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1	The Divinity of God (Romans 1:20)	1
2	“Messiah the Prince” (Dan 9:25)	20
3	Faith Overcomes the World (1 Jn 5:4)	54
4	Be Born Again (John 3:3)	74
5	Receive Forgiveness (Acts 26:18)	91
6	Reconciling the World (2 Cor 5:19)	109
7	Gave Himself as a Ransom (1 Tim 2:6)	126
8	A Propitiation in His Blood (Rom 3:25)	158
9	Word of Cross is Salvation (1 Co 1:18)	180
10	Gospel is Power of God (Rom 1:16)	194
11	Delivers (Da 6:27) & Translates (Col 1:13)	210
12	God’s Will is Sanctification (1 Th 4:3)	224
13	In the Cause of Christ (Phil 1:13)	242
14	Jesus Sends You! (John 20:21)	288
15	Baptism of the Holy Spirit	308
16	The Way To Go (Psalm 32:8)	326
17	Your faith heals you (Mk 5:34)	340
14	Be Diligent Until the End (Heb 6:11)	365

The Divine Nature and Attributes of God (Romans 1:20)

Creation

Perhaps one of the first roles you ascribe to God is Creator. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Ge 1:1). God was present "before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world" (Ps 90:2). In Genesis the "Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters" (Ge 1:2). Simultaneously "by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth" (Col 1:16). This was Jesus Christ who is "the image of the invisible God" (:15). Then God saw that everything "was very good" (Ge 1:31). This is all scriptural because it "is given by inspiration of God" (2Ti 3:16). "Prophecy of Scripture . . . [came as] holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2Pe 1:21). Some religious books may have stories about creation but they'd be mythological. However, astronomers have recently estimated how many billions of years old the universe is. Adam and Eve lived at a certain time but you can't necessarily ascertain when that was. The Bible refers to creation many times to emphasize its importance, reinforce your understanding, and build faith in God.

Psalms relate God's achievement. "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host" (Ps 33:6). "He established the earth upon its foundations, so that it will not totter forever and ever" (104:5). This is accomplished because "The Lord reigns, He is clothed with majesty; the Lord has clothed and girded Himself with strength" (93:1). "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands" (19:1). The psalmist reflects saying "I consider your heavens the work of your fingers, the moon and stars which You have ordained" (8:3). The theme continues in the New Testament.

"Turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them" (Ac 14:15). "You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created" (Rev 4:11). "He made from one man every nation of mankind" (Ac 17:26) and "gives to all people life and breath and all things" (:25). Isaiah recognizes "But now, O Lord, You are our Father, we are the clay, and You our potter; and all of us are the work of Your hand" (Isa 64:8). Malachi says "Do we not all have one father? Has not one God created us?" (Mal 2:10). It's part of a cooperative endeavor because "The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life" (Job 33:4). The purpose is "that they would seek God . . . [because] He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist" (Ac 17:27-28).

Revelation

The book of Revelation begins with "the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show" (Rev 1:1). It was the "testimony of Jesus Christ" (:2) and sent to John "who testified to the word of God" (:2). God had appeared to them in a "pillar of fire" (Ex 13:21) and "thick cloud" (19:9) which was to "give them light" (13:21) and so that they would "believe" (19:9). At Mt. Sinai God appeared with "thunder and lightning flashes . . . and a very loud trumpet sound" (19:16) so the "people may hear" (:9). The Lord spoke to Moses, Aaron and Miriam (Nu 12:4) and they "came out" (:4) to the tent of meeting. Then God addressed Aaron and Miriam about speaking against Moses. They should have been more careful because when God speaks revealing himself you should pay attention.

How is it that you can hear and understand God? God had said, "Let Us make man in Our image" (Ge 1:26). "In the image of God He made man" (9:6). Being in the image does not mean having been cloned. It means "according to Our

likeness" (1:26) as James states that we are men "who have been made in the likeness of God" (Jas 3:9). How it functions depends on God's sovereign purpose. "The Lord appeared to [Moses] in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush" (Ex 3:2). When Moses decided to investigate "the Lord saw that he turned aside" (:4) and spoke to him. If we are open to God he will reveal what he desires. Moses' situation was special because God said, "'With him I speak mouth to mouth, even openly, and not in dark sayings, and he beholds the form of the Lord'" (Nu 12:8). As Christians we "put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created" (Eph 4:24) and "is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him" (Col 3:10). God said through Jeremiah that "'you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart'" (Jer 29:11). There is a general revelation available from nature and the works of God and special revelation through scripture (the Living Word) and subjective experience which lines up with God's word. "We know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true . . . the true God and eternal life" (1Jn 5:20).

Spirit

"God is spirit" (Jn 4:24). "No one has seen God at any time . . . [however, Jesus] has explained Him" (1:18). God "possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see" (1Ti 6:16). Isaiah said, "You are a God who hides Himself" (Isa 45:15). He is "invisible" (1Ti 1:17). God says, "'I dwell on a high and holy place'" (Isa 57:15). Zophar asked, "'Can you discover the limits of the Almighty? They are high as the heavens, what can you do?'" (Job 11:7). How "unfathomable [are] His ways!" (Ro 11:33).

Why is God's revelation essential? It is because of the

relationship with God man finds himself in since God had said "you will surely die" (Ge 2:17) if Adam ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Even though God created man in his image and likeness and said "You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High" (Ps 82:6) he also stated "Nevertheless you will die like men" (:6). The psalmist asked, "What is man that You take thought of him?" (Ps 8:4). Man is just a created being and "God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM'" (Ex 3:14) which shows the difference. "God is not a man" (Nu 23:19). Therefore man does not innately know about the divine. Jesus knew what was required when he asked, "Who do you say that I am?" (Mt 16:15). Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (:16). Jesus recognized and said "flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (:17). Therefore the Lord has optimistically offered, "Come now, and let us reason together" (Isa 1:18). At the anthropological level God reaches out with analogical revelations to achieve a redemptive relationship.

Infinite

God is omnipotent which means he is all-powerful. He has infinite capacity to accomplish what he wants and the authority to exercise that power. John expresses it with "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns" (Rev 19:6). "Job answered the Lord and said, 'I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted'" (Job 42:2). "He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What have you done?'" (Da 4:35). "Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?" (Mt 20:15). "You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?' On the contrary, who are you O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not

say to the molder, 'Why did you make me like this,' will it?" (Ro 9:19-20). Jesus "upholds all things by the word of His power" (Heb 1:3). "Jesus said to them, 'With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible'" (Mt 19:26). The Lord said to Abraham, "'Is anything too difficult for the Lord?'" (Ge 18:14). Paul acknowledged that God was "able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us" (Eph 3:20).

God is omniscient because he has infinite understanding of all things. "The Lord by wisdom founded the earth, by understanding He established the heavens" (Pr 3:19). "He counts the number of the stars; He gives names to all of them. Great is our Lord and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite" (Ps 147:4-5). "Who gave Him understanding . . . [or] taught Him knowledge? (Isa 40:14). God's ability is reflected in his knowledge, wisdom and understanding. "'With Him are wisdom and might; to Him belong counsel and understanding'" (Job 12:13). "Daniel said, 'Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him . . . He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding.'" (Da 2:20-21). Wisdom is the joining of the knowledge of truth with experience in life. "It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things" (:22). "For truly my words are not false; One who is perfect in knowledge is with you. Behold, God is mighty but does not despise any; He is mighty in strength of understanding" (36:4-5). "In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will" (Eph 1:8-9).

God is omnipresent which means he is in all places at all times. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, watching the evil and the good" (Pr 15:3). "Where can I go from Your Spirit? "There is no creature hidden from His sight" (Heb 3:13). Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of dawn, if I dwell in the remotest

part of the sea, even there Your hand will lay hold of me" (Ps 139:7-10). Solomon exclaimed, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built?" (1Ki 8:27). "Am I a God who is near,' declares the Lord, 'and not a God far off? Can a man hide himself in hiding places so I do not see him?' declares the Lord. 'Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?' declares the Lord" (Jer 23:23-24).

Sovereign

God is unique. "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!" (Dt 6:4). "There is no God but one" (1Co 8:4). Isaiah says "He is the God who formed the earth . . . to be inhabited" (Isa 45:18). God said "I am the Lord, and there is none else" (:18). Furthermore God says, "I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me. I, even I, am the Lord" (43:10-11). He directs to "turn to Me and be saved . . . for I am God, and there is no other" (45:22). There is "one body and one Spirit" (Eph 4:6) and "one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Jesus Christ" (1Ti 2:5). We are to "turn from these vain things to a living God" (Ac 14:15) to "serve a living and true God" (1Th 1:9). "The Father has life in Himself" (Jn 5:26). You could "fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb 10:31). There is also a "seal of the living God" (Rev 7:2).

God is sovereign. "Our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases" (Ps 115:3). God is eternal (Ge 21:33; Dt 33:27). "Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God" (Ps 90:2). You can depend on God. "I, the Lord, do not change" (Mal 3:6). With God "there is no variation or shifting shadow" (Jas 1:17). God always does what is right. "The Lord is righteous in all His ways and kind in all His deeds" (Ps 145:17). "The sum of Your word is truth" (Ps 119:160). "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth" (Jn 17:17). God also protects. God is "their help and their shield" (Ps

115:9) and "our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble" (46:1). "He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one" (2Th 3:3). "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but . . . will provide a way of escape also" (1Co 10:13). But we make mistakes. However, "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1Jo 1:9).

Holy

God is holy and you can trust him. "Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders?" (Ex 15:11). "Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy" (Rev 15:4). Holiness is to be separated from the commonplace or vulgar. Seraphim proclaim his holiness (Isa 6:3; Rev 4:8). "Be holy, for I am holy" (Lev 11:44) because without sanctification "no one will see the Lord" (Heb 12:14). To be holy is being dedicated to God's purposes. God is the one "who sanctifies you" (Lev 20:8). However, "if we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves" (1Jn 1:8). We do not rely on "a righteousness of my own" (Php 3:9) which is inadequate that "comes through the Law" (Gal 2:21). We depend on "the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith" (Php 3:9). "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). God's righteousness is a perfect standard of right behavior. "His work is perfect, for all His ways are just" (Dt 32:4). He is "the Lord our righteousness" (Jer 23:6). "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne" (Ps 89:14). "I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the Lord." (Jer 9:24).

God is good. Jesus said, "There is only One who is good" (Mt 19:17). "The Lord is good; His lovingkindness is

everlasting and His faithfulness to all generations" (Ps 100:5). "The Lord good to all, and His mercies are over all His works" (Ps 145:9). "You are a God of forgiveness, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness" (Neh 9:17). God "because of His great love with which He loved us . . . made us alive together with Christ" (Eph 2:4-5). "O taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps 34:8). "I trust in the loving kindness of God forever and ever" (52:8). Therefore "give thanks to" (Ps 30:4) and "bless His holy name" (103:1).

Trinity

Triune means three in unity. When it applies to God it pertains to three persons in one Godhead. The word *trinity* is not found in the Bible and the Old Testament does not directly teach it. However in Genesis God said, "'Let Us make man in Our Image, according to Our likeness'" (Ge 1:26). Then after man was created he said, "'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil'" (3:22). The Trinity is inferred by the use of the plural pronoun "us." Later God said, "'Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language so that they will not understand one another's speech'" (11:7). Then Isaiah "heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?'" (Isa 6:8).

The three, equal members of the Trinity cooperate because they are one God. But tritheists believe that the three members of the Godhead are entirely separate and have individual hierarchical importance. Also, those who believe in Sabellianism say God takes the form called for at the time saying that there is only one God and no multiple personages. However, the Bible has passages which mention A) the Father and Jesus, B) the Father and Spirit, C) the Son and Spirit, and D) God, Holy Spirit and Christ. In the first case "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (Jn 1:1). "Who has established all the

ends of the earth? What is His name or His Son's name?" (Pr 30:4). "I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You'" (Ps 2:7). Because "God so loved the world" (Jn 3:16) he "sent forth His Son" (Gal 4:4). Jesus says, "'For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me'" (Jn 6:38). Their relationship is such that "'no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son'" (Mt 11:27). Then because of what was accomplished at the resurrection "whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God" (1Jn 4:15). "It was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him" (Col 2:9). John said "our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1Jn 1:3).

In the second case "the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God" (1Co 2:11). It is "'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts" (Zec 4:6). The interrelationship is seen as when "the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him; and He took of the Spirit who was upon him and placed Him upon the seventy elders" (Nu 11:25). Nehemiah relates to the Father and Spirit by saying "You bore with them for many years, and admonished them by Your Spirit through your prophets" (Neh 9:30). "He who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you" (1Th 4:8). In the third case Jesus "was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead according to the Spirit" (Ro 1:4). Isaiah cites the Messiah and Spirit with "for He said, 'Surely they are My people but they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit'" (Isa 63:10). A unilateral example is when "the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward" (1Sa 16:13). The Holy Spirit "intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Ro 8:27).

Unity

God being collectively one is similar to Adam and Eve who would "become one flesh" (Ge 2:24). "God created man in His own image . . . male and female He created them" (Gen 1:27). It is like a puzzle. Without the other piece it would be incomplete. Each piece is different and the image would not be whole unless all is pieced together. "The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise" (1Co 7:4) with the other partner. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct yet one in nature and character. Jesus said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9). He said "the Father is in Me, and I in the Father" (10:38) and "I and the Father are one" (:30). He also prayed, "Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are" (17:11). Being one also means having a single mind and purpose. Jesus prayed "that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one" (Jn 17:21-22). "Do you not know . . . that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price" (1Co 7:20).

Perhaps the Trinity is most clearly seen with all three working together with purpose. "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: these three are one" (1Jn 5:7 KJV). The angel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God" (Lk 1:35). "Now the Lord God has sent Me, and His Spirit" (Isa 48:16). In Jesus' baptism "Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold,

a voice out of the heavens said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased'" (Mt 3:16-17). Jesus was in the water, the Father spoke from heaven, and the Holy Spirit descended like a dove. All three are present and separate. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me" (Isa 61:1). Hebrews reports "how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience?" (Heb 9:14). It is "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ" (1Pe 1:2). Later Jesus applied this truth by saying, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19). He also said, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth" (Jn 14:16-17). Paul offered "to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (Ro 15:16). Paul prayed "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all" (2Co 13:14).

The Son of God

"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).

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).

God is Faithful

Being faithful means following through on a promise you've made. "The Lord is not slow about His promise . . . not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2Pe 3:9). "He who promised is faithful" (Heb 10:23). However, we must "hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering" (:23). By faith Sarah had Isaac because "she considered Him faithful who had promised" (11:11). "Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass" (1Th 5:24). It is the way God is. It is his name. John said, "I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True" (Rev 19:11). "He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself" (2Ti 2:13). He "made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever" (Ps 146:6). "In the heavens You will establish Your faithfulness" (Ps 89:2). "The witness in the sky is faithful" (89:37).

You are faithful when a friend knows he can depend on

you for help. She should be "faithful to her husband" (1Ti 5:9 NIV). "Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps His covenant" (Dt 7:9). She is "your wife by covenant" (Mal 3:14) so "do not break faith" (:15 NIV). "If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself" (2Ti 2:13). "Listen, that you may live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, according to the faithful mercies shown to David" (Isa 55:3). "All the paths of the Lord are lovingkindness and truth to those who keep His covenant and His testimonies" (Ps 25:10). Deuteronomy 7:9 also says God "keeps His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments." Faith and love go together. "My faithfulness and My lovingkindness will be with him" (Ps 89:24). "The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness" (La 3:22-23).

God's faithfulness is manifested. "I will exalt You, I will give thanks to Your name; for You have worked wonders, plans formed long ago, with perfect faithfulness" (Isa 25:1). "His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He" (Dt 32:4). "The word of the Lord is upright, and all His work is done in faithfulness" (Ps 33:4). We are the recipient of God's work, but it is a two-way street. "Those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right" (1Pe 4:19). "My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; He who walks in a blameless way is the one who will minister to me" (Ps 101:6). Therefore "the Lord preserves the faithful" (Ps 31:23).

God is Compassionate

Moses desired to know more about God (Ex 33:18). God answered "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the Lord before you" (:19).

He already knew Moses "by name" (:17). Consequently "the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin'" (34:6-7). When God said he would declare his name he also stated "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on who I will show compassion" (33:19). God understands when someone is going through a trial and in his concern he endeavors to alleviate suffering. He is sympathetic and considerate and desires to demonstrate kindness. He expects us to practice it too. Jesus taught "go and learn what this means: 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE'" (Mt 9:13). Furthermore Jesus said "if you had known what this means . . . you would not have condemned the innocent" (12:7). Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6 where "compassion" is translated from "mercy" (NIV) and "loyalty" (NASB).

How does God accomplish his purposes? How would humans even comprehend? God is "able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think" (Eph 3:20). Isaiah 55:9 says "My ways [are] higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts." "He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end" (Ecc 3:11). God does "great things which we cannot comprehend" (Job 37:5). In his "hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind" (12:10). It does not depend on man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy" (Ro 9:16). God works through people despite their predispositions. Lot and his family were saved because "the compassion of the Lord was upon him" (Ge 19:16). "We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God" (Ro 8:28). God "will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you

are able, but . . . will provide a way of escape" (1Co 10:13). God made Israel "objects of compassion before those who have taken them captive, that they may have compassion on them" (1Ki 8:50). "God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials" (Da 1:9).

God is Gracious

Gracious and compassionate applies to God (Ex 34:6). Many scriptures pair the two terms together (Ex 33:19; 2Ch 30:9; Ne 9:31; Ps 102:13,112:4; Isa 30:18; Joel 2:13; Jnh 4:2). To be gracious is to be benevolent, congenial and loving. To be compassionate is to be charitable, kindhearted and merciful. These characteristics are the motivation for everything God does. Jesus told Philip, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9). When Jesus saw "the people, He felt compassion for them" (Mt 9:36) and was "moved with compassion" (Mt 20:34, Mk 1:41). They cried to God "in their time of distress [and he] heard from heaven, and according to [his] great compassion gave them deliverers who delivered them from the hand of their oppressors" (Ne 9:27).

Another term paired with "compassion" in the Bible is "lovingkindness" (Ne 13:22; Ps 25:6,40:11, 69:16,103:4,106:45-46,119:76-77; Isa 54:7-10; Jn 4:2). Paul said to "put on a heart of compassion" (Col 3:12). Love is the main ingredient. Jesus said, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:36). Paul said "if there is any consolation of love, . . . if any affection and compassion . . . [be] of the same mind, maintaining the same love" (Php 2:1-2). Jesus said, "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love" (Jn 15:9). "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends" (:13).

The Lord proclaimed further that it is he "who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin" (Ex 34:7). "To the Lord our God

belong compassion and forgiveness" (Da 9:9). "The Lord is full of compassion and is merciful" (Jas 5:11). "He, being compassionate, forgave their iniquity and did not destroy them" (Ps 78:38). "He who confesses and forsakes [his transgressions] will find compassion" (Pr 28:13). Therefore "be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Eph 4:32 NIV).

