "those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh" (Gal 5:24). "Our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin" (Ro 6:6). "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me . . . [for] whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it" (Lk 9:23-24). It was "through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb 2:14). "The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil" (1Jn 3:8). For example, Jesus told Peter, "'You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests'" (Mt 16:23). "The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life" (Ro 8:6). "Christ was raised from the dead . . . so we too might walk in newness of life" (6:4). Therefore, "we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection" (:5).

Reconciling the World to Himself

(2 Corinthians 5:19)

Adam and Eve

Flesh is corporeal in that "God formed the man from the dust of the ground" (Ge 2:7). But it lacks the dimension of life. For this reason God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" (:7). Therefore you might say that there is an inner as well as outer man. This is reflected in "who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him" (1Co 2:11)? On the sixth day "God created man in His own image" (Ge 1:27) in "spirit and soul and body" (1Th 5:23). "It is I who made the earth and created man upon it" (Isa 45:12). "It was Adam who was first created" (1Ti 2:13) and in Hebrew his name means "humanity." In an extended sense the word "flesh" is also humanity. The human race inherits from Adam for, "as in Adam all" (1Co 15:22), applies to everyone. "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good" (Ge 1:31). Therefore it cannot be concluded that man is inherently sinful.

When God put Adam in the Garden of Eden he "commanded the man" (Ge 2:16) "from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die" (:17). It was not said that "you will drop dead" as if it was poisonous. So to die must mean that death was not part of God's scheme of things, but it would transpire if Adam was disobedient. "The Lord fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man" (Ge 2:22) and they "were both naked and were not ashamed" (:25). However, Eve "took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate" (3:6). "It was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression" (1Ti 2:14). Transgression is defined as

lawlessness and it is against God's instruction because God asked, "Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" (Ge 3:11). But when they ate of the fruit of the tree "the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked so they . . . made coverings for themselves" (3:7). They had "become like one of us knowing good and evil" (:22). Did they know being naked as good or evil? They didn't feel shame before, but it seems they did now. They had to replace the innocence of their previous condition with a covering and God, himself, had to make "garments of skin for Adam and his wife" (:21). In Laodicea they didn't know that they were "wretched and miserable and poor and blind and **naked**" (Rev 3:17). God advises "buy from me . . . white garments that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your **nakedness** may not be revealed" (3:18).

What had Adam done? He was "the one who sinned" (Ro 5:16). What is sin? It is a "transgression" (:15) or "offense" (:15 KJV). It is also a "trespass" (:15 RSV). You've seen signs saying "NO TRESPASSING." "God commanded . . . you shall not eat" (Ge 2:16-17). But Adam violated the command. "Through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners" (Ro 5:19). "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Ro 3:23). The result was "through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin" (:12). But others "had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam" (:14). Then "death spread to all men" (:12) because "in Adam all die" (1Co 15:22). Sin is the culprit because "the sting of death is sin" (1Co 15:56). "The wages of sin is death" (Ro 6:23). Therefore "sin reigned in death" (5:21) and "death reigned" (:17). "Death works in us" (2Co 4:12). One might respond that everyone has to die naturally anyway. But you should consider "him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb 2:14).

Some might say that the rendition of Adam and Eve is just a metaphor because evolution proves otherwise. But God said,

"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife . . . cursed is the ground because of you" (Ge 3:17). "By a man came death" (1Co 15:21) and "you will all likewise perish" (Lk 13:3). Death is firstly interpreted as physical death. "Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death" (Heb 11:5). "It is appointed for men to die once" (9:27). Sin is the reason for the problem. You are "dead in your trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1). Consequently you "shall be condemned" (Mk 16:16) and therefore must be "saved from wrath" (Ro 5:9). Sin contributes to the inevitable. It is "cause and effect" because it's a "law of sin and of death" (8:2). "The outcome of those things is death" (6:21) since there "is a sin leading to death" (1Jn 5:16). It is said we live in the flesh. However, "if you are living according to the flesh, you must die" (Ro 8:13). "The mind set on the flesh is death" (8:6). "With my flesh [I serve] the law of sin" (7:25) "resulting in death" (6:16). "While we were in the flesh, the sinful passions . . . were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death: (7:5).

Every human knows that occasionally he will sin. There is no excuse, for Paul reminds that "we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin" (Ro 3:9). Some believe that Adam and Eve's existence is figurative and that the Bible's explanation of sin is allegorical. But "the first man Adam became a living being" (1Co 15:45). "The first man is from the earth . . . [and] so also are those who are earthy" (:47-48). "It was Adam who was first created and then Eve (1Ti 2:13). "But the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression" (:14). The consequences are imposed "even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam's offense" (Ro 15:14). Due to a solidarity with Adam and "not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own" (Ro 10:3) Jesus warned the Pharisees, "'You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men'" (Lk 16:15). God "rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done" (Ge 2:2).

"The works were finished from the foundation of the world" (Heb 4:3). But when Adam disobeyed God he demonstrated that he didn't trust what God had done and believed the serpent who said, "You will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Ge 3:5). Afterwards "God sent them out of the garden of Eden" (:23).

Paul says "I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh" (Ro 7:18). He states "no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me" (:17). Sin reigns "in your mortal body" (6:12) and is a "body of death" (7:24). "The Scripture has shut up everyone under sin" (Gal 3:22) "making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members" (Ro 7:23). The "pleasures of sin" (Heb 11:25) "easily entangles" (12:1) and sin can become "master over you" (Ro 6:14). It has "lusts" (:12) and "coveting of every kind" (7:8). You can be "led into" (2Co 11:29) and "caught in any trespass" (Gal 6:1). Then you can "be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb 3:13). Paul was acutely aware of sin. "Those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh" (Ro 8:5). "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (:8). He made it clear that it wasn't just his opinion of what sin is. In fact, even though "sin was in the world . . . [it was] not imputed" (5:13) before the law. "Apart from the Law sin is dead" (7:8). "I would not have come to know sin except through the Law" (:7). It was a "commandment, which was to result in life" (:10) by way of a "ministry . . . in letters engraved on stones" (2Co 3:7). "The Law came in so that the transgression would increase" (Ro 5:20). Therefore "the Law is spiritual" (7:14). This behavior is explained as man's "flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal 5:24). It could be said that man's human nature is physical, sensuous and earthy. "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak" (Mt 26:41). Man's flesh is but "a wind that passes and does not return" (Ps 78:39). "All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades" (Isa 40:6-7). He continues with "the deeds of the flesh are

evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these" (Gal 5:19-21). "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jer 17:9).

Came to Seek

Since man couldn't help himself God decided to solve the problem. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" (Jn 3:16) as a propitiation. He was "revealed" (1Ti 3:16) and sent "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Ro 8:3), "has come in the flesh" (1Jn 4:2), and was made "in the likeness of men" (Php 2:7) as a "descendant of David" (Ro 1:3). This was to demonstrate His righteousness" (Ro 3:24-25). John saw the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn 1:29). Jesus "will save His people from their sins" (Mt 1:21). Your sins will be "wiped away" (Ac 3:19). How is this accomplished? It is because "Christ died for our sins" (1Co 15:3). He "was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification" (Ro 4:25). God "made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf" (2Co 5:21) and he was "offered once to bear the sins of many" (Heb 9:28). "He died to sin once for all" (Ro 6:10) and "condemned sin in the flesh" (8:3). Jesus said "'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE', for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mt 9:13). Christ gave "His life a ransom for many" (Mt 20:28) and therefore "in Him we have redemption through His blood" (Eph 1:7). You believe that he is the "propitiation for our sins" (1Jn 2:2). Therefore "consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (6:11). We are "always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body" (2Co 4:10). Because of what Christ accomplished "the life which I now live

in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God" (Gal 2:20). Paul said "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ in me" (:20). "Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness" (Ro 8:10).

Paul noted in Romans 3 by quoting that "The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God" (Ps 14:2). Why does Christ seek the lost? It is because no one seeks on their own since "every one of them has turned aside; together they have become corrupt" (Ps 53:3). Paul elaborates in Romans 10 by citing "I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me; I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me" (Isa 65:1). Paul asks "how shall they hear" (Ro 10:14) without anyone telling them? He also asks "surely they have never heard, have they?" (:17). But he affirms the promulgation of doctrine in Romans 10 by quoting "their line has gone out through all the earth, and their utterances to the end of the world" (Isa 19:4). However Isaiah asks, "Who has believed our message?" (53:1). Paul then presents the caveat that "a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (1Co 2:14). If you need the Spirit to comprehend scripture, but don't have the Spirit because you haven't experienced salvation, then it is a "catch-22" and you need a way to comprehend the gospel initially. Paul said he was "not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to every one who believes" (Ro 1:16). Scriptures "have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ" (Jn 20:31). It is "the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation" (Eph 1:13) and the "living and enduring word of God" (1Pe 1:23). "All scripture is inspired by God" (2Ti 3:16) and "if any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching whether it is of God" (Jn 7:17). It is

revelation by "faith which comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Ro 10:17). The Greek word *rhema* defines it as the Living Word of God himself speaking. Jesus told Peter "flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (Mt 1:17).

Repentance

How would you answer a person who asked, "Why would I have to repent if I didn't sin like Adam?" (Ro 5:14). Adam sinned because he broke God's commandment (Ge 2:17). He disobeyed (even rebelled) because he was not deceived (1Ti 2:14). Perhaps he ate the fruit Eve gave him because he just wanted to keep her happy. Maybe he rationalized that death would be only a temporary disciplinary action. It's possible he considered knowing more and becoming wiser would be worth it. "Through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners" (Ro 5:19). It's as though we, as descendants, have inherited the "original sin." Since "by a man came death" (1Co 5:21), through solidarity with Adam, "death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Ro 5:12). "Like Adam they have transgressed the covenant" (Hosea 6:7). Our guilt is imputed in a legal way as if a contract has been violated and a judgment has taken place because the ground has been cursed (Ge 3:17-18). This is the Adamic Covenant where Adam, as the representative of the human race, causes God to introduce physical death saying, "You [will] return to the ground, because from it you were taken" (:19). Others may say that Adam's nature became corrupted by the sin and that we inherit the corruption and sin automatically (Ro 5:19). Calvinists believe that we are incapable of being spiritually saved except for God's grace. So if you repent for these reasons you acknowledge that "through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous" (:19).

Repentance is therefore necessary. John the Baptist began preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt 3:2). The purpose of it was "for the forgiveness of sins" (Mk 1:4). It is because "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Ro 3:23). Then "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel'" (Mk 1:14-15). Paul said, "Having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent" (Ac 17:30). Isaiah said to "turn from transgression" (Isa 59:20) and Ezekiel said to tell him to "turn from his wickedness or from his wicked way" (Eze 3:19). Paul said "the Lord will . . . bring to an end . . . the activity of Satan . . . with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth to be saved" (2Th 2:8-10). The disciples told Jesus about the Galileans who Pilate had killed. He replied, "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (Lk 13:3). To perish means to die or be destroyed. God said to Ezekiel, "Warn the wicked from his wicked way that he may live" (Eze 3:18). Jesus said, "Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). Also, "I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish" (10:28). The Lord is "patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2Pe 3:9). "Do you not think . . . that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" (Ro 2:4). "The sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation" (2Co 6:10). It is "repentance toward God" (Ac 20:21).

Restoration

God was the only one who could restore the relationship with man. He told the serpent he would "put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed"

(Ge 3:15). Her seed (future offspring) was Christ which is why the word is capitalized. There was enmity because "while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son" (Ro 5:10). God said, "He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel" (Ge 3:15). God developed his plan through Abraham and told him "because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son" (22:16) "in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice" (:18). Then "after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise" (Heb 6:15). God told Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years" (Ge 15:13). God has everything in control and cites that "when Israel was a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son" (Hos 11:1). Jesus remained in Egypt "until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Out of Egypt I called My Son'" (Mt 2:15). God led Israel out of Egypt. Even then Hebrews explains that "the gospel was preached to us as well as to them" (Heb 4:2). Unfortunately God explains, "It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest" (Ps 95:10). "There remains a rest for the people of God" (Heb 4:9). "But the word which they [Israel] heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it" (:2). "He who entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His" (:10).

God's plan was implemented via Israel. Paul reminds the Gentiles "that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph 2:12). "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2Co 5:19). His purpose was "through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the

blood of His cross" (Col 1:20) which "put to death the enmity" (Eph 2:16). "He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach" (Col 1:22). He reconciled "both [Jew and Gentile] in one body to God through the cross" (Eph 2:16). Paul encourages "on behalf of Christ, to be reconciled to God" (2Co 5:20). "Having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Ro 5:10).

Redemption

To redeem means to get possession of something you don't own by paying for it. Perhaps ownership of something was lost and you want to regain it. There is the case where a man was "so poor . . . as to sell himself" (Lev 25:47) as a slave. Fortunately "one of his brothers may redeem him" (:48) or "if he prospers, he may redeem himself" (:49). "If a ransom is demanded of him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is demanded of him" (Ex 21:30). In man's case we had been "severed from Christ" (Gal 5:4) and "alienated and hostile in mind" (Col 1:21). "God created man in His own image" (Ge 1:27). But now Adam had "a son in his own likeness" (5:3), and due to the fall of man, this image was not equivalent to the original likeness because man's relationship with God had deteriorated. Unfortunately man was caught in a "yoke of slavery" (Gal 5:1) and "through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives" (Heb 2:15). "We are slaves; yet in our bondage, [and] our God has not forsaken us, but has extended lovingkindness to us" (Ez 9:9). "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Ro 5:8). Christ had to accomplish this because "no man can by any means redeem his brother or give God a ransom for him--for the redemption of his soul is costly, and he should cease trying forever" (Ps 4:7-8). Redemption means to buy back by making payment, and in man's predicament, it

pertains to freeing him from his bondage to sin. Therefore Jesus explained, "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give His life a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45). The payment of a ransom applies to a loosing or setting someone free, and by this, the Father through Christ is regaining possession of something that originally was his as a "redemption of God's own possession" (Eph 1:14). It is "the church of God which He purchases with His own blood" (Ac 20:28). "Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb 9:22). Christ "gave Himself as a ransom for all" (1Ti 2:5) since "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2Co 5:19). Someone once told me that it means everyone automatically goes to heaven. But you must appropriate what Christ has done to make it personally official.

Christ "cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us; and . . . nailed it to the cross" (Col 2:14). However, "the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness" (1Co 1:18). But it is serious and not just academic. Christ "redeemed us . . . having become a curse for us" (Gal 3:13) by his crucifixion. It was from "the curse of the Law" (:13) for "forgiveness of our trespasses" (Eph 1:7). It is "redemption [for] the forgiveness of sins" (Col 1:14) and "transgressions that were committed under the first covenant" (Heb 9:15). It was to redeem us "from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers" (1Pe 1:18) and "from every lawless deed . . . [to be] zealous for good deeds" (Titus 2:14). He "rescued us from the domain of darkness" (:13) and "from the hand of our enemies" (Lk 1:74). It was a "testimony given at the proper time" (1Ti 2:6) and "displayed publicly as an atonement in His blood through faith" (Ro 3:25). "Jesus said, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood" (1Co 11:25) "poured out for many" (Mk 14:24). Redemption has numerous important objectives. One result is that we are "justified as a gift by His grace" (Ro 3:24). It is so "we might receive the adoption as sons" (Gal 4:5) and to

"receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb 9:15). We have "the first fruits of the Spirit" (Ro 8:23) and are "sealed" (Eph 4:30) by the Holy Spirit. Christ to us becomes "wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification" (1Co 1:30). Through Christ we "are believers in God . . . so that your faith and hope are in God" (1Pe 1:21). "Through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all" (Heb 9:12) having "purchased for God . . . men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev 5:9). "Do you not know . . . that you are not your own?" (1Co 6:19,20). "You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men" (7:23).

Eternal Life

The first message that John the Baptist and Jesus preached was "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt 4:17). Then early in Jesus' ministry he had a conversation with "Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews" (Jn 3:1). Jesus revealed, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (:5). Some people say that unless you aren't water baptized you don't qualify, but Jesus is stating a principle and not creating a checklist based upon works. Nicodemus didn't understand so Jesus responded, "Are you a teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?" (:10). The Jews had the Old Testament scriptures and were supposed to understand spiritual things. Jesus observed, "You do not believe [earthly things] so how shall you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" (:11). Then he proceeded to say "whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (:16). I've heard people say that its difficult to grasp the concept of eternity much less living forever. The translation of Melchizedik's name is "king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem" (Heb 7:2). "Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son

of God, he abides a priest perpetually" (:3). "His name will be called . . . Eternal Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6). "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8).

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God" (Jn 1:1). He is "the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father" (:18). He said to the Father, "You loved Me before the foundation of the world" (17:24). Jesus said it was "the glory which I had with You before the world was" (:5). This was before the Creation. "He is before all things" (Col 1:7). Jesus has "neither beginning of days nor end of life" (Heb 7:3). He says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (Rev 22:13). He is "the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8). "I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am" (Jn 8:58). "In Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Col 2:9). This relationship is cited as having been predicted by a prophet regarding a Messiah being born in Bethlehem (Mt 2:4). The facts are scripturally correlated. The scriptures are "God-breathed" (2Ti 3:16) as the Spirit "carried along" (2Pe 1:21) the writers. What is written about Jesus is from the Spirit. God "has testified concerning His Son" (1Jn 5:9). Jesus said the Holy Spirit would "teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you" (Jn 14:26 NIV). That is why they had knowledge impossible to know otherwise. Jesus was "in the beginning with God" (1:2). "All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being" (:3). "You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands" (Heb 1:10). "For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible" (Col 1:16). "The world was made through Him" (Jn 1:10). It is He "for whom are all things, and through whom are all things" (Heb 2:10).

To understand Biblical doctrine you must comprehend what the Bible says. It may sound like a circular argument but its possible to be "handling accurately the word of truth" (2Ti 2:15). God gave the Bible's authors accurate information because "men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2Pe 1:21). How do you understand the concept of eternal life? Eternity depends on God. God says, "I am God. Even from eternity I am He" (Isa 43:12-13). "His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity" (Mic 5:2). "You are from everlasting" (Ps 93:2). "Are You not from everlasting?" (Hab 1:12). Furthermore, "I live forever" (Dt 32:40). "From everlasting to everlasting, You are God" (Ps 90:2). "Your years will not come to an end" (Ps 102:27). "The Lord shall reign forever and ever" (Ex 15:18). He saved Israel "with an everlasting salvation . . . to all eternity" (Isa 45:17). "His ways are everlasting" (Hab 3:6). This "momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison" (2Co 4:17). It depends upon your perspective. "Things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2Co 4:18). "The one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life" (Gal 6:8). "We have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2Co 5:1). The "free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ro 6:23). "This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life" (1Jn 2:25). "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (5:11). "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (Jn 17:3). Christ "died for sins once for all" (1Pe 3:18). "Having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation" (Heb 5:9). Therefore "he who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life" (Jn 3:36). Jesus cautioned the Jews, "You think that in [the Scriptures] you have eternal life . . . [but] you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life" (5:39-40).

Saved by Grace

There is a second kind of birth. Jesus said "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" (Jn 3:5-6). This is possible whereby "all of us who were baptized into Christ" (Ro 6:3) were "all baptized by one Spirit" (1Co 12:13). Therefore "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2Co 5:17). Furthermore Jesus will "baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mt 3:11). "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ" (Ro 8:9). It is not God's will that anyone should perish (Mt 18:14). The gospel is "the power of God to salvation" (Ro 1:16). To keep from perishing, the gospel provides "a righteousness that is by faith . . . [so that] the righteous will live by faith" (:17). The theme of Romans is justification by faith. No one lacks faith because it "comes by hearing" (10:17). "What may be known about God is plain because God has made it plain" (1:19 NIV). The truth (:18) is more accurately defined in verse 25 as the "truth about God." The truth is "known" (:19,:21), "seen, understood" (:20), "knowledge" (:28), and "knowing" (:32). "What may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them" (:19 NKJV). "Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities . . . have been clearly seen" (:20). They include his eternal power and deity.

God is "clearly seen" (Ro 1:20) and "they knew God" (:21). "God made it evident to them . . . since the creation of the world" (:19-20). They saw "His invisible attributes . . . through what has been made so that they are without excuse" (:20). This includes "His eternal power and divine nature" (:20). This revelation is "faith [which] comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (10:17). In Greek it is "rhema" which means the "Living Word" or God himself speaking. It would "show the work of the Law written in their hearts" (2:15). "God made it

evident to them" (1:19) and since it was "within them" (:19) "the word is . . . in your heart (10:8). God has allotted to each a measure of faith" (12:3). Even Paul recognized that he "received [his revelation] from the Lord" (1Co 11:23) and he "received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:12). This was "the word of faith which we are preaching" (10:8). Therefore "believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (10:9). How do you hear with your heart? "If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him" (Rev 3:20). Communication is "inspired by God" (2Ti 3:16). "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit" (Ro 8:16). When Peter heard, Jesus said, "flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (Mt 16:17). It is by "faith which comes through Him" (Ac 3:16). "By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph 2:8-9).

Heaven or Hell?