God Judges and Is Just

"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap" (Gal 6:7). God has built a cause-and-effect into life which automatically judges. "Vengeance is Mine, and retribution, in due time their foot will slip; for the day of their calamity is near" (Dt 32:35). "I will repay', says the Lord" (Ro 12:19). "God is not one to show partiality" (Ac 10:34). There is "no injustice with God" (Ro 9:14). He is "the one who impartially judges according to each one's work" (1Pe 1:17). "We know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things" (Ro 2:2). "How unsearchable are His judgments" (Rev 15:3). "Righteous and true are your ways" (:3).

What you do makes a difference because it determines whether you will "inherit the kingdom" (Mt 25:34). What qualifies is if you help feed, clothe and house people, and visit people when they are sick or in prison (:35-36). They "were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds" (Rev 20:12). It should make one take notice that his actions are actually recorded. "Whatever good thing each one does, he will receive back from the Lord" (Eph 6:8). "You recompense a man according to his work" (Ps 62:12). Paul quotes this regarding "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteousness judgment of God, who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS" (Ro 2:5-6). Jesus says "My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done" (Rev

22:12). "By perseverance in doing good . . . [you receive] eternal life" (Ro 2:7). "This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life" (1Jn 2:25). "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (Jn 17:3). "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (3:16). But "He who does not have the Son of God does not have the life" (1Jn 5:12).

God is "the Judge of all" (Heb 12:23) but "not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son" (Jn 5:22). He is "the One who has been appointed by God a Judge of the living and the dead" (Ac 10:42). "God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus" (Ro 2:16). "There is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known" (Lk 12:2). Is there a time for this? "We will all stand before the judgment seat of God" (Ro 14:10). "He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Ac 17:31). "Having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent" (:30). He "is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2Pe 3:9). "He ordered [the Apostles] to preach to the people and solemnly to testify" (Ac 10:42) about it. "The Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven . . . dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2Th 1:7-8). "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mt 10:28). "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ro 6:23). "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish" (Jn 10:27-28). "In My

Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you" (Jn 14:2). However, "He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels'" (Mt 25:41).

“Messiah the Prince” (Dan 9:25)

Everlasting

God spoke to Moses from the burning bush saying, "I am the God of your father" (Ex 3:6). Moses wrote the Pentateuch so this is not a second-hand conversation. He then asked, "When I say to Israel 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you' [and] they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?" (:13). "God told Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM' (:14). "This is My name forever" (:14). The crowd said, "We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever" (Jn 12:34). "Before the mountains were born or you gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God" (Ps 90:2). Abraham "called on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God" (Ge 21:33). God is "the high and exalted One Who lives forever" (Isa 57:15). "His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity" (Mic 5:2). "The eternal God is a dwelling place" (Dt 33:27). "His name will be called . . . Eternal Father" (Isa 9:6). Because God instructed Moses to say "'I AM has sent me to you'" (Ex 3:14) it means he is eternal, everlasting, and lives forever. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8). "'For I, the Lord, do not change'" (Mal 3:6). The Lord instructed Jeremiah to say to Israel, "'It is He who made the earth by His power, Who established the world by His wisdom'" (Jer 10:12). Solomon personified the Messiah as wisdom saying, "'The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old. From everlasting I was established'" (Pr 8:22-23). It was Christ who "was beside Him, as master workman; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him" (:30-31).

Son of God

Jesus is "the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father" (Jn 1:18) who said to the Father, "You loved Me before the foundation of the world" (17:24). Also, it was "the glory which I had with You before the world was" (:5). This is before Creation because "He is before all things" (Col 1:7). "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God" (Jn 1:1). Jesus said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end" (Rev 21:6) and "the first and the last" (22:13). Melchizedik personifies Christ as "having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God" (Heb 7:3). Jesus said, "Before Abraham was born, I am" (Jn 8:58). "His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity" (Mic 5:2).

"For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible" (Col 1:16). "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together" (:17). "All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being" (Jn 1:3). "You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands" (Heb 1:10). "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).

We understand Jesus' pre-existence and everlastingness. He was the "only begotten from the Father" (Jn 1:14). John the Baptist declared, "I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit'" (1:33). The Father communicated this to John. It was the "eternal Spirit" (Heb 9:14) about whom "John testified saying, 'I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven'" (Jn 1:32). John questioned his role in this and Jesus answered, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all

righteousness" (Mt 3:15). Here were the three equal members of the Godhead working together in a triune way. John explains that "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His Glory" (Jn 1:14). Furthermore "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (1Jn 5:11).

Bread of Life

God implemented his plan saying to the serpent, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel" (Ge 3:15). Peter said that Christ "was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you" (1Pe 1:20). Israel was familiar with all the prophecies and even the Samaritan woman said, "I know that Messiah is coming . . . [and] when that One comes, He will declare all things to us" (Jn 4:25). The plan developed and in Jerusalem "it had been revealed to [Simeon] by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (Lk 2:26). Then in the temple when he saw Jesus he said, "My eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples" (:30). John the Baptist promulgated the message and said, "I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent ahead of Him'" (Jn 3:28). However, he stated, "I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God" (1:34). After Andrew encountered Jesus he told Peter, "We have found the Messiah' (which translated means Christ)" (1:41). Then Philip told Nathanael, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote" (:45). Jesus revealed to the Samaritan woman, "I who speak to you am He" (4:26). "Many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman" (:39). Then they said, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world" (:42).

John began his gospel stating, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (Jn 1:1). John the Baptist confirmed this saying, "He whom God has sent speaks the words of God" (3:34). Jesus himself reinforced this saying, "I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (6:38). "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world" (16:28). "I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me" (7:29). "Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going" (8:14). "The bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world" (:33) "so that one may eat of it and not die" (:50). Jesus said, "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven . . . and the bread also which I will give . . . is My flesh" (:51). Some of his disciples responded saying, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" (:61). Then when Jesus questioned the twelve Peter answered, "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" (:68-69). Even John asked from prison, "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?" (Mt 11:3). Jesus said to tell John "the blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up" (:4). Jesus is "the Word" (Jn 1:1). "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching" (2Ti 3:16). Jesus said, "It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught of God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me" (Jn 6:45). Jesus prayed "the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me" (17:8).

Jesus' Genealogy

Matthew writes to the Jews establishing "Jesus [as] the

Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Mt 1:1). By saying that he is the "son of" these ancestors Matthew's using the genealogical record proves that Christ's legal inheritance is valid. He traverses the family tree of heirs from Abraham connecting each by the phrase "the father of." This context is crucial because "the scripture . . . preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All the nations will be blessed [in the future] in you'" (Gal 3:8). God said, "'In you all the families of the earth will be blessed'" (Ge 12:3). Therefore, there must be a continuity for it's fulfillment to come to pass. "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'And to your seed,' that is Christ" (Gal 3:16). Therefore Jesus must be a legal heir. Consequently God promised "'one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir'" (Gen 15:4) also stating that "'Sarah your wife will have a son'" (18:10). Abraham cooperated and God repeated, "'In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice'" (22:18). God confirmed that "'through Isaac your descendants shall be named'" (21:12). Furthermore God promised Isaac himself that "'by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed'" (26:4).

Luke traces his genealogy in a natural upward direction from Christ to Adam. He concludes it saying "the son of Adam, the son of God" (Lk 3:38). This is because "the Lord God formed man" (Ge 2:7) and "put him into the garden of Eden" (:15). "But for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him" (:20) so God fashioned a woman from Adam's rib (:22). Adam said, "'She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man'" (:23) (i.e. Adam's name). Then "the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living (3:20). God orchestrated the process from generation to generation. It developed within the Jewish nation. For instance, "God said to him, 'Your

name is Jacob; you shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name" (35:10) and "a nation . . . shall come from you" (:11). Abraham, himself, inherited a new Jewish identity. Some kings were at war and they took possessions and captives of which Lot was one (14:1-12). "A fugitive came and told Abram the Hebrew" (:13) about it.

There are subtleties in the genealogies that are significant regarding Jesus' virgin birth. Luke relates "Jesus . . . being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, the son of Eli" (Lk 3:23). But an angel of the Lord explains the supposition by saying "the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 1:20). Eli was Mary's father and Luke's genealogy is from her perspective. Matthew also relates that "Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born (:16). In this case he uses "husband of" instead of "father of." Individual elements must coincide with the big picture. Paul said that he was "set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh" (Ro 1:1-3). Joseph qualified since he "went up from Galilee . . . to the city of David . . . because he was of the house and family of David" (Lk 2:4). An "angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife'" (Mt 1:20). Even though Luke's genealogy is from Mary's perspective, legal inheritance is substantiated from Joseph's. Joseph is a heir via Jacob and could lawfully marry her because her father Eli was Jacob's brother of the same tribe of Joseph. This is in accordance with the scripture where God said, "'the daughters of Zelophehad . . . must marry within the tribe of their father . . . [so that] no inheritance of the sons of Israel shall be transferred from tribe to tribe'" (Nu 36:6-7). They "are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons . . . whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ" (Ro 9:4-5).

Judah

Jesus' ancestry was not built by "natural selection." God chose whom he desired. He "rejected" (Ps 78:67) some and "did not choose" (:67) others. But he did "chose the tribe of Judah" (:68) and "also chose David His servant" (:70). God's purpose was to "shepherd Jacob His people" (:71) "according to the integrity of his heart" (:72). Balaam prophesied this as "the oracle of him who hears the words of God" (Nu 24:4). He declared, "How fair are your tents, O Jacob, your dwellings, O Israel!" (:5). "He couches, he lies down as a lion, and as a lion, who dares rouse him?" (:9). He continued saying, "A scepter shall rise from Israel" (:17) and, "One from Jacob shall have dominion" (:19). Jacob prophesied similarly to his sons and "all these are the twelve tribes of Israel" (Ge 49:28). To Judah he said, "Your brothers shall praise you" (:8) (i.e. Judah means "praise"). He declared that "the scepter shall not depart from Judah . . . until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples" (:10). It is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah" (Heb 7:14). An elder revealed that "the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome" (Rev 5:5).

David

Samuel was a priest and prophet in Israel. The people said to Samuel, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all nations" (1Sa 8:5). The Lord then told Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people . . . [for] they have rejected Me from being king over them . . . [so] tell them of the procedure of the king who will reign over them" (:7-9). He was ministering in a certain city and Saul was seeking his help there. Saul was told, "You will find him before he goes up to the high place to eat, for the people will not eat until he comes, because he must bless the sacrifice" (:13). The previous day God had told Samuel, "About this time tomorrow I will send a

man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over My people Israel" (:15). Saul became king and later in a critical situation he "waited seven days, according to the appointed time set by Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal" (13:8) so he made the offering himself. "As soon as he finished . . . Samuel came" (:10) and he explained that he had been desperate saying, "I forced myself and offered the burnt offering" (:12). Samuel told him, "You have acted foolishly . . . but now your kingdom shall not endure" (:13). Later, God told Samuel, "I regret I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me and has not carried out My commands" (15:11). Then Samuel told Saul, "Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has rejected you from being king" (:23). Later God said to Samuel, "I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have selected a king for Myself among his sons" (16:1). This fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy "a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit" (Isa 11:1). Also, "the women said to Naomi, 'Blessed is the Lord who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel'" (Ruth 4:13). "They named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David" (:17). They brought David to Samuel and God said, "Anoint him; for this is he" (1Sa 16:12). Samuel did so and "the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward" (:13).

Many years passed and "David inquired of the Lord" (2Sa 2:1) what to do. It led to the men of Judah anointing "David king over the house of Judah" (:4). Events led to Israel coming to David at Hebron. They said, "The Lord said to you, 'You will shepherd My people Israel'" (5:2). A covenant was made with them and "they anointed David king over Israel" (:3). "He reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah" (:5). There was a natural fortress on a rock escarpment on the western ridge of Jerusalem controlled by the Jebusites. "David captured the stronghold" (5:17) and "lived in the

stronghold and called it the city of David" (i.e. Zion) (:9). He "realized that the Lord had established him as king over Israel, and that He had exalted his kingdom for the sake of His people Israel" (:12). He made Jerusalem his capital which was on the border of Judah and Israel. David "was buried in the city of David" (1Ki 2:10). "Solomon sat on the throne of David his father, and his kingdom was firmly established" (:12).

Throne of David

"The Lord has sworn to David . . . of the fruit of your body I will set upon the throne" (Ps 132:11). "One will go forth for Me to be ruler of Israel" (Micah 5:2). "I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king" (Jer 23:5). Nathan prophesied, "Your throne shall be established forever" (2Sa 7:16). "There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom" (Isa 9:7). "Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" (Jn 7:42). "Joseph went up from Galilee . . . to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David" (Lk 2:4). An angel announced "today in the city of David there was born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (:11).

In the Bible a throne applies to royalty as when "Solomon has even taken his seat on the throne of the kingdom" (1Ki 1:46) and God told him, "I will establish your royal throne as I covenanted with your father David" (2Ch 7:18). A throne is symbolic of dignity as when Pharaoh said "only in the throne I will be greater" (Ge 41:40). The exercise of regal power is expected "when he sits on the throne of his kingdom" (Dt 17:18). Authority is inherent as when the angel told Mary that Jesus "will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David" (Lk 1:32). Paul stated that Christ "was born of a descendant of David

according to the flesh" (Ro 1:3). Jesus, himself, cited the importance of this continuity saying, "I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright and morning star" (Rev 22:16). Prophecy culminates in Christ. Daniel predicted that "His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him" (Da 7:27). The angel explained regarding Jesus' birth that "He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end" (Lk 1:33).

Christ and Lord

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).

Prophecy

Prophets speak what only God knows and desires to communicate. It is not uncommon. Jesus said, "When He, the Spirit of truth comes . . . He will disclose to you what is to come" (Jn 16:13). It usually is about the future. Isaiah said, "Let them bring forth and declare to us what is going to take place" (Isa 41:22). He said to , "Cry loudly, do not hold back" (58:1). Jeremiah said, "The prophet who has a dream may relate his dream , but let him who has My word speak My word in truth" (Jer 23:28). Jesus presented himself as "the faithful and true Witness" (Rev 3:14). To be a valid prophetic word it must be from God and sent by him. "The prophet who prophesies of peace, when the word of the prophet comes to pass, then that prophet will be known as one whom the Lord has truly sent" (Jer 28:9). Moses instructed, "You may say in your heart, 'How will we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?' When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken" (Dt 18:21-22). Jeremiah cautioned to not listen because "they speak a vision of their own imagination, not from the mouth of the Lord" (Jer 23:16).

There are hundreds of Old Testament prophecies many of which have been fulfilled in the New Testament and others which still must come to pass. For instance Isaiah prophesied, "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). This was fulfilled by the birth of Jesus Christ. He reiterated, "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace" (9:6). Was the meaning clear at that time or was it a mystery? Daniel said to the king, "There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days" (Da 2:28). But the king didn't

know the meaning so Daniel responded, "I will read the inscription to the king and make the interpretation to him" (5:17). In Paul's case he said "by revelation there was made known to me the mystery" (Eph 3:3). He understood because "the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith" (Ro 1:17). Without God's inspiration man tries to understand with his intellect by questioning. But "one who doubts is like . . . a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (Ja 1:6-8). Therefore you must believe in prophecy from the heart in faith.

John the Baptist

The word "angel" in the Bible is defined by teachers as a messenger. An angel appeared to Zacharias next to the altar of incense while he was ministering in the temple (Lk 1:11). The angel said, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news" (:19). The news was that "your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son" (:13). Cornelius was told, "Your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God" (Ac 10:31). This is "the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end" (Ecc 3:11) and he "has made everything appropriate in its time" (:11). It goes down to the detail of "you will give him the name John" (Lk 1:13). It also goes to the larger context that "he will be great" (:15) and "will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God" (:16). Zacharias was also told that John was the "forerunner" (:17) prophesied by Malachi. "I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. He will restore the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse" (Mal 4:5-6). "This is the One referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, 'The voice of One crying in the wilderness'" (Mt 3:3). The angel said John would "make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Lk 1:17). Later John would preach, "Repent, for the kingdom

of heaven is at hand" (Mt 3:2).

Immanuel

"Surely the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). Then he follows through accordingly as he explained to Jeremiah, "I am watching over My word to perform it" (Jer 1:11). God announces his intentions as when Micah prophesied to Bethlehem, "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) and cites "the time when she who is in labor has borne a child" (:3). When the time came Gabriel was sent to inform Mary (Lk 1:26-38). Gabriel explained "you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call Him Jesus" (:30). But God doesn't keep you guessing. The angel explained that this was possible because "the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you" (:35) since "nothing will be impossible with God" (:37). "For that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God" (:35). God is the father and therefore "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High" (:32). The ultimate purpose is 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" (:33). Time passed and "before [Joseph and Mary] came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit" (Mt 1:18). Then the angel of the Lord explained everything to Joseph in a dream (Mt 1:20-23). He stated that "she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (:21). Matthew explains that "all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet" (:22) Isaiah said, "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 translates the name as "God with us" (Mt

1:23). Then Joseph "did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son" (:24-25).

Virgin Birth

Prophetic utterances are consistent with the events they predict. Micah stated of Jesus that "at that time He will be great to the ends of the earth" (Mic 5:4). Gabriel told Zacharias that "he will be great in the sight of the Lord" (Lk 1:15). He told Mary "he will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High" (:32). Mary declared, "the Mighty One has done great things for me" (Lk 1:49). His name is the "Mighty God" (Isa 9:6). Jeremiah said, "There is none like You, O Lord; You are great, and great is Your name in might" (Jer 10:6). Moses said, "The Lord your God is . . . the great, the mighty, and the awesome God" (Dt 10:17). Nehemiah emphasizes that it is God's power that "keeps covenant and lovingkindness" (Neh 9:32). "He will remember His covenant forever. He has made known to His people the power of His works" (Ps 111:5-6). He is "mighty in deed" (Jer 32:19). The remnant of Israel that escaped "will truly rely on the Lord" (Isa 10:20) and will return "to the mighty God" (:21). Isaiah said Jesus would "bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him" (Isa 49:5). Micah said "His brethren will return to the sons of Israel" (Mic 5:3). He said "He will arise and shepherd His flock in the strength of the Lord" (:4) and Isaiah cited that it is because "My God is My strength" (Isa 49:5). His name is the "Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6). Micah said "this One will be our peace" (Mic 5:5). "He will speak peace to the nations" (Zec 9:10). The heavenly hosts' praise was "on earth peace among men" (Lk 2:14).

Where does it begin? The Lord told Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you" (Jer 1:5). Isaiah prophesied "the Lord called Me from the womb" (Isa 49:1) and "formed Me from the

womb to be His Servant" (:5) and there "He named Me" (:1). Gabriel told Mary "even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age" (Lk 1:36). Mary went to visit her and "when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit" (:41). Zacharias had been told that "'he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb'" (:15). How can people today say that you don't actually become a real person until you complete the birth process?

At Bethlehem "there were shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night" (Lk 2:8). Then an angel appeared before them (:9). In a dream Jacob saw a ladder "set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven . . . and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it" (Ge 28:12). "The glory of the Lord shone around them" (Lk 2:9). The angel announced "'good news of great joy which will be for all people" (:10). Zacharias had been told "'many will rejoice at [John's] birth'" (1:14). The message was "'today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord'" (2:11). The angel also explained "'this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger'" (:12). To emphasize this news a multitude of angels appeared "praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased'" (:13-14). Afterwards they went "away from them into heaven" (:15). The shepherds then "found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger" (:16). They then "made known the statement which had been told them about this Child . . . [and] all who heard it wondered" (:17-18). They "had heard and seen, just as had been told them" (:20).

Out of Egypt

Matthew relates that "in the days of Herod the king, magi

from the east arrived in Jerusalem" (Mt 2:1) looking for Jesus. Herod had heard they were following a star and enquired of Jewish officials "where the Messiah was to be born" (:4). They quoted "from you [Bethlehem] One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel" (Mic 5:2). Herod sent them there to search (Mt 2:8) and to report back. They found Jesus and "presented to Him gifts" (:11) but "having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way" (:12).

Researchers have discovered that if people are repeatedly woken up while dreaming it has detrimental effects. There is a psychological purpose. However, dreams can also be instructional albeit frustrating when interpreting them. But when God gives a dream the interpretation accompanies it. Even so, others may not accept the explanation. Joseph asked his brothers to, "Please listen to this dream which I have had" (Ge 37:6). But "they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words" (:8). A Godly dream can save your life. "An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream" (Mt 2:13) and told him to take the family to Egypt. He said Herod would try to kill Jesus and they were to stay in Egypt temporarily (:13). Paul instructed to "live by the Spirit" (Gal 5:25), be "led by the Spirit" (:18), and "walk by the Spirit" (:16). The angel said, "Remain there until I tell you" (Mt 2:13). Obedience is essential. "Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt" (:14).

"When Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt" (Mt 2:19). He was instructed to return to Israel (:20). Matthew cites the prophecy of this (:15). "When Israel was a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My Son" (Hosea 11:1). God told Moses, "And it shall be when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' then you shall say to him, 'With a powerful hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery'" (Ex

13:14). God had "led them" (Hos 11:4), "fed them" (:4), and "healed them" (:3). But "they kept . . . burning incense to idols" (:2) and "they refused to return to Me" (:5). Then again "after being warned by God in a dream, he [Joseph] left for the regions of Galilee, and came and lived in a city called Nazareth" (Mt 2:23) fulfilling the prophecy "'He shall be called a Nazarene'" (:23).

Foreordained

There are over 300 predictions about the Messiah in the Old Testament. After the Resurrection Jesus accompanied two disciples on their journey and "explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (Lk 24:27). Later he reminded his disciples that, "'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled'" (:44). It is God's word reinforced by Isaiah saying "'truly I have spoken'" (Isa 46:11). It is God "'declaring the end from the beginning'" (:10). Isaiah "moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2Pe 1:21). "All scripture is inspired by God" (1Ti 3:16). Peter explains that "we have the prophetic word made more sure" (2Pe 1:19). Prophecy encompasses events "'from ancient times things have not been done'" (Isa 46:10). Only God can accomplish this. He provides the perspective saying, "'I am God, and there is no other; I am God and there is no one like Me'" (:9). "No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will" (2Pe 1:21). God declares, "'I have planned it'" (Isa 46:11) and it is "My purpose" (:10). Isaiah prophecies fulfillment. It "'will be established'" (:10), "'I will accomplish all'" (:10), "'I will bring it to pass'" (:11), and "'surely I will do it'" (:11).

God instituted the Feasts of the Lord to atone for the sins of Israel. The animal sacrifices have their fulfillment in Christ's death on the Cross. This plan was introduced long ago and was practiced over a long period showing that God's

intentions are not just ideas that "seemed good for the moment." The chance that the hundreds of prophecies altogether would come to pass as predicted accidentally is statistically small. Of course, if the prophecy was general lacking detail then an interpreter would have more latitude in explaining it in his own way. In fact, various religions often interpret a scripture so it reflects their own belief thereby invalidating your meaning in their eyes. It would be advantageous if the content of the prophecy didn't contain its own obvious explanation because that would eliminate the mystery. Also, there is a span of time between the prediction and its fulfillment such that the person speaking it does not have the opportunity to fulfill it by himself. In fact, it could be argued by some that since Christ knew the scriptures he could have manipulated events to cause them to happen that way. But there would have been too many imponderables and ramifications to make this possible. You must give God the credit for having the understanding and insight for knowing what would happen given certain circumstances. You must also recognize that God has the power to determine outcomes without having to override peoples' freedom of choice.

Betrayed

Jesus was betrayed by Judas. This was foretold in the Psalms. "For it is not an enemy who reproaches me . . . but it is you, a man my equal, My companion and my familiar friend" (Ps 55:12-13). "We who had sweet fellowship together walked in the house of God in the throng" (:14). Jesus told his disciples, "I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me'" (Jn 13:18). The reference is "even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me" (Ps 41:9). It demonstrates that God's Old Testament plan is being carried out and that it is important to understand. To emphasize this Jesus explained, "From

now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so when it does occur, you may believe that I am He" (Jn 13:19). There is the original prophecy and then a prophetic reminder. Jesus then follows up testifying, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me" (:21). The devil had put the motivation to betray Jesus into the heart of Judas (Jn 13:2). At the Last Supper Jesus warned "woe to that man by whom He is betrayed" (22:22). A person should scrutinize and not just accept anything he hears because we are responsible for our actions.

"Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?' And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him" (Mt 26:14-15). Later he "came up accompanied by a large crowd with swords and clubs" (:47). Peter afterwards acknowledged that "the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus" (Ac 1:16). David said "let his days be few; let another take his office" (Ps 109:8). "Now he who was betraying Him gave them a sign . . . [and] Judas went to Jesus . . . and kissed Him" (:48-49). "Jesus said to him, 'Friend, do what you have come for'" (:50). Later "when Judas . . . saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders" (27:3). This is seen in Zechariah's prophecy. "I took my staff Favor and cut it in pieces, to break my covenant which I had made with all the peoples" (Zec 11:10). "The flock who were watching me realized it was the word of the Lord" (:11). "I said to them, 'If it is good in your sight, give me my wages' . . . so they weighed out thirty shekels of silver" (:12). "Then the Lord said to me, 'Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them'" (:13). Accordingly Judas "threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself" (Mt 27:5). The officials "conferred

together and with the money bought the Potter's field as a burial place for strangers" (:7). "That which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled" (:9). God told Jeremiah, "Go and buy a potter's earthenware jar . . . and break the jar in the sight of the men who accompany you" (Jer 19:1,10). Furthermore, "Say to them, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Just so will I break this people and this city, even as one breaks a potter's vessel, which cannot again be repaired'" (:11).

Arrested

When you repeat something again to someone you reinforce its importance. When you reiterate a fact two times in the same dialog you are saying it is twice as important. In Matthew 26:54 Jesus said, "How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?" In verse 56 he said, "But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets." In the first verse he warns that "all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword." In the second he asks, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me?" Jesus states that he is innocent saying, "Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me" (:55). He was then brought before the high priest and "they kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death. They did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward" (Mt 26:59-60). Prophetic scripture says for Israel in Egypt to take a "lamb" (Ex 12:3) which is "unblemished" (:5). On the fourteenth day of the month it was to be killed (:6) and they were to "take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses" (:7). "The blood shall be a sign" (:13). Israel's being delivered from Egypt's bondage on Passover is prophetic of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection for the forgiveness of our sins.

In Acts 1:16 Peter refers to Psalm 109:8 as "the Scripture

[which] had to be fulfilled" on the same subject as stated in Matthew 26:54,56. In a similar way this reference is used prophetically to describe the trial before the temple officials. "For they have opened up the wicked and deceitful mouth against me; they have spoken against me with a lying tongue" (Ps 109:2). Finally two false witnesses "came forward" (Mt 26:60). The high priest "said to Him, 'Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?' But Jesus kept silent" (:62-63). "Like a lamb that is led to slaughter . . . He did not open His mouth" (Isa 53:7). Then before Pilate "He did not answer him with regard to even a single charge, so the governor was quite amazed" (Mt 27:14). This is because Jesus is one "who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth" (1Pe 2:22). He leaves "an example for you to follow in His steps" (:21). "While being reviled, He did not revile in return . . . but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously" (:23). Pilate's wife told him, "'Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him'" (Mt 27:19). Pilate responded saying, "'I am innocent of this Man's blood'" (:24).

Accused

They kept interrogating Jesus expecting that he would eventually be found guilty of an offence against the law. Pilate said to the Jews, "'Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him'" (Jn 19:6). In the questioning the high priest asked, "'I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God'" (Mt 26:63). The phrasing of the question presumes a response. Jesus replied, "'You have said it yourself'" (:64). Then the high priest said, "'He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold you have now heard the blasphemy; what do you think?' They answered, 'He deserves death'" (:65-66). The Jews later told Pilate, "'We have a law, and by that law

He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God" (Jn 19:7). Their religion made up laws like this, but man's laws are not ethical just because they're laws. Peter said, "Let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ--this Jesus whom you crucified" (Ac 2:36).

Their decision resulted in "some [who] began to spit at Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists" (Mk 14:65). Isaiah had said, "I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting" (Isa 50:6). Micah prophesied, "With a rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek" (Mic 5:1). Later Pilate's soldiers "kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting on Him" (Mk 15:19). The Jews were violent "accusing him vehemently" (Lk 23:10). "They cried out all together, saying, 'Away with this man'" (:18). "They kept on calling out, saying, 'Crucify, crucify Him!'" (:21). Herod's soldiers treated Jesus contemptuously, mocked him, and returned him to Pilate (Lk 23:11). Pilate responded "I have found in Him no guilt demanding death' . . . [but] their voices began to prevail" (:22-23). Therefore "Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him" (Jn 19:1). Micah prophesied, "I gave My back to those who strike Me, and My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard" (Mic 5:6). "The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him" (Jn 19:2). The Jews threatened, "If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar" (:12) "so he handed Him over to them to be crucified" (:16). "His appearance was marred more than any man and His form more than the sons of men" (Isa 52:14).

Crucified

Jesus was crucified at a place near the city called Golgotha. "They pierced my hands and my feet" (Ps 22:16). Isaiah prophesied that he would be "numbered with the transgressors" (Isa 53:12). Jesus himself said, "I tell you that

this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, 'And He was numbered with transgressors'; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment" (Lk 22:37). "They crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left" (Mk 15:27). Psalm 22 predicted the situation. "For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me" (Ps 22:16). Isaiah foresaw that "many were astonished at you" (Isa 52:14); and he would "become a reproach to them" (Ps 109:25). "The people stood by, looking on" (Lk 23:35). Psalm 22 prophesied that "all who see me sneer at me" (Ps 22:7); and "when they see me, they wag their head" (Ps 109:25). "They open wide their mouth at me, as a ravening and a roaring lion" (Ps 22:13). "They separate with the lip, they wag the head" (:7-8). "Those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads" (Mt 27:39). "Even the rulers were sneering at Him" (Lk 23:35). Some commented, "If You are the son of God, come down from the cross" (Mt 27:40) and others said, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself" (:42). After all, in Psalm 22 there is a request to "deliver . . . my only life from the power of the dog" (Ps 22:20) in accordance with "let Him rescue him, because He delights in him" (:8). However, Isaiah prophesied that he "interceded for the transgressors" (Isa 53:12) and "Jesus was saying, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing'" (Lk 23:34).

Isaiah clarifies God's purpose. "He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities" (Isa 53:5). "He poured out Himself to death . . . [and] bore the sin of many" (:12). The suffering is described as the agony of dried up strength and the tongue cleaving to the jaw (Ps 22:15). It is stated prophetically that, "They also gave me gall for food and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Ps 69:21). Jesus said, "I am thirsty" (Jn 19:28). "They gave Him wine to drink mixed with gall" (Mt 27:34). They offered him "sour wine upon a branch of hyssop" (Jn 19:29). It was said, "They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing

they cast lots" (Ps 22:18). The soldiers divided Jesus' garments among themselves (Jn 19:23). They "cast lots for it [the tunic] . . . to fulfill the Scriptures" (:24). Psalm 31 states, "Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have ransomed me" (:5). Jesus cried out loudly, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" (Lk 23:46). Isaiah prophesied, "The chastening of our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed" (Isa 53:5). Peter says, "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). He uses a common verb meaning to heal. "Is anyone among you sick?" (Ja 5:14). Here it is the same verb Peter uses regarding bodily healing. We are to "call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him" (:14) and to "confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed" (:16). We should appropriate what Jesus accomplished, otherwise he died in vain.

Resurrected

Jesus was telling them about his death and resurrection. "But the disciples understood none of these things, and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said" (Lk 18:33). "They were afraid to ask Him" (Mk 9:32). Peter's understanding of it was that he "began to rebuke Him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You'" (Mt 16:22). Jesus replied, "'You are not setting your mind on God's interests'" (:23). God is interested in what he does and you should focus on it too. Jesus explained, "'I lay down My life for the sheep'" (Jn 10:15). "I lay it down on My own initiative . . . and I have authority to take it up again" (:18). However, "He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ" (Mt 16:20). Furthermore, "As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "'Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead'" (17:9). He also

instructed, "After I have been raised, I will go ahead of you into Galilee" (26:32). He had, however, provided some knowledge. He gave them "the sign of Jonah the prophet; for . . . so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (12:39-40). There is also the example of Lazarus. When Jesus arrived in Bethany, Martha told him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days" (Jn 11:39). He said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" (:40). Then he cried, "Lazarus, come forth" (:43) and he was raised by God's power in the same way that "God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power" (1Co 6:14). Paul sought to "know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering, being conformed to His death" (Php 3:10).

Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James came to the tomb the first day of the week. They found the stone sealing the entrance of the tomb rolled away and two angels standing nearby. They said, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He is risen" (Lk 24:6). This was to fulfill the prophecy: "For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay" (Ps 16:10). The angels reminded them what they had been told saying that it was "just as He said" (Mt 28:6). They said, "Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee" (Lk 24:6). At that time "Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem . . . and be killed, and be raised up on the third day" (Mt 16:21). He had also said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (Jn 2:19). This is why Jesus was accused of blasphemy. Before the high priest a witness stated that Jesus had said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days" (Mt 26:61). Jesus, himself, had explained why they didn't understand due to the parables because "seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear" (13:13).

Jesus also told Caiaphas that "hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" (26:64). They didn't accept that either. When the angels explained things to the women at the tomb "they remembered His words" (Lk 24:8). However, when they "were telling these things to the apostles . . . these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them" (:10-11). It is not a matter of just bad memory. Jesus specifically told the twelve that all things written would be accomplished (18:31). The end result in Jerusalem would be "they will kill Him; and on the third day He will rise again" (:33). Again, Mary Magdalene "reported to those who had been with Him . . . [and] when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it" (Mk 15:10-11). Jesus was aware of their state of faith. He appeared to the group at dinner and "reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen" (16:14).

Appeared

After being resurrected Jesus appeared "to them over a period of forty days" (Ac 1:30). "The rain fell upon the earth for forty days" (Ge 7:12) as judgment. They spied out the land for "forty days" (Nu 13:25) but then wandered "forty years" (:34) because of their disobedience. Jesus was tested for "forty days" (Ac 1:3). Jonah preached to Nineveh for "forty days" (Jon 3:4) regarding repentance. During this period Jesus "presented himself alive . . . by many convincing proofs" (Ac 1:3). He also spoke of the "kingdom of God" (:3). It is said that the number forty is symbolic of a probationary period. A certain period of time was necessary to make the point that he had indeed risen from the dead. Also, he had some additional instructions for them because he would no longer be present with them in the same way. He had previously prayed, "I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves

are in the world" (Jn 17:11).

Jesus had taught before using the symbols of his flesh and blood. The Jews argued, saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" (Jn 6:52). In John 6:53-58 he mentions this eating six times and the drinking four times. His disciples commented, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" (:60). But if they can't comprehend this then Jesus replies, "What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?" (:62). His point is unless you do this "you have no life in yourselves" (:53). Food and drink provide sustenance for life. He instructs that whoever "believes in him will have eternal life" (:40). He who obeys "abides in Me and I in him" (:56) and "will live forever" (:58). He explains, "I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he will also live because of Me" (:57). "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing" (:63). "I go to prepare a place for you . . . [and] will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also" (Jn 14:2-3). "I will raise him up on the last day" (6:54).

Ascended

Jesus told Nicodemus heavenly things (Jn 3:12). "No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man" (:13). Jesus knew "that He had come forth from God, and was going back to God" (13:3). "For the joy set before Him [he] endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb 12:2). "Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1Pe 3:21) "He had made purification of sins" (Heb 1:3) so we could have "clean hands and a pure heart" (Ps 24:4) and "may stand in His holy place" (:3). "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" (Lk 24:26). Jesus told them, "But now I am going to Him who sent He" (Jn 16:5). "He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb 1:3) and "at the right hand of the throne of God" (12:2). There he "intercedes for us" (Ro 8:34).

God "seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph 1:20) and "bestowed on Him the name which is above every name" (Php 2:9). "You are the Lord Most High over all the earth; You are exalted far above all gods" (Ps 97:9). God then told him to "sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet" (110:1).

John reports that, "After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven" (Rev 4:1). Ezekiel said that "the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God" (Ez 1:1). When Jesus was baptized "the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him" (Mt 3:16). Stephen said, "I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (Ac 7:56). In John's case a voice directed him to, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place" (Rev 4:1). He saw that "a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne" (:2). Isaiah said, "In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted: (Isa 6:1). Ezekiel stated that "in the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim something like a sapphire stone, in appearance resembling a throne, appeared above them" (Ez 10:1). John says, "He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardis in appearance, and there was a rainbow around the throne" (Rev 4:3).

Jesus "led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them" (Lk 24:50). "After He said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight" (Ac 1:9). "He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God" (Mk 16:19). "As they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them" (Ac 1:10). They said that Jesus would return "'in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven" (:11). "You have ascended on high, You have led captive Your captives" (Ps 68:18). "When He had disarmed the rulers

and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him" (Col 2:15). "He gave gifts to men" (Eph 4:8). "To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift" (:7).