They didn't apply their knowledge since "they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks" (Ro 1:21). It was a deliberate decision because "they did not see fit to acknowledge God" (:28). They "suppress the truth" (:18). They "exchanged the glory" (:23) and "the truth of God for a lie" (:25). In their pride they claimed "to be wise" (:22) and "worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator" (:25). By their behavior they sealed their own fate. When they "became futile in their speculations" (:21) it gave "birth to sin . . . [which] brings forth death (Jas 1:15). Therefore God "gave them over" (Ro 1:24, 26, 28) to the desires of their hearts. "Their foolish heart was darkened" (:21) in the form of "impurity" (:24) and "degrading passions" (:26) which are acts of sexual indecency. They received "in their own persons the due penalty of their error" (:27). Finally "God gave them over to a depraved mind" (:28) and worse things happened.

What do you think the destiny of those who "suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Ro 1:18), "exchanged the truth of God for a lie" (:25), and "do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness" (2:8) will be? There will be "wrath and indignation . . . tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil" (:8-9). You take the wrong direction when you don't "honor Him as God or give thanks" (1:21). When you claim "to be wise" (:22) yourself and do "not see fit to acknowledge God any longer" (:28) you become "selfishly ambitious" (2:8). You serve instead "the creature rather than the Creator" (1:25) and your "heart was darkened" (:21). "You are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of . . . the righteous judgment of God" (2:5). Your "end will be according to their deeds" (2Co 11:15). But if you go the right direction there will be "glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good" (Ro 2:10). If you don't "hold fast . . . until the end" (Heb 3: 6) then you won't be saved.

Having the truth is crucial since "they perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved" (2Th 2:10). They "suppress the truth by their wickedness" (Ro 1:18). The knowledge of God was accessible but people closed their minds to it. "They did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God" (:28). The truth of God has been "clearly seen . . . [and] men are without excuse" (:20). It is a matter of what one decides in his mind. "Their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened" (:21). They didn't glorify God or give thanks (:21) and then "claimed to be wise" (:22). "God sent them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness" (2Th 2:11). "Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts" (Ro 1:26). God had protected them before. But "since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over

[again] to a depraved mind" (:28). "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he" (Pr 23:7).

He gave Himself as a Ransom for All (1 Timothy 2:6)

Seeks the Lost

Why does Christ seek the lost? He says, "Here am I, here am I" (Isa 65:1). "The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God" (Ps 14:2). "There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God" (Ro 3:10). No one tries to find out because "every one of them has turned aside; together they have become corrupt" (53:3). They "walk in the way which is not good, following their own thoughts" (Isa 65:2). They "became futile in their speculations, and their foolish hearts were darkened" (Ro 1:21). Therefore God took the initiative saying, "I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people" (Isa 65:2). "Not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God" (Ro 10:3). Consequently "I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me; I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek me" (Isa 65:1). Today we see "the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk 19:10).

When I was younger I tried to figure things out because it was a matter of survival. Just accepting was inadequate since only being fat, dumb and happy wasn't the answer. Someone once told me that his secret was just not worrying about it. However, I grew up during the cold war where a capitalist was good and a communist bad. But they're both people, though if you don't know what makes them tick, you might be taken advantage of and not survive. It could be how society programs you. So once I attempted to neutralize thoughts to prevent being programmed. I mentioned it to someone and her response was "people don't do that." Then I concluded that the more you knew the more successful you'd

be. Instead of just accepting what you observed you'd have to comprehend it. Scientifically things are composed of atoms and molecules. Electrons, protons and neutrons are in everything and objects only differ by their arrangement and resulting characteristics. I thought of a glass, soft drink container and concluded that it was just my brain, senses, and experiences telling me what it was. Then I would have to accept my decision. That container could be a glass to hold liquid to drink. But what if it contained dirt to hold a flower? At that point you'd pretty much have it figured out. However, the store clerk where you were purchasing it had the right answer. You set it upside down with the rim on the table. Then little objects they also sold could be placed on the top for display. One teacher explained that you can't understand everything that the Bible says so you just have to accept it. But how do you know what you decide is true or not? "A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (1Co 2:14). If you need the Spirit to comprehend scripture, but don't have the Spirit because you haven't experienced salvation, then it is a "catch-22" and you need a way to comprehend the gospel initially. It is revelation by "faith which comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Ro 10:17). The Greek word *rhema* defines it as the Living Word of God himself speaking. Jesus told Peter "flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (Mt 1:17).

Evident Within

"Since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen" (Ro 1:20). Truth is reality being "understood through what has been made" (:20). The process of observation requires that the five senses be used. It means you can look up at the stars and understand about God. Paul phrases it as knowing about God

as opposed to personally knowing God. Thinking predicates reasoning which includes deciding if something is true or false. Then with an open mind you choose by believing in the best alternative. It involves wrestling with various possibilities until the one with the highest probability of being true wins out. But when "that which is known about God is evident within them" (:19) it was God who "made it evident to them" (:19). Jesus told Pilate "for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth" (Jn 18:37) for which Pilate asked, "What is truth?" (:38). At that level it is absolute certainty and a revelation to their conscious understanding. "With the heart man believes" (Ro 10:10). Nonetheless "they exchanged the truth of God for a lie" (1:25) and "their foolish heart was darkened" (:21).

Mankind has been given a general revelation or moral sense. They "do instinctively the things of the Law, these not having the Law to themselves" (Ro 2:14). "They show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness" (:15). However the people did not conduct themselves correctly. But "in the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways" (Ac 14:16). "In the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed" (Ro 3:25). Nevertheless they are sins. The "Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind being darkened in their understanding" (Eph 4:17-18) having "given themselves over to sensuality" (:19). But the message of general revelation does not spell out a plan of salvation. "Having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring that all people everywhere should repent" (Ac 17:30). He "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1Ti 2:4). Paul said, "I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief" (1:13). The Gentiles sinned "because of the ignorance that is in them because of the hardness of their heart" (Eph 4:18). But he is "patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2Pe 3:9). "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do justly?" (Ge 18:25). "He who believes in Him is not

judged; he who does not believe has been judged already" (Jn 3:18). "The one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging will receive but few" (Lk 12:48). "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Eze 33:11). "When we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world" (1Co 11:32).

Worldview

There's a popular interview show on TV where I heard the host say the most common consideration of his intelligent, well-informed guests was "What is consciousness?" Consciousness can be equated to thinking, but at a deeper level it relates to existence. People have questions about life pertaining to asking the who, what, when, why and how of existence. If God "made it evident" (Ro 1:19) then it is an undeniable objective standard. It is composed of a priori, self-evident axioms. These are self-authenticating first principles from a primary source which are logically universal, foundational and determinative. Instincts have foundations as God gave them to all creatures in order to survive. It can be said that they exist at the subconscious, psychological and subjective level. But there is a higher level of thinking involved with making decisions. They "exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image" (:23) and "did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer" (:28). "They are without excuse" (:20). Therefore "choose for yourselves today whom you will serve" (Jos 24:15).

Consciousness is awareness. In one respect there is a constant link with the unknown as if querying to discover answers. In a sense it is instinctual as a survival mechanism. But it is not continuous cerebral questioning. Deists believe that reality can be determined by human reasoning. Philosophically a person develops a worldview that is perceived as reality. Consciously and unconsciously a coherent and

consistent framework is created in building a worldview. Presuppositions and assumptions are applied. However, normative customs can become truisms and tradition. But feelings, intuition and common sense do not necessarily arrive at truth. Also, personal opinion and experience must be substantiated. Therefore, in order for a worldview to be valid it must inherently adhere to the laws of logic. In addition, it must externally agree with the laws of history and science. Furthermore, it must satisfy human emotional and spiritual needs on a universal level.

In the age of reason, Descarte was suspicious of reason itself. What is a cognitive thought? Does it need specific content to qualify? However, when that mechanism isn't generating certain thoughts it is still self-aware. Therefore if we are conscious of our thoughts then consciousness is at a higher level than thinking. He said that if thinking could doubt the veracity of something, the reasoning was in the context of the existence of a higher entity responsible for the faculty of thinking in the first place. The well-known quote of his conclusion is "I am, I exist" for which a cognito has been created saying "I think, therefore I am." Apparently with that he was satisfied with who he was. Moses asked God for a name and he said, "'I AM WHO I AM'" (Ex 3:14). God isn't like Descarte whose identity was in his thought. He says "'I am the first and I am the last, and there is no god besides Me'" (Is 44:6).

Objectivity

Worldviews can be mutually exclusive if not diametrically opposed. Which one represents the truth? In our society it is not politically correct to criticize one worldview at the expense of another. Pluralism recognizes many worldviews as being valid at the same time wherein each is relative to its source (relativism) and tolerance enables all to be successfully globally (globalism) combined. But what if a belief leads to a false reality and it becomes self-destructive? How, then, do you

judge a religion on its correctness when basically it is a belief in a set of ideas? How do you evaluate something which is subjective or psychological or simply based on hearsay? You can study their holy books but it all depends on how they're interpreted, and in many cases, the doctrine is based on the testimony of a founder which is comprised of a personal experience. Usually adherents don't attempt to prove the doctrine and you are just supposed to accept it because it is a spiritual and emotional matter. There are approaches one can take. Rationalists believe there is a starting point that everything else becomes relative to. Humanists believe that man is supreme and whatever someone believes his starting point is works for him. However, this method is subjective and opinions easily conflict with each other such that there is no agreement and there is chaos. Then if society itself sets a standard it is no longer relative and becomes an absolute itself. Religious pluralism attempts to keep everyone happy by proposing that each religion represents a piece of the puzzle and together they all comprise the whole truth. But how do you reconcile monotheism which believes in one God and polytheism's many gods? Also, how does Christianity's personal God fit with the New Age's universal consciousness?

One person counted 1,200 operating religions in this country alone. They all can't be right. Is it man's imagination that directs him? You would think that a human being's thinking would usually lead in a logical direction. "Who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?" (1Co 2:11). "God made it evident to them" (Ro 1:19) but I suppose you then have to think about it to decide. If they reject the revelation then "professing to be wise, they became fools" (:22). "As he thinks within himself, so he is" (Pr 23:7). "They are without excuse" (Ro 1:20). "Just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind" (:28). We've received "the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God"

(1Co 2:12).

Word of Truth

Paul asks, "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed?" (Ro 10:14). He's concerned that "surely they have never heard, have they?" (:17). Isaiah even asks, "Who has believed our message?" (Isa 19:4). However, in Romans 10 Paul quotes "their line has gone out through all the earth, and their utterances to the end of the world" (Isa 19:4). An old question in church circles is "can the heathen be saved?" It's based on what happens to far-flung peoples who have never had the chance to hear the gospel. But Paul's reference seems to say that one way or another everyone gets the message. Paul said he was "not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to every one who believes" (Ro 1:16). "In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth" (Ja 1:18). Scriptures "have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ" (Jn 20:31). It is "the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation" (Eph 1:13) and the "living and enduring word of God" (1Pe 1:23). "All scripture is inspired by God" (2Ti 3:16) and "if any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching whether it is of God" (Jn 7:17).

Disobeyed Directive

God "rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done" (Ge 2:2). "The works were finished from the foundation of the world" (Heb 4:3). "The first man Adam became a living being" (1Co 15:45). "The first man is from the earth . . . [and] so also are those who are earthy" (:47-48). "It was Adam who was first created then Eve" (1Ti 2:13). The Lord God told Adam, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Ge 2:17). "But the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression" (1Ti 2:14). When Adam disobeyed God he demonstrated that he didn't trust what God had done and

believed the serpent who said, "You will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Ge 3:5). Afterwards "God sent them out of the garden of Eden" (:23). "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Ro 3:23). Every human knows that occasionally he will sin. There is no excuse, for Paul reminds that "we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are under sin" (Ro 3:9). Some believe that Adam and Eve's existence is figurative and that the Bible's explanation of sin is allegorical. But the consequences are imposed "even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam's offense" (15:14). Due to a solidarity with Adam and "not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own" (10:3) Jesus warned the Pharisees, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men" (Lk 16:15). It is because "through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners" (Ro 5:19). "Sin entered into the world . . . [and] death spread to all men" (:12). "The wages of sin is death" (6:23).

God was the only one who could restore the relationship with man. He told the serpent he would "put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed" (Ge 3:15). Her seed (future offspring) was Christ which is why the word is capitalized. There was enmity because "while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son" (Ro 5:10). God said, "He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel" (Ge 3:15). God developed his plan through Abraham and told him "because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son" (22:16) "in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice" (:18). Then "after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise" (Heb 6:15). God told Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years" (Ge 15:13). God has everything in control and cites that "when Israel was a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son" (Hos 11:1). Jesus remained in Egypt

"until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Out of Egypt I called My Son'" (Mt 2:15).

God led Israel out of Egypt. Even then Hebrews explains that "the gospel was preached to us as well as to them" (Heb 4:2). Unfortunately God explains, "'It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest" (Ps 95:10). "There remains a rest for the people of God" (Heb 4:9). "But the word which they [Israel] heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it" (:2). "He who entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His" (:10). God's plan was implemented via Israel. Paul reminds "that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph 2:12). "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2Co 5:19). His purpose was "through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col 1:20) which "put to death the enmity" (Eph 2:16). "He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach" (Col 1:22). He reconciled "both [Jew and Gentile] in one body to God through the cross" (Eph 2:16). Paul encourages "on behalf of Christ, to be reconciled to God" (2Co 5:20). "Having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Ro 5:10).

Certain Probability

A responsible person should at least evaluate all the possibilities. If it's not possible then why even consider it? It comes down to proving that it is true, but how do you do that with absolute certainty? God "furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Ac 17:31). Proof is an adequate degree of certainty about something arrived at by accumulating

an amount of evidence which would satisfy a competent, unprejudiced mind. Reasonable people in ordinary situations would judge this. To call it true the results would have to be reliable beyond a reasonable doubt. Even though the conclusion might not be mathematically certain it will have a high chance of probability. It will be predictable and the result can be regularly demonstrated. Finally, faith is required to substantiate the premise.

The author of a Christian apologetics book believes that Christianity can be substantiated by relying on internal laws of logic and external laws of history and science. The scientific method starts with a hypothesis or premise of what is believed to be true. It can be tested and the results observed. Natural phenomena produce responses and natural laws are descriptions of them which results in a tentative acceptance based upon a predicted result reliably occurring. Active certainty is not claimed but the chance of the premise being correct is strengthened by the preponderance of the evidence supporting it. Inductive reasoning organizes the evidence such that the accuracy of the historical record can be determined and facts can be verified. Archaeology has continued to support Biblical descriptions and history has documented fulfillment of prophecies. Consequently the external inconsistencies of some religions create false realities.

Firsthand Witness

Firsthand witnesses in the Bible minimize questionability by primary source material being cited in the New Testament. Also the time between the events themselves and when they were recorded was very short leaving negligible chance for error. Peter cites "we are witnesses of all the things He did . . . [and] they also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross" (Ac 10:39) whereby we were "witness of the sufferings of Christ" (1Pe 5:1). A witness testifies in court. Jesus substantiated his responsibility saying "'the very works that I do

testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me" (Jn 5:36). Furthermore, "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works" (10:37). They were "signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples" (20:30). Peter witnessed that it was "Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst" (Ac 2:22). John "is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things" (21:24). "These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ" (20:31) and to know "that his testimony is true" (:24).

It was so convincing that they "convened a council, and were saying, 'What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. If we let Him go like this, all men will believe in Him!'" (Jn 11:47-48). Even John the Baptist sent two of his disciples to Jesus asking, "Are You the Expected One?" (Lk 7:20). One's faith is challenged because it was the same John where "the next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (Jn 1:29). Jesus answered, "The blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them" (:22). "God raised Him up on the third day" (Ac 10:40) and he "was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead" (Ro 1:4). It was granted that He become visible not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand" (Ac 10:41). "We did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2Pe 1:16). John testifies "what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life" (1Jn 1:1). "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One" (Ac 10:42). "After that He appeared

to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now" (1Co 15:6).

Practical Worldview

What is our so-called "world view?" Jesus told the Jews, "You are of this world" (Jn 8:23). There are the facts of life. Paul says "if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either" (1Th 3:10). It is a matter of survival. However, Jesus told his disciples "you are not of the world . . . [because] I chose you out of the world" (Jn 15:19). Which side then are you on? Is it just survival of the fittest, or is there another way? It is a matter of perspective. "Whatever you do, do all for the glory of God" (1Co 15:31). "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth" (Col 2:3). But you still have to exist. However, "your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things" (Mt 6:32). The most common translation of the word "prayer" in the Bible is to make requests of God. Jesus taught regarding prayer to ask, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Mt 6:11). Paul refers to God's promise to provide for our needs by saying "my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Php 4:19). "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above" (Ja 1:17). So "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (:33). Paul instructed "be anxious for nothing, but . . . let your requests be made known to God" (Php 4:6). Jesus said, "Do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself" (Mt 6:33). He said, "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it" (Jn 14:14) because "everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds" (Lk 11:10). The promise is for believers who "trust in the Lord . . . and He will give you the desires of your heart" (Ps 37:3-4).

Is an unbeliever justified in saying, "I didn't get the message so how can I be held responsible?" It's as if they are answering, "Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty . . .

[etc.]" (Mt 25:44). This is at The Judgment so it isn't an incidental matter. "When" is the crux of the situation. How is the knowledge received? To Paul it was "not according to man" (Gal 1:11) but "through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (:12). He even "went away to Arabia" (:17) where he learned. "They are without excuse" (Ro 1:19). At the judgment Christ will explain that if you were not righteous to others in your normal life "you did not do it to Me [and] these will go away into eternal punishment" (Mt 25:45-46). Therefore "the wrath of god is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Ro 1:18). God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1Ti 2:4). The wrath is against the sin in man because they "suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Ro 1:19). The truth "known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them" (:19). It is evident because it was made clear and visible. "His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen" (:20). It is clearly discerned so as to have come to be mentally recognized and known. Having been "understood through what has been made" (:20) affirms that a person's awareness, thinking and perception confirms that truth. Therefore "they knew God" (:21). But "they did not honor Him as God or give thanks" (:21). "Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" (Ge 18:25). Just because the unbeliever might not have read these scriptures does not mean that in the same way that Paul was taught God has not reached him by revelation.

Raised from the Dead

Jesus' life is a historical record and its historicity is hardly ever questioned. "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory" (Jn 1:14). One day Jesus "asked his disciples, 'Who do you say I am?'" (Mt 16:15). Even "the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, 'Teacher'" (12:38). But "Peter responded, 'You are the Christ'" (16:16). "No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (Ro 10:9). "Every

tongue will confess that Jesus us Lord" (Php 2:11). "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Ro 10:13).

Fulfilled prophecy from the Bible establishes who Jesus is. He initiated and witnessed it saying, "I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes" (Mt 23:34). It pointed towards his purpose and he said, "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" (Lk 24:26). He said the scriptures "testify about Me" (Jn 5:39) and "all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets" (Mt 26:56). But they were "slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" (Lk 24:25) so "He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (:27).

At a certain time "Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and raised up the third day" (Mt 16:21). He then explained, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (Jn 2:19). The Jews then wanted a sign and Jesus responded, "Just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Mt 13:40).

When Luke wrote his gospel he cited that "many have undertaken to compile an account . . . and they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses" (Lk1:1-2). He "investigated everything carefully" (:3) in order "that you may know the exact truth" (:4). After the resurrection "He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve" (1Co 15:5). "When the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace be with you'" (Jn 20:19). "He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now" (1Co 15:6). He visited with two disciples and when he ate with them "their eyes were opened

and they recognized Him . . . [and said] 'were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?' (Lk 24:31-32). There was a "third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples" (Jn 21:14). "When the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus" (:4). Then John "said to Peter, 'It is the Lord'" (:7). He met them on the beach but "none of the disciples ventured to question Him, 'Who are You?' knowing that it was the Lord" (:12).

Risen from the Dead

"When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had become a disciple of Jesus" (Mt 27:57) who was "a prominent member of the Council" (Mk 15:43) and a "good and righteous man" (Lk 23:50). "He gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus" (Mk 15:43). "Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoned the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead. And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph" (:44-45). Then he "took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away" (Mt 27:59-60). "Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses were looking on to see where He was laid" (Mk 15:47). "Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment" (Lk 23:56).

The next day the chief priests and Pharisees asked Pilate, "'Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I am to rise again.' Therefore give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, otherwise His disciples may come and steal Him away'" (Mt 27:63-64). Pilate approved and "they went and made the grave

secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone" (:66). The stone "was extremely large" (Mk 16:4). Also there were a number of "guards" (Mt 28:4) and afterwards "some of the guard came into the city" (:11). Then on the "first day of the week" (Mk 16:2) the women "bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him" (:1) and they wondered, "'Who will roll away the stone?'" (:3). Next, "a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it" (Mt 28:2).

The angel's "appearance was like lightning and his clothing as white as snow. The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men" (Mt 28:3-4). Similarly, when the women entered the tomb "they did not find the body" (Lk 24:3) but "two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing" (:4). They said, "'He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come see the place where He was lying'" (Mt 28:6). Then some of the guards "reported to the chief priests all that had happened and . . . they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, and said, 'You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' and if this should come to the governor's ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble'" (:11-13). The "story was widely spread among the Jews, and is to this day" (:15).