Return

Before the Sanhedrin the high priest said, "Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God" (Mt 26:63). Not only did Jesus confirm it but also said "hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" (:64). Afterwards at his ascension "clouds received Him out of their sight" (Ac 1:9) and "two men in white . . . [told them that Jesus] will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (:10-11). Later Peter warned that there will be those who ask, "Where is this 'coming' he promised?" (2Pe 3:4 NIV). They will be those "walking according to their own lusts" (:3) saying, "Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation" (:4 NIV). They are Jews referencing their ancestors but ignoring "that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water" (:5 NIV). Jesus had asked, "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" (Lk 18:8) and Peter cites the lack of faith of these scoffers. He says "they deliberately" (2Pe 3:5 NIV) and "willfully forget" (:5 NKJV) "for when they maintain this, it escapes their notice" (:5 NASB). However, Paul warns that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against . . . [those] who suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Ro 1:18). "Since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" (:20). Peter instructs "that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of us" (2Pe 3:2). He reminds that "the Lord is not slack concerning His promise . . . [and is] not willing that any should perish but that all should

come to repentance" (:9). Jesus told his disciples, "There are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" (Mt 16:28). Six days later three of them accompanied him up a mountain and "He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light" (17:2). Peter later related that "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). You could say that this was done as a demonstration to dispel imaginations they might have harbored. You might say Jesus had to bring "down to earth" understandings that they otherwise might incorrectly develop about heaven. He told them, "In My Father's house are many dwelling places . . . [and] if I go prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also" (Jn 14:2-3).

They asked, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming?" (Mt 24:3). Jesus answered, "This gospel of the kingdom shall [first] be preached in the whole world" (:14). "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky" (:30). However, he explained "you do not know which day your Lord is coming" (:42). "For this reason you must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will" (:44). "What I say to you I say to all, 'Be on the alert!'" (Mk 13:37). "Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes" (Lk 12:37). Be a person "who knew his master's will" (:47) because "from everyone who has been given much, much will be required" (:47-48). However "do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will" (1Co 4:5) "bring about justice for them quickly" (Lk 18:8). "He who is coming will come, and will not delay" (Heb 10:37). "Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits . . . [so] you too be

patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near" (Ja 5:7-8). Jesus instructed Thyatira saying, "What you have, hold fast until I come" (Rev 2:25). He said, "Behold, I am coming quickly" (22:7). He "will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him" (Heb 9:28).

Second Coming

Peter cited how the Old Testament prophets sought to know what "time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow" (1Pe 1:11). Jude reports "that Enoch . . . prophesied, saying, 'Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones'" (Ju 10:14). Zechariah prophesied that "'the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations'" (Zec 14:3) and "you will flee . . . [and] the Lord, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him!" (:5). These are those who "God will bring with Him" (1Th 4:14) who "will be caught up together" (:17) in "our gathering together to Him" (2Th 2:1). "Creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the Sons of God" (Ro 8:19) and "the glory that is to be revealed in us" (:18). This revelation is an unveiling or exposure to view. We are to "wait for His Son from heaven" (1Th 1:10). Knowing that "our citizenship is in heaven" (Php 3:20) we set our "mind on the things above" (Col 3:2) and when Christ is revealed "you also will be revealed with Him in glory" (:4). Paul prayed that God would "establish your hearts without blame in holiness . . . at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints" (1Th 3:13). Peter prayed that your faith "may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1Pe 1:7). Paul prayed "that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Co 1:7).

The event of the Second Advent is called the parousia. Jesus, whose presence is in heaven, comes to earth where his arrival is observed by everyone. When it occurs is not

known but there are metaphors to describe it. "Just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Mt 24:27). It "will be just like the days of Noah" (:37). "They did not understand until the flood came and took them all away" (:39). "On the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed" (Lk 17:29-30). "The powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (21:26-27). He will come "with His mighty angels in flaming fire" (2Th 1:7) "and then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds" (Mk 13:27). Therefore "when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Lk 21:28). "What will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mt 16:26). "All the tribes of the earth will mourn" (24:30). He "will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts" (1Co 4:5). "Each man's praise will come to him from God" (:5). Paul explains that he will receive "the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2Ti 4:8). He "will repay every man according to his deeds" (Mt 16:27). He "rescues us from the wrath to come" (1Th 1:10). "Then He will sit on His glorious throne" (Mt 25:31).

Appearing

Christ's appearing is called an epiphaneia. It is a bringing forth into light causing something to shine. An epiphany is a sudden, intuitive perception into the reality of something. His appearance is "when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and be marveled at among all who have believed" (2Th 1:10). Therefore, it is important "that you keep the

commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Ti 6:14). "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him those [who have died, and] . . . we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord" (1Th 4:14-15). "In Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order . . . who are Christ's at His coming" (1Co 15:22-23). We will be "caught up together . . . to meet the Lord . . . and so we shall always be with the Lord" (1Th 4:17). Peter says "when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory" (1Pe 5:4) and "at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation" (4:13). But we must "abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming" (1Jn 2:28). John explains "it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (3:2). "The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first" (1Th 4:16). "Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming" (2Th 2:8).

Faith Overcomes the World (1 John 5:4)

About Faith

If you are going through a difficult time undoubtedly someone will encourage you by saying "have faith, it will all work out." One meaning is that you should be positive because being negative makes it worse. There are no guarantees. But having faith demonstrates that you are optimistic and are hoping for a good outcome. A factual prognosis may be realistic but Biblical faith has its own rules. God "gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist" (Ro 4:17). Therefore if we follow the Bible "we walk by faith, not by sight" (1Co 5:7). We become "those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all" (Ro 4:16).

God instituted faith. He "said to Abram, 'Go forth from your country . . . to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation'" (Ge 12:1-2). Abram acted in faith and "went forth as the Lord had spoken to him" (:4). God later reminded him saying "'I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans'" (15:7). God had promised Abraham an heir saying, "'So shall your descendants be" (:5). "'Abraham believed God'" (Ro 4:3) and "'faith was credited to Abraham'" (:9).

What Faith Is

Abraham exercised faith by believing. But it isn't mental gymnastics. "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Ro 10:17). "By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God" (Heb 11:3). Even though "what is seen" (:3) is visible they were "not made out of things which are visible" (:3). It requires faith to accept this. "For by grace you have been saved through faith" (Eph 2:8). "It is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace" (Ro 4:16). "It is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so

that no one may boast" (Eph 2:8-9). It was a promise that Abraham "would be heir of the world" (Ro 4:13) and faith ensures "that the promise will be guaranteed" (:16).

Hebrews 11:1 defines faith because it says "faith is." If the text consisted of metaphors they would be likenesses, but one part says "faith is . . . the conviction of things not seen" (11:1) which is more of a definition. We weren't witnesses when "the worlds were prepared by the word of God" (11:3) but "that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them" (Ro 1:19) and "His invisible attributes . . . have been clearly seen" (:20). This evidence is not unlike what is presented in a court case which substantiates the truth. You see the reality of what had been previously unproven when it is spelled out by God through faith. Faith is the tangible evidence which comes only from God.

Faith is Surety

"Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Heb 11:1 NIV). Assurance and certainty apply to "of what" a person has confidence in will come to pass. If it is "of things" (11:1 NASB), it is from, concerning or belonging to the existence of what is desired or expected. Hope must be based upon something potentially happening in the first place. When you are hopeful you are optimistic that your expectations are reasonable. But from a Biblical standpoint it is faith from God that makes hope authentic.

God told Abraham his descendants would be as the number of stars (Ge 15:5). But the time came when "Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing" (18:11). In a natural way there was no substance for Abraham's hope. But God said "'Sarah your wife will have a son'" (:10). Therefore Abraham was "fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform" (Ro 4:21). Abraham was aware of natural impossibilities because it was "against hope" (:18). No

realistic person would hope in something impossible. But Abraham "in hope . . . believed . . . according to that which had been spoken" (:18). It was with scriptural hope based upon God's promise. Faith is the substance for hope because the assurance is inherent in the promise. Also, Abraham "with respect to the promise . . . did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving Glory to God" (:20). What God had spoken contained what convinced Abraham so that he could faithfully believe in it.

Word of Faith

Faith is released by words. "By your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned" (12:37). "The tongue has the power of life and death" (Pr 18:21). "The tongue of the wise brings healing" (12:18). Jesus taught "out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks" (Mt 12:34). The faith you have is expressed in speech. "What he says will happen" (Mk 11:23). It works because of the characteristics of the communication. Jesus said "the words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life" (Jn 6:63). He also reveals "I am in the Father . . . [and] the words I say to you are not just my own" (14:10).

It has to be in accordance with God's words "in you" (:7). The words are there if you meditate on the book of the law (Jos 1:8). They are there because "Your word I have treasured in my heart" (Ps 119:11). "From Your precepts I get understanding" (:104). "The unfolding of Your words gives light" (:130). "Your testimonies . . . are my counselors" (:24). "Jesus answered, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God'" (Mt 4:4). He repeats it being written in verses 7 and 10. "If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa 8:20).

Believe in Faith

Jesus "healed all who were ill" (Mt 8:16). The people who came to him for this had faith in God (Mk 11:22). "Two blind men followed Him, crying out, 'Have mercy on us, Son of David!'" (Mt 9:27). Jesus asked, "'Do you believe that I am able to do this?'" (:28). The blind men answered, "'Yes, Lord'" (:28). Jesus responded, "'It shall be done to you according to your faith'" (:29). Then "their eyes were opened" (:30). They believed Jesus could heal them and were healed because of their faith. "'For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart'" (Mt 12:34). "'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart'-that is, the word of faith" (Ro 10:8).

A centurion asked for help saying, "'Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, fearfully tormented'" (Mt 8:4). He said to Jesus, "'just say the word, and my servant will be healed'" (:8). Jesus responded, "'Go; it shall be done for you as you have believed'" (:13). Because the centurion believed that all Jesus had to do is speak the command Jesus said, "'I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel'" (:10). "The servant was healed that very moment" (:13). The centurion had the faith and believed. A Canaanite woman asked Jesus to heal her daughter. Through their talk Jesus ascertained that she believed he could heal her and said, "'O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish'" (Mt 15:28). "Her daughter was healed at once" (:28).

Both the centurion and Canaanite woman had "great faith." They were persistent and "strong in faith" (Ro 4:20). They believed and kept their focus. If you don't, then circumstances will undermine your confidence and your faith will be too small to get what you want (Mt 14:29-31). Peter "seeing the wind" (:30) lost focus. Thomas' focus was on seeing because he said "'Unless I see . . . I will not believe'" (Jn 20:25). When he did see, Jesus told him "'be not faithless, but believing'" (:27 KJV). Jesus said "see my hands . . . stop doubting and

believe" (:27 NIV). Not having faith and doubting are synonymous. That is why Jesus said, "do not be unbelieving, but believing" (:27 NASB).

Hear by Faith

"Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Ro 10:13). "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard?" (:14). Fortunately "faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (:17). The Greek term for "word" is "rhema" which means uttered by a living voice. The "word of God is quick" (Heb 4:12) which means it is alive. When God speaks, it is present tense having "been granted for Christ's sake" (Php 1:29) to "believe in Him" (:29). "Having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph 1:13).

Without knowing the truth you don't have faith to believe. It comes by "listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation" (Eph 1:13). It is "hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel" (Col 1:5). It has worked in you "since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth" (:6). It is "the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation" (:23). "You have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus" (Eph 4:21).

Mystery Revealed

"The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham" (Gal 3:8). "In Him we have redemption through His blood" (Eph 1:7). It is "the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations" (Col 1:26). The Apostle Paul was a steward "of the mysteries of God" (1Co 4:1). He said "we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden

wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory" (2:7). It was hidden and God had to reveal it. Paul said "He made known to us the mystery of His will" (Eph 1:9). He said it was "God's grace which was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery" (3:3). "This grace was given . . . to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery" (:8-9). Paul said "when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ" (:4). We base our faith on God's revelation. It "was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit" (:5). Paul told the Galatians "that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man" (Gal 1:11). He said "I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (:12). Furthermore Paul said it was "to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles" (:16).

Paul told the Colossians that "I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit" (Col 1:25). The mystery revealed is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (:27). It is "God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:2-3). Paul said "the mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church" (Eph 5:32). He prayed that "utterance may be given to me . . . to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel" (6:19). He also requested that "God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ" (Col 4:3).

Paul told the Galatians "we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ" (Gal 2:16). Therefore "you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (3:26). Paul explained "'I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me'" (2:20). This is the mystery (Col 1:27). "The

life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God" (Gal 2:20). We are "those who believe and are saved" (Heb 10:39 NIV).

Have Faith

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. "That which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them" (Ro 1:19). "God has allotted to each a measure of faith" (12:3). "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (10:8). It is "with the heart a person believes" (:10). It applies to "the hidden person of the heart" (1Pe 3:4) or "inner man" (Ro 7:22).

You have to pay attention to God. "Since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse" (Ro 1:20). But "even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God" (:21). It's because "a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God" (1Co 2:14). It's an eternal decision. "Fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mt 10:28). Paul prayed that "may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete" (1Th 5:23).

"Those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (Jn 4:24). But spiritual things are foreign to the natural man "because they are spiritually appraised" (1Co 2:14). Therefore you must become a "new creature" (2Co 5:17). When that happens "old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (:17). 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).

Grow in Faith

"The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith!'" (Lk 17:5). Jesus had been teaching them and apparently they felt that they didn't have the ability to carry out what had been taught. Jesus said they would need "faith like a mustard seed" (:6). One time they couldn't cast a demon out and Jesus said it was "Because of the littleness of your faith" (Mt 17:20). Jesus explained "if you have faith the size of a mustard seed . . . nothing will be impossible to you" (:20). Previously Jesus had taught that "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed . . . [which] is smaller than all other seeds; but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants" (Mt 13:31-32). Therefore your faith must grow "but God was causing the growth" (1Co 3:6). This demonstrates "your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God" (2:5).

Abraham "grew strong in faith" (Ro 4:20). He was "fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform" (:21). Abraham had confidence in God. Jesus said "Have faith in God" (Mk 11:22). "By grace you have been saved through faith" (Eph 2:8). It is by righteousness "which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith" (Php 3:9). It is based upon "the faith of the gospel" (1:27) and "the hope of the gospel" (Col 1:23) in which "you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast" (:23). Your faith grows as you mature and it is recognizable as when Paul "heard of your faith" (Col 1:4, Eph 1:15). The Colossians had been "built up in Him and established in . . . faith" (2:7). Paul rejoiced to see "the stability of your faith in Christ" (:5). It was Paul's responsibility to be with them "for your progress and joy in the faith" (Php 1:25). He was in the "sacrifice and service of your faith" (2:17). He stated that "your faith grows" (2Co 10:15). Faith grows when

you are "striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Php 1:27).

Receive Faith

Abraham was "fully assured" (Ro 4:21) of what God had promised. He attained "the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery" (Col 2:2). How is knowledge received? Paul prayed for people asking "that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (Col 1:9). He prayed that God would "give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Eph 1:17). It is received by the spirit. Paul prayed that "the eyes of your heart may be enlightened" (:18). God "gave us the Spirit in our hearts" (2Co 1:22). He asked for them "to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (Eph 3:16-17). When "increasing in the knowledge of God [you are] strengthened with all power" (Col 1:10). You learn "what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe" (Eph 1:19). You "abound still more and more in real knowledge and in all discernment" (Php 1:9) "increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col 1:10). In Christ "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (2:3). The result is that you "put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him" (3:10). You begin "to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge . . . [and are] filled up to all the fullness of God" (Eph 3:19). You attain "the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man" (4:13). You endeavor to "know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (Php 3:10).

Believe in Heart

"With the heart a person believes" (Ro 10:10) which is the "inner man" (Eph 3:16). 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). Jesus "became a life-giving spirit" (1Co 15:45) and "breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (Jn 20:22). Therefore be careful of an "unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God" (Heb 3:12).

Faith Presented

"Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Ro 10:17). Is the Old Testament less relevant than the New Covenant? When you consider that what happened to Israel was "written for our instruction" (1Co 10:11) it is applicable. We are no different than them. "Elijah was a man

with a nature like ours" (Jas 5:17). They had to follow God themselves and God doesn't change (Mal 3:6). "They were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ" (1Co 10:4).

God led Israel "performing wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years" (Ac 7:36). "He led them with the cloud by day, and all the night with a light of fire" (Ps 78:14). The Lord said, "Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth" (Dt 4:10). Moses said, "'You, O Lord, have been seen face to face, that your cloud stays over them, and that you go before them'" (Nu 14:14). Later he said, "'Has anything been heard like it? Has any people heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, as you have heard it, and survived?'" (Dt 4:32-33). "'To you it was shown that you might know that the Lord, He is God; that there is no other besides Him'" (:35).

Therefore, when we read this we, too, can comprehend. It provides the faith we need. "'Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life'" (Dt 4:9).

Faith Demonstrated

Moses recounted saying, "'You were not willing to go up, but rebelled against the command of the Lord your God'" (Dt 1:26). They "gathered together against" (Nu 14:35) and grumbled against (:27) God. They "turned back from following" (:43), did not listen to his voice (:22), and spurned (:11) God. "The Lord said to Moses,. . . 'How long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst?'" (13:11). God said "'they are a people who err in their heart, and they do not know My ways'" (Ps 95:10). Moses said, "'You did not trust the Lord your God'" (Dt 1:32).

Joshua and Caleb were optimistic. Caleb said "we will certainly overcome it" (Nu 13:30) because "the Lord is with us" (14:9). He said that God "will Himself fight on your behalf, just as He did for you in Egypt before your eyes" (Dt 1:30). God said, "My servant Caleb . . . has had a different spirit and has followed Me fully" (Nu 14:24). Caleb said "do not fear" (:9), but the people said, "Our brethren have made our hearts melt" (Dt 1:28). They did not know God "and said, 'Because the Lord hates us . . . [he will] deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us'" (:27). But Moses knew better saying, "the Lord your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you" (4:31).

Jesus encountered the same problem. The religious authorities observed, "This man is performing many signs. If we let him go like this, all men will believe in Him" (Jn 11:47-48). Jesus tried to deal with their unbelief saying, "But if I do them, though you do not believe in Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father" (10:38). "Though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him" (12:37). Jesus asked, "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" (Lk 18:8). Israel "failed to enter [the Promised Land] because of disobedience" (Heb 4:6). "The word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard" (:2). "They were not able to enter because of unbelief" (3:18). Therefore "let us hold fast our confession" (4:14) because "we who have believed enter that rest" (:3)

Faith in the Power of God

Faith has different applications. Christians believe in "the" faith which is professing "by" faith what Christ accomplished on the cross through "having" faith in the power of God who brought it to pass. It is because of faith that God "has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light"

(Col 1:12). It motivated Paul to "press on toward the upward call of God" (Php 3:14). It is an upward direction because God "raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6). This is "at His right hand in the heavenly places" (1:20). We are "buried with him in baptism and raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead" (Col 2:12). "As He is, so are we in this world" (1Jn 4:17). Jesus said, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (Jn 17:14). "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Php 3:20). But if heaven and earth are mutually exclusive then how can you be in two places at once? You have a heavenly "position" while in an earthly existence. However, the latter can be upgraded. It is Christ "who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to himself" (:21).

"To the Lord your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it" (Dt 10:14). "It pleased the Father . . . to reconcile all things to himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven" (Col 1:19). His purpose is "the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth" (Eph 1:10). It is "the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name" (Eph 3:15). "God highly exalted Him" (Php 2:9) "far above the heavens . . . to fill all things" (Eph 4:10) "so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth" (Php 2:10). You have a position in heaven even though you live on earth. God "has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Eph 1:3). There is even the responsibility to disseminate "the manifold wisdom of God . . . through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places" (3:10). But you must "put on the full armor of God . . . [because] our struggle is . . . against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (6:12). Take up

"the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one" (:16). Therefore, since "you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col 3:1-2).

Faith is Optimistic

An idiom is an expression whose meaning cannot be derived from its words. "Pie in the sky" is such a phrase. You know what it means only from experiences having heard it used in certain contexts. It means that an idea or plan is so unrealistic or impractical that it will never materialize. It is an empty promise or impossible dream. Such a person has his "head in the clouds" meaning that he is a dreamer and out of touch with reality. The empty wish is "pie in the sky" meaning that it won't come to pass. There's a phrase criticizing a religious idealist who is "so heavenly preoccupied that he's no earthly good." In 1911 a labor organizer named Joe Hill wrote the phrase about pie in a song criticizing the Salvation Army song "In the Sweet Bye and Bye." He was critical of preaching which contained promises of future rewards but did little to alleviate suffering in this life. He wrote, "You'll get pie in the sky when you die." But "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb 11:1). It is not false hope as in the idiom above. But there is a caveat. Proverbs 13:12 says "hope deferred makes the heart sick." When you become depressed it's possible to lose faith if your expectation vanishes. Nonetheless, "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him" (Job 13:15). Don't assume you must accomplish something unilaterally as Israel "presumed to go up to the hill country" (Nu 14:44) and their enemies defeated them. Sarai assumed that "the Lord has prevented me from bearing children" (Ge 16:6) and it resulted in Ishmael being born (:15). At the right time the Lord said "Sarah your wife

shall have a son" (18:10) even though she was "past childbearing" (:11). Therefore cast "all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you" (1Pe 5:7). Moses' solution is to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul . . . [and] follow the Lord your God and fear Him . . . [and] listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him" (Dt 13:3-4). It is "'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts" (Zec 4:6).

Faith Inherits

When you inherit something it is passed down from an ancestor and you have legal right to possess it. Terah took his family from Ur "to enter the land of Canaan" (Ge 11:31). After he died "the Lord said to Abram, 'Go forth from your country . . . to the land which I will show you'" (12:1). He also said, "'I will make you a great nation'" (:2). "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance" (Heb 11:8). Then he was told, "'Your reward will be very great'" (Ge 15:1). But he didn't see how it was possible because his only heir was his head servant (:2). God replied, "'One who shall come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir'" (:4). Then God directed him, "'Count the stars, if you are able to count them . . . so shall your descendants be'" (5). Consequently Abram "believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness" (:6). "God has granted [the inheritance] to Abraham by means of a promise" (Gal 3:18). God said, "'I have made you the father of a multitude of nations'" (Ge 17:5) which took the form of a covenant. God said, "'This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male shall be circumcised'" (:10). It was a "sign of the covenant" (:11), and without it, a person "'has broken My covenant'" (:14). God then said, "'I will give you and your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting

possession; and I will be their God" (:8).

In order to accomplish this it would have to be a miracle, but that would prove that only God could do it. When the "Lord appeared to Abram" (Ge 17:1) he said, "Indeed I will give you a son by her . . . and she shall be a mother of nations" (:16). "By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive . . . since she considered Him faithful who had promised" (Heb 11:11). God told Abram, "You shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him" (Ge 17:19). Furthermore, God said, "I have chosen him . . . in order that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him" (18:19). They sang, "Thou wilt bring them and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, . . . Thy dwelling" (Ex 15:17). This was Mount Zion in the Promised Land where the temple was later built. Joshua was told by Moses, "Go with this people into the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall give it to them as an inheritance" (Dt 31:7).

Your Inheritance

In the garden God told the serpent that Eve's seed would bruise him on the head, and his would bruise hers on the heel (Ge 3:15). This was what the future had in store. He also foretold to Abram that his descendants would be "strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years" (15:13). Through God's planning and action "we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will" (Eph 1:11). God brought Israel "out of Egypt with a mighty hand" (Dt 9:26). He told Israel, "I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and . . . redeem you with an outstretched arm" (Ex 6:6). "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us" (Gal 3:13). Moses prayed, "Do not

destroy your people, even Your inheritance, whom You have redeemed through Your greatness" (Dt 9:26). God had adopted Israel. "They are Your people, even Your inheritance" (:29). "The Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance" (32:9).

God's plan began long ago since "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4). "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham" (Gal 3:8). This understanding "in other generations was not made known to the sons of men" (Eph 3:5). "For ages [it] has been hidden in God who created all things" (:9). "He predestined us . . . according to the kind intention of His will" (1:5) and made it "known to us . . . according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him" (:9). It is the "manifold wisdom of God . . . in accordance with the eternal purpose" (3:10-11). It is an all-encompassing plan. It is a "view to the redemption of God's own possession" (1:14) "to bring to light what is the administration" (3:9) "suitable to the fullness of the times" (1:10). "Since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions . . . those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance" (Heb 9:15). God has "qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints" (Col 1:12). It is an "inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God" (Eph 5:5). "The reward of the inheritance . . . is the Lord Christ whom you serve" (Col 3:24). This conforms with God telling Abraham, "I am thy exceeding great reward" (Ge 15:1 KJV). It results in "that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:7).

Survive by Faith

I grew up when there was constant fear of a nuclear war with Russia. It was believed that godless propaganda produced people who became antagonistic to our way of life.

Is it possible to program the mind of someone so they become a particular kind of person? "As he thinks within himself, so he is" (Pr 23:7). You might call it a mindset. In this sense you could expect retaliation to threats because it's "survival of the fittest." But with Christians it is "with the heart a person believes" (Ro 10:10). The Bible often uses the heart as a metaphor for the spirit. You are "renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph 4:23). You should "love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev 19:18). We "live by his faith" (Hab 2:4) because "we walk by faith" (2Co 5:7). "By faith Sarah . . . considered Him faithful who had promised" (Heb 11:11). "By faith [Moses] . . . endured, as seeing Him who is unseen" (:27). Others had a longer time horizon and "these people died in faith, without receiving the promises" (:13) but they "saw them from a distance" (:13 NIV). However, "God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect" (:40 NIV).

Christ said "you will be hated by all nations because of My name" (Mt 24:9). He also said "'an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God'" (Jn 16:2). Some were tortured . . . , experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment . . . , stoned . . . [and] were put to death with the sword" (Heb 11:35-37). It is because "the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God" (Ro 8:7). That is why Jesus said "'I did not come to bring peace, but a sword'" (Mt 10:34). But there should be a point of commonality. However, as citizens of the same country even Republicans and Democrats violently disagree. People in the same geographic region start wars of ethnic cleansing. "Nation will rise against nation" (24:7). It will "wear down the saints" (Da 7:25) "but the people who know their God will display strength and take action" (11:32). They "by faith conquered kingdoms . . . and obtained promises" (Heb 11:33). They "escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, [and] became mighty in war"

(:34). They all "gained approval through their faith" (:39) and "God is not ashamed to be called their God" (:16).

Overcome by Faith

In the New Testament "He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father" (Rev 1:6). In the Old Testament the priests "shall be clothed with linen garments; and wool shall not be on them while they are ministering . . . [because] they shall not gird themselves with anything which makes them sweat" (Eze 44:17-18). In Christianity doing anything that produces sweat is considered doing it "in your own strength." One of Christianity's basic tenets is that "by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph 2:8). But even though faith is from God it must be exercised. Jude said he "felt the necessity to write you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" (Jude 3). "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force" (Mt 11:12). It sounds like exercising faith is hard. It is "tested by fire" (1Pe 1:7) and "the testing of your faith produces endurance" (Jas 1:3). "Whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith" (1Jn 5:4). On an individual level "the faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God" (Ro 14:22). "God has allotted to each a measure of faith" (12:3). "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith" (2Co 13:5). But if you doubt yourself then your "eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin" (14:23). Your relationship with God is strengthened when you exercise faith. Nehemiah was the king's cupbearer. One day the king asked why he was so sad. Nehemiah told him the truth and the king asked how he could help. Then Nehemiah's rapport with God was demonstrated when, on the spot, he "prayed to the God of heaven" (Neh 2:4). God's answer was instantaneous and

Nehemiah requested to be sent to Judah to rebuild the city (:5). On a group level God gives various workers "for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith" (Eph 4:12-13). Paul told them they should be "standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Php 1:27). "He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Rev 3:21).

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).

- 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 Cor 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 5:21). 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).

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 Thess 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 "earthly, 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).

In the Cause of Christ (Phil 1:13)

Ephesians

Paul begins Ephesians by telling them he was "an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God" (Eph 1:1). He told the Colossians "of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God" (Col 1:25). According to the Greek word diakonos for minister Paul was a servant. To be preaching meant that he was proclaiming the gospel. Jesus told Ananias, "'Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel'" (Ac 9:15). Christ also "humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death" (Php 2:8) and became "a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers" (Ro 15:8). However, Jesus was also prophetically "the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem" (Eccl 1:1). "The Preacher also taught the people knowledge" (12:9). Jesus was "called Rabbi by men" (Mt 23:7) "which translated means Teacher" (Jn 1:38).

Paul said "I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher" (2Ti 1:11). It was in accordance with "the hope of the gospel . . . of which I, Paul, was made a minister" (Col 1:23) and according to the "promise of Christ Jesus through the gospel, of which I was made a minister" (Eph 3:6-7). However it was by "the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power" (:7) in that "this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles" (:8). He told the Galatians that God "had set me apart even from my mother's womb [and] called me through His grace, [and] was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles" (Gal 1:15-16). Then he continues saying, "the

gospel which was preached by me is not according to man . . . nor was [I] taught it, but received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (:11-12). This is when he "went away to Arabia" (:18) ["Mount Sinai [is] in Arabia" (4:25)] and after staying in "Damascus . . . three years later I went up to Jerusalem" (:17-18). The original twelve apostles had also been with Jesus for three years.

Paul reminded the Ephesians that "you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery" (Eph 3:2). It is a mystery because it had never been revealed. "We speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages through our glory" (1Co 2:7). But when you read Paul's doctrine it isn't necessarily easy to understand because even Peter said "in all his letters, speaking in them of these things . . . [there] are some things hard to understand" (2Pe 3:16). Its as if you need a revelation to understand the revelation. Doctrine can be just words, plus "a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God . . . because they are spiritually appraised (1Co 2:14). Fortunately "we have received . . . the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God" (:12). Paul prayed "that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling" (Eph 1:18). Furthermore, he prayed "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him" (:17). He also provides hope citing "by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ" (3:4). It comes by "Him who is able to establish you . . . according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past" (Ro 16:25). We are "attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of

understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:2-3).

Revelation by Grace

Salvation comes from God founded in "being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us" (Eph 2:4). "God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Ro 5:7). "The Law came . . . but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (:20). "Even when we were dead in our transgressions, [God] made us alive together with Christ" (Eph 2:5). God operates through mercy, love and grace. Grace is supernatural enablement beyond the capacity of man. It is a divine plan "according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him" (1:9). It was "so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (2:7). "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (1:7). "By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (2:8). "It is faith working through love" (Gal 5:6). It is by "His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved" (Eph 1:6). "To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift" (4:7). "Of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace" (Jn 1:16).

There is "the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ" (Eph 3:11). "We have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will" (1:11). There are "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (:18) composed of "the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe" (:19). This takes the form of "the power that

works within us" (3:20) according to "the working of the strength of His might" (1:19). With Paul it was the "grace which was given to me according to the working of His power" (3:7). Consequently "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will" (1:5). "His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence" (2Pe 1:3). "He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph 1:20) and has now "raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (2:6). He "has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (1:3).

Called and Chosen

God "chose us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4). I was told by a member of another religion that this was possible because "those whom He foreknew" (Ro 8:29) existed as spirit babies when God created everything in the beginning. Can you build an entire doctrine based on presumption regarding detail that isn't even spelled out in scripture? The meaning of scripture must not be ambiguous, and relevant scriptures must reinforce each other and not be just selectively applied. To "foreknow" is the Greek word *proginosko* meaning to know beforehand ahead of time or to foreordain. A sense of time is involved which means the rules aren't changed just because God lives in eternity and can define things any way he wants. "He chose us in Him" (Eph 1:4). To choose is the Greek word *eklegomai* meaning to choose, pick or select designating that there is a definite choice made. In the Old Testament God said it was "'Israel, whom I have chosen'" (Isa 44:1). Being chosen is described by the Hebrew word *bahar* meaning to choose or select based

upon a certain desire or preference to appoint to a position. He chose Jacob over Esau "so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand" (Ro 9:11). That choice is described by the Greek word *ekloge* meaning that a selection or election has taken place. It is predicated on "God's purpose" (:11). God "knows all things" (1Jn 3:20) and "His understanding is infinite" (Ps 147:5). He points out, "'I am the first and I am the last'" (Isa 44:6) and "'I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning'" (46:9-10). God chose Israel when "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Gal 3:6). Consequently the selection of Jacob was "not because of works but because of Him who calls" (Ro 9:11). Calling is expressed by the Greek word *kaleo* meaning to call, invite or summon. God did not rig the process to accept only those who he knew would agree to his plan. "These whom He predestined, He also called" (8:30) which is an invitation whereby "God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent" (Ac 17:30). It was based upon "the grace of God [that] He might taste death for everyone" (Heb 2:9). This is accomplished "In Him" (Eph 1:13).

You respond to the call "after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation" (:13). "He predestined, He also called" (Ro 8:30). To predestine is expressed by the Greek word *proorizo* meaning to decide beforehand.. That predestination occurs before the calling which demonstrates it is "in Him" (Eph 1:13). The key is that "having also believed you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise" (:13). We are "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled by His blood" (1Pe 1:1-2). "We have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works out all things after the counsel of

His will" (Eph 1:11). "He predestinated us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will" (:5). "He also predestinated to become conformed to the image of His Son" (Ro 8:29). "As many as had been appointed to eternal life believed" (Ac 13:48). To appoint is the Greek word tasso which is to determine, establish or assign. Peter therefore warns, "Be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you" (1Pe 1:10-11).

Inheritance

Paul's letter to the Romans is recognized as foundational theology. Ephesians has a similar status undoubtedly due to "the surpassing greatness of the revelations" (2Co 12:7). They are matched by the "surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe" (Eph 1:19). The revelations according to the Greek word hyperbole are superior or beyond measure which means that to some people might sound excessively religious or impractical. But to those who "having also believed" (:13) and have "faith in the Lord Jesus" (:15) the doctrine is valuable to "know what is the hope of His calling" (:18). "We have obtained an inheritance having been predestined . . . to the end that we . . . would be to the praise of His glory" (:11-12). It is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27). Then the Holy Spirit "is given as a pledge (NASB), deposit guaranteeing (NIV), earnest (KJV), guarantee (RSV) of our inheritance" (:14). "In Him we have redemption through His blood" (:7). "You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men" (1Co 7:23). We "were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph 1:13) "with a view to the redemption . . . to the praise of His glory" (:14). "For

the Lord will not abandon His people, nor will He forsake His inheritance" (Ps 94:14). An inheritance happens after "the death of the one who made" (Heb 9:16) the covenant. We are to know "what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Eph 1:18) who are "God's own possession" (:14). You are redeemed at salvation so "the redemption of the purchased possession" (:14) occurs in the future kingdom. We are "awaiting for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body" (Ro 8:23). "The anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God" (:19).

"When the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son . . . so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Gal 4:4-5). Redemption pertains to purchasing slaves or prisoners to set them free as when we "were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world" (:3). In the ancient world adoption was a legal process where a person was brought into a family and placed as a son with the same privileges as a biological child. "Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God" (:7). An heir is "owner of everything" (:1). "You have received a spirit of adoption as sons" (Ro 8:15) and "because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba Father!'" (Gal 4:6) whereby we know "we are children of God" (Ro 8:16). We are also "fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him" (:17). "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (:18). "The creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (:21).

Body of Christ

Paul uses the metaphor of "the whole [human] body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part" (Eph 4:16). Holistically "the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body" (1Co 12:12). There is "no division in the body" (:25). The body is a unit but "God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired" (:18). It is a figure of speech because "we are members of His body" (Eph 5:30) since "you are Christ's body" (1Co 12:27). "We, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another" (Ro 12:5) so "that the members may have the same care for one another" (1Co 12:25). "Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body" (Eph 5:23) "which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (1:23). He is the "head of the body, the church" (Col 1:18). God "put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church" (Eph 1:22). "The church is subject to Christ" (5:24). "When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all" (1Co 15:28).

It was to "reconcile them both in one body through the cross" (Eph 1:16) whereby "by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks . . . we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1Co 12:13). "We are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ" (Eph 4:15). We must hold "fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God" (Col 2:19). "Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a

woman, and God is the head of Christ" (1Co 11:3). "The equipping of the saints [is] for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12) so "the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord" (2:21) "into a dwelling of God in the Spirit" (:22).

It is in context of "a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times" (1:10) "not only in this age but also in the one to come" (:21). It is in terms of "the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth" (:10). "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together" (Col 1:17). He is seated "in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named" (Eph 1:21). "He put all things . . . under His feet" (:22) and has authority "over all things to the church" (:22). It is "the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (:23).

Fullness of Christ

God reconciled us "as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself" (Eph 1:5). Christ "loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (5:25). Therefore "through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father" (2:18). We are now "fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household" (:19). As a result "God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name" (Php 2:9). It is so that Christ "will come to have first place in everything" (Col 1:8) and "for all the fullness to dwell in Him" (:19). "All things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together" (:16-17). Christ "ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things" (Eph 4:10). There is "one Spirit . . . one Lord . . . one God and Father of all who is over all and through all in all" (:4-6).

Hoping in Christ is "to the praise of His glory" (Eph 1:12) and through suffering "we may also be glorified with Him" (Ro 8:17) which "is to be revealed in us" (:18). It is grace "which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved" (Eph 1:6) "to make you stand in the presence of His glory" (Jude 24). He "called us by His own glory" (2Pe 1:3) and "of His fullness we have all received" (Jn 1:16). It comes through "the true knowledge of Him" (2Pe 1:3) and Paul prayed that "the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and a revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Eph 1:17). Then "every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Php 2:11).

God has "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Eph 1:3). "His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness" (2Pe 1:3). Consequently Paul asked them "to walk in a manner worthy of [your] calling" (Eph 4:1) also stating "you were called in one hope of your calling" (:4). Furthermore, be "diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (:3) "until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man" (:13). "We are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even "Christ" (:15) to "the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ" (:13). We "also are being built together into a dwelling of God" (2:22) which is "the building up of the body of Christ" (4:12) by "being fitted together" (2:21). "To each one of us grace was given" (4:7) "until we all attain to the unity of the faith" (:13).