Some of the scribes and Pharisees once asked Jesus, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." (Mt 12:38). He replied, "'For just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.'" (:40). He was put in the tomb at the beginning of the Sabbath and then on the first day of the week the women came to the tomb. There were three days to account for when Jesus was in the tomb "in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison" (1Pe 3:19) which has been interpreted as going to Paradise to preach the gospel to people

who had died. He had not yet visited or been transported to heaven and the Bible does not explain what form he had taken. He had not rolled away the stone by himself and escaped, and his disciples had not returned to break him out. However, most people think of existence in the spirit according to "who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?" (1Co 2:11). Furthermore, the angel had not arrived yet synonymously with the earthquake at the end of the Sabbath to roll away the stone, so there was no reported activity during those days. Of course, Pilate or the Jews would not have secretly removed the body either because it would have defeated their own purposes.

Purchased Redemption

To redeem means to get possession of something you don't own by paying for it. Perhaps ownership of something was lost and you want to regain it. There is the case where a man was "so poor . . . as to sell himself" (Lev 25:47) as a slave. Fortunately "one of his brothers may redeem him" (:48) or "if he prospers, he may redeem himself" (:49). "If a ransom is demanded of him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is demanded of him" (Ex 21:30). In man's case we had been "severed from Christ" (Gal 5:4) and "alienated and hostile in mind" (Col 1:21). "God created man in His own image" (Ge 1:27). But now Adam had "a son in his own likeness" (5:3), and due to the fall of man, this image was not equivalent to the original likeness because man's relationship with God had deteriorated. Unfortunately man was caught in a "yoke of slavery" (Gal 5:1) and "through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives" (Heb 2:15). "'We are slaves; yet in our bondage, [and] our God has not forsaken us, but has extended lovingkindness to us'" (Ez 9:9). "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Ro 5:8). Christ had to accomplish this because "no man can by any means redeem his brother or give God a

ransom for him--for the redemption of his soul is costly, and he should cease trying forever" (Ps 4:7-8). Redemption means to buy back by making payment, and in man's predicament, it pertains to freeing him from his bondage to sin. Therefore Jesus explained, "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give His life a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45). The payment of a ransom applies to a loosing or setting someone free, and by this, the Father through Christ is regaining possession of something that originally was his as a "redemption of God's own possession" (Eph 1:14). It is "the church of God which He purchases with His own blood" (Ac 20:28). "Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb 9:22). Christ "gave Himself as a ransom for all" (1Ti 2:5) since "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2Co 5:19). Someone once told me that it means everyone automatically goes to heaven. But you must appropriate what Christ has done to make it personally official.

"He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people" (Lk 1:68). Christ "cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us; and . . . nailed it to the cross" (Col 2:14). However, "the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness" (1Co 1:18). But it is serious and not just academic. Christ "redeemed us . . . having become a curse for us" (Gal 3:13) by his crucifixion. It was from "the curse of the Law" (:13) for "forgiveness of our trespasses" (Eph 1:7). It is "redemption [for] the forgiveness of sins" (Col 1:14) and "transgressions that were committed under the first covenant" (Heb 9:15). It was to redeem us "from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers" (1Pe 1:18) and "from every lawless deed . . . [to be] zealous for good deeds" (Titus 2:14). He "rescued us from the domain of darkness" (:13) and "from the hand of our enemies" (Lk 1:74). It was a "testimony given at the proper time" (1Ti 2:6) and "displayed publicly as an atonement in His blood through faith" (Ro 3:25). "Jesus said, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood" (1Co 11:25)

"poured out for many" (Mk 14:24). Redemption has numerous important objectives. One result is that we are "justified as a gift by His grace" (Ro 3:24). It is so "we might receive the adoption as sons" (Gal 4:5) and to "receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb 9:15). We have "the first fruits of the Spirit" (Ro 8:23) and are "sealed" (Eph 4:30) by the Holy Spirit. Christ to us becomes "wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification" (1Co 1:30). Through Christ we "are believers in God . . . so that your faith and hope are in God" (1Pe 1:21). "Through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all" (Heb 9:12) having "purchased for God . . . men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev 5:9). "Do you not know . . . that you are not your own?" (1Co 6:19,20). "You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men" (7:23).

Have Eternal Life

"He who believes in the Son has eternal life" (Jn 3:36). The first message that John the Baptist and Jesus preached was "'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Mt 4:17). Then early in Jesus' ministry he had a conversation with "Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews" (Jn 3:1). Jesus revealed, "'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God'" (:5). Some people say that unless you aren't water baptized you don't qualify, but Jesus is stating a principle and not creating a checklist based upon works. Nicodemus didn't understand so Jesus responded, "'Are you a teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?'" (:10). The Jews had the Old Testament scriptures and were supposed to understand spiritual things. Jesus observed, "'You do not believe [earthly things] so how shall you believe if I tell you heavenly things?'" (:11). Then he proceeded to say "'whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life'" (:16). I've heard people say that its difficult to grasp the concept of eternity much less

living forever. The translation of Melchizedik's name is "king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem" (Heb 7:2). "Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he abides a priest perpetually" (:3). "His name will be called . . . Eternal Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6). "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8).

To understand Biblical doctrine you must comprehend what the Bible says. It may sound like a circular argument but it's possible to be "handling accurately the word of truth" (2Ti 2:15). God gave the Bible's authors accurate information because "men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2Pe 1:21). How do you understand the concept of eternal life? Eternity depends on God. God says, "I am God. Even from eternity I am He" (Isa 43:12-13). "His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity" (Mic 5:2). "You are from everlasting" (Ps 93:2). "Are You not from everlasting?" (Hab 1:12). Furthermore, "I live forever" (Dt 32:40). "From everlasting to everlasting, You are God" (Ps 90:2). "Your years will not come to an end" (Ps 102:27). "The Lord shall reign forever and ever" (Ex 15:18). He saved Israel "with an everlasting salvation . . . to all eternity" (Isa 45:17). "His ways are everlasting" (Hab 3:6). This "momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison" (2Co 4:17). It depends upon your perspective. "Things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2Co 4:18). "The one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life" (Gal 6:8). "We have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2Co 5:1). The "free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ro 6:23). "This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life" (1Jn 2:25). "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (5:11). "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (Jn 17:3). Christ "died for sins

once for all" (1Pe 3:18). "Having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation" (Heb 5:9). Therefore "he who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life" (Jn 3:36). Jesus cautioned the Jews, "You think that in [the Scriptures] you have eternal life . . . [but] you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life" (5:39-40).

Enter that Rest

The writer of Hebrews was encouraging Jews to keep the faith. Many of them had been indoctrinated into Judaism and there was undoubtedly pressure on them to return. They were warned not to "drift away" (Heb 2:1) and not to "neglect so great a salvation" (:3). The gospel is "the power of God for salvation to every one who believes" (Ro 1:16) because "in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith" (:17). "It was at the first spoken through the Lord" (Heb 2:3) and "God [was] also bearing witness with them" (:4). Then "it was confirmed to us by those who heard" (:3). The author reminds them to "pay much closer attention to what we have heard" (2:1). He asks "how shall we escape?" (:3) if we ignore what we have heard. He warns about "falling away from the living God" (3:12) "whose house we are" (:6). Not "any one of you should seem to have come short of [the promise]" (4:1). We are "partakers of a heavenly calling" (3:1) and "partakers of Christ" (:14). It is because "we have had good news preached to us" (4:2). But it is necessary to "hold fast our confidence" (3:6) and "the beginning of our assurance" (:14). We are to cling to "the boast of our hope firm until the end" (:6). The author goes as far as to say "let us fear while the promise remains" (4:1). The danger is that "you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (3:13). "Today, if you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" (Ps 95:7-8). "Take care, brethren, lest there should be any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart" (Heb 3:12).

God led Israel out of Egypt. Even then Hebrews explains that "the gospel was preached to us as well as to them" (Heb 4:2). Unfortunately God explains, "'It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest" (Ps 95:10). "There remains a rest for the people of God" (Heb 4:9). "But the word which they [Israel] heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it" (:2). "He who entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His" (:10). God's plan was implemented via Israel. Paul reminds "that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph 2:12). "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2Co 5:19). His purpose was "through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col 1:20) which "put to death the enmity" (Eph 2:16). "He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach" (Col 1:22). He reconciled "both [Jew and Gentile] in one body to God through the cross" (Eph 2:16). Paul encourages "on behalf of Christ, to be reconciled to God" (2Co 5:20). "Having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Ro 5:10).

The author of Hebrews links his message to "'the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, and saw My works for forty years'" (Heb 3:8-9). They hardened their hearts (:8) and "were disobedient" (:18). "They are a people who err in their heart and they do not know My ways" (Ps 95:10). They heard the word but it "did not profit them, because it was not united by faith" (Heb 4:2). God had told them to survey Canaan and "send a man from each of their fathers' tribes, every one a leader among them" (Num 13:2). Caleb reported, "'We should by all means go up'" (13:30) for "'if the Lord is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land,

and give it to us" (14:8). But the majority "gave out to the sons of Israel a bad report" (13:32) and caused the congregation to respond, "Why is the Lord bringing us into this land to fall by the sword" (14:3). They then said "to stone them [Joshua and Caleb] with stones" (:10). They were "not able to enter because of unbelief" (Heb 3:19). God then declared, "They shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who spurned Me see it" (Num 14:23). God cited "all the men who have seen My glory and My signs, which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness" (:22). But they did not unite their observations with faith (Heb 4:2), "have not listened to My voice" (Num 14:22) and therefore "they do not know My ways" (Ps 95:10). God said they "yet have put me to the test ten times" (Num 14:22). Of the twelve spies, ten of them were negative.

Nonetheless, God had a plan. "Indeed, as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Num 14:21). "My servant Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land which he entered, and his descendants shall take possession of it" (:24). The unbelieving ones "failed to enter because of disobedience" (Heb 4:6). Therefore "be diligent to enter that rest lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience" (:11). "We who have believed enter that rest" (:3). "One who has entered His rest has also rested from his works" (:10). Jesus leads the way where he "has entered as a forerunner for us" (6:20) "who has passed through the heavens" (4:14). He is "one who has been tempted in all things as we are yet without sin" (:15). Therefore "let us hold fast our confession" (:14) and "draw near with confidence to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need" (:16).

Anchor of Hope

God told Abraham, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants" (Heb 6:13). This was God's oath so that

we would "inherit what has been promised" (:12). It was "an oath through the One" (7:21) who spoke to Jesus. God wanted to make his purpose very clear to the heirs" (:17). Therefore Jesus "became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him" (5:9). The author of Hebrews tells them that he is "confident of better things that accompany salvation" (6:9). Jesus accomplished this "when He offered up Himself" (7:27) and "has become the guarantee of a better covenant" (:22). Accordingly "the Lord has sworn [by an oath, saying] . . . 'Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'" (Ps 110:4). "The word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever" (Heb 7:28). The author of Hebrews was concerned about those "who are ignorant and going astray" (Heb 5:2) and those who were "slow to learn" (:11). He wanted to encourage the recipients of his letter. He cites that "God wanted to make the unchanging nature of His purpose very clear" (6:17) so that they "may be greatly encouraged" (:18). "He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (7:25). The author acknowledges they have "fled to take hold of the hope offered to us" (6:18). There is a "better hope, through which we draw near to God" (:19). "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (:19). Therefore "in order to make your hope sure" (:11) "we want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end" (:11). Also, "imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised" (:12). "If that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for the second" (Heb 8:7). It would be "not like the covenant which I made with their fathers . . . which they broke, although I was a husband to them" (Jer 31:32). "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel" (:31). "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (:33). There is the "setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness" (Heb 7:18). It

is by way of "another priest" (:11) "according to the power of an indestructible life" (:16). It brings in "a change of law also" (:12). "He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises" (8:6). He is a "high priest" (:1) "exalted above the heavens" (7:26) who is a "minister in the sanctuary in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man" (8:2). "He abides forever [and] holds His priesthood permanently" (7:24). "Has He said, and will not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" (Nu 23:19).

Draw Near

There is a legal saying that possession is nine-tenths of the law. So if you "have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift" (Heb 6:4) you have an entitlement. Also, if you "have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come" (:5) you demonstrate ownership. These are heavenly, not worldly, characteristics. "Ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God" (:7). However, if they "then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance" (:6). "They have escaped the defilements of the world by knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2Pe 2:20). "It would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them" (:21). Therefore, be mature and train yourselves to put the use of your spiritual senses into practice "to discern good and evil" (Heb 5:14).

Tabernacle worship signified that "the way into the holy place [had] not yet been disclosed" (Heb 9:8). It meant that sacrifices were "offered which [could] not make the worshipper perfect in conscience" (:9). But then "through His own blood, [Christ] entered the holy place once for all, having obtained

eternal redemption" (:12). He will now "cleanse your conscience from dead works" (:14) to serve God. A new covenant is therefore created "since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions" (:15). "All things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (:22). "Where a covenant is, there must be the death of the one who makes it" (:16). A covenant is a legal agreement whereby a testator writes a will making a bequest of what belongs to him to the heirs of the inheritance. Consequently "He is a mediator of a new covenant" (:15). "He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises" (8:6) "It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment" (Heb 9:27). "We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb 10:10). "He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (:14). "'You are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect'" (Mt 5:48). "'I am the Lord who sanctifies you'" (Lev 22:32). "You were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1Co 6:11). Therefore "we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus" (Heb 10:19). "Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith" (:22). "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (:23). "We are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preservation of the soul" (:39).

Abide in Him

Early in his writing to the Corinthians Paul cited that he heard "there are quarrels among you" (1Co 1:11) some saying "'I am of Paul,' and 'I of Apollos' . . . [etc.]" (:12). Later he stated "you are seeking for proof of the Christ who speaks in me" (2Co 13:3). Then as if to return the question he replied, "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!"

(:5). "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God" (1Jn 4:15). When the jailer asked Paul, "What must I do to be saved?" (Ac 16:30) he replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (:31). When you give your testimony as a witness in court they ask you to promise that it will be "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Paul challenged them asking "do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless you indeed fail the test?" (2Co 13:5). What does it mean if you are "in the faith" (:5)? The preposition "in" grammatically can mean indicating a belief such as with "the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness" (Ro 4:5). Therefore "God abides in him" (1Jn 4:15) because he "believes in Him" (Ro 4:5). Paul continued saying "I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test" (2Co 13:6). This is how someone would determine if a person was a Christian or not. "We know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us His Spirit" (1Jn 4:13). To abide means to stay or remain in a permanent relationship. It is not the type of question you would ask a stranger but it would be useful "in the defense and confirmation of the gospel" (Php 1:7).

Paul's question to them was if "Christ is in you?" (2Co 13:5). The preposition "in" denotes a location or place. His teaching is based on "if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus" (Eph 4:21). "Let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning . . . [and] you also will abide in the Son and in the Father" (1Jn 2:24). "You know Him who has been from the beginning . . . [because] the word of God abides in you" (:14). We "abide in the teaching of Christ" (2Jn 1:9). Jesus expressed that "'My words abide in you'" (Jn 15:7) and that you "'abide in Me, and I in you'" (:4). "Just as it has taught you, you abide in Him" (1Jn 2:27). He has "given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true" (5:20). "After listening to

the message of truth . . . having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph 1:13). "The anointing which you received from Him abides in you . . . [and] His anointing teaches you about all things" (1Jn 2:27). "His seed abides in him . . . because he is born of God" (3:9). "In Him we live and move and exist" (Ac 17:28). "In Him you have been made complete" (Col 2:10). The anointing is from the "Spirit of truth . . . [and] you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you" (Jn 14:17). It is "for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever" (2Jn 11:2). "The one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son" (1:9). Paul directed the Corinthians to spiritually and experientially prove themselves. They did not possess the completed New Testament as we have today but they had "no need for anyone to teach you" (1Jn 2:27).

Testimonial Evidence

No one disputes that Jesus was a real person. He asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" (Mt 16:13). The antichrist denies that he is the Son of God. They answered, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah" (:14). But Peter responded, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God" (:16). They were going by what they had observed. He "rebuked the wind . . . and it became perfectly calm" (Mk 4:39) and they asked, "Who then is this?" (:41). Later Jesus cleared things up and they replied, "now You are speaking plainly . . . and we have no need to question You; by this we believe that you came from God" (Jn 16:29-30). God makes it plain to you. When they "saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, they became very frightened and said "Truly this was the Son of God!" (27:54). The demonstrations had a purpose but many were skeptical. Jesus explained, "If I do them, though you do not believe on Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father" (Jn

10:37-38). Later he exclaimed, "He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me" (12:44). They had heard his teaching and seen his miracles. Jesus said, "He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me" (:45). "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him" (Jn 14:7). But the people didn't have faith and he told them, "You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also" (8:19). "He who hates Me hates My Father also" (15:23). Jesus had said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 15:24). But they "did not recognize the time of [their] visitation" (Lk 19:44).

Jesus said, "Before Abraham was born, I am" (Jn 8:58). The high priest asked Jesus, "Are You the Christ' . . . and Jesus said, 'I am'" (Mk 14:61-62). Jesus told them, "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and . . . I and the Father are one" (Jn 10:29-30). He later told Philip, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (14:9). "The Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He . . . was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God" (5:18). Also, they "were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath" (:16). "He answered them, 'My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working'" (:17) plus "the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing" (:19). He had just healed a sick man at the pool of Bethesda telling him, "Get up, pick up your pallet and walk" (:8). Later he told him in the temple, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you" (:14). Another time they brought him a paralytic and "Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven'" (Mk 2:5). But he didn't heal him immediately as at Bethseda. The scribes who were present reasoned, "Why does this man speak this way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?" (:7). That is why another time they accused "we know that this man is a

sinner" (Jn 9:24). But it was "so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (Mk 2:10). He explained "the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (Mt 12:8). Also "All authority has been given Me in heaven and on earth" (27:18). Then he said to the paralytic, "Get up, pick up your pallet and go home" (Mk 2:10). "On another Sabbath . . . there was a man whose right hand was withered" (Lk 6:6). He told him, "Stretch out your hand!" And he did so and his hand was restored" (:10). Then there was a blind man who cited that "it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind" (Jn 9:32). Jesus "applied the clay to his eyes" (:6) and "he went away and washed, and came back seeing" (:7). The Pharisees accused Jesus of being a sinner and the man replied, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know . . . [but] now I see" (:25). Jesus' response is, "Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?" (Jn 8:46).

Faith Saves You

"Having gained approval through their faith, they did not receive what was promised" (Heb 11:39). You are "enlightened" (Heb 10:32) "after receiving the knowledge of the truth" (:26). "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Ro 10:17). Jesus said, "Your faith has saved you" (Lk 7:50). "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for" (Heb 11:1). "In hope we have been saved" (Ro 8:24). Faith is "the conviction of things not seen" (Heb 11:1) which is "your confidence" (10:35). It produces "endurance, so that . . . you may receive what was promised" (:36) and be able to "run with endurance the race that is set before us" (12:1). "The righteous will live by his faith" (Hab 2:4). Noah became "an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (Heb 11:7). Abraham received faith "when he was called" (:8) "from hearing" (Ro 10:17) by the Lord saying "Go forth from your country . . . to the land which I will show you" (Ge 12:1). "He who comes to

God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (Heb 11:6). "In hope against hope he believed" (Ro 4:18) and "did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith" (:20) "being fully assured that what He had promised, He was also able to perform" (:21). "Sarah herself received ability to conceive . . . since she considered Him faithful who had promised" (Heb 11:11). "Consider Him . . . so that you may not grow weary and lose heart" (12:3) by fixing [your] eyes upon Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith" (:2).

"Make every effort to live in peace with all men" (Heb 12:14). The author of Hebrews said that at the start they "endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly, by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations" (Heb 10:32). Jesus said, "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33). Does that mean we'll always be prosperous and healthy? Paul asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine" (Ro 8:35)? He answers "in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him" (:37). He also states that God "always leads us in His triumph in Christ" (2Co 2:14). The author encourages them to "remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body" (Heb 13:3). He cites "you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one" (10:34). "See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking" (12:25). The author of Hebrews warns them about "thinking of that country from which they went out" (11:15). He replies that there is a better "heavenly one" (:16) namely "a city for them" (:16). God "warned them on earth" (12:25) and "warns from heaven" (:25). There's a tendency to treat intangible things as unrealistic because you have to put food on the table and take care of your

family. However, the author wants heavenly things to be meaningful. He invites them to come to "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (:22). "Angels . . . and the church of the first-born" (:23) are there. Plus "God, the Judge of all" (:23) is there as well as "Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant" (:24). "Much less shall we escape who turn away from Him" (:25).