Unity of Spirit

Paul instructed to "put on the new self who is being renewed" (Col 3:10). Also, "put on a [new] heart" (:12) and "put on love" (:14). To put something on applies figuratively

to clothes which are basically a covering. The new self entails "a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him" (:11) in terms of "the likeness of God [which] has been created in the righteousness and holiness of the truth" (Eph 4:24). The new self walks "in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called" (:1) with the goal of preserving "the unity of the Spirit" (:3). This is accomplished "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love" (:2). Also, "put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other" (Col 3:12-13). Paul instructs "being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:3). In addition, "put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity" (Col 3:14). The bond of unity and peace is in and of the Spirit which is why you must put on the grace (divine enablement via unmerited favor) to make it possible.

Love is the "perfect" (Col 3:14) way to "preserve" (Eph 4:3) unity. It comes from "a heart of compassion [and] kindness" (Col 3:12). You have compassion when you sympathize with another person's misfortunes and are disposed to help and be merciful and gracious. It is in the context of "when you encounter various trials" (Ja 1:2) which requires "patience" (Eph 4:2, Col 3:12). Then this "testing of your faith produces endurance" (Ja 1:3) which has "its perfect result" (:4). Endurance is based upon having patience which is the ability to persevere through trouble without complaining or losing control. Patience is centered on an internal attitude that is a spiritual matter. You may have to submit to circumstances for a while and tolerate problems while calmly waiting for the situation to resolve itself. It is important to show "tolerance for one another in love" (Eph 4:2). Others have beliefs and ways of doing things. To put up with them

without getting provoked is forbearance. You can recognize and respect these differences without having to compromise your own standards. To achieve unity you will also need humility (Eph 4:2, Col 3:12). Spiritually it is dependent on acknowledging God's grace as opposed to being prideful and self-assertive. Human shortcomings must be confronted which hopefully would lead a person to being more modest and unassuming and less pretentious and obtrusive. Gentleness (Eph 4:2, Col 3:12) and kindness (:12) are also required. To be gentle is to be mild-mannered such that you don't easily lose your temper. It is to be soft-hearted and not given to offensive communication. Kindness is being in the habit of being friendly, generous and affectionate. "Whoever has a complaint against anyone, just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you" (:13).

Equipping of Saints

God only gave "some" (Eph 4:11) five-fold gifts. How does a person know he has one of those gifts? Jesus told Ananias that Paul was "a chosen instrument of Mine" (Ac 9:15). I was taking some Bible courses on-line from a school, and the instruction in one course was that their denomination wouldn't recognize anyone being in the ministry until they had earned a degree, which assumes that they had followed through to get their credentials. According to this denomination in Paul's case it wouldn't matter if "the stewardship of God's grace . . . was given me" (Eph 3:2), or "the stewardship from God [was] bestowed on me" (Col 1:25), or "I was appointed a preacher" (2Ti 1:11) and "this grace was given to preach" (Eph 3:8), since his statement that he "was made a minister" (:7) on its own wouldn't have been recognized by the denomination.

God gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers "for the equipping of the saints for the work of

service" (Eph 4:12). Some say the first two have fulfilled their purpose in founding the church and these people are called cessationists. Nonetheless, anyone in these five categories would have the qualification to train the saints. But does that mean that you couldn't understand anything yourself by studying the Bible on your own? I've heard some pastors say to their congregations that it was their exclusive responsibility to provide Bible instruction. In one church I attended it was made clear that only the pastor could officially counsel the flock. One day I saw an attendee downtown and bought him a cup of coffee and piece of pie and shot a game of pool with him. He was mentally challenged and should have made an appointment with the pastor. One day he saw me driving down the street and almost ran in front of the car. Unfortunately a month or so later he jumped off a bridge downtown into a waterfall and killed himself. Its like the veterans who died while waiting for their VA hospital appointments. In one sermon that church's pastor quoted a scripture saying that anyone who didn't cooperate with his recommendations would be disobedient. I operated the bookstore and checked out a great number of tapes on that sermon and soon almost half the church left. Much later I told the pastor what those people had concluded and he replied he hadn't said anything wrong. Then he died and the next pastor was requiring potential members to sign a document promising to follow his leadership. Many church splits are caused by so-called leaders trying to control the "laypeople." Once I visited churches in a nearby town and their overseers had created a document for potential members to sign promising to seek counseling before jumping to another church.

The "work of service, [is] to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the

knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:12-13). "We are to grow up in all aspects into Him" (:15) as a body that "grows with a growth which is from God" (Col 2:19). It is for "building up" (Eph 4:12) so that "the whole building, [is] being fitted together [and] is growing into a holy temple in the Lord" (2:21) "into a dwelling of God in the Spirit" (:22).

The New Self

Who would want to be "excluded from the life of God" (Eph 4:18) and "having no hope and without God in the world" (2:12)? However, there are those who "knew God" (Ro 1:21) "because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them" (:19) but "they did not honor Him as God or give thanks" (:21). There is the person who thinks he knows better "taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind" (Col 2:18). However, "they became futile in their speculations" (Ro 1:21). Peter told the Jews of "your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers" (1Pe 1:18) and Paul said the Gentiles walked "in the futility of their mind" (Eph 4:17). As a result of this futility "their foolish heart was darkened" (Ro 1:21) and they became "darkened in their understanding" (Eph 4:18). "Having become callous" (:19) they became "excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them because of the hardness of their heart" (:18). It is a conscious decision. Their speculations can be composed of deceptive "doctrine, by the trickery of men" (:14) which is why Peter warned "prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit" (1Pe 1:13). "Let no one deceive you with empty words" (Eph 4:19). They "have given themselves to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness" (:19). By "speaking out words of

vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality" (2Pe 2:18). "In all this they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you" (1Pe 4:4). "Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them" (Eph 5:11).

When they chose the wrong path they lost touch with God "because of the ignorance that is in them" (Eph 4:18) due to the "hardness of their heart" (:18). The NKJV calls it the "blindness" of their heart. However, hardness seems to imply that they have set up a barrier to truthfulness having "given themselves over" (:19). Blindness seems to be a side effect of "craftiness in deceitful scheming" (:14) "by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron" (1Ti 4:2). The "hardness of their heart" (Eph 4:18) results in "being darkened in their understanding" (:18) producing "ignorance" (:18) which indicates they are "misguided" (Heb 5:2) because they don't "believe and know the truth" (1Ti 4:3) since they "did not receive the love of the truth" (2Th 2:10). They are "separate from Christ" (Eph 2:12) and walk "according to the course of this world . . . [via] the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience" (Eph 2:2). "Having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent" (Ac 17:30). "Do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance" (1Pe 1:14). "Lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit" (Eph 4:22). "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (:23). "Laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one with his neighbor" (:25). "You were formerly in darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord" (5:8) consisting "of all goodness and righteousness and truth" (:9). "The Spirit is truth" (1Jn 5:6) and "truth is in Jesus" (Eph 4:21). "The new self . . . has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (:24).

Philippians

Paul writes again that "it is a safeguard for you" (Php 3:1). He reiterates that as a practicing Jew "as to the righteousness which is in the Law, [he was] found blameless" (:6). Nowadays most would consider that faultless. After all "Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; [and he] walked with God" (Ge 6:9). Also, Job "was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil" (Job 1:1). However, Paul said "I count all [these] things to be loss . . . and count them as rubbish" (Php 3:8). He regarded his accomplishments as forfeited or written off in an accounting sense since a loss is looked at as a debt and a gain as a credit. He said that "those things I have counted as loss" (:7) since, when taking an inventory, you count the occurrences which "things were gain to me" (:7). The gain was "righteousness which was in the Law" (:6) and "of my own derived from the Law" (:9) which, in accounting language, is a positive value. However, if "counted as loss" (:7) it has no value.

In a fiduciary sense it is like capital gains and losses. Paul uses it in banking vernacular saying "if he . . . owes you anything, charge that to my account" (Phm 1:18) even though he probably didn't have a savings account anywhere. Furthermore they "sent a gift more than once (Php 4:16) and Paul sought "the profit which increases to your account" (:17). When you place a deposit in an account you determine the proper amount setting the balance to increase by that amount imputing it as a gain. It is a "profit" (:17) which connotes money. "The kings came and fought . . . they took no plunder [gain] in silver" (Ju 5:19). However, a man "finds wisdom and . . . gains understanding [and] . . . her profit is better than the profit of silver and her gain better than fine gold" (Pr 3:13-14).

Reckoned

"Is there any . . . profit [gain] if you make your ways perfect?" (Job 22:3). Nowadays you are to "prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach" (Php 2:15). "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them" (2Co 5:19). "This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed" (Ro 3:25). "He has now reconciled you . . . in order to present you before Him holy and blameless" (Col 1:22). It is "so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2Co 5:21). "Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account" (Ro 4:8). "The Lord of hosts will have a day of reckoning" (Isa 2:12). "'The day that is coming will set them ablaze' says the Lord of hosts" (Mal 4:1). "They will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead" (1Pe 4:5). It is as certain as paying your income tax. You will be accepted "if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, not moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Col 1:23).

What is it to be accountable? Darius appointed "120 satraps over the kingdom, that they should be in charge" (Da 6:1) and "over them three commissioners . . . [that they] might be accountable to them" (:2). Accountable means responsible for what they were put in charge of. In the church "they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account" (Heb 13:17). "Let them do this . . . [or else it] would be unprofitable for you" (:18). Paul said "I count" (Php 3:8), he "counted" (:7), and cited God's "not counting" (2Co 5:19). In the concordance you see that the root word is *logos* which has many applications. It is a statement of a certain truth in the form of a message, speech, documenting, or testimony which establishes authenticity.

Credited

The NASB translates it "considered worthy" (Lk 20:35) whereas the KJV says "accounted as." Romans 8:36 is translated by the NASB as "considered" whereas the KJV presents "accounted as." The concordance cites the Greek word *logizomai* based on *logos* as the process of considering or taking something into account. It can entail thinking about, reasoning, or numbering. There can be an aspect of considering, supposing or proposing. The result is to conclude, acknowledge, impute, or credit with. Paul counts his loss "for the sake of Christ" (Php 3:7). He also counts it "in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ" (:8). It is based on "faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith" (:9). "Faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness" (Ro 4:9). "In it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith" (1:17). It is for "the man whom God credits righteousness apart from works" (4:6). The NASB translates it as "credited" whereas the KJV as "reckoned." However they are both the same Greek word for "counted" as *logizomai*. But the Romans quote from Genesis says "then he believed in the Lord and He reckoned it to him as righteousness" (15:6). The NASB changes the word to "reckoned." That is the Hebrew word *chashab* which the concordance says means to account, think, calculate, determine or regard. God reckoned Abraham's faith as righteousness and credited it to his account.

Knowing God

Paul gave up "all things" (:8) "for the sake of Christ" (:7). For something's sake is to ultimately pursue a certain purpose. Paul's end result is "Christ" (:7) He counts as "loss" (:7,8) "for the sake of" (:7) and "in view of" (:8) specific reasons and explains he wants to elaborate by saying "more than that"

(:8). Verses 8-11 are one sentence in the Greek composed of a construction which logically, carefully fits many pieces together. The goal is "knowing Christ" (:8) that he could "know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings: (:10). The purpose is "being conformed to His death in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" (:10-11).

When Paul treats his previous endeavors as a loss he is not belittling them. But he is juxtaposing the truth with its opposite for emphasis. "I delight in . . . the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6). Also he is renouncing what is false and "forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead" (Php 3:13). He highlights the better way as "the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (:8). It is personal knowledge of Christ and what he represents. It is "resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself" (Col 2:2). How do you know this? In a worldly way you could vicariously share someone else's experience using sympathy and your imagination. In an existential way you could exercise your freedom to decide how to respond not really understanding it all. But "if anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know; but if anyone loves God he is known by Him" (1Co 8:2-3). Knowing God is a mutual relationship. Knowing is "all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding" (Col 2:2). You are "enlightened . . . and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit" (Heb 6:4) and "have tasted . . . the powers of the age to come" (:5). "His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him" (2Pe 1:3). Paul sought to be "found in Him having the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith" (Php 3:9). "They will not teach again . . . saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they will all know Me" (Jer 31:34).

Christ in You

"Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-unless you indeed fail the test?" (2Co 13:5). The preposition "in" denotes a location or place with certain defined boundaries. It could also mean you agree with some proposed truth and take it further by identifying with it. Therefore if "Christ is in you" (:5) you are of "those who are in Christ Jesus" (Ro 8:1). It is not designating a physical place per se. But it depends on "if you are in the faith" (1Co 13:5). When a person "believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness" (Ro 4:5). Paul concludes "I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test" (2Co 13:6).

How do you conduct this self-test? You must know what it means to be "in the faith" (:5). When you believed "you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise who is given as a pledge of our inheritance" (Eph 1:13-14). You are now "in Him" (:13) which is your position. "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). Therefore "God abides in him" (1Jn 4:15). To abide means to stay or remain in a permanent relationship. "We know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us His Spirit" (4:13). It is "this mystery . . . which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27).

It is "He who raised Jesus from the dead . . . who indwells you" (Ro 8:11). Christ "was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection of the dead" (1:4). "After listening to the message of truth" (Eph 1:13) "you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus" (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). But unless the "Spirit of God dwells in you . . . [for] if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him" (Ro 8:9). "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God" (1Jn 4:15).

Abide in Him

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). "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life" (Jn 3:36). "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).

"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). "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). They had "no need for anyone to teach you" (1Jn 2:27).

Suffering

Paul wanted to know "the fellowship of His sufferings" (Php 3:10). This was initiated when Christ told Ananias that Saul was "a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name . . . [and] I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Ac 9:15-16). Paul later said, "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church" (Col 1:24). He saw it as "death working in us, but life in you" (2Co 4:12). "We who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body" (:11). "If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation . . . which is

effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer" (2Co 1:6). "Why are we also in danger every hour?" (1Co 15:30). "I affirm . . . I die daily" (:31). It is more than a lifestyle or mindset. It is an existence "being conformed to His death" (Php 3:10).

The "afflictions of Christ" (Col 1:24) happened when "Christ suffered for us in the flesh" (1Pe 4:1) "for sins" (3:18). "Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered" (Heb 5:8). It was appropriate "in bringing many sons to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (2:10). "As you are partakers of the sufferings" (2Co 1:7) then "when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy" (1Pe 4:13). We are "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him" (Ro 8:17). "The same sufferings are experienced by your brethren in the world" (2Pe 5:9) so "after you have suffered a while . . . [Christ] will strengthen and settle you" (:10).

Power of Resurrection

One of the things Paul wanted to know was "the power of His resurrection" (Php 3:10). He didn't say he wanted to know just about the resurrection itself but was interested in the "power" of it. It was "the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead" (Ro 8:11). "God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power" (1Co 6:14). Also, the power of the resurrection has ramifications. According to the concordance, the Greek word for it is *dunamis*, meaning a violent, strong force or mighty work. It is derived from *dunamai* meaning the ability or possibility of exerting it is available. In terms of the resurrection the "dead are raised up" (Mt 11:5). The concordance cites it with the Greek word *egeiro* saying it is as one who is in a sitting or lying position

being woken from sleep, disease or death. It is to lift, raise, or stand up from obscurity or non-existence. "The Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you'" (Ro 9:17).

"By a man also came resurrection from the dead" (1Co 15:21). "Then comes the end . . . when He has abolished all authority and power" (:24). These two words must be distinguished. "He who stands firm in his heart, being under no constraint, but has authority over his own will . . . has decided this in his own heart" (1Co 7:37 NASB). Another translation instead says he "has power" (:37 KJV). Power is the actual strength or force. The concordance defines authority with the Greek word *exousia* meaning the privilege, capacity, or jurisdiction to do something. "There is no authority except from God" (Ro 13:1). "Does not the potter have a right over the clay" (Ro 9:21 NASB). The KJV says rather that he has "the power" (:21). Paul had authority to carry out his responsibilities. "If others share the right over you, do we not more?" (1Co 9:12). There is what "Christ has accomplished through [Paul] in the power of signs and wonders" (Ro 15:18). "Others share the right" (1Co 9:12) to make a "living from the gospel" (:14). But Paul said "we did not use this right" (:12) because he did "offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel" (:18).

Raised in Power

"All is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory . . . [and] raised in power" (1Co 15:42). The "power is . . . strength, which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead" (Eph 1:19,20). Christ acknowledged he had "'accomplished the work'" (Jn 17:4) and now "upholds all things by the word of His power" (Heb 1:3). "Christ is the power of God" (1Co 1:24). The "kingdom of God

does not consist of words but in power" (4:20)). Christ "is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Eph 3:20). His primary purpose was to redeem and reconcile mankind to himself. "To us who are being saved [the cross] is the power of God" (1Co 1:18) and the gospel "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Ro 1:16). Plus we are "protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation" (1Pe 1:5). Paul said it was a "gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power" (Eph 3:7). Furthermore "our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit with full conviction" (1Th 1:5).

There is a long term aspect of the "working of His power" (Eph 3:7) "that works within us" (:20). God "will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself" (Php 3:21). It involves "a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1Pe 1:5) having "made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2Pe 1:16). Without salvation a person would be "away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (2Th 1:9). We are to "be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ" (Php 1:10). Paul's desire was to "confirm you to the end" (1Co 1:8) and he was "convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day" (2Ti 1:12).

Strengthened with Power

At the macro level Christ "upholds all things" (Heb 1:3). But what about the micro level in an individual's life? He is "able to establish you" (Ro 16:25). "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves" (2Co 4:7). We are "weak in Him, yet we live with Him because of the power

of God" (13:4). Paul said he would "rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me" (12:9). It is "in accordance with the working of the strength of His might" (Eph 1:19).

How is the power manifested in a person's everyday life? "God will . . . fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power" (2Th 1:11). It is "by the power of God through faith" (1Pe 1:5). It is so "faith would rest on the power of God" (1Co 2:5) and to "everyone who believes" (Ro 1:16). "His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him" (2Pe 1:3). Paul prayed that "the God of Hope fill you with joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Ro 15:13). "God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline" (1Ti 1:7). He desired for them to be "strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience" (Col 1:11). Therefore "be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God" (Eph 6:10-11).