A Propitiation in His Blood (Romans 3:25)

The Transgression

When God put Adam in the Garden of Eden he "commanded the man" (Ge 2:16) "from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die" (:17). However, Adam violated the command. "Through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners" (Ro 5:19). The result was "through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin" (:12). Then "death spread to all men" (:12) because "in Adam all die" (1Co 15:22). Sin is the culprit because "the sting of death is sin" (1Co 15:56). "The wages of sin is death" (Ro 6:23). Therefore "sin reigned in death" (5:21) and "death reigned" (:17). "Death works in us" (2Co 4:12). "They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds" (Ps 14:1). "They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one" (:3). But even though "the wise man and the fool alike die" (Eccl 2:16), you should consider "him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb 2:14). There was a "certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us" (Col 2:14).

Jesus told them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin" (Jn 8:34). Being a slave means you are not free as Israel was in "the house of slavery" (Ex 13:13) in Egypt. It has a more serious meaning because the devil has "the power of death" (Heb 2:14). At the judgment "death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire" (Rev 20:14). But before that people were under "the power of Sheol" (Ps 49:15) which resulted in "going to the pit" (Job 33:28). Therefore, you have to be rescued in order to be free. But "No man can by any means redeem his brother or give God a

ransom for him--for the redemption of his soul is costly, and he should cease trying forever" (Ps 49:7-8).

Just and Justifier

We know that "the wages of sin is death" (Ro 6:23) because "the soul who sins will die" (Eze 18:4). It is a fact of life as Paul said he served "the law of sin which is in my members" (Ro 7:23). We are "sold into bondage to sin" (:14). You can yield yourself to serve "sin resulting in death" (6:16). When Adam and Eve sinned they were driven from the Garden of Eden (Ge 3:24) and lost their relationship with God. Consequently God developed a plan to reconcile humanity back to himself. However, there is the issue of the sin and guilt of humanity. The "curse of the Law" (Gal 3:13) convicts us and there is a "certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us" (Col 2:14). We are "delivered . . . into the power of our iniquities" (Isa 64:7). Job revealed that God would "'bring [man] into judgment with Yourself. Who can make the clean out of the unclean? No one!" (Job 14:3-4). Furthermore, man cannot extradite himself "since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal 2:16). That is why Jesus stated, "'The Son of Man has come to save that which was lost'" (Mt 18:11) and to rescue "those who are perishing" (2Co 4:3). "While we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly" (Ro 5:6). "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (:8).

But God is just and his wrath must be appeased. "I will not acquit the guilty" (Ex 23:7). "He will by no means clear the guilty" (Nu 14:18). In other words, in his mercy he will not just unilaterally let humanity off the hook. "Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight no man living is righteous" (Ps 143:2). "If you, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?" (130:3). To acquit would be to pronounce a party not guilty. Therefore he must "be just and

the justifier" (Ro 3:26). He is the one who "justifies the ungodly" (4:5). To be justified is a forensic term meaning to be justly treated or to be vindicated which is to exonerate. It is a judicial act whereby all the claims of the law are completely satisfied. It is a judicial process where the judges "justify the righteous and condemn the wicked" (Dt 25:1) which renders a verdict. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" (Ge 18:25). "The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether" (19:9).

Nature of Sin

What is sin whose sins we are guilty of? A good way to delineate it is to describe its effects. Paul explained it saying "if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin that dwells in me" (Ro 7:20). He said that we indulge "the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath" (Eph 2:3). The source or reality of it is in man's nature. David said, "I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me" (Ps 51:5). A more direct revelation from Paul is that it is "the principle that evil is present in me" (Ro 7:21). "Sin [evil] was in the world" (5:13).

Many people define the original sin as being "through the one man's [Adam's] disobedience the many were made sinners" (Ro 5:19). "Death spread to all men, because all sinned" (:12). That sin is explained in Romans 5:18 by the NASB as "through one transgression", the NIV "as the result of one trespass", and the NKJV "by the offence of one." An offence is a violation involving a breaking of a law or rule as with "the offence of Adam" (:14). It is "iniquity . . . in sin" (Ps 51:5) as "disobedience" (Ro 5:19). That "the many were made sinners" (:19) is explained by the Greek word *kathistemi* meaning that one is appointed to a position designating that he hasn't specifically qualified himself for it. That is why you

received the guilty status even though you "had not sinned in the likeness" (:14) of Adam.

Consequently "there resulted condemnation of all men" (Ro 5:18 NASB) and "judgment came upon all men to condemnation" (:18 NKJV). Condemnation means that a penalty has been assessed as a judgment in that Adam was told he would "surely die" (Ge 2:17) which is equivalent to a death penalty. "The Lord God commanded the man, saying . . . 'from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die'" (:17). However, the serpent tempted Eve asking, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" (3:1). How did he know this? He was there "from the beginning" (Jn 8:44). Then he lied saying, "'You will not surely die'" (Ge 3:4). Jesus said, "'Whenever he [the devil] speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies'" (Jn 8:44).

Condemned Sin

The right of redemption was a tenet in Old Testament Jewish law. Inheritance of land was a practice in their society. But it's possible an owner would come upon hard times and have to sell his property. However, "his nearest relative is to come and buy back what his relative has sold" (Lev 25:25). Another situation might be that a person comes into poverty and has to sell himself into slavery to survive. But in this case also "he shall have redemption right after he has been sold: (:47). Fortunately the law specifies that "one of his blood relatives from his family may redeem him" (:49). An Old Testament word for it is "gaal" which means to free by means of a price paid. Another legal term is "padah" which means to deliver or rescue. The nearest relative is called the kinsman-redeemer who is responsible for protecting the interests of needy members of the extended family. The price paid for

redemption is called the ransom. Christ came "to give His life a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45). He is the "one mediator also between God and man . . . who gave Himself as a ransom for all" (1Ti 2:5-6). Many believed that Jesus was the one prophesied to redeem Israel, which at that moment, would be their subjugation to Rome. In the temple Anna "continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (Lk 2:38). On the road to Emmaus two men confessed, "We were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel" (24:21).

In the garden of Eden God told Adam, "From the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for . . . you shall surely die" (Ge 2:17). Consequently, "through fear of death [they] were subject to slavery all their lives" (Heb 2:15). Since that is the case then "one of his brothers may redeem him" (Lev 25:48). However, "No man can by any means redeem his brother or give God a ransom for him" (Ps 49:7). "No one is justified by the Law before God" (Gal 3:11). Therefore, God had to take the initiative "who reconciled us to Himself through Christ" (2Co 5:18). It was "with a view to the redemption of God's own possession" (Eph 1:14). God made a way for mankind who he created to be reclaimed. "The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men" (Titus 2:11). "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2Co 5:21). He was "offered once to bear the sins of many" (Heb 9:28). "He died to sin once for all" (Ro 6:10) and "condemned sin in the flesh" (8:30). "He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Col 2:14). Therefore "consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Ro 6:11). Even though you have been delivered from slavery to sin "it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20). I now "live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me" (:20).

Forgiveness of Sins

If someone offends you he usually gets blamed for the consequences. You can hold it against him which tends to drag you down. But if that person says he is sorry you should forgive him. For serious crimes many people never forgive the offender. However, Christians tend to follow the Bible's teaching and forgive the perpetrator. "Vengeance is Mine, and retribution" (Dt 32:35). How does God forgive our sins? Zecharias prophesied concerning this (Lk 1:67) saying that you become aware of "the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of sins" (:77). Jesus "will save [i.e. salvation] His people from their sins" (Mt 1:21). It starts with "repentance for forgiveness of sins" (Lk 24:47). Then, "I will forgive their iniquity and their sin I will remember more" (Jer 31:34). Sin had to be destroyed and the sins produced by it had to be accounted for. "Your sins will be wiped away" (Ac 3:19). John saw the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). Does that mean that the world's slate is wiped clean and that's the end of it? The only way forgiveness can be received is if God's work is appropriated. Sins are committed in the flesh, so at the basic level, God had to "put to death the enmity" (Eph 2:16) and "condemned sin in the flesh" (Ro 8:3). It was done so "the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin" (6:6).

How is this accomplished? It is because "Christ died for our sins" (1Co 15:3). He "was delivered over because of our transgressions" (Ro 4:25). Jesus said, "'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE', for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mt 9:13). "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Ro 5:8). He gave "His life a ransom for many" (Mt 20:28). He was "offered once to bear the sins of many" (Heb 9:28). He "gave Himself as a ransom for all" (1Ti 2:6). It results

in "the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph 1:7). He is the "propitiation for our sins" (1Jn 2:2).

The Savior

Then John recognized Jesus saying, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn 1:29). "The Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world" (1Jn 4:14). "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (1Co 5:21). He "was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification" (Ro 4:25). He was "offered once to bear the sins of many" (Heb 9:28). "He died to sin once for all" (Ro 6:10) and "condemned sin in the flesh" (8:3).

It was "through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death" (Heb 2:14). He "canceled out the certificate of death" (Col 2:14). "The Root of David, has overcome" (Rev 5:5). "God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol" (Ps 49:15). "He has redeemed my soul from going to the pit, and my life shall see the light" (Job 33:28). Jesus said, "I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and have the keys of death and Hades" (Rev 1:18). "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses" (Eph 1:7). Therefore, "consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Ro 6:11). "We have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men" (1Ti 4:10).

Abram's father was taking his family to Canaan from Ur but then he died. Next, God spoke to Abram and directed him to continue alone with his family to a place he would be shown. If he was obedient he would receive certain promises from God

(Ge 12:2-3), When they arrived in Canaan the "Lord appeared to Abram and said, 'To your offspring I will give this land'" (:7). "Then he believed in the Lord, and He reckoned it to him as righteousness" (15:6). It was God "who redeemed Abraham" (Isa 29:22). In Christ "we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col 1:14). God initiated the process of redemption saying to the serpent regarding their descendants, "He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel" (Ge 3:15). But Satan as "the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving" (2Co 4:4). "The whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (1Jn 5:19). Therefore, mankind was in bondage to sin. But "whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith" (:4). God continued to carry out his plan saying to Israel, "I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians" (Ex 6:6). "The Lord has ransomed Jacob and redeemed him from the hand of him who was stronger than he" (Jer 31:11). "You have by Your power redeemed Your people" (Ps 77:15) "which You have purchased of old, which You have redeemed to be the tribe of Your inheritance" (74:2). "Because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers . . . [He] redeemed you from the house of slavery" (Dt 7:8). Isaiah prophesied by way of "the Redeemer of Israel" (Isa 49:7) that Christ would be "the Servant of rulers" (:7) and "will have compassion on you" (54:8). "A Redeemer will come to Zion" (59:20) and "He will redeem Israel" (Ps 130:8). Job foresaw the future saying, "As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth" (Job 19:25). "Then you will know that I, the Lord, am your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob" (Isa 60:16). "All flesh will know" (49:26).

At the Cross

"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2Co

5:19) "having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col 1:20). It was a "testimony given at the proper time" (1Ti 2:6) and "displayed publicly as an atonement in His blood through faith" (Ro 3:25). "We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses" (Eph 1:7). "Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb 9:22). He "released us from our sins by His blood" (Rev 1:5). "You were not redeemed with perishable things. . . but with precious blood" (1Pe 1:19). Jesus said, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood" (1Co 11:25) "poured out for many" (Mk 14:24). "Through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb 9:12). It is "the church of God which He purchases with His own blood" (Ac 20:28). "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony" (Rev 12:11).

Christ's sacrifice was prophesied in the Old Testament. "He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening of our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed" (Isa 53:5). "He would render Himself as a guilt offering" (:10). The Tabernacle of Moses was a picture of Christ's work. "He shall present his offering to the Lord . . . one ewe-lamb a year old without defect for a sin offering" (Nu 6:14). Also, the priest was to "offer to the Lord a bull without defect as a sin offering" (Lev 4:3) and then "dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle some of the blood seven times before the Lord" (:6). Being without defect guaranteed that the death it died was not its own. Jesus was "tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15). "He had done no violence nor was there any deceit in His mouth" (Isa 53:9).

"He has taken it [sin] out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Col 2:14). "The word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness" (1Co 1:18). Christ "redeemed us . . .

having become a curse for us-for it is written, 'Cursed is every one who hangs on a tree'" (Gal 3:13). "We know that our old self was crucified with him . . . that we should no longer be slaves to sin" (Ro 6:6). "He who has died is freed from sin" (:7). Paul said "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ in me" (Gal 2:20). We know that in actuality "Christ died for our sins" (1Co 15:3) and "died to sin once for all" (Ro 6:10). We identify with Christ's actual sacrifice in a spiritual way, but it becomes real in our lives. "Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness" (Ro 8:10). We are "always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body" (2Co 4:10). "Consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Ro 6:11). "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God" (Gal 2:20).

Became Sin

His "death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions" (Heb 9:15). Christ "through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God" (:14). He offered "Himself as a guilt offering" (Isa 53:10). This was prophetic as when "the blood of goats and bulls" (Heb 9:13) was sprinkled on "those who have been defiled, [to] sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh" (:13). "One may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood" (:22). These were the "transgressions that were committed under the first covenant" (:15) which "was not inaugurated without blood" (:18). Moses explained it as "according to the Law" (:19) as "'the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you'" (Ex 24:8). "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! "How blessed is the man whom the Lord does not impute iniquity" (Ps 32:1-2). Then Jesus cited, "'This cup is the new covenant in My blood'" (1Co 11:25). "Where a covenant is, there must be the

death of the one who made it" (Heb 9:16). When a person writes a will he must die before the executor can lawfully distribute to the beneficiaries. "A covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives" (:17).

God "made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2Co 5:21). He "committed no sin" (1Pe 2:22) so how could he become sin? He was "made . . . to be sin" (2Co 5:21) because he was, in terms of a figure of speech, a sinless substitute as a sin offering "on our behalf" (:21). Mankind was already experiencing the penalty of death and was separated from God. In order to take on the burden of humanity's transgressions he had to bear the fate of sinners and experience those consequences. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us" (Gal 3:13) and was therefore treated as though he was a sinner. Because he was sinless it was obvious he wasn't dying his own death per se but was a substitute for the sinner who was guilty and couldn't save himself. At the cross "when the sixth hour had come, darkness fell over the whole land" (Mk 15:33) which symbolizes God's turning away from the Son whom he had made "to be sin" (2Co 15:21). This is reflected in Jesus' voicing, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me'?" (:34). The sin debt "was hostile to us" (Col 2:14) and he "nailed it to the cross" (:14). Because Christ had become sin you'd think it had also died. However, "He has taken it out of the way" (:14) which explains why sin is still in the world. What it means is that it made a way to be "raised because of our justification" (Ro 4:25) so "we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2Co 5:21).

Sent in Likeness

God sent "His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Ro

8:3) "who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2Co 5:21). What is the likeness of sinful man? "The first man is from the earth, earthly" (1Co 15:47) and "so also are those [we] who are earthy" (:48). Physically it is heredity and DNA. Psychologically it is how you are raised, and as some presume, you become the product of the sum total of your experiences. Man is composed of "spirit and soul and body" (1Th 5:23). "The Lord God formed man of dust from the ground" (Ge 2:7) which is the body. The brain is a physical organ and we make decisions with our intellect. But you "believe in your heart" (Ro 10:9) which is from another capacity. That source is from when God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Ge 2:7). Job said the "'Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life'" (Job 33:4). You could limit God's creation if you only considered Solomon saying "they all have the same breath" (Ecc 3:19) or Isaiah stating, "Stop regarding man, whose breath of life is in his nostrils" (Isa 2:22). But a distinction is made by Solomon saying, "Who knows that the breath of man ascends upward and the breath of the beast descends downward to the earth?" (Ecc 3:22). He says "man goes to his eternal home" (12:5) and "the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it" (:7). Zechariah states that it is the Lord who "forms the spirit of man within him" (Zec 12:1). He is the "Father of spirits" (Heb 12:9). Moses referred to the Lord as "the God of the spirits of all flesh" (Num 27:16).

God made man in the image and likeness of God (Ge 1:26). He "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (2:7). Hebrew for "breath" means breath, wind, or spirit. "God is spirit" (Jn 4:24) and he communicates with man. Jesus "became a life-giving spirit" (1Co 15:45) and "breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (Jn 20:22). "With the heart a person believes"

(Ro 10:10) which is the "inner man" (Eph 3:16). It applies to "the hidden person of the heart" (1Pe 3:4) or "inner man" (Ro 7:22). You become a new person "inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit" (Ro 2:29). "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (Jn 3:6). Then "our inner man is being renewed day by day" (2Co 4:16). But since Christ was born as we are, wouldn't he become subject to the same fleshly drives? The difference is that "Christ is born of God" (1Jn 5:1). On the surface, as a man, it would appear that he possessed a sinful nature like everyone else, but he was sinless "for in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Col 2:9).

The Gospel

In several of Paul's letters he expresses the greeting, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph 1:2) representing two members of the three-person Deity. "God created the heavens and the earth" (Ge 1:1) and "the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters" (:2). "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image'" (:26). The Father alone is not the "first cause" as Greek philosophy might argue. But Jesus was sent by the Father because he said his desire was "'to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work'" (Jn 4:34). Also Jesus explained that when the Holy Spirit arrives, "'He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak'" (Jn 16:13). Then Paul explains that at the finish "comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father" (1Co 15:24).

Paul told the Colossians he had "heard of your faith in Christ Jesus" (Col 1:4) that they had "heard in the word of truth, the gospel" (:5) in which they "understood the grace of God in truth" (:6). It is "the hope of the gospel that you have heard" (:23). Paul told the Romans he was "not ashamed of the gospel, for

it is the power of God for salvation" (Ro 1:16) because "in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith" (:17). He was sent to "preach the gospel" (1Co 1:17) "by which you are saved" (15:2). "The word of the cross is . . . to us who are being saved . . . the power of God" (1:18). "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2Co 5:19). They comprehended "the grace of God in truth" (Col 1:6) which means that they fully and experientially knew. Jesus "was with God, and the Word was God" (Jn 1:1) and "the Word became flesh . . . and we beheld His glory . . . full of grace and truth" (:14). Jesus prayed, "'Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth'" (Jn 17:17). It is "the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations; but has now been manifested" (Col 1:26) "which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (:27).

Spiritual vs. Carnal

Paul confessed "I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin" (Ro 7:14 NASB). "I am carnal, sold under sin" (:14 NKJV). "I am unspiritual, sold as a slave under sin" (:14 NIV). Some Corinthians were in the same predicament. He told them "I could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh" (1Co 3:1). That is not a good prognosis because "the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so" (Ro 8:7). You would think that carnality and spirituality were mutually exclusive. In the first case, Paul told the Colossians that "you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds" (Col 1:21). But in the second he reminded the Corinthians that "you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you" (Ro 8:9). "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him" (:9). "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold new things have come" (2Co 5:17).

Paul said "the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh" (Ro 7:14) whereas the NIV translates "I am unspiritual" (:14). But he says "you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit" (8:9). Is this a contradiction in terms? He says "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is in my flesh" (7:18) whereas the NIV calls it the "sinful nature" (:18). Is everything the natural man does unspiritual? Consider "when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law . . . they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness" (2:14). People are born with a conscience so aren't necessarily fleshly and sinful all the time. A major commandment is to "love the Lord with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind" (Lk 10:27). You are composed of "spirit and soul and body" (1Th 5:23). The body and soul are individual components because God "is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mt 10:28). The spirit and soul are separate because there is a "division of soul and spirit" (Heb 4:12). Also the soul and heart are individual parts because they "were of one heart and soul" (Ac 4:32). Paul explains there is "the law of God in the inner man" (Ro 7:22). Then he sees "a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members" (:23). If the body wars against the mind (thinking etc.) how can this be so if the head is part of the body? It's because the reference is to the "law of the mind" (:23) whereby "with my mind [I] am serving the law of God" (:25) which is "the law of the Spirit of life" (8:2). But he describes a problem that "I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out" (7:18 NIV). It is because the "sin living in me does it" (:18 NIV). The reason that "I practice the very evil that I do not wish" (:19) is due to "the principle that evil is present in me" (:21). This is not easy to understand. God had originally said, "From the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die" (Ge 2:17). Paul asked,

"Who will set me free from the body of this death?" (Ro 7:24). He responds, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (:25).

Rightness

The Bible did not (speaking with "tongue in cheek") invent the term "righteousness." A commentator cites a Mesopotamian word based on a river reed being used as a ruler to measure if walls were straight. This would be an absolute standard. But when it comes to the expectations of a society, the standards could vary from culture to culture. At a higher philosophical level you might consider the relative humanist who could say that expectations change to whatever currently works, which would mean that there was only a relative standard. If you consider the evolutionist he might conclude that whatever is necessary to survive is the standard, whereby expectations would vary according to circumstances. One source cited that Greek writing treated righteousness as someone who conformed to the expectations of deity and society. In the Bible it relates to the Hebrew word "tsedeq" and the Greek root "dikaio." All the relevant words are used in various ways so that translators had to select the correct English word for the appropriate context. In the former it would mean "rightness." It would refer to a state of being such as being right as opposed to being wrong. It would be an attribute of a person having a state of integrity relative to God's standards or the expectations of society. God implemented a practical application of his character when he chose Israel and called Jerusalem the "city of righteousness, a faithful city" (Isa 1:26). "He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness" (33:5). "They will call you the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel" (60:14). It was a unilateral purpose of God because "It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart" (Dt 9:5) that "God is giving you this good land to

possess, for you are a stubborn people" (:6).

Righteousness becomes meaningful when there are relationships involved. They can be nurturing or destructive. Relations exist between family members, friends, fellow citizens and foreigners. They are expressed through conversation and behavior. Righteousness is the glue that holds families and society together. "Sow with a view to righteousness. Reap in accordance with kindness" (Hos 10:12). In Israel the "saddiq" was a wise person who got "wisdom . . . [and then] the father of the righteous" (Prv 23:23-24) greatly rejoiced. The Hebrew word "sedeq" refers to an action which conforms to a norm. There is ethical conduct expressed by, "You shall have just balances [and] just weights" (Lev 19:36). In context, the word "justice" is derived from the same source as "righteousness." "You shall appoint for yourself judges . . . and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment" (Dt 16:18). "If a man is righteous and practices justice and righteousness" (Eze 18:5) he "executes true justice between man and man" (:8). "Give the king Your judgments, O God . . . [that he may] judge Your people with righteousness and Your afflicted with justice" (Ps 72:1). God called Israel beginning with Abraham but then had to supply them with the Law so they would have a revelation of how to conduct themselves. The king was God's appointed theocratic ruler and was to be obedient to God's leading. David advised Solomon, "Keep the charge of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the Law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn" (1Ki 2:3).

Righteousness

Paul uses the Greek word *dikaiosyne* meaning

righteousness over one hundred times in the New Testament. He applies it in a covenantal context in terms of God's promise and man's response which establishes a relationship. God "made a covenant with him [Abraham] to give him the land of the Canaanite . . . [and] to give it to his descendants" (Neh 9:8). Nehemiah states, "You [God] found his [Abraham's] heart faithful before You" (:7) and "You have fulfilled Your promise, for You are righteous" (:8). God's initiative was necessary because of Adam's disobedience. God had "commanded" (Ge 2:16) him "from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat" (:17). But when they disobeyed, it came to pass that they "shall surely die" (:17) and "the Lord God sent him out from the garden" (3:23) and man was disenfranchised from God and unable to reestablish the relationship. Therefore, "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Ro 5:8). "This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed" (3:25). "He will judge the world in righteousness . . . having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Ac 17:31) "so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2Co 5:21). "If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you" (Ro 8:11). "Who has announced this from old? . . . Is it not I, the Lord?" (Isa 45:21). "And there is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a savior; there is none except Me" (:21). "This is His name by which He will be called, 'The Lord our righteousness'" (Jer 23:6). Let "salvation bear fruit and righteousness spring up from it. I, the Lord, have created it" (Isa 45:8). "My righteousness is near, My salvation has gone forth, and My arms will judge the peoples" (51:5). The phrase with God's arms anthropomorphically ascribes human attributes to deity. "He has clothed me with garments of salvation [and] wrapped me with a robe of righteousness"

(61:10).

Abraham "believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness" (Ge 15:6). God credited his own righteousness to Abraham's account as Paul observed "not having a righteousness of my own . . . [but] the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith" (Php 3:9). "In it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith" (Ro 1:17). It is for "the man whom God credits righteousness apart from works" (4:6). God chose Abraham "so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice" (Ge 18:19) and God kept his promise "because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws" (26:5). But the disobedient do "not subject themselves to the righteousness of God" (Ro 10:3), "By His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1Co 1:30). God proceeded to deliver Israel from Egypt "so that you might know the righteous acts of the Lord" (Mic 6:5). It is "He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you" (Gal 3:5). "The Lord performs righteous deeds and judgments for all who are oppressed" (Ps 103:6). "The Lord is righteous within her; He will do no injustice" (Zep 3:5). "His work is perfect, for all His ways are just" (Dt 32:4). They "humbled themselves and said, 'The Lord is righteous'" (2Ch 12:6). "They shall recount the righteous deeds of the Lord" (Jdg 5:11). Christ will establish his kingdom "with justice and righteousness. . . [via] the zeal of the Lord of hosts" (Isa 9:7) because "'the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness'" (45:23) and "'My righteousness will be forever'" (51:8).

Paths of Righteousness

A covenant is a two-way street. "What does the Lord require

of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Mic 6:8). "Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God" (Ge 6:9). "To do righteousness and justice is desired by the Lord more than sacrifice" (Prv 21:3). Sacrifice is acceptable to someone when he deems the loss of something okay when the end justifies the means since "every man's way is right in his own eyes" (:2). "Preserve justice and do righteousness" (Isa 56:1). "Only justice, you shall pursue, that you may live and possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you" (Ge 6:9). "If a man is righteous and practices justice and righteousness" (Eze 18:5) he "will surely live," declares the Lord God" (:9). "The righteous will live by his faith" (Hab 2:4). David told Solomon, "Keep the charge of the Lord your God . . . that you may succeed in all that you do" (1Ki 2:3). Paul told them to "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness" (1Ti 6:11). "I walk in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of justice" (Prv 8:20). "Righteousness guards the one whose way is blameless" (13:6). "Righteous lips are the delight of kings" (16:13). The key is to "present your members as slaves to righteousness resulting in sanctification" (Ro 6:19). "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Mt 6:33). "He who does the will of My Father who is in heaven" (7:21) "will enter the kingdom of heaven" (:21). "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven" (5:20). "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (Gal 5:25).

On the other side of the coin, "If only you paid attention to My commandments! Then your well-being would have been like a river" (Isa 48:18). "They went far from Me and walked after emptiness" (Jer 2:5). "The righteous God tries the hearts and minds" (Ps 7:9). "God is a righteous judge" (:11) and "upright are Your judgments" (119:137). There is "the

indictment of the Lord . . . because the Lord has a case against His people" (Mic 6:2). "Therefore the Lord has kept the calamity in store and brought it on us; for the Lord our God is righteous with respect to all His deeds" (Da 9:14). "The Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish" (Ps 1:6). The benefits are that "He restores my soul; [and] He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake" (23:3).

Christ in You

"Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness" (Ro 4:9) and "the righteous is saved" (1Pe 4:18) because "God is the one who justifies" (Ro 8:33). Therefore, your "spirit is alive because of righteousness" (:10). You receive "life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit" (:11). It is the "free gift of God [which] is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (6:23). "Because of His great love with which He loved us . . . [he] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)" (Eph 1:4-5). "He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions" (Col 1:13). God did not just throw a switch or make a proclamation. It is accomplished by "He who raised Jesus Christ from the dead . . . who indwells you" (Ro 8:11). It requires the same means by which Christ "was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead" (1:4). But it will not happen unless the "Spirit of God dwells in you . . . [for] if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him" (8:9). "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life" (Jn 3:36). Paul was "not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God to everyone who believes" (Ro 1:16). Paul had made known to them "the gospel . . . which also you received, in which you also stand" (1Co 15:1) and emphasized the important aspects twice saying they were "according to the Scriptures" (:3,4). It happens "after listening to the message of

truth, the gospel of your salvation" (Eph 1:13). It is "the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe" (Ro 3:22). "With the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation" (10:10). "In hope we have been saved" (8:24). "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be delivered" (Joel 2:32) which is equivalent to "will be saved" (Ro 10:13).

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Ro 8:1). "Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1Co 3:16). "If Christ is in you" (Ro 8:10) you are "in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you" (:9). It is "this mystery . . . which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27). Paul recommends to "test yourselves to see if you are in the faith . . . that Jesus Christ is in you" (2Co 13:5). "You were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise who is given as a pledge of our inheritance" (Eph 1:13-14). Consequently, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free" (Ro 8:2). We now "do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (:4). Walking is a step-by-step process and we are being "led by the Spirit of God" (:14). One person explains this as being "practically actuated" and another says it is "progressive sanctification." "The Spirit also helps our weaknesses; for we do not know how to pray as we should" (:26). Also, "the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God" (:16). The process proceeds as "if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live" (:13). "The mind set on the Spirit is life and peace" (:6). You are "raised up with Christ" (Col 3:1) and "your life is hidden with Christ in God" (:3). Therefore "keep seeking the things above" (:1) and "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you" (Mt 6:33). Furthermore, "when Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you will also be revealed with Him in glory" (Col 3:4). "We eagerly wait for a Savior . . . who

will transform the body of our humble state into the body of His glory" (Php 3:20-21). "It has not appeared as yet what we shall be . . . [for] when He appears, we shall be like Him" (1Jn 3:2).

Word of the Cross is to us Salvation (1 Corinthians 1:18)

Son of David

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God" (Jn 1:1). He is "the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father" (:18). He said to the Father, "You loved Me before the foundation of the world" (17:24). Jesus said it was "the glory which I had with You before the world was" (:5). This was before the Creation. "He is before all things" (Col 1:7). Jesus has "neither beginning of days nor end of life" (Heb 7:3). He says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (Rev 22:13). He is "the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8). "I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am" (Jn 8:58). "In Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Col 2:9). This relationship is cited as having been predicted by a prophet regarding a Messiah being born in Bethlehem (Mt 2:4). The facts are scripturally correlated. The scriptures are "God-breathed" (2Ti 3:16) as the Spirit "carried along" (2Pe 1:21) the writers. What is written about Jesus is from the Spirit. God "has testified concerning His Son" (1Jn 5:9). Jesus said the Holy Spirit would "teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you" (Jn 14:26 NIV). That is why they had knowledge impossible to know otherwise. Jesus was "in the beginning with God" (1:2). "All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being" (:3). "You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands" (Heb 1:10). "For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible" (Col 1:16). "The world was made through Him" (Jn 1:10). It is He "for whom are all things, and through whom are all things" (Heb 2:10).

Adam and Eve disobeyed God (Ge 3:6). One of God's responses was to the serpent. He said, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head" (:15). When you consider God had said to Adam, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (1:28), Eve's seed could be anyone. But God had a plan. Ultimately an angel announced that, "today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Lk 2:11). Matthew records a "genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David" (Mt 1:1). "Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah" (:16). The name "Christ" means that God had anointed him supernaturally with power to accomplish what he had been assigned to do. It was further explained that "the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end" (Lk 1:32-33). Jesus asked the Pharisees, "What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?" (Mt 22:42). They answered, "The son of David" (:42).

The Jews believed this because of what Nathan prophesied to King David that, "the Lord also declares to you that . . . I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you . . . and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (2Sa 7:11-13). David prayed that God would "confirm it forever, and do as You have spoken" (:25). Even though there is no eschatological foundation in the Old Testament for a Davidic dynasty, Jews regarded the promise as God potentially returning to restore Israel's monarchy. There is a Hebrew word "mashah" which deals with anointing with oil. The word "mashiach" comes from it which refers to the "anointed one" who would become this messianic king. Paul said to the Thessalonians, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ" (Ac 17:3).

Lord and Christ

Peter explained "that God had sworn to [David] with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne" (Ac 2:30). "He was a prophet" (:30) and predicted "For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay" (Ps 16:10). "Surely the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets" (Am 3:7). Peter said that David "looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ" (Ac 2:31). "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses" (:32). He also said that Jesus was "delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God" (:23). God's plan is cited by Matthew (Mt 1:22-23) when he quotes the prophecy "the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel" (Isa 7:14). Matthew also speaks of the prophecy regarding the Messiah being born in Bethlehem (Mt 2:6) quoting "from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity" (Mic 5:2).

At Corinth Paul began "solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ" (Ac 18:5). The angel had said "there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Lk 2:11). He was "born for you." Mary was told "you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Mt 1:21). Scripture says Jesus is Lord. Jesus confessed, "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am" (Jn 13:13). Peter stated "that God has made Him both Lord and Christ" (Ac 2:36). "Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Php 2:11). When a person is referred to as a "lord" it means he occupies a supreme place.

When Peter explains Jesus' position he shows "having been exalted to the right hand of God . . . [he] received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit" (Ac 2:33). Being

exalted would be occupying a "supreme place" and he can be referred to as "Lord." To prove it Peter explains that from Jesus' position "He has poured forth this which you both see and hear" (:33). This is substantiated because he quotes "It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind" (Joe 2:28). Even Jesus refers to prophecy to make a point. He asks the Pharisees, "How does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,'" (Mt 22:43) for "if David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?" (:45). The reference is "The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet'" (Ps 110:1). Jesus was proving that he was the Messiah and "no one was able to answer Him a word" (Mt 22:46).

Part of Jesus' assignment was "to teach and preach in the cities" (Mt 11:1). But he told them, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me" (Jn 7:16). This is not to conclude that he was just a messenger. After the resurrection he declared, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Mt 28:18). "All things that the Father has are Mine" (Jn 16:15). Jesus had told them to wait until he sent the Holy Spirit (Lk 24:49) "whom the Father will send in My name" (Jn 14:26). Jesus told them "when He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth" (16:13). All scripture is true. "He who sent Me is true" (8:26). Jesus said that the Spirit "will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak" (16:13). Jesus had said "the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world" (8:26). He said that the Spirit would "glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you" (16:14). Jesus always gave God credit. When he quoted Exodus 20:12 he said it was the "commandment of God" (Mt 15:3) and that "God said" (:4) it. When he quoted Exodus 3:6 he said it was "spoken to you by God" (22:31). When teaching he asked "have you not read?" (19:4) and declared they were "not understanding the Scriptures" (22:29).

He quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 to prove, "It is written" (Lk 4:4) and Isaiah 29:13 to emphasize Isaiah's prophecy (Mk 7:6). He knew that the "Jews ask for signs" (1Co 1:22) so he gave them the "sign of Jonah the prophet" (Mt 12:39). He also quoted Psalm 110:1 as an example of an Old Testament anointing where "David himself said in the Holy Spirit" (Mk 12:36). This confirms that, "He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you" (Jn 14:26). "I did not come to abolish [the Law] but to fulfill" (Mt 5:17). "My words will not pass away" (24:35).

Saved by Grace

There is a second kind of birth. Jesus said "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" (Jn 3:5-6). This is possible whereby "all of us who were baptized into Christ" (Ro 6:3) were "all baptized by one Spirit" (1Co 12:13). Therefore "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2Co 5:17). Furthermore Jesus will "baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mt 3:11). "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ" (Ro 8:9). It is not God's will that anyone should perish (Mt 18:14). The gospel is "the power of God to salvation" (Ro 1:16). To keep from perishing, the gospel provides "a righteousness that is by faith . . . [so that] the righteous will live by faith" (:17). The theme of Romans is justification by faith. No one lacks faith because it "comes by hearing" (10:17). "What may be known about God is plain because God has made it plain" (1:19 NIV). The truth (:18) is more accurately defined in verse 25 as the "truth about God." The truth is "known" (:19,:21), "seen, understood" (:20), "knowledge" (:28), and "knowing" (:32). "What may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them" (:19 NKJV). "Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities . . . have been clearly seen" (:20). They include his eternal power and deity.

God is "clearly seen" (Ro 1:20) and "they knew God" (:21). "God made it evident to them . . . since the creation of the world" (:19-20). They saw "His invisible attributes . . . through what has been made so that they are without excuse" (:20). This includes "His eternal power and divine nature" (:20). This revelation is "faith [which] comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (10:17). In Greek it is "rhema" which means the "Living Word" or God himself speaking. It would "show the work of the Law written in their hearts" (2:15). "God made it evident to them" (1:19) and since it was "within them" (:19) "the word is . . . in your heart" (10:8). God has allotted to each a measure of faith" (12:3). Even Paul recognized that he "received [his revelation] from the Lord" (1Co 11:23) and he "received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:12). This was "the word of faith which we are preaching" (10:8). Therefore "believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (10:9). How do you hear with your heart? "If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him" (Rev 3:20). Communication is "inspired by God" (2Ti 3:16). "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit" (Ro 8:16). When Peter heard, Jesus said, "flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (Mt 16:17). It is by "faith which comes through Him" (Ac 3:16). "By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph 2:8-9).

Truth of God

They didn't apply their knowledge since "they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks" (Ro 1:21). It was a deliberate decision because "they did not see fit to acknowledge God" (:28). They "suppress the truth" (:18). They "exchanged the glory" (:23) and "the truth of God for a lie" (:25). In their pride they claimed "to be wise" (:22) and "worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator" (:25). By their behavior they sealed their own fate. When they "became futile in their

speculations" (:21) it gave "birth to sin . . . [which] brings forth death (Jas 1:15). Therefore God "gave them over" (Ro 1:24, 26, 28) to the desires of their hearts. "Their foolish heart was darkened" (:21) in the form of "impurity" (:24) and "degrading passions" (:26) which are acts of sexual indecency. They received "in their own persons the due penalty of their error" (:27). Finally "God gave them over to a depraved mind" (:28) and worse things happened.

What do you think the destiny of those who "suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Ro 1:18), "exchanged the truth of God for a lie" (:25), and "do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness" (2:8) will be? There will be "wrath and indignation . . . tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil" (:8-9). You take the wrong direction when you don't "honor Him as God or give thanks" (1:21). When you claim "to be wise" (:22) yourself and do "not see fit to acknowledge God any longer" (:28) you become "selfishly ambitious" (2:8). You serve instead "the creature rather than the Creator" (1:25) and your "heart was darkened" (:21). "You are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of . . . the righteous judgment of God" (2:5). Your "end will be according to their deeds" (2Co 11:15). But if you go the right direction there will be "glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good" (Ro 2:10). If you don't "hold fast . . . until the end" (Heb 3: 6) then you won't be saved.

Having the truth is crucial since "they perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved" (2Th 2:10). They "suppress the truth by their wickedness" (Ro 1:18). The knowledge of God was accessible but people closed their minds to it. "They did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God" (:28). The truth of God has been "clearly seen . . . [and] men are without excuse" (:20). It is a matter of what one decides in his mind. "Their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened" (:21). They didn't glorify

God or give thanks (:21) and then "claimed to be wise" (:22). "God sent them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness" (2Th 2:11). "Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts" (Ro 1:26). God had protected them before. But "since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over [again] to a depraved mind" (:28). "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he" (Pr 23:7).

Pay Close Attention

The writer of Hebrews was encouraging Jews to keep the faith. Many of them had been indoctrinated into Judaism and there was undoubtedly pressure on them to return. They were warned not to "drift away" (Heb 2:1) and not to "neglect so great a salvation" (:3). The gospel is "the power of God for salvation to every one who believes" (Ro 1:16) because "in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith" (:17). "It was at the first spoken through the Lord" (Heb 2:3) and "God [was] also bearing witness with them" (:4). Then "it was confirmed to us by those who heard" (:3). The author reminds them to "pay much closer attention to what we have heard" (2:1). He asks "how shall we escape?" (:3) if we ignore what we have heard. He warns about "falling away from the living God" (3:12) "whose house we are" (:6). Not "any one of you should seem to have come short of [the promise]" (4:1). We are "partakers of a heavenly calling" (3:1) and "partakers of Christ" (:14). It is because "we have had good news preached to us" (4:2). But it is necessary to "hold fast our confidence" (3:6) and "the beginning of our assurance" (:14). We are to cling to "the boast of our hope firm until the end" (:6). "Show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end" (6:11). Remember that "faith is the assurance of things hoped for" (11:1). The author goes as far as to say "let us fear while the promise remains" (4:1). The danger is that

"you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (3:13). "Today, if you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" (Ps 95:7-8). "Take care, brethren, lest there should be any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart" (Heb 3:12).

There is a legal saying that possession is nine-tenths of the law. So if you "have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift" (Heb 6:4) you have an entitlement. Also, if you "have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come" (:5) you demonstrate ownership. These are heavenly, not worldly, characteristics. "Ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God" (:7). However, if they "then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance" (:6). "They have escaped the defilements of the world by knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2Pe 2:20). "It would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them" (:21). Therefore, be mature and train yourselves to put the use of your spiritual senses into practice "to discern good and evil" (Heb 5:14).

New Covenant

Tabernacle worship signified that "the way into the holy place [had] not yet been disclosed" (Heb 9:8). It meant that sacrifices were "offered which [could] not make the worshipper perfect in conscience" (:9). But then "through His own blood, [Christ] entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (:12). He will now "cleanse your conscience from dead works" (:14) to serve God. A new covenant is therefore created "since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions" (:15). "All things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no

forgiveness" (:22). "Where a covenant is, there must be the death of the one who makes it" (:16). A covenant is a legal agreement whereby a testator writes a will making a bequest of what belongs to him to the heirs of the inheritance. Consequently "He is a mediator of a new covenant" (:15). "He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises" (8:6). "We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb 10:10). "He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (:14). "'You are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect'" (Mt 5:48). "'I am the Lord who sanctifies you'" (Lev 22:32). "You were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1Co 6:11). Therefore "we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus" (Heb 10:19). "Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith" (:22). "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (:23). "We are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preservation of the soul" (:39).

Faith Overcomes

You are "enlightened" (Heb 10:32) "after receiving the knowledge of the truth" (:26). "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Ro 10:17). Jesus said, "'Your faith has saved you'" (Lk 7:50). "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for" (Heb 11:1). "In hope we have been saved" (Ro 8:24). Faith is "the conviction of things not seen" (Heb 11:1) which is "your confidence" (10:35). It produces "endurance, so that . . . you may receive what was promised" (:36) and be able to "run with endurance the race that is set before us" (12:1). "The righteous will live by his faith" (Hab 2:4). Noah became "an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (Heb 11:7). Abraham received faith "when he was called" (:8) "from

hearing" (Ro 10:17) by the Lord saying "Go forth from your country . . . to the land which I will show you" (Ge 12:1). "He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (Heb 11:6). "In hope against hope he believed" (Ro 4:18) and "did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith" (:20) "being fully assured that what He had promised, He was also able to perform" (:21). "Sarah herself received ability to conceive . . . since she considered Him faithful who had promised" (Heb 11:11). "Consider Him . . . so that you may not grow weary and lose heart" (12:3) by fixing [your] eyes upon Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith" (:2).