Achieve the Goal

Paul wished to "attain to the resurrection of the dead" (Php 3:11). Some students believe that there are two resurrections. However Paul said he had not "already attained it" (:12) but he did "press on toward the goal" (:14). The context is the key to keep from getting off track. He mentions attaining "it" (:12) and equates it with to "become perfect" (:12). The resurrection and perfection are equivalent but different. His intention was to "press on" (:12) that he could reach the goal, but realized he had not "laid hold of it yet" (:13). Resurrection (:11) and perfection (:12) were cited as goals. In addition, there is that "I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus" (:12). Jesus told

Ananias that Paul was chosen "to bear My name before the Gentiles" (Ac 9:15). But Paul expressed he did "not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet" (:13). That context seems to encompass more than just his assignment to the Gentiles. His desire was to be "reaching forward to what lies ahead" (:13). You can't reach for something you don't see. He wanted to "press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God" (:14). It was necessary to "press on" (:12) because "as many as are perfect, have this attitude" (:15). He had not "already become perfect" (:12) but was with "as many as are perfect" (:15). To walk uprightly is to "keep living by that same standard to which we have attained" (:16). If you stray "God will reveal that also to you" (:15). The big picture is that "our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior" (:20). The "prize" (:14) is the "resurrection" (:11) when God "will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory" (:21). "In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award me on that day" (1Ti 4:8). "In a race all run . . . [so] run in such a way that you may win" (1Co 9:24).

Colossians

Paul wrote the letter to the Colossians while imprisoned in Rome. He had traveled through the area on his third missionary journey on the way to Ephesus. Colossae was on the Lycus River on a busy east-west trade route, but the nearby towns of Laodicea and Hierapolis were more commercially successful. It was in western Asia Minor when in 670-546 BC it was known as the Kingdom of Lydia. Phrygia occupied the eastern part of the region. In 223-187 BC thousands of Jews were transported there from Mesopotamia and Babylon. On the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem some of the participants were from "Phrygia and Pamphylia" (Ac 2:10).

Paul heard about the church from Epaphras who is said to have planted the churches in that area after he had studied the gospel under Paul in Ephesus. In his epistle to Philemon Paul writes "Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you" (Phm 32). He cites that they had learned the gospel "from Epaphras, our fellow bond servant" (Col 1:7). You don't just travel from Colossae to Rome on a long weekend visit. Epaphras was an official co-minister with Paul who said he was "a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf" (:7). It seems that Epaphras needed Paul's advice in an important matter and shared having "informed us of your love in the Spirit" (:8). Consequently Paul replied, "since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (:9). His epistle deals with the region of Phrygia because he instructed "when this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans" (4:16). The church was not a large physical edifice of those "who are in Laodicea . . . [but rather like] Nympha and the church that is in her house" (:15). It was a significant presence because, in Ephesus, Paul taught daily in the school of Tyrannus for two years "so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (Ac 19:10). In Thessalonica they complained, "'These men who have upset the world have come here also'" (17:6). Paul told the Colossians that the gospel had come to them "just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing" (Col 1:6).

Incipient Deception

The Phrygians were skilled and sophisticated. There was a Hellenistic culture due to Greek occupation and the Greek language was commonly used. Naturally Greek thought, ideas and philosophy would be understood with its

metaphysical tendencies. The church there was composed primarily of Gentiles but there was a sizable Jewish community. There were other so-called religions and the Romans were known to tolerate just about every one and incorporate them into their culture. There was idolatry from pagan practices cultivated from their original sources in Babylon. Greeks, in particular, encouraged pursuing knowledge as Paul discovered that "Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness" (1Co 1:22-23). In a down-to-earth way they believed in the worship of nature because, to them, it was the source of life. However, they were also dualistic because they believed that matter and spirit were co-eternal. In the spiritual sense they had their gods who they believed controlled the universe. On the metaphysical level they believed that spirit (represented by God) was good, but that matter, having been only created, was evil. At least they had a suspicion that they were spiritual beings. But since humanity had been in rebellion against God, their spiritual sensitivities could have been just as much from the imaginations of their mind. Ecstatic reveries were practiced to precipitate spiritual experience. They held ceremonies to placate the gods and Paul said "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons" (1Co 10:20). "For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false" (2Th 2:11).

Some church people may have gotten the idea that it would be more effective to mix the gospel with what the pagan Gentiles already believed so that Christianity would appear more palatable. When Paul was in Athens "some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him" (Ac 17:18). They observed, "'He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities'-because he was preaching Jesus

and the resurrection" (:18) and said, "'You are bringing strange things to our ears; we want to know therefore what these things mean'" (:20). They "used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new" (:21). But apparently Epaphras believed that merging Greek thought with Christianity was a threat to the church. That's why he went all the way to Rome to get answers from Paul. A warning came that "wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires" (1Ti 4:3). Peter said, "There will be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies" (2Pe 2:1). Paul expressed this concern when he replied in his epistle to the Colossians that "no one may delude you with persuasive argument" (Col 2:4 NASB) "lest any man should beguile you with enticing words" (:4 NKJV). Furthermore, "see to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men" (:8 NASB) "lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit" (:8 NKJV). But combining ideas from different beliefs would become syncretistic. That is why this threat has been dubbed heretical teaching from within that church. It may have "the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion" (Col 2:23) but they are only the "commandments and teachings of men" (:22) resulting in being "inflated without cause by his fleshly mind" (:18).

Heretical Doctrine

To some, Paul's purpose for the Colossian letter was to confront the false teachers and refute the heresy. They see it as a diabolical plan to undermine the church starting with Gnosticism combined with Judaism. Paul lists a number of faults as though they are FAQs but there is no systematic description of the doctrinal errors. Paul seems to answer problems the church had which had been brought up by

Epaphras, but their cause is not clear and an explanation must come from clues in the statements Paul made. This must come from studying the content and context of verses 2:8-3:4. Most religions attempt to address the heavenly or eternal. But they can't prove what their senses can't detect so they implement "the elementary principles of the world" (Col 2:8,20) in their schemes. However, Paul is saying the Colossian heretics are shortsighted in their approach by ignoring that it is "according to Christ" (:8). We have "died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world" (:20). If the heresies were circulating in the church they were either ignorant of the church's teaching, or didn't understand it, or felt they would supplement the basics by their own self-effort. Man has a propensity to do things his own way. But "when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death" (Jas 1:15). Zechariah prophesied, "'Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts'" (Zec 4:6).

Paul cites the pride, earthiness, and ineffectiveness of this asceticism. What value is "self-abasement and severe treatment of the body" (Col 2:23) or to "submit yourself to decrees, such as, 'Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!'" (:20-21). These have their roots in Jewish legalism. Paul warns "let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement" (:18). Were Judaizers active in the church? Paul advised "let on one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival" (:16). Jewish society developed their own traditions by interpreting the Old Testament in a certain way which led to an attitude of separatism and intellectual exclusiveness being "inflated without cause: (:18). However, Paul stated "there is no distinction between Greek and Jew . . . but Christ is all, and in all" (3:11) and "the substance belongs to Christ" (2:17).

We "have died to the basic principles of the world" (:20) and are to "fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2), practice the law of love (Jas 2:8), and follow "the law of liberty" (:12). Anything less would be just "the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion" (:23).

The Colossians

"The nations were separated on the earth after the flood" (Ge 10:32). Then they said to one another, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name" (11:4). A similar thing happened in Colossae where some would get involved "in the worship of angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen . . . [with] his fleshly mind" (Col 2:18). By taking a stand a person tried to make a name for himself. The Colossians could have been exposed to rudimentary gnostic philosophy. Just like they built the Tower of Babel they began constructing a philosophy based on presumption. Some religions do this too by choosing scripture verses out of context and piecing their own puzzle together using "brick for stone, and . . . tar for mortar" (Ge 11:3). The correct method comes by Christ who is the head of the church which "grows with a growth which is from God" (Col 2:19).

Paul wouldn't have mentioned that there were those who were "delighting in . . . the worship of angels" (:18) just for a couple of people. "Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head" (:18-19 NIV). They believed that there were hierarchies of angelic levels (eons) you would traverse towards God and that secret knowledge (gnosis) was necessary for passage. How could anyone even believe that since we know that it is "Christ Himself in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (:2-3). But there are New Age beliefs that there are spirit guides that lead you through your journey. The main

problem with the gnostic's mystical and esoteric beliefs was that they explained Jesus as an emanation (eon) like YHWH who was at a lower level because, to them, YHWH created the kosmos which was composed of matter and not spirit. Even though their thinking would affirm Jesus' deity it denied that Jesus was fully man who is "the one mediator also between God and men" (1Ti 2:5) because "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory" (Jn 1:14).

There is a modern religion that believes that man is just like God because "God created man in His own image" (Ge 1:27). God confirmed to Moses that he "'has appeared to you'" (Ex 4:5) even though Moses "was afraid to look at God" (3:6). Later God told him "'no man can see Me and live!'" (33:20) but then said "'I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen'" (:23). Their religion is based on their interpretation citing Moses "endured, as seeing Him who is unseen" (Heb 11:27). They disregard that God is "the invisible God" (Col 1:15), that "no one has beheld God at any time" (1Jn 4:12) and that God "dwells in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen or can see" (1Ti 6:16). It would take deception to engage in "the worship of the angels" (Col 2:18) even though "you shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only" (Mt 4:10). They even have their own customized version of salvation.

Supremacy of Christ

The false teachings may have been more than just one person promulgating the doctrine and it may have spread to a group of churches. Everyone has heard of church splits where doctrine divides. Paul warned, "I say this in order that no one may delude you with persuasive argument" (Col 2:4). He continues saying, "See to it [beware] that no one takes you captive [kidnaps, seduces, enslaves]" (:8). The new ideas are speculative and hypothetical and have the "appearance of wisdom" (:23) but are only "empty deception" (:8). Paul

warned Timothy to "guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing argument of what is falsely called 'knowledge'-which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith" (1Ti 6:20-21). "Let no one deceive you through empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience" (Eph 5:6). If someone "takes you captive" (Col 2:8) it is "with all the deception of wickedness" (2Th 2:10) with "a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged" (:11-12). "It was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression" (1Ti 2:14).

The false teachers were mixing philosophy with Christianity. However, Peter "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Ac 4:8) told them "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" (:12). Those teachers were misled when they combined human ideas with scripture creating a universalism or syncretism and diluted the supremacy of Christ. Paul set them straight because he "was made a minister . . . [for] preaching the word of God" since he had "received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:12). You could say that those false teachers were confused because it had been "the mystery which has been hidden from past ages" (Col 1:26) and therefore the opportunity had been presented to "speak forth the mystery of Christ" (4:3) to enlighten them. The mystery is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (1:27) and by their understanding this it would result "in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself" (2:2).

Who God Is

The gnostics explained existence as beginning at the lowest, evil level of matter and proceeding upward through emanations towards God who is spirit and good and inhabits

the highest, heavenly sphere. If you followed these teachers it would undermine what the Bible says about God. At creation God said, "Let Us make man in Our image" (Ge 1:26; 3:22; 11:7). The name is Elohim which represents the triune God. Firstly, "the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters" (1:2), and furthermore, Paul uses the greeting in his letters of, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Ro 1:7; 1Co 1:3; Gal 1:3). The gnostics said that YHWH created the universe which is composed of matter so he would have to be a lower emanation because he identified with matter. However, YHWH is composed of the four consonants which make up the divine name (i.e. the Hebrew language doesn't include vowels so the readers supply them when they read). Then they decided to be extra-careful not to misuse God's name because, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain" (Ex 20:7). To protect against mistakes the scribes put the vowels from "Adonai" (Lord) beside the consonants to remind them to say Lord instead. Then a Latinized form pronounced Jehovah was created from it which was actually not a real word at all. The real pronunciation of YHWH was lost over time but scholars believe it was probably pronounced Yahweh. Moses asked God who he should say sent him and God replied, "I am who I am" (Ex 3:14). Also, God said to say to Israel that he was "The Lord, the God of your fathers" (:15). "This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations" (:15). "Even the Lord, the God of hosts, the Lord is His name" (Hos 12:5).

The gnostics had differing interpretations of who Jesus was. Some said he was equal with God so others then pointed out that he couldn't therefore have appeared in a human body. Then others countered that he just seemed human but was really spirit. However, if he was not incarnate then his sacrifice would have been in vain. Also, if he was not

completely divine then he wouldn't have qualified as being sinless. "Although He existed in the form of God, [he] did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant . . . [and] humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death" (Php 2:6-8). After he was resurrected he identified himself to John as "the Alpha and Omega . . . who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev 1:8) and again as "the first and the last, who was dead and has come to life" (2:8). In addition, "He is the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15). "He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature" (Heb 1:3). "In Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Col 2:9). Jesus told Philip, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9). "From now on you know Him, and have seen Him" (:17).

Image of God

Paul wrote his letter to the Colossians in prison where Epaphras had told him about the church which Paul had never visited. He writes them of the "faith and love [they have] that spring up from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven" (Col 1:5). He cites that they had heard the gospel "and understood God's grace in all its truth" (:6). They had heard it in "all" its truth and were not verging on backsliding. He prayed that they would receive "all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (:9). Commentators say that a letter contains certain ideas or themes that possess a flow of thought filling the content contextually so as to present an argument in a logical way. Some might say that his only purpose was to counter the false teaching that was threatening the church. But he was not just addressing questions as with the Corinthians saying, "Now about food sacrificed to idols" (1Co 8:1). Creation and redemption are the two main themes of the Bible and Paul focused on them to build up the Colossians. It would be important to be "strengthened with all power . . . for

the attaining of all steadfastness and patience" (Col 1:11). He knew they would accept and approve what was presented and therefore receive any instruction regarding their situation. He proceeds saying, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation" (Col 1:15). Some would say Paul is applying certain less-used words such as "firstborn" and "fullness" which the Gnostics also utilized that would refute their doctrine by defining them in the correct way.

Paul begins by changing direction somewhat from explaining the kingdom of Christ to a poetic description of the nature of the kingdom in Colossians 1:15-20. Many see this as a lyrical and linguistic change from incorporating a church hymn which Christians would have been familiar with. It also seems likely to some that Paul would have inserted his own theology into the hymn at certain points. One of the main arguments of this epistle is the deity of Christ. Paul says, "He is the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15) which focuses on his relationship with the Father. The word "image" in Greek is 'eikon', and at first glance, it means that he reflects God as a representative and exactly symbolizes him. The same word is used in that "God created man in his own image" (Ge 1:27). The gospel is "the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2Co 4:4). On a deeper level, being an image means that Christ manifests the actual presence of the Father. Hebrews uses the Greek term 'charakter' as "the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature" (Heb 1:3). This must be comprehended at the spiritual level, and because he is "the invisible God" (Col 1:15), it requires Jesus who "made him known" (Jn 1:18). It is possible because he is "God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side" (:18). Jesus asked Philip, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9) even though "no one has ever seen God" (1:18). "Since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen,

being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse" (Ro 1:20). We know that Jesus "existed in the form of God" (Php 2:6) but then took human form "being made in the likeness of men" (:7). He prayed, "Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (Jn 17:5). In our case we are to "put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him" (Col 3:10). This is at the spiritual level. "God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1Sa 16:7). Paul prayed "that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling" (Eph 1:18). We are to be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Ro 8:29) and "transformed into the same image from glory to glory" (1Co 3:18).

Firstborn before Creation

Jesus is "the firstborn of all creation" (Col 1:15). An average person would probably parse the word into "first" and "born." In the past it referred primarily to the first offspring of a man or animal. The word itself was used mostly in Biblical writing and occurs 130 times in the Old Testament. Births in a family in succession would be seen in the context of time. Some interested in the Bible have taken this to mean that Jesus was God's first creation. The Gnostics took it a step further teaching that created beings were emanations of God and Jesus was in the next-to-highest aeon under God. Arius promulgated this long ago in Egypt, and even today, certain sectarian groups adhere to this idea. But that is not what Paul means by this scripture. Jewish society had a concept of the birthright where the first son had an honored position in the family. He had certain rights and privileges. Psalm 89:27 says, "I will also appoint him my firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth." With the birthright he was the heir and also had the responsibility of managing the family's affairs.

Jesus was "appointed heir of all things" (Heb 1:2). "He has inherited a more excellent name than they" (:4). "God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name" (Php 2:9). The term developed beyond the use as primogeniture (physical birth) into the concept of priority and sovereignty. It became a metaphor, as with, he is "the firstborn over all creation" (Col 1:15) which distinguishes him from creation itself and gives him a preeminent position as opposed to a subsidiary role. He is the first begotten Son closely united with God, antecedent to the whole, collective creation. There is an inferential reference to rank in dignity temporally, but Christ conditions the creation and is independent of it. The main point is the Son's permanent relationship with the Father which denotes deity and lays the groundwork for creation itself. "In these last days [God] has spoken to us in His Son . . . through whom also He made the world" (Heb 1:2).

Before all Things

Paul begins the section saying that Jesus is the image of God and the firstborn of creation (Col 1:15). Is he deliberately confronting the false teachers? Perhaps he thought it was just a good time to share the "stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you" (Eph 3:2). After all, it had been "revealed to His holy apostles" (:5) and he stated "that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery" (:2). He had received "the surpassing greatness of the revelations" (2Co 12:7). He therefore continued saying, "For by Him all things are created" (Col 1:16). "For" denotes a conclusion as if he had said "because." "All things" are specified which designates supremacy which counters the Gnostic's arguments that hierarchies have restrictions of authority. "All things" is repeated seven times to reinforce importance. These revelations had to be to the "prophets in the Spirit" (Eph 2:5) because no man could personally figure this out on his

own. "The world was made through Him" (Jn 1:10) and "all things came into being through Him" (:3). The Gnostics might have been able to rationalize this somehow. However, Paul's revelation is all-encompassing explaining "there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him" (1Co 8:6). Also, there is "Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him" (:6). Maybe determining when this happened is the key. Paul points out that "He is before all things" (Col 1:17) which speaks of his preexistence. "He was in the beginning with God" (Jn 1:2) and had "equality with God" (Php 2:6). He prayed, "Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (Jn 17:5). "You loved Me before the foundation of the world" (:24).

Here Paul focuses on Jesus as evidenced by the pronouns "He", "Him" and "Himself" occurring fifteen times in six verses. Paul concludes that the purpose is "so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything" (Col 1:18). He sums it up saying "for Him and through Him and to Him are all things" (Ro 11:36). This parallels the verse "by Him all things were created . . . [and] all things have been created through Him and for Him" (Col 1:16). It is obvious that Jesus is not just an aeon as the Gnostics hypothesized. One interpreter explains "by Him" as literally "in Him" which connotes systematically planning the endeavor. "It was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him" (:19). The phrase "through Him" appears three times in verses 16 and 20. It means that he is the agent of creation because he has the power and ability to carry it out as it is he "through whom are all things" (Heb 2:10). Finally, everything has been created "for Him" (Col 1:16), or literally, "unto Him." It is he "for whom are all things" (Heb 2:10). It was God's purpose "through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col 1:20). It was prophesied, "Behold I come" (Ps 40:7) because "I delight to do Thy will, O my God"

(:8). Then "every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Php 2:11). It was prophesied, "Thou dost make him to rule over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet" (Ps 8:6). Finally, "the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all" (1Co 15:28).