The author of Hebrews said that at the start they "endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly, by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations" (Heb 10:32). Jesus said, "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33). Does that mean we'll always be prosperous and healthy? Paul asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine" (Ro 8:35)? He answers "in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him" (:37). He also states that God "always leads us in His triumph in Christ" (2Co 2:14). The author encourages them to "remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body" (Heb 13:3). He cites "you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one" (10:34).

The author warns them about "thinking of that country from which they went out" (Heb 11:15). He replies that there is a better "heavenly one" (:16) namely "a city for them" (:16). God "warned them on earth" (12:25) and "warns from heaven" (:25). There's a tendency to treat intangible things as unrealistic because you have to put food on the table and take care of your

family. However, the author wants heavenly things to be meaningful. He invites them to come to "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (12:22). "Angels. . . and the church of the first-born" (:23) are there. Plus "God, the Judge of all" (:23) is there as well as "Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant" (:24). "Much less shall we escape who turn away from Him" (:25).

Eternal Salvation

God told Abraham, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants" (Heb 6:13). This was God's oath so that we would "inherit what has been promised" (:12). It was "an oath through the One" (7:21) who spoke to Jesus. God wanted to make his purpose very clear to the heirs" (:17). Therefore Jesus "became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him" (5:9). The author of Hebrews tells them that he is "confident of better things that accompany salvation" (6:9). Jesus accomplished this "when He offered up Himself" (7:27) and "has become the guarantee of a better covenant" (:22). Accordingly "the Lord has sworn [by an oath, saying] . . . 'Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'" (Ps 110:4). "The word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever" (Heb 7:28). The author of Hebrews was concerned about those "who are ignorant and going astray" (Heb 5:2) and those who were "slow to learn" (:11). He wanted to encourage the recipients of his letter. He cites that "God wanted to make the unchanging nature of His purpose very clear" (6:17) so that they "may be greatly encouraged" (:18). "He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (7:25). The author acknowledges they have "fled to take hold of the hope offered to us" (6:18). There is a "better hope, through which we draw near to God" (:19). "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (:19). Therefore "in order to make your hope sure" (:11) "we

want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end" (:11). Also, "imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised" (:12). "If that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for the second" (Heb 8:7). It would be "not like the covenant which I made with their fathers . . . which they broke, although I was a husband to them" (Jer 31:32). "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel" (:31). "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (:33). There is the "setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness" (Heb 7:18). It is by way of "another priest" (:11) "according to the power of an indestructible life" (:16). It brings in "a change of law also" (:12). "He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises" (8:6). He is a "high priest" (:1) "exalted above the heavens" (7:26) who is a "minister in the sanctuary in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man" (8:2). "He abides forever [and] holds His priesthood permanently" (7:24). "'Has He said, and will not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?'" (Nu 23:19).

Testimony of Christ

Paul preached "Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (2Co 4:6) whereby "through us spreads everywhere . . . the knowledge of him" (2Co 2:14). Furthermore, "in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God (v.17)." He was sent to "preach the gospel-not with words of human wisdom" (1Co 1:17) but to "preach Christ crucified" (:23). He "did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom [but with] the testimony about God" (1Co 2:1). He "received from the Lord" (1Co 11:23) and "what I received I passed on to you as of first importance" (1Co 15:3). Paul was committed to this "field God has assigned to us, a field that

reaches even to you" (2Co 10:13). He did "have knowledge [and] made this perfectly clear to you in every way" (2Co 11:6).

The result of Paul's ministry was that "our testimony of Christ was confirmed in you" (1Co 1:6) in that God "has called you into fellowship with his Son" (:9). This applies to "all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (:2) because they are "sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy" (:2). Paul sought to reach everyone "so that by all possible means I might save some" (1Co 9:22). He was "not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they might be saved" (10:33). He saw "the message of the cross . . . to us who are being saved [as] the power of God" (1Co 1:18). He observed that "God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe" (:21). He considered himself as a servant "through whom you came to believe" (1Co 3:5). Believing is the key. Paul reminded them that "the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand [is how] you are saved" (1Co 15:1-2).

The Corinthian church was "enriched in every way" (1Co 1:4) yet still had problems. You would think that with the help of the Apostle Paul they wouldn't "sit in judgment" (1Co 9:3) of him. He was concerned that "when I come I may not find you as I want you to be" (2Co 12:20). Yet he was concerned that "your minds may somehow be led astray" (:3). You have to be careful what you tolerate in your mind because "a little yeast works through the whole batch" (1Co 5:6). They were susceptible because Paul said "you put up with it easily enough" (2Co 11:4). But it is dependent on that "you hold firmly to the word I preached [or else] you have believed in vain" (:2). It is a continuing process as you are "among those who are being saved" (2Co 2:15).

The Gospel is the Power of God (Romans 1:16)

Adam and Eve

On the sixth day "God created man in His own image" (Ge 1:27) in "spirit and soul and body" (1Th 5:23). "It is I who made the earth and created man upon it" (Isa 45:12). Flesh is corporeal in that "God formed the man from the dust of the ground" (Ge 2:7). But it lacks the dimension of life. For this reason God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" (:7). "The first man Adam became a living being" (1Co 15:45). "The first man is from the earth . . . [and] so also are those who are earthy" (:47-48). Therefore you might say that there is an inner as well as outer man. This is reflected in "who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him" (1Co 2:11)? In Hebrew his name means "humanity." In an extended sense the word "flesh" is also humanity. The human race inherits from Adam for, "as in Adam all" (1Co 15:22), applies to everyone. Then "the Lord fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man" (Ge 2:22) and they "were both naked and were not ashamed" (:25). "It was Adam who was first created and then Eve" (1Ti 2:13). "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good" (Ge 1:31). Therefore it cannot be concluded that man is inherently sinful. However, Eve "took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate" (3:6). "It was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression" (1Ti 2:14). Some might say that the rendition of Adam and Eve is just a metaphor because evolution proves otherwise. Some believe that Adam and Eve's existence is figurative and that the Bible's explanation of sin is allegorical. But God said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife . . . cursed is the ground because of you" (Ge 3:17).

When God put Adam in the Garden of Eden he "commanded the man" (Ge 2:16) "from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die" (:17). It was not said that "you will drop dead" as if it was poisonous. So to die must mean that death was not part of God's scheme of things, but it would transpire if Adam was disobedient. However, Adam transgressed which is defined as lawlessness and it is against God's instruction because God asked, "'Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?'" (Ge 3:11). But when they ate of the fruit of the tree "the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked so they . . . made coverings for themselves" (3:7). They had "become like one of us knowing good and evil" (:22). Did they know being naked as good or evil? They didn't feel shame before, but it seems they did now. They had to replace the innocence of their previous condition with a covering and God, himself, had to make "garments of skin for Adam and his wife" (:21). In Laodicea they didn't know that they were "wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked" (Rev 3:17). God advises "buy from me . . . white garments that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed" (3:18).

Death Reigned

What had Adam done? He was "the one who sinned" (Ro 5:16). What is sin? It is a "transgression" (:15) or "offense" (:15 KJV). It is also a "trespass" (:15 RSV). You've seen signs saying "NO TRESPASSING." "God commanded . . . you shall not eat" (Ge 2:16-17). But Adam violated the command. "Through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners" (Ro 5:19). The result was "through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin" (:12). But others "had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam" (:14). Then "death spread to all men" (:12) because "in Adam all die"

(1Co 15:22). Sin is the culprit because "the sting of death is sin" (1Co 15:56). "The wages of sin is death" (Ro 6:23). Therefore "sin reigned in death" (5:21) and "death reigned" (:17). "Death works in us" (2Co 4:12). One might respond that everyone has to die naturally anyway. But you should consider "him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb 2:14).

"By a man came death" (1Co 15:21) and "you will all likewise perish" (Lk 13:3). Death is firstly interpreted as physical death. "Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death" (Heb 11:5). "It is appointed for men to die once" (9:27). Sin is the reason for the problem. You are "dead in your trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1). Consequently you "shall be condemned" (Mk 16:16) and therefore must be "saved from wrath" (Ro 5:9). Sin contributes to the inevitable. It is "cause and effect" because it's a "law of sin and of death" (8:2). "The outcome of those things is death" (6:21) since there "is a sin leading to death" (1Jn 5:16). It is said we live in the flesh. However, "if you are living according to the flesh, you must die" (Ro 8:13). "The mind set on the flesh is death" (8:6). "With my flesh [I serve] the law of sin" (7:25) "resulting in death" (6:16). "While we were in the flesh, the sinful passions . . . were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death: (7:5).

How would you answer a person who asked, "Why would I have to repent if I didn't sin like Adam?" (Ro 5:14). Adam sinned because he broke God's commandment (Ge 2:17). He disobeyed (even rebelled) because he was not deceived (1Ti 2:14). Perhaps he ate the fruit Eve gave him because he just wanted to keep her happy. Maybe he rationalized that death would be only a temporary disciplinary action. It's possible he considered knowing more and becoming wiser would be worth it. "Through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners" (Ro 5:19). It's as though we, as descendants, have inherited the "original sin." Since "by a man came death" (1Co 5:21), through solidarity with Adam, "death spread to all men,

because all sinned" (Ro 5:12).

"Like Adam they have transgressed the covenant" (Hosea 6:7). Our guilt is imputed in a legal way as if a contract has been violated and a judgment has taken place because the ground has been cursed (Ge 3:17-18). This is the Adamic Covenant where Adam, as the representative of the human race, causes God to introduce physical death saying, "You [will] return to the ground, because from it you were taken" (:19). Others may say that Adam's nature became corrupted by the sin and that we inherit the corruption and sin automatically (Ro 5:19). Calvinists believe that we are incapable of being spiritually saved except for God's grace. So if you repent for these reasons you acknowledge that "through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous" (:19).

Sinful Flesh

Paul was acutely aware of sin. "Those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh" (Ro 8:5). "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (:8). He made it clear that it wasn't just his opinion of what sin is. In fact, even though "sin was in the world . . . [it was] not imputed" (5:13) before the law. "Apart from the Law sin is dead" (7:8). "I would not have come to know sin except through the Law" (:7). It was a "commandment, which was to result in life" (:10) by way of a "ministry . . . in letters engraved on stones" (2Co 3:7). "The Law came in so that the transgression would increase" (Ro 5:20). Therefore "the Law is spiritual" (7:14).

This behavior is explained as man's "flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal 5:24). It could be said that man's human nature is physical, sensuous and earthy. "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak" (Mt 26:41). Man's flesh is but "a wind that passes and does not return" (Ps 78:39). "All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers,

the flower fades" (Isa 40:6-7). He continues with "the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these" (Gal 5:19-21).

Paul concludes by saying "I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh" (Ro 7:18). "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jer 17:9). He states "no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me" (:17). Sin reigns "in your mortal body" (6:12) and is a "body of death" (7:24). "The Scripture has shut up everyone under sin" (Gal 3:22) "making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members" (Ro 7:23). The "pleasures of sin" (Heb 11:25) "easily entangles" (12:1) and sin can become "master over you" (Ro 6:14). It has "lusts" (:12) and "coveting of every kind" (7:8). You can be "led into" (2Co 11:29) and "caught in any trespass" (Gal 6:1). Then you can "be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb 3:13).

Restoration

God was the only one who could restore the relationship with man. He told the serpent he would "'put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed'" (Ge 3:15). Her seed (future offspring) was Christ which is why the word is capitalized. There was enmity because "while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son" (Ro 5:10). God said, "'He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel'" (Ge 3:15). God developed his plan through Abraham and told him "'because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son" (22:16) "in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice" (:18). Then "after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise" (Heb 6:15). God told Abram, "'Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that

is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years" (Ge 15:13). God has everything in control and cites that "when Israel was a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son" (Hos 11:1). Jesus remained in Egypt "until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Out of Egypt I called My Son'" (Mt 2:15). God led Israel out of Egypt. Even then Hebrews explains that "the gospel was preached to us as well as to them" (Heb 4:2). Unfortunately God explains, "It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest" (Ps 95:10). "There remains a rest for the people of God" (Heb 4:9). "But the word which they [Israel] heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it" (:2). "He who entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His" (:10). God's plan was implemented via Israel. Paul reminds "that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph 2:12). "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2Co 5:19). His purpose was "through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col 1:20) which "put to death the enmity" (Eph 2:16). "He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach" (Col 1:22). He reconciled "both [Jew and Gentile] in one body to God through the cross" (Eph 2:16). Paul encourages "on behalf of Christ, to be reconciled to God" (2Co 5:20). "Having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Ro 5:10).

God told Abraham, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants" (Heb 6:13). This was God's oath so that we would "inherit what has been promised" (:12). It was "an oath through the One" (7:21) who spoke to Jesus. God wanted

to make his purpose very clear to the heirs" (:17). Therefore Jesus "became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him" (5:9). The author of Hebrews tells them that he is "confident of better things that accompany salvation" (6:9). Jesus accomplished this "when He offered up Himself" (7:27) and "has become the guarantee of a better covenant" (:22). Accordingly "the Lord has sworn [by an oath, saying] . . . 'Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'" (Ps 110:4). "The word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever" (Heb 7:28). The author of Hebrews was concerned about those "who are ignorant and going astray" (Heb 5:2) and those who were "slow to learn" (:11). He wanted to encourage the recipients of his letter. He cites that "God wanted to make the unchanging nature of His purpose very clear" (6:17) so that they "may be greatly encouraged" (:18). "He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (7:25). The author acknowledges they have "fled to take hold of the hope offered to us" (6:18). There is a "better hope, through which we draw near to God" (:19). "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (:19). Therefore "in order to make your hope sure" (:11) "we want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end" (:11). Also, "imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised" (:12). "If that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for the second" (Heb 8:7). It would be "'not like the covenant which I made with their fathers . . . which they broke, although I was a husband to them'" (Jer 31:32). "'I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel'" (:31). "'I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people'" (:33). There is the "setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness" (Heb 7:18). It is by way of "another priest" (:11) "according to the power of an indestructible life" (:16). It brings in "a change of law also" (:12).

"He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises" (8:6). He is a "high priest" (:1) "exalted above the heavens" (7:26) who is a "minister in the sanctuary in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man" (8:2). "He abides forever [and] holds His priesthood permanently" (7:24). "Has He said, and will not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" (Nu 23:19).

Reconciliation

God's plan was implemented via Israel. Paul reminds "that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph 2:12). "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2Co 5:19). His purpose was "through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col 1:20) which "put to death the enmity" (Eph 2:16). "He as now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach" (Col 1:22). He reconciled "both [Jew and Gentile] in one body to God through the cross" (Eph 2:16). Paul encourages "on behalf of Christ, to be reconciled to God" (2Co 5:20). "Having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Ro 5:10).

Since man couldn't help himself God decided to solve the problem. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" (Jn 3:16) as a propitiation. He was "revealed" (1Ti 3:16) and sent "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Ro 8:3), "has come in the flesh" (1Jn 4:2), and was made "in the likeness of men" (Php 2:7) as a "descendant of David" (Ro 1:3). This was to demonstrate His righteousness" (Ro 3:24-25). John saw the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn 1:29). Jesus "will save His people from their sins" (Mt 1:21). Your sins

will be "wiped away" (Ac 3:19). How is this accomplished? It is because "Christ died for our sins" (1Co 15:3). He "was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification" (Ro 4:25). God "made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf" (2Co 5:21) and he was "offered once to bear the sins of many" (Heb 9:28). "He died to sin once for all" (Ro 6:10) and "condemned sin in the flesh" (8:3). Jesus said "'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE', for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mt 9:13). Christ gave "His life a ransom for many" (Mt 20:28) and therefore "in Him we have redemption through His blood" (Eph 1:7). You believe that he is the "propitiation for our sins" (1Jn 2:2). Therefore "consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (6:11). We are "always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body" (2Co 4:10). Because of what Christ accomplished "the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God" (Gal 2:20). Paul said "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ in me" (:20). "Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness" (Ro 8:10).

Redemption

To redeem means to get possession of something you don't own by paying for it. Perhaps ownership of something was lost and you want to regain it. There is the case where a man was "so poor . . . as to sell himself" (Lev 25:47) as a slave. Fortunately "one of his brothers may redeem him" (:48) or "if he prospers, he may redeem himself" (:49). "If a ransom is demanded of him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is demanded of him" (Ex 21:30). In man's case we had been "severed from Christ" (Gal 5:4) and "alienated and hostile in mind" (Col 1:21). "God created man in His own image" (Ge 1:27). But now Adam had "a son in his own likeness" (5:3),

and due to the fall of man, this image was not equivalent to the original likeness because man's relationship with God had deteriorated. Unfortunately man was caught in a "yoke of slavery" (Gal 5:1) and "through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives" (Heb 2:15). "We are slaves; yet in our bondage, [and] our God has not forsaken us, but has extended lovingkindness to us" (Ez 9:9). "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Ro 5:8). Christ had to accomplish this because "no man can by any means redeem his brother or give God a ransom for him--for the redemption of his soul is costly, and he should cease trying forever" (Ps 4:7-8). Redemption means to buy back by making payment, and in man's predicament, it pertains to freeing him from his bondage to sin. Therefore Jesus explained, "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give His life a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45). The payment of a ransom applies to a loosing or setting someone free, and by this, the Father through Christ is regaining possession of something that originally was his as a "redemption of God's own possession" (Eph 1:14). It is "the church of God which He purchases with His own blood" (Ac 20:28). "Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb 9:22). Christ "gave Himself as a ransom for all" (1Ti 2:5) since "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2Co 5:19). Someone once told me that it means everyone automatically goes to heaven. But you must appropriate what Christ has done to make it personally official.

Christ "cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us; and . . . nailed it to the cross" (Col 2:14). However, "the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness" (1Co 1:18). But it is serious and not just academic. Christ "redeemed us . . . having become a curse for us" (Gal 3:13) by his crucifixion. It was from "the curse of the Law" (:13) for "forgiveness of our trespasses" (Eph 1:7). It is "redemption

[for] the forgiveness of sins" (Col 1:14) and "transgressions that were committed under the first covenant" (Heb 9:15). It was to redeem us "from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers" (1Pe 1:18) and "from every lawless deed . . . [to be] zealous for good deeds" (Titus 2:14). He "rescued us from the domain of darkness" (:13) and "from the hand of our enemies" (Lk 1:74). It was a "testimony given at the proper time" (1Ti 2:6) and "displayed publicly as an atonement in His blood through faith" (Ro 3:25). "Jesus said, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood" (1Co 11:25) "poured out for many" (Mk 14:24). Redemption has numerous important objectives. One result is that we are "justified as a gift by His grace" (Ro 3:24). It is so "we might receive the adoption as sons" (Gal 4:5) and to "receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb 9:15). We have "the first fruits of the Spirit" (Ro 8:23) and are "sealed" (Eph 4:30) by the Holy Spirit. Christ to us becomes "wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification" (1Co 1:30). Through Christ we "are believers in God . . . so that your faith and hope are in God" (1Pe 1:21). "Through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all" (Heb 9:12) having "purchased for God . . . men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev 5:9). "Do you not know . . . that you are not your own?" (1Co 6:19,20). "You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men" (7:23).

Came to Seek

Paul noted in Romans 3 by quoting that "The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God" (Ps 14:2). Why does Christ seek the lost? It is because no one seeks on their own since "every one of them has turned aside; together they have become corrupt" (Ps 53:3). Paul elaborates in Romans 10 by citing "I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me; I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me" (Isa 65:1). Paul asks "how shall they hear" (Ro 10:14)

without anyone telling them? He also asks "surely they have never heard, have they?" (:17). But he affirms the promulgation of doctrine in Romans 10 by quoting "their line has gone out through all the earth, and their utterances to the end of the world" (Isa 19:4). However Isaiah asks, "Who has believed our message?" (53:1). Paul then presents the caveat that "a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (1Co 2:14). If you need the Spirit to comprehend scripture, but don't have the Spirit because you haven't experienced salvation, then it is a "catch-22" and you need a way to comprehend the gospel initially. Paul said he was "not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to every one who believes" (Ro 1:16). Scriptures "have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ" (Jn 20:31). It is "the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation" (Eph 1:13) and the "living and enduring word of God" (1Pe 1:23). "All scripture is inspired by God" (2Ti 3:16) and "if any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching whether it is of God" (Jn 7:17). It is revelation by "faith which comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Ro 10:17). The Greek word *rhema* defines it as the Living Word of God himself speaking. Jesus told Peter "flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (Mt 1:17).

Not only did God perform works, but he personally made things known to his servants which got recorded in scripture. It is estimated that one-third of scriptures are prophetic and two thousand prophecies have already been fulfilled. Jesus, himself, quoted fifteen Old Testament books. He prefaced a quote of Deuteronomy 8:3 by answering, "'It is written'" (Lk 4:4). He substantiates the Old Testament because "He was teaching them as one having authority" (Mt 7:29). He had this authority as exemplified by his using "'But I say'" (Mt

5:33,28,32,34,39,44) six times in the Sermon on the Mount. He deferred to the Bible as when he said "have you not read that which was spoken to you by God" (Mt 22:31) when quoting Exodus 3:6. God was speaking to Moses from a burning bush. But Jesus said he had spoken "to you" and didn't treat it as a second-hand reference. His dialog was with people "not understanding the scriptures" (:29). Another time he asked them, "Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God?" (Mt 15:3). He said, "You invalidated the word of God" (:6) in referring to the Fourth Commandment (Ex 20:12). Jesus states that "Scripture cannot be broken" (Jn 10:35) and you shouldn't ever break "the least of these commandments" (Mt 5:19).

Paul said "all Scripture is inspired by God" (2Ti 3:16) and Peter said that prophecy came by men who "spoke from God" (2Pe 1:21). God told Moses he would "teach you what you are to say" (Ex 4:12) and told Jeremiah "all that I command you, you shall speak" (Jer 1:7). Peter said "Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you" (2Pe 3:15). Paul concurs saying "the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment" (1Co 14:37) and "taught by the Spirit" (2:13). He told the Ephesians he had declared the "whole purpose of God" (Ac 20:27). In TV detective shows they often mention the "chain of evidence." Jesus followed the same "standard operating procedure" as Peter and Paul. Jesus explained, "the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak" (Jn 12:49). He also said the Spirit "will bear witness of Me" (15:26) but "will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak" (16:13). Furthermore "the Holy Spirit . . . will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you" (14:26). Therefore you will "know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself" (7:7).

Repentance

Repentance is therefore necessary. John the Baptist began preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt 3:2). The purpose of it was "for the forgiveness of sins" (Mk 1:4). It is because "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Ro 3:23). Then "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel'" (Mk 1:14-15). Paul said, "Having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent" (Ac 17:30). Isaiah said to "turn from transgression" (Isa 59:20) and Ezekiel said to tell him to "turn from his wickedness or from his wicked way" (Eze 3:19). Paul said "the Lord will . . . bring to an end . . . the activity of Satan . . . with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth to be saved" (2Th 2:8-10). The disciples told Jesus about the Galileans who Pilate had killed. He replied, "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (Lk 13:3). To perish means to die or be destroyed. God said to Ezekiel, "Warn the wicked from his wicked way that he may live" (Eze 3:18). Jesus said, "Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). Also, "I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish" (10:28). The Lord is "patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2Pe 3:9). "Do you not think . . . that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" (Ro 2:4). "The sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation" (2Co 6:10). It is "repentance toward God" (Ac 20:21).

The first message that John the Baptist and Jesus preached was "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt 4:17). Then early in Jesus' ministry he had a conversation with "Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews" (Jn 3:1). Jesus revealed, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the

Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (:5). Some people say that unless you aren't water baptized you don't qualify, but Jesus is stating a principle and not creating a checklist based upon works. Nicodemus didn't understand so Jesus responded, "Are you a teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?" (:10). The Jews had the Old Testament scriptures and were supposed to understand spiritual things. Jesus observed, "You do not believe [earthly things] so how shall you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" (:11). Then he proceeded to say "whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (:16). I've heard people say that its difficult to grasp the concept of eternity much less living forever. The translation of Melchizedik's name is "king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem" (Heb 7:2). "Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he abides a priest perpetually" (:3). "His name will be called . . . Eternal Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6). "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8). To understand Biblical doctrine you must comprehend what the Bible says. It may sound like a circular argument but its possible to be "handling accurately the word of truth" (2Ti 2:15). God gave the Bible's authors accurate information because "men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2Pe 1:21). How do you understand the concept of eternal life? Eternity depends on God. God says, "I am God. Even from eternity I am He" (Isa 43:12-13). "His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity" (Mic 5:2). "You are from everlasting" (Ps 93:2). "Are You not from everlasting?" (Hab 1:12). Furthermore, "I live forever" (Dt 32:40). "From everlasting to everlasting, You are God" (Ps 90:2). "Your years will not come to an end" (Ps 102:27). "The Lord shall reign forever and ever" (Ex 15:18). He saved Israel "with an everlasting salvation . . . to all eternity" (Isa 45:17). "His ways are everlasting" (Hab 3:6). This "momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight

of glory far beyond all comparison" (2Co 4:17). It depends upon your perspective. "Things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2Co 4:18). "The one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life" (Gal 6:8). "We have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (2Co 5:1). The "free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ro 6:23). "This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life" (1Jn 2:25). "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (5:11). "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (Jn 17:3). Christ "died for sins once for all" (1Pe 3:18). "Having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation" (Heb 5:9). Therefore "he who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life" (Jn 3:36). Jesus cautioned the Jews, "You think that in [the Scriptures] you have eternal life . . . [but] you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life" (5:39-40).

God Delivers (Dan 6:27) and Translates (Col 1:13)

Son of David

Adam and Eve disobeyed God (Ge 3:6). One of God's responses was to the serpent. He said, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head" (:15). When you consider God had said to Adam, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (1:28), Eve's seed could be anyone. But God had a plan. Ultimately an angel announced that, "today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Lk 2:11). Matthew records a "genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David" (Mt 1:1). "Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah" (:16). The name "Christ" means that God had anointed him supernaturally with power to accomplish what he had been assigned to do. It was further explained that "the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end" (Lk 1:32-33). Jesus asked the Pharisees, "What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?" (Mt 22:42). They answered, "The son of David" (:42).

The Jews believed this because of what Nathan prophesied to King David that, "the Lord also declares to you that . . . I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you . . . and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (2Sa 7:11-13). David prayed that God would "confirm it forever, and do as You have spoken" (:25). Even though there is no eschatological foundation in the Old Testament for a Davidic dynasty, Jews regarded the promise as God potentially returning to restore Israel's monarchy. There is a Hebrew word "mashah" which deals with anointing

with oil. The word "mashiach" comes from it which refers to the "anointed one" who would become this messianic king. Paul said to the Thessalonians, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ" (Ac 17:3).

Christ and Lord

Peter explained "that God had sworn to [David] with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne" (Ac 2:30). "He was a prophet" (:30) and predicted "For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay" (Ps 16:10). "Surely the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets" (Am 3:7). Peter said that David "looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ" (Ac 2:31). "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses" (:32). He also said that Jesus was "delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God" (:23). God's plan is cited by Matthew (Mt 1:22-23) when he quotes the prophecy "the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel" (Isa 7:14). Matthew also speaks of the prophecy regarding the Messiah being born in Bethlehem (Mt 2:6) quoting "from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity" (Mic 5:2).

At Corinth Paul began "solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ" (Ac 18:5). The angel had said "there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Lk 2:11). He was "born for you." Mary was told "you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Mt 1:21). Scripture says Jesus is Lord. Jesus confessed, "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am" (Jn 13:13). Peter stated "that God has made Him both

Lord and Christ" (Ac 2:36). "Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Php 2:11). When a person is referred to as a "lord" it means he occupies a supreme place.

When Peter explains Jesus' position he shows "having been exalted to the right hand of God . . . [he] received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit" (Ac 2:33). Being exalted would be occupying a "supreme place" and he can be referred to as "Lord." To prove it Peter explains that from Jesus' position "He has poured forth this which you both see and hear" (:33). This is substantiated because he quotes "It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind" (Joe 2:28). Even Jesus refers to prophecy to make a point. He asks the Pharisees, "How does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,'" (Mt 22:43) for "if David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?" (:45). The reference is "The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet'" (Ps 110:1). Jesus was proving that he was the Messiah and "no one was able to answer Him a word" (Mt 22:46).

Repent from Sin

John the Baptist began preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt 3:2). The purpose of it was "for the forgiveness of sins" (Mk 1:4). It is because "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Ro 3:23). Then "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel'" (Mk 1:14-15). Paul said, "Having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent" (Ac 17:30). Isaiah said to "turn from transgression" (Isa 59:20) and Ezekiel said to tell him to "turn from his wickedness or from his wicked way" (Eze 3:19). Paul said

"the Lord will . . . bring to an end . . . the activity of Satan . . . with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth to be saved" (2Th 2:8-10). The disciples told Jesus about the Galileans who Pilate had killed. He replied, "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (Lk 13:3). To perish means to die or be destroyed. God said to Ezekiel, "Warn the wicked from his wicked way that he may live" (Eze 3:18). Jesus said, "Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). Also, "I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish" (10:28). The Lord is "patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2Pe 3:9). "Do you not think . . . that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" (Ro 2:4). "The sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation" (2Co 6:10). It is "repentance toward God" (Ac 20:21).

How would you answer a person who asked, "Why would I have to repent if I didn't sin like Adam?" (Ro 5:14). Adam sinned because he broke God's commandment (Ge 2:17). He disobeyed (even rebelled) because he was not deceived (1Ti 2:14). Perhaps he ate the fruit Eve gave him because he just wanted to keep her happy. Maybe he rationalized that death would be only a temporary disciplinary action. It's possible he considered knowing more and becoming wiser would be worth it. "Through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners" (Ro 5:19). It's as though we, as descendants, have inherited the "original sin." Since "by a man came death" (1Co 5:21), through solidarity with Adam, "death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Ro 5:12). "Like Adam they have transgressed the covenant" (Hosea 6:7). Our guilt is imputed in a legal way as if a contract has been violated and a judgment has taken place because the ground has been cursed (Ge 3:17-18). This is the Adamic Covenant

where Adam, as the representative of the human race, causes God to introduce physical death saying, "You [will] return to the ground, because from it you were taken" (:19). Others may say that Adam's nature became corrupted by the sin and that we inherit the corruption and sin automatically (Ro 5:19). Calvinists believe that we are incapable of being spiritually saved except for God's grace. So if you repent for these reasons you acknowledge that "through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous" (:19).

Be Transformed

Why is it necessary to repent from sin? Sin originated in the Garden of Eden. God had commanded Adam, "From the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die" (Ge 2:17). But Eve "took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate" (3:6). However "it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression" (1Ti 2:14). Transgression is defined as lawlessness and it is against God's instruction because God asked, "Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" (Ge 3:11). Consequently the sin had to be dealt with. The serpent was "more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made" (:1) and deceived Eve (:1-5). God told him Eve's seed "shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel" (:15). This person who was promised was the seed of Abraham "that is, Christ" (Gal 3:16) because "in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Ge 22:18). Christ came "to destroy the works of the devil" (1Jn 3:8). Christ died that "He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb 2:14). This was all necessary because Adam was "the one who sinned" (Ro 5:16) and "by a man came death" (1Co 15:21), but "in Christ all shall be made alive" (:22).

"In Adam all die" (1Co 15:22). Paul says "you were dead in your trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1). "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Ge 6:5). These are the works of the devil that Christ had to overcome. Humans are "by nature children of wrath" (Eph 2:3) because they live in a worldly way "according to the prince of the power of the air" (:2). We "lived in the lusts of our flesh" (:3) and a person who indulges in "the desires of the flesh and mind" (:3) "is dead even while she lives" (1Ti 5:6). When Paul became aware of sin through the Law he said "it killed me" (Ro 7:11). But there is a way to "save his soul from death" (Ja 5:20). "When we were dead in our transgressions, [God] made us alive together with Christ" (Eph 2:5). Jesus said, "You have no life in yourselves" (Jn 6:53) so we are saved "according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Ro 12:2). "Repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away" (Ac 3:19). God accomplishes this because he said, "I will put My Spirit within you" (Eze 36:27). John said that Jesus "will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mt 3:11). "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature" (2Co 5:17). "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (Jn 3:6). We are "born again to a living hope" (1Pe 1:3) "through the living and enduring word of God" (:23).

Gives Eternal Life

In nature a person tries to survive. Even Jesus said, "I came that they may have life, and have it more abundantly" (Jn 10:10). Are you supposed to do anything necessary to survive? Jesus warns, "Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it" (Mt 16:25). There was a situation in Smyrna where Jesus instructed through John, "You will have tribulation ten

days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev 2:10). This "momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison" (2Co 4:17). It depends upon your perspective. "Things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2Co 4:18). "The one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life" (Gal 6:8). "We have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2Co 5:1). So our focus should be on eternal things.

The "free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ro 6:23). "This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life" (1Jn 2:25). "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (5:11). "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (Jn 17:3). Christ "died for sins once for all" (1Pe 3:18). "Having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation" (Heb 5:9). Therefore "he who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life" (Jn 3:36). Jesus cautioned the Jews, "You think that in [the Scriptures] you have eternal life . . . [but] you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life" (5:39-40).

Imparts Immortality

God "alone possesses immortality" (1Ti 6:16). "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Ro 5:8). He "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (1Ti 1:10). How do you pursue and possess eternal life? "Those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life" (Ro 2:7). "Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called" (1Ti 6:12). "He who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal" (Jn 12:25). "There is no one who

has left [house, family, business] . . . for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now . . . and in the age to come, eternal life" (Mk 10:29-30). "The dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed . . . for this mortal must put on immortality" (1Co 15:52-53).

Eternal life is having a relationship with God. Moses spoke to God face to face. "Whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he would take off the veil until he came out" (Ex 34:34). "Whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away" (2Co 3:16). When Christ was resurrected "the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Mt 27:51). It is "a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil" (Heb 6:19). "Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace" (4:16). It is a proactive decision. James said, "Do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles" (Ac 15:19). "Behold, now is 'the acceptable time,' behold, now is the 'day of salvation'" (2Co 6:2).

Redeemed Us

Early church councils determined that Jesus was one with the Father, and as incarnated, was of the same essence as human beings. They described it as a hypostatic union. The spirit of man is mentioned in the New Testament, and on the cross, Jesus cried out, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" (Lk 23:46). Humans have a soul. Paul said "may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete" (1Th 5:23). In Gethsemane Jesus exclaimed, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death" (Mt 26:38). Hebrews explains "He had to be made like his brethren in all things" (2:16) being "tempted in all things as we are" (4:15). He shared in an existential humanity as experienced by normal people and

was not given an "ideal" humanity where he would be immune from temptation. "Since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (2:14). He "canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us" (Col 2:14). An elder said, "The Root of David, has overcome" (Rev 5:5). Jesus said, "I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and have the keys of death and of Hades" (1:18).

When you redeem something you buy it back as if retrieving it from a pawnshop. We've all seen movies where someone is kidnapped and a ransom is demanded. There is a price for releasing a captive. Mankind has been in bondage to sin. But Jesus "became a curse for us" (Gal 3:13) and we are "bought with a price" (1Co 6:20). His "death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions" (Heb 9:15) and it is he "in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col 1:14). He is the "one mediator also between God and man . . . who gave Himself as a ransom for all" (1Ti 2:5-6). We are "justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Ro 3:24). "In Him we have redemption through His blood" (Eph 1:7). "You were not redeemed with perishable things . . . but with precious blood" (1Pe 1:19). "Through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb 9:12).

God Guaranties

God has "saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works" (2Ti 1:9). Israel didn't apprehend it because "they did not pursue it by faith, as though it were by works" (Ro 9:31). "Seeking to establish their own

[righteousness], they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God" (10:3). "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him" (Eph 1:4). He called us "according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity" (2Ti 1:9). Jesus "was foreknown before the foundation of the world" (1Pe 1:19). But don't "neglect so great a salvation" (Heb 2:3). At a banquet there was a person "not dressed in wedding clothes" (Mt 22:12). The king said, "'bind him . . . and throw him into outer darkness'" (:13). "Many are called but few are chosen" (:14).

What guaranty is there that you can follow through with your commitment? Paul's confidence is "that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Php 1:6). It depends on God. "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20). It works because God has "sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts" (2Co 1:22) "as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession" (Eph 1:14). Because Jesus "continues forever . . . He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him" (Heb 7:24-25). "Who will separate us from the love of Christ?" (Ro 8:35). Nothing "will be able to separate us from the love of God" (:38). "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day" (Jn 6:39).

Where does the threat to a believer come from? It is because "they themselves are in the world" (17:11). Therefore Jesus asked the Father to "'keep them in Your name'" (:11). As a result, "'My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand'" (10:29). Paul was "convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day" (2Ti 1:12). Peter said we "are protected by the power of God

through faith" (1Pe 1:5). Also, "your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (5:8). "But He who is born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him" (1Jn 5:18). "Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (4:4).

Increase in Knowledge

It is important for each person to take to heart what the Bible says. With Israel "their heart was not steadfast toward Him" (Ps 78:37) and they "did not believe in His wonderful works" (:32). The elders "had known all the deeds of the Lord which He had done in Israel" (Jos 24:31). "They quickly forgot His works" (Ps 106:13) "nor were they faithful in His covenant" (Ps 78:37). "The Lord said to Samuel, . . . 'they have rejected me'" (1Sa 8:7). Paul said that "he who rejects this is not rejecting man but God" (1Th 4:8). That is why John says of Jesus that "the Word was God" (Jn 1:1).

A writer on theology wrote that God has placed something in each man's heart to want to know him. Paul said "I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ" (Php 3:8). In man's current state "we see in a mirror dimly" (1Co 13:12). I attended church once with a man I saw recently who told me that he had died during hip replacement surgery and went to heaven and saw his parents and others he knew. His wife prayed for him in the operating room and he returned to life and now gives his testimony at church meetings. When I asked, he explained that even though the people there didn't have earthly bodies you knew who they were. It's as if on earth you see as if in a mirror's reflection, but in heaven "face to face . . . [and] know fully just as I also have been fully known" (13:12). The purpose is to be "increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col 1:10) and have "grace and peace be multiplied in you in the knowledge of

God and of Jesus our Lord" (2Pe 1:2). Paul prayed you would "abound still more and more in real knowledge and discernment" (Php 1:9) and that God may give you a "revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Eph 1:17). At the basic level you "come to the knowledge of the truth" (1Ti 2:4). More accurately you "believe and know the truth" (4:3) because you are "to be saved and come to the knowledge" (2:4). It is a "true knowledge" (Col 3:10) by understanding "the grace of God in truth" (1:6). Also, it is "the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him" (3:10). We then "attain to . . . knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man" (Eph 4:13).

Be Sanctified

"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature" (2Co 5:17). Must you, then, act differently? God told them, "Be holy, for I am holy" (Lev 11:44). To be a certain way means you have to live that way. How do you know what is required? Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth" (Jn 17:17). Sanctification in Greek means setting apart, and in Hebrew it is making something ceremonially clean. Jesus participated and said, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth" (:19). Jesus "that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate" (Heb 13:12). In the Old Testament tabernacle "the blood of bulls and goats . . . [was used in] sprinkling those who have been defiled" (Heb 9:13). It was to "sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh" (:13). In the same way it is "by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled by His blood" (1Pe 1:2). Jesus did this for his church "that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word" (Eph 5:26). Paul referred to "the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling" (1Co 1:2).

He said "you were washed, . . . sanctified, . . . [and] justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1Co 6:11). "Both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father" (Heb 2:11).

God provides sanctification at salvation in that "they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me" (Ac 26:18). "We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb 10:10). To make it possible God said, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you" (Eze 36:26). He also said, "I will give them one heart . . . for their own good" (Jer 32:39). "The Lord your God will circumcise your heart . . . in order that you may live" (Dt 30:6). Will not "the blood of Christ . . . cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb 9:13). Therefore "present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship" (Ro 12:1). God told Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them . . . and let them wash their garments" (Ex 19:10). A person must "possess his own vessel in sanctification" (1Th 4:4) and you must "sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts" (1Pe 3:15). Then "do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Ro 8:4) and "walk in newness of life" (6:4). "Walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light . . . and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1Jn 1:7). "May the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely . . . [so you will be] without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Th 5:23). "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev 7:14).

Must Persevere

Peter said "they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2Pe 2:20). "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (1Jn 5:11). But Jesus said, "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up" (Jn 15:6). Branches "were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith" (Ro 11:20). You persevere by "keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith" (1Ti 1:19). Therefore be careful "that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God" (Heb 3:12). "The Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith" (1Ti 4:1) and will "have fallen from grace" (Gal 5:4). Jesus said, "There are some of you who do not believe" (Jn 6:64) and "many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore" (:66).

If "they are again entangled in [defilements] and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first" (2Pe 2:20). "It would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them" (:21). But "we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance" (Heb 3:14) and "our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end" (:6). Even Paul said "I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified" (1Co 9:27). "Jesus said to the twelve, 'You do not want to go away also do you?' Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God'" (Jn 6:67-69).

The Will of God Your Sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:3)

Consecration

There are many hundreds of religions in the world. Some claim that God told their founders proprietary truths, and they were then written down in official books for their religion. The ideas from different religions often conflict with each other denoting either that God has come up with a large offering of variety, or that a number of ideas are actually wrong. In Christianity the Holy Spirit can reveal to you what is truth and what is not. However, religions' adherents tend "religiously" to defend their doctrine. It seems that their minds are made up. The mind is where thinking occurs. It can be analytical making sense of the input it gets, or imaginative creating original thoughts. It is a tool which helps determine whether something is true or false. But it doesn't inherently know everything, so processes like the scientific method may have to be implemented. The conscience can determine whether something is right or wrong but it doesn't necessarily depend on the logical mind for this.

Paul explained "you are slaves of the one whom you obey . . . [such as] sin resulting in death" (Ro 6:16). But now you "present your members as slaves to righteousness resulting in sanctification" (:19). "The outcome [results in] eternal life" (:22). God "is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Ac 20:32). "You were washed, . . . sanctified . . . [and] justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God" (1Co 6:11). These facets are a package deal representing instantaneous regeneration and are not phases of a long,

drawn out process. "God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth" (2Th 2:13). Christ "became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption" (1Co 1:30). He accomplished this "having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time" (Heb 10:12) and "has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (:14).

"This is the will of God, your sanctification" (1Th 4:3). The Hebrew word *qadash* means to be set apart, holy, or consecrated. The Greek word *hagiazō* means to make holy, purify, or dedicate. Christians are "beloved of God . . . called as saints" (Ro 1:7). The term comes from the same root word as "consecration". Moses told Israel, "'You are a holy people to the Lord . . . for His own possession'" (Dt 7:6). Joshua told them, "'He is a holy God'" (Jos 24:19). God desires to have a relationship with his people but advises, "'Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am holy'" (Lev 11:44). God told Moses to say, "'You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation'" (Ex 19:6). To accomplish this God instructs, "'You shall consecrate yourselves . . . and you shall keep My statutes and practice them; I am the Lord who sanctifies you'" (Lev 20:7-8).

Natural vs. Spiritual

Paul told the Romans "that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin" (Ro 3:9). Then in verses 10-12 he references Psalm 14:1-3 which are not exactly verbatim quotations because they are spiritually applied. Psalm 14:2 says that God "looked down from heaven . . . to see if there are any who understand", but Paul simply cites "there is none who understands" (Ro 3:11). God looks for any "who seek after God" (Ps 14:2), and Paul just says "there is none who seeks

for God" (Ro 3:11). The precedent set was "all have turned aside, together they have become useless" (:12). Those references are prefaced with "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" (Ps 14:1). One could conclude from the context that no one seeks God because they don't believe that God exists in the first place. Abraham observed, "'There is surely no fear of God in this place'" (Ge 20:11). "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God" (:7). Many "are enemies of the cross of Christ" (Php 3:18) and "set their minds on earthly things" (:19). "A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (1Co 2:14).

Therefore God had to take the initiative. Stephen testified that, "'The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia'" (Ac 7:2). "The Lord said to Abram, 'Go forth from your country . . . to the land which I will show you'" (Ge 12:1). The Lord spoke to Abram as if they were face to face. Stephen explained God's appearing to Abram with the Greek word "optomai" which pertains to personal presence involving sight. Also, "the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre" (18:1) and Abram responded, "'My Lord, if now I have found favor in your sight, please do not pass your servant by'" (:3).

God circumvents man when necessary as when "suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'" (Ac 9:4). Years later on Paul's third missionary journey they entered Europe for the first time where God's assistance was needed. At Philippi "a certain woman named Lydia . . . was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul" (16:14).

"Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Ro 10:17) which is quickened as in Lydia's case. "But we have the mind of Christ" (1Co 2:16). "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus" (Php 2:5). "The mind set on the Spirit is life and peace" (Ro 8:6).

Sanctification

When God saves a person "he is a new creature [in Christ]; the old passed away; behold, new things have come" (2Co 5:17). He becomes a heir of God's promises and is said to have a "position" in Christ. But having been reborn he needs to grow, and as he progresses, he is said to be experientially advancing. But it takes the work and grace of the Holy Spirit to establish this new creature and to build upon this foundation. This is called sanctification. It is a basic principle with God. In the beginning "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made" (Ge 2:3). God set this day apart to himself and made it holy. It becomes that way because, as Joshua told the people, God is "a holy God" (Jos 24:9). "For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself" (Heb 6:13). Amos prefaced his prophecy with "the Lord God has sworn by Himself, the Lord God of hosts has declared" (Amos 6:8). Another time a prophecy began with "the Lord God has sworn by His holiness" (4:2). Not only is God the ultimate authority, his fundamental characteristic is holiness. "The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times" (Ps 12:6). "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You cannot look on wickedness with favor" (Hab 1:13). The essence of his being is perfection. However, he is separate and distinct from his creation. Furthermore, man lives in a sinful world because of the Fall and is not holy.

Therefore he must be cleansed and God is the only one who can do it. How did it get that way? The serpent tempted them in Eden by disputing God's truthfulness saying, "God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God" (Ge 3:5) implying that he was keeping godliness to himself. But God's creation is not synonymous with God himself. When Eve ate the fruit it was as if she was saying I will be equivalent to God. The Antichrist "exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God" (1Th 2:4). However, "God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification" (1Th 4:8). Therefore, "this is the will of God, your sanctification" (:3). God instituted a plan to restore Israel and even prophesied the end result (Ezekiel 36,37,47; Jeremiah 17,31; Joel 2; Zechariah 14).

Purification

God gave Moses the plans for the Tabernacle at Mt. Sinai. It is a type of how God's plans would be executed. Since God had rested from his work and blessed the seventh day (Ge 2:3) it was a logical place to start. Moses told Israel, "This is what the Lord meant: tomorrow is a sabbath observance, a holy sabbath to the Lord" (Ex 16:23). "It is a sabbath of complete rest to you, and you shall humble your souls" (Lev 23:32). Much later God reiterated through Jeremiah, "You shall not bring a load out of your houses on the sabbath day nor do any work" (Jer 17:22). Furthermore, "If you listen attentively to Me,' declares the Lord . . . 'then there will come in through the gates of this city kings and princes sitting on the throne of David . . . and this city will be inhabited forever" (:you out from the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord" (Lev 22:31-33). There were extensive details. For example God said, "Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the first offering of

every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast; it belongs to Me" (Ex 13:2).

It was a prophetic plan and God's designs come to pass. Through Ezekiel the goals which were expressed in Leviticus 22:31-33 were repeated. These were not just token ideas. In Ezekiel 36:25-29 God's promise of "I will" occurs nine times. He first deals with sin and idolatry. "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols" (Eze 36:25). God takes control saying, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you" (:26). The Spirit will "cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances" (:27). He would "gather them" (37:21) and "make them one nation in the land" (:22). "The nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever" (:28). "You will be My people, and I will be your God" (36:28). Additionally, "I will call for the grain and multiply it" (:29). Also, God repeats, "I will save you from all your uncleanness" (:29) where in verse 25 it says "will cleanse" which becomes equivalent to "will save." It also says, "I will sprinkle clean water on you" which illustrates purification. This is a fulfillment of Moses instructing "the priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle some of the blood seven times before the Lord" (Lev 4:6).

Made Perfect

"The Lord has set apart the godly man for Himself" (Ps 4:3) and tells him to "be separate" (2Co 6:17). "God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation" (2Th 2:13) and you become "saints by calling" (1Co 1:2). He told Jeremiah, "Before you were born I consecrated you" (Jer 1:5). "He saved us . . . according to His mercy, by the washing of

regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). "You were washed, . . . sanctified, . . . [and] justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1Co 6:11). You "have been sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1:2) "through the offering of the body of Jesus" (Heb 10:10) "through His own blood" (13:12).

Paul states the purpose that "the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame" (1Th 5:23). It is for "the church of God . . . [for] all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Co 1:2). Jesus said, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself" (Jn 17:19) "so that He might sanctify her" (Eph 5:26) and "present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle" (:27). This is no halfway endeavor. It is so "that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth" (Jn 17:19) and you will "be holy yourselves also in all your behavior" (1Pe 1:2). "You have in obedience to the truth purified your souls" (:22). God will "also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit" (Ro 8:11) and have "our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb 10:22). Furthermore, he will "cleanse your conscience from dead works" (9:14) and have "our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience" (10:22). "By one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (10:14). "You have come to Mount Zion to the spirits of righteous men made perfect" (12:22-23).

Living Water

We "are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled by His blood" (1Pe 1:1-2). Jesus is "the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled

blood" (Heb 12:24). What else participates in sanctification? Jesus instructed, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth" (Jn 17:17). We are saved "through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth" (2Th 2:13). Jesus said that you "may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me" (Ac 26:18). "It is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer" (1Ti 4:5).

Paul prayed that his "offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (Ro 15:16). "The God of peace [will] sanctify you entirely" (1Th 5:23) for it is "He who sanctifies" (Heb 2:11). God said, "I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel" (Eze 37:28). It is "by the sanctifying work of the Spirit" (1Pe 1:2). Jesus said, "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke of the Spirit" (Jn 7:38-39). He told the woman of Samaria, "If you knew the gift of God . . . He would have given you living water" (4:10). Furthermore, "The water I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life" (:14). Ezekiel prophesied, "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean" (Eze 36:25). It says in the Law "he shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in running water and shall become clean" (Lev 15:13). Zechariah prophesied, "In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity" (Zec 13:1). He is "the fountain of living waters" (Jer 2:13) "and in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem" (Zec 14:8). But "those who turn away on earth will be written down, because they have forsaken the fountain of living water" (Jer 17:13). Also, "he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you" (1Th 4:18). "Every living creature . . . where the river goes, will live" (Eze 47:9). "But its swamps

and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt" (:11).

Set Your Mind

"Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth" (Col 3:1). There is pure "wisdom from above" (Jas 3:17), whereas if it is not from above, it is "earthy, natural, demonic" (:15) "which amounts to idolatry" (Col 3:5). "The one who practices sin is of the devil" (1Jn 3:8). Paul told the Corinthians, "I could not speak to you as spiritual men, but as to men of flesh" (1Co 3:1). "Are you not walking like mere men?" (:3). Disobedience is not restricted just to non-Christians. He even said he would "deliver [one of the brethren] to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (5:5). Therefore "deny ungodliness and worldly desires" (Tit 2:12) and "live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age" (:12). "Keep seeking the things above, where Christ is" (Col 3:1).

The scriptures instruct to set your mind on the things above. But a person might say he is too busy at work needing to support his family. After all, there are laws against talking on a cell phone and driving at the same time. To make matters worse there is disease and depression. You are to keep believing, but could not these extenuating circumstances cause fatigue over time to make it harder and harder to believe? Perhaps an overriding motivation could erase lesser preoccupations. Maybe an all-encompassing world view would make smaller problems not as difficult to handle. If you focus on "the outcome, eternal life" (Ro 6:23) then "the second death has no power" (Rev 20:6). Abraham "without becoming weak in faith" (Ro 4:19) "did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God" (:20).

But you need something significant to believe in to hold your attention. Abraham believed in "the promise of God" (:20). The promise according to Paul is "the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which you stand, by which also you are saved" (1Co 15:1-2). It says that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day" (:3-4). Paul told the Romans that "God displayed [Christ] publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness" (Ro 3:25). "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world" (1Jn 2:2). The Tabernacle pictures propitiation. Each part of it represents a facet of salvation. Christ is the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement. It is so "that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Ro 3:26) "through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (:25). You might say that you should set your mind on redemption and justification. "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus" (Php 2:5). He "made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant" (:7) and "humbled himself and became obedient to death" (:8).

Be Sanctified

Paul told the Corinthians to "test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!" (2Co 13:5). Did he perceive that there were some that were not aware they weren't believers, or did he suggest this knowing that the process would build their faith? How do you even know how to examine yourself? He had previously asked, "Are you not fleshly, and are you walking like mere men?" (1Co 3:3). They could be either worldly men or "spiritual men" (:1). If the latter, "he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2Co 5:17). In this case Paul

comments, "Do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?" (13:5). But regarding the first case he observes "unless indeed you fail the test?" (:5). Here it could be that the person "does not accept the things of the Spirit . . . [since] he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (1Co 2:14). How difficult would it be to test yourself and decide? If you question excessively you may become like "the one who doubts [who] is like the surf of the sea" (Jas 1:6) and become like "a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (:8). It is possible to be both since Paul addressed them as "men of flesh . . . [as well as] babes in Christ" (1Co 3:1). How do you determine from which part of your mind the current thought originates? "He who is spiritual appraises all things" (2:15).

If you are spiritual you "are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:10). That should answer the test question "that Jesus Christ is in you" (2Co 13:5). Paul explains "it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20). Paul does not mean that he has been "beamed up", because he refers to "the life which I now live in the flesh" (:20). It does mean "you have died [to yourself] and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:3). He relates "in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God" (Gal 2:20). "You have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world" (Col 2:20). "If we died with Him, we shall also live with Him" (2Ti 2:11). "He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions" (Col 2:13).

Peter instructed "like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior" (1Pe 1:15). "In obedience to the truth [you] purified your souls" (:22). "Every one who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself" (1Jn 3:3). "This is the will of God . . . that you abstain from sexual

immorality; that each of you know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor" (1Th 4:3-4). "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?" (1Co 6:9). "Therefore do not be partakers with them . . . [but] walk as children of light" (Eph 5:7-8). Paul told them they "received from us instruction as to how to walk and please God" (1Th 4:1). He said "let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2Co 7:1). The goal is to have "clean hands and a pure heart" (Ps 24:4). "Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work" (2Ti 2:21). "The unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife" (1Co 7:14). Women should "continue in faith and love and sanctify with self-restraint" (1Ti 2:15). Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man will see the Lord" (Heb 12:14). "He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness" (:10).

Keep Commandments

Is it possible to get so distracted and out of touch that you are required to "remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place -unless you repent" (Rev 2:5)? A more precipitous drop would be where "the falling away comes first" (2Th 2:3). How do you protect yourself from this possibility? Christ "is able to keep you from stumbling and to make you stand" (Jude 24). The Ephesian church had "been enlightened" (Heb 6:4), had "tasted of the heavenly gift" (:4), were "partakers of the Holy Spirit" (:4), and had "tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come" (:5). But they had "left [their] first love" (Rev 2:4) and were being required to repeat their first

deeds and reestablish a right attitude. Also, there are those who "have fallen away, and it is impossible to renew them again to repentance" (Heb 6:6). Reasons responsible for this are presented in the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:3-8 and 18-23. Jesus explains the remedy saying, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you" (Jn 15:7). The importance of this is cited by the words abide/abides occurring a dozen times in chapters 2-3 of First John. It comes under the subject of having a relationship. The First Commandment is "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Ex 20:3) in the context of God "showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments" (:6). Jesus taught, "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love" (Jn 15:10). "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you" (:12). John reiterates, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God" (1Jn 4:7).

The initial chapters of First John emphasize this as John used the words write/written ten times. "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that reads it" (Hab 2:2). He states, "I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard" (1Jn 2:7). The church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Eph 2:20). Therefore the word is what the apostles taught having received the teaching from Jesus at the implementing of his ministry. "This is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another" (1Jn 3:11). It "is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning" (2Jn 6). Of course it occurred at the beginning of Christ's ministry, but furthermore, "In the

beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). "He was in the beginning with God" (:2) and "all things came into being through Him" (:3). These commands came to the apostles during their discipleship, but being Israelites, by extension they originate in the beginning of the Old Testament. "You shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord. You are to keep my statutes" (Lev 19:18-19). "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Dt 6:5).

Everything John was writing in First John was "concerning those who are trying to deceive you" (1Jn 2:26). Someone from a different religion I knew often tried to persuade me with his doctrine. One day in his frustration he commented that their studies had shown that after X number of times a person would give in. But it wasn't true in my case because "the anointing which you received from Him abides in you" (:27). This is "the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it" (Mt 13:23). Why was John concerned about their being deceived? There is he who "has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away" (:21). Does your quality of character determine your propensity to believe "because they had no depth of soil" (:5)? Jesus told the church at Philadelphia, "You have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name" (Rev 3:8). However, at Sardis he said, "You have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Wake up and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die" (:1-2). "The sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away" (Mt 13:6). He told them, "You have kept the word of My perseverance" (Rev 3:10) and to "hold fast what you have, so

that no one will take your crown" (:11). "The one who endures to the end, he will be saved" (Mk 13:13).

How do you "endure to the end" (:13) when there are "the worries of the world" (4:19) to contend with and "other things enter in and choke the word" (:19)? There are "the ones who are beside the road . . . [where] Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them" (:15). Do you keep the word refreshed by "meaningless repetition" (Mt 6:7)? A better way is to be of "the ones whom seed was sown on the good soil and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit" (Mk 4:20). John encouraged them saying "I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth" (1Jn 2:21). "The anointing which you received from Him abides in you . . . [and] teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie" (:27). "His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (3:9) since "the Spirit is the truth" (5:6). John taught to love "in deed and truth . . . [and] we will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him" (3:18-19). "God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness" (1:5). If we "walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth" (:6). "The true Light is already shining" (2:8). "This is the true God and eternal life" (5:20) and he "has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true" (:20). "You know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him" (2:29) and "the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous" (3:7). "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments" (2:3) and "whoever keeps His word, in Him the love of God has truly been perfected" (:5). Therefore "if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light" (1:7) "our heart does not condemn us, [and] we have confidence before God" (3:21).

God's Calling

Peter advised "always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you" (1Pe 3:15). That could lead to your asking yourself why you believe. There's a rationale to this since Paul advised, "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith, examine yourselves!" (2 Co 13:5). There's the saying, "Do as I say, not as I do." "Faith, if it has no works is dead, being by itself" (Ja 2:17). In the case of Sardis, Jesus observed, "I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead" (Rev 3:1). He said, "I have not found your deeds completed" (:2). They didn't have the dedication to fulfill what they had started because of their attitude and their endeavors were unfinished and incomplete. Paul told them to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Php 2:12-13). It is "not according to our works, but according to His own purpose" (2Ti 1:9).

God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1Ti 2:4). "God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him" (Jn 3:17). He "gave Himself a ransom for all" (1Ti 2:6). It was "in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus" (Eph 3:11). You were "called according to His purpose" (Ro 8:28) and "called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing" (1Pe 3:9). "You were called into fellowship with His Son" (1Co 1:9). It was so "you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness" (1Pe 2:9). "A death has taken place for the redemption . . . [so that] those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance" (Heb 9:15).

It is "Him who calls you" (Gal 5:8) "who called you by the grace of Christ" (1:6). It was "grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity" (2Ti 1:9). Peter cited it was "'this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God'" (Ac 2:23). "He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you" (1Pe 1:20). "It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Th 2:14). God formulated the whole plan from the beginning. We "have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose" (Eph 1:11). God's plan predetermined that "all men [were] to be saved" (1Ti 2:4) and "that the world might be saved" (Jn 3:17). Paul concluded that it was "God, who had set me apart from my mother's womb and called me through His grace" (Gal 1:15). Paul was God's "prisoner" (2Ti 1:8) and "the gifts and calling are irrevocable" (Ro 11:29).

Called and Chosen

Many people consider the call they received as having heard the gospel message and accordingly responded positively. It is as if at a certain time God chose them. However, "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4). "God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation" (2Th 2:13). "Those whom He foreknew, He also predestined" (Ro 8:29). You "are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God, the Father" (1Pe 1:1). Calvinists believe that you can only be saved if God chooses you and makes it possible. "In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself" (Eph 1:5). Furthermore, "these whom He predestined, He also called" (Ro 9:23). We were "prepared beforehand, even us, whom He also called" (:24).

We are chosen "through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth" (2Th 2:13) "by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled by His blood" (1Pe 1:2). It is so "that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, [that he] suffered outside the gate" (Heb 13:12). Consequently we are "called as saints" (Ro 1:7) and separated as sacred and holy. We are made holy and set apart as we "sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts" (1Pe 3:15) and consecrate ourselves. It is so "that we should be holy and blameless before Him" (Eph 1:4). He has "called us with a holy calling" (2Ti 1:9).

Paul came to the Corinthians "proclaiming to you the testimony of God" (1Co 2:1). There is "the testimony of our Lord" (2Ti 1:8) "concerning Christ" (1Co 1:6) which was "given at the proper time" (1Ti 2:6). Then there was Paul's testimony (2Ti 1:8) though "not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1Co 2:4). There was also John "who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 1:2) It contains "the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory" (1Co 2:7). It is composed of words "taught by the Spirit" (:13) as "God revealed them through the Spirit" (:10). "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Ro 10:17). Paul cites that "our testimony to you was believed" (2Th 1:10). It was "confirmed in you" (1Co 1:6) and God "will also confirm you to the end" (:8). Peter said, "We have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God" (Jn 6:69). There is "the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe" (Ro 3:22). But in Jesus' parable the king "'saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes'" (Mt 22:11). However, "He has clothed me with garments of salvation" (Ps 61:10) and "her priests also I will clothe with salvation" (132:16). The king told them to

"throw him into outer darkness" (Mt 22:13) which explains that "many are called, but few are chosen" (:14). The wedding guest had decided not to dress properly. "Those who disbelieve" (1Pe 2:7) "stumble because they are disobedient to the word" (:8). Just as "for you who believe" (:7) God "predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son" (Ro 8:29) "those who disbelieve" (1Pe 2:7) "to this doom they were also appointed" (:8).