All Subjected to Him

"All things were created" (Col 1:16) "by Him" (:16) and "through Him" (:16). "He is before all things" (:17). "In the beginning was the Word" (Jn 1:1). "Apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being" (:3). This preexistence gives Christ a supremacy or priority and a prominent position in creation. Creation is conditional upon and rests in him. The context of "all things" does not limit creation to only certain areas because it encompasses everything "both in the heavens and on the earth" (Col 1:16). Since they "have been created" (:16) they remain so. "In Him all things hold together" (:17). It was not just based upon a "first cause" and everything evolved afterwards but that Christ sustains creation and directs development on a permanent basis. Paul described creation "both in the heavens and on the earth, visible and invisible" (:15). Here he uses a literary style called a chiasm which juxtaposes twofold categories to define a relationship. The outside members receive emphasis, so heaven/invisible is highest, followed by earth/visible. Heaven is defined as a place above the earth and where spirits reside (and Christians by way of appropriation). In the immediate context, heaven and earth are set apart but combined for purposes of affinity. Paul elaborates saying that "thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities" (:16) have been created. It seems that the reference is to classes of angelic beings since Colossians 2:8-3:4 discusses the subject. It could be that he is answering the hypothesis regarding eons by the Gnostics.

Many scriptures mention together the words rulers, authorities, and power. "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places" (Eph 6:12). "Against" is mentioned five times. However, God "raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion" (Eph 1:20-21). "He is the head over all rule and authority" (Col 2:10). "He had disarmed the rulers and authorities" (:15) and "is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him" (1Pe 3:22). "He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church" (Eph 1:22). Paul was "convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities . . . nor any created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God" (Ro 8:38-39). "The manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places" (Eph 3:10). Then the end comes "when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power" (1Co 15:24).

Firstborn

Paul's hymn in Colossians 1:15-20 has two parts. The first pertains to who Christ is saying, "He is the image of the invisible God" (:15). The second deals with his purpose saying, "He is also head of the body, the church" (:18). The two halves are tied together with his being "the firstborn of all creation" (:15) and "the firstborn from the dead" (:18). We have seen that "firstborn" doesn't have a time connotation per se but rather means that Christ has prominent position and primacy in authority "so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything" (:18). He is "the firstborn from the

dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth" (Rev 1:5). He is "the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead" (Ro 1:4). However, there is a time orientation because "He is before all things" (:17) and "He is the beginning" (:18). At a point in time he "made peace through the blood of His cross" (:20). The Greek text places the thoughts "He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead" (:18) side by side in an appositional relationship so that the second restates or interprets the first. Paul stated that "we have testified of God that He raised up Christ" (1Co 15:15) and that "Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits" (:20). In Israel's grain harvest some grains ripened first before the main harvest and they could be gathered representing the firstfruits. The Father "brings the firstborn into the world" (Heb 1:6) so that there would be those "predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He could be the firstborn among many brethren" (Ro 8:29). They would become the "church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven . . . [who are] the spirits of the righteous made perfect" (Heb 12:23). He has "raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6).

Jesus initiated an age of redemption by his sacrifice at the cross and, as such, "He is the beginning" (Col 1:18). It required a new direction "from the dead" (:18) because the status quo was that through Adam "came death" (1Co 15:21) and "in Adam all die" (:22). But fortunately we are "buried with Him through baptism into death" (Ro 6:4) and by Christ "came the resurrection of the dead" (1Co 15:21). "When we were dead in trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ" (Eph 2:5). Because the Holy Spirit "dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies" (Ro 8:11). Everyone who "believes in Him may have everlasting life" (Jn 6:40) and we "should walk in newness of life" (Ro 6:4). There is "neither Greek nor Jew" (Col 3:11), "slave nor free . . . [or] male nor female; for you are all one in

Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28) and "Christ is all and in all" (Col 3:11). "Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits" (1Co 15:20) and "by Man also came the resurrection of the dead" (:21) so that "all shall be made alive" (:22). But is anything postponed? It says it happens "afterward [to] those who are Christ's at His coming" (:23). Jesus said, "I will raise him up at the last day" (Jn 6:40) and "in a moment . . . at the last trumpet . . . the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1Co 15:52). Some of these dead are those who had been killed (Rev 20:4) and "the rest of the dead did not live again" (:4) for a while. It is the "first resurrection" (:5). There are also those "who are alive until the coming of the Lord" (1Th 4:15) who "shall be caught up together with them in the clouds" (:17). In this context Christ's resurrection is a promise of a new life and a sign of things to come.

His Body the Church

Colossians 1:15-17 establishes that Christ is infinite (beginning and end) and sovereign (absolute rule over all). You might say that verse 18 makes a transition from the natural to the spiritual by saying "He is also the head of the body, the church." The body is Paul's metaphor saying that as the brain directs and controls the functions of the body so Christ has authority over the operation of his church. The Greek word "ekklesia" defines the church as his called out ones. "You have come to Mount Zion . . . to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven . . . and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect" (Heb 12:22-23). Paul explained to the Ephesians that they were initially "separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise" (Eph 2:12). God had originally chosen Israel saying, "You are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth" (Dt

7:6). But Israel decided not to follow God. However, "as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable" (Ro 11:28-29). Consequently, Christ turned to the Gentiles and "is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal life" (Heb 9:15). Peter cites that the Gentiles therefore became "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God" (1Pe 2:9). Paul explained that "in Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will" (Eph 1:11). You are "called according to His purpose" (Ro 8:28). He "has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace" (2Ti 1:9).

"He is also head of the body, the church" (Col 1:18), "He Himself being the Savior of the body" (Eph 5:23). He has the supremacy because its members owe allegiance since he has redeemed them. "The church is subject to Christ" (:24). God "put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church" (:22). This is reflected in the wording of Colossians 1:15-20 and Ephesians 1:21-23: "all things"(6); "He is"(4); "through Him"(3); "in Him"(2); "all the fullness"(2); "all creation", "all rule", "His", "He Himself", "by Him", "for Him" (1). "Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of the woman, and God is the head of Christ" (1Co 11:3). The church is the precursor of Christ's ultimate kingdom. It is "that in Himself He might make the two into one new man" (Eph 2:15) to "reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross" (:16). We become "fellow-citizens with the saints, and are of God's household" (:19) "in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord" (:21).

God "calls you into His kingdom and glory" (1Th 2:12) and

it is he "through whom you were called into fellowship with his Son" (1Co 1:9). Paul told them that God has "called you by the grace of Christ" (Gal 1:6) and had "set me apart from birth and called me through His grace" (:15). "Whom He predestined, these He also called" (Ro 8:30) and "chose us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4). You are "those who have been chosen of God" (Col 3:12). "There is one body and one Spirit-just as you were called to one hope whom you were called" (Eph 4:1). "From the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit" (2Th 2:13). He chose you "through belief in the truth" (:13) and "called you to this through our gospel" (:14). There are actually two terms here of "calling" and "choosing" as Peter advises to "be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you" (2Pe 1:10). "From the standpoint of the gospel [calling] they are enemies . . . but from the standpoint of God's choice [choosing] they are beloved" (Ro 11:28). "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph 1:13). Paul said, "I entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling" (Eph 4:1) of God "who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling" (2Ti 1:9). "As long as you practice these things, you will never stumble" (2Pe 1:10) if you "let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which you were called in one body" (Col 3:15). "In this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you" (2Pe 1:11).

Jesus Sends You! (John 20:21)

Testimony

A Christian witness must be "ready to make a defense . . . for the hope that is in you" (1Pe 3:15). Your testimony is based on the truth of the gospel. God has "furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Ac 17:31). Jesus "was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead" (Ro 1:4). To be able to explain you must understand Jesus' part in the predetermined plan. He "began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things" (Mt 16:21). He told them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day" (17:22-32). It was a planned sequence of events. However, he said, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead" (17:9). On the Cross he said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Lk 23:46). Jesus was buried and would be raised on the third day. Some point out that during this time he preached "unto the spirits in prison" (1Pe 3:19 KJV). What form did he take at this time? "He appeared in a different form" (Mk 16:12) to disciples on the road to Emmaus. Later he appeared to the disciples and "He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace be to you'" (Lk 24:36). "They were startled and frightened and thought they were seeing a spirit" (:37). He said, "Touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have" (:39).

On the journey to Emmaus "He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the scriptures" (Lk 24:27). Later at dinner "He took bread and . . . began giving it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him" (:30). It shows that having a supernatural body also requires a spiritual anointing to discern it. He told them, "'Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee,

and they will see Me" (Mt 28:10). This was to fulfill the prophetic statement made earlier that, "After I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee" (26:32). Then when they met with the Apostles and "were telling these things" (Lk 24:36) Jesus appeared and "when they saw Him, they worshipped Him; but some were doubtful" (Mt 28:17).

Appeared

Jesus having been resurrected was discovered by two women who went to the tomb. Then Mary Magdalene "went and reported to those who had been with Him . . . [and] when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it" (Mk 16:10-11). When the Emmaus disciples related their experience to the Apostles "they did not believe them either" (Mk 16:13). Jesus responded, "Why do doubts arise in your hearts?" (:37). It's as if he was saying that they should know better. How could they disregard all they had learned and experienced the last three years since even Jesus had said "you have been with Me from the beginning" (Jn 15:27)? Their depth of understanding was such that "Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God'" (Jn 6:68-69)." He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen" (Mk 16:14). Jesus "said to Thomas, 'Reach here with your finger, and see My hands . . . and do not be unbelieving but believing'" (Jn 20:27). "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed" (:29). Jesus began to refresh what he had taught them. "He said to them, 'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you'" (Lk 24:44). He said, "All things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms

must be fulfilled" (:44). He also reminded that, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day" (:46). Then "He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures" (:45).

Sends

"Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you'" (Jn 20:21). This was one of the first things he said to them which shows it had a high priority. "Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations'" (Mt 28:18). It was the next phase of the purpose for which he had been sent because the word "therefore" logically connects the first part with the second. The first part shows that God had given him an assignment. In the same way sending the disciples out was a continuation of that command. The Greek word used means "just as to the same degree." Jesus did what he had been directed to do and now had been given authority to command what was necessary to do next. The disciples became representatives. Beforehand he had said that the Holy Spirit "will testify about Me, and you will testify also" (Jn 15:26). They had seen him and Jesus confirmed this by saying, "You shall be my witnesses" (Ac 1:8). He also gave them encouragement saying, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mt 28:20).

Furthermore he said, "I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you" (Lk 24:49). "The Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me" (Jn 15:26). "He will bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said to you" (14:26). He instructed them to "make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (Mt 28:20). This involved explaining and educating people who would become believers and followers

obedient to the commands. He said to go to "all the world . . . to all creation" (Mk 16:15) to "all the nations" (Mt 28:19). They were to "preach the gospel" (Mk 16:15) and "repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name" (Lk 24:47). It would involve "baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19). "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved, but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned" (Mk 16:16). Signs of the manifestation of the Spirit would "accompany those who have believed" (:17). So "they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed" (:20). There's the example where Jesus said, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch" (Jn 21:6). Someone complained that "these men who have upset the world have come here also" (Ac 17:6).

Forgiveness

Jesus gave instructions to his disciples after his resurrection. On the subject of forgiveness he said, "If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained" (Jn 20:23). How can an ordinary person do this? The scribes saw Jesus heal a paralytic and heard him say, "My son, your sins are forgiven" (Mk 2:5). They thought to themselves "who can forgive sins but God alone?" (:7). Jesus responded saying "the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (:10). Then when Jesus met with his disciples after the resurrection he stated, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Mt 28:18). With this authority "He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (Jn 20:22). Therefore the Holy Spirit would enable them to forgive sin in the name of Jesus. Jesus told them "behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you

are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Lk 24:49). You wear clothes, so therefore power becomes a personal covering. Elijah was a prophet and "a man with a nature like ours" (Ja 5:17). He had a mantle (robe, garment) and "threw his mantle on [Elisha]" (1Ki 19:19). It represented God's actual power because "Elijah took his mantle . . . and struck the waters and they were divided here and there" (2Ki 2:8). Elisha also when "he took the mantle of Elijah . . . and struck the waters . . . they were divided here and there" (:14).

Jesus was giving his final instructions to the apostles and mentioned what he had taught them and that it had been written in the Old Testament (Lk 24:48). He then said, "You are witnesses of these things" (:48). It means that they had experienced the prophecies coming true. In court a witness is someone who has observed something taking place. Peter repeatedly stated "we are witnesses of these things and so is the Holy Spirit" (Ac 5:32) and "we are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem" (10:39). More importantly John said that Jesus "dwelt among us, and we saw His glory as of the only begotten from the Father" (Jn 1:14). Peter said "we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain" (2Pe 1:18). Then what does it mean when Jesus said "you shall be My witnesses" (Ac 1:8) since they were, in effect, already witnesses? In this case the phrase follows "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (:8). It means you will have supernatural power to be future witnesses in a way you would not have had on your own. "We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (1Co 4:7). Inherent in this is that there is a responsibility to witness, and motivation is provided by the Spirit to accomplish it. "God anointed Him [Jesus] with the Holy Spirit and with power . . . [so that] He went about doing good and healing all" (10:38).

It's easy to mistakenly conclude when you hear the term "great commission" that now I have to do it myself. However, Jesus made it clear saying, "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself" (Jn 12:32). Jesus said, "I sent you to reap" (4:38). "Beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (Lk 10:2).

Witness with Power

Peter advised to be "ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you" (1Pe 3:15). I once had a pastor who used this scripture to show that you shouldn't just approach any stranger on the street to push the gospel. Instead he said the Holy Spirit would prepare the heart of a person to ask you a question. The hope in you "is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27). You have to make sure. "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith" (2Co 13:5). "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders . . . so that you will know how you should respond to each person" (Col 4:5-6). Therefore you should pray for God to "grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence" (Ac 4:29) and to "keep a good conscience" (1Pe 3:16). It is "not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit" (Zec 4:6). Paul wrote the Thessalonians that "our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (1Th 1:5). "My message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1Co 2:4). The gospel is "the power of God for salvation" (Ro 1:16).

Jesus told them "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses" (Ac 1:8). John the Baptist said, "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mk 1:8) and Jesus followed through when "He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (Jn 20:22). This would enable them to witness. However, they would also need the power that was promised. So they

waited as instructed (Lk 24:49) and on Pentecost they were "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Ac 2:4) as he was "poured forth" (2:33). Jesus said the Holy Spirit would "come upon you" (1:8) and "the Holy Spirit came on them" (19:6). He "fell upon all those who were listening" (10:44) and "fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning" (11:15). They then were "full of the Holy Spirit and of faith" (6:5, 7:55, 11:24). "When they had prayed, the place where they had gathered was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness" (Ac 4:31). Others "were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking" (6:10).

Ambassadors

The Holy Spirit fell upon them at Pentecost which required Peter to explain to them what it meant. Later he was arrested and the authorities ordered them to cease witnessing. Their answer was "we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard" (Ac 4:20). "Having the same spirit of faith . . . we also believe, therefore we also speak" (2Co 4:13). Jesus said that you don't shutter your lamp but rather put it "on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house" (Mt 5:15). It is understandable that the apostles would tell everyone because they had just been with Jesus for three years and it was fresh. Then as the years passed the experiences and teaching were written down and you might say it became second-hand evidence. In fact, a Bible school professor told me there are people called cessationists who believe that many of the things which happened through Jesus and the apostles stopped being exercised after their deaths. However, Paul explains "even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature" (2Co 5:16-17). "You have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable" (1Pe 1:23). "Unless one is

born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (Jn 3:5). So you are not a second-hand Christian. "You are the salt of the earth" (Mt 5:13). Therefore "let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt" (Col 4:6). However, someone reported that through a study they found that a preponderance of witnessing was done by those who had been Christians for less than a year. That is why Jesus said to the church in Ephesus, "I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first" (Rev 2:4-5).

Paul explained that Jesus "has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us . . . be reconciled to God" (2Co 5:19-20). It was so important to Jesus that he said, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work" (Jn 4:34). Peter recognized God's work as "to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose [has been] predestined to occur" (Ac 4:28). "It is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Php 2:13). Paul's goal was to reach "every man . . . [saying] for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me" (Col 1:28-29). He also said "I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus" (Php 3:12). Furthermore he asked the Colossians to pray "that God may open up to us a door for the word" (Col 4:3). This demonstrates that they needed God to accomplish their purpose. However, you must still "conduct yourselves . . . making the most of the opportunity" (:5). Jesus pointed out, "Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest" (Jn 4:35). Do not postpone it. "He who watches the wind will not sow, and he who looks at the clouds will not reap: (Ecc 11:4).

Lead a Person to Christ

When you approach a stranger to give him a booklet you don't know if he's religious, an agnostic, or an atheist. When you offer a booklet at the start, at least the person knows you are giving him something and he should appreciate that. At the same time you should have an introductory remark which catches interest. It could be in the form of an interesting question and not sound like you are challenging him. After all, you have his welfare at heart. We are to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt 19:19). Therefore be friendly and not argumentative. We were once in his shoes regarding being unsaved and we should have a humble attitude and not feel superior. The conversation should be informal but focused. You have an agenda to follow but should be receptive to questions that come up. Its possible to get off track, and time will expire without coming to a conclusion. An answer should be presented for the original question. Agreement would be a sign you are getting somewhere. If the person wants to think it over some more just make sure he's aware of the main points in the booklet as a reminder. Don't rule out that you can lead a person to Christ. Then thank the person for spending time with you. It would be beneficial to provide a phone number or e-mail address for asking questions.

Various tracts are available for witnessing. World Missionary Press scripture booklets are portions of the Bible and each is designed for a particular purpose. You must thoroughly understand the message so you can explain it even if you're not referring to the booklet. Each point in the topic should have a reference to a place in the booklet. You should be so familiar with the booklet that you know immediately which page to refer to. A pregnant pause can cause the train of thought to be lost. By being conversant you communicate confidence and the person stays connected. Concentration precipitates thought which leads to

comprehension.

Use the Bible

You witness to someone because you must always be "ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you" (1Pe 3:15). You must make sure you are "accurately handling the word of truth" (2Ti 2:15). You might precede your response with "the Bible says." But the reply might be "how do you know the Bible is true?" It would be a circular argument if you said its true because it says its true. However, you could use logic to substantiate it. Inductive reasoning takes evidence and works its way back to the truth. God accomplished his works to make it known, and one is apparent, where he "brought them up from Egypt" (Isa 8:8). "He saved them for the sake of His name that He might make His power known" (Ps 106:8). If you have the faith to acknowledge that this history is true then, to you, it is a testimony that the Bible is the Word of God.

You should determine what the person's world view is so you can relate to him. Many people believe in evolution and that they are the end product of a very long process proving that their adaptability and intelligence enabled them to prevail. Others are spirit-oriented who believe in other dimensions or realities where the spirit takes precedence over the physical. Your reference must be the Bible and you don't want to go around in circles just talking about philosophies and theories. If you say that the Bible says that God created man you can quote the scriptures where the Bible says it is true. 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). In Hebrew his name means "humanity" and, 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). "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good" (Ge 1:31). The person might be surprised that it sounds logical and consider it.

Imperishable Seed

How valuable is spreading the gospel? "Beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news" (Ro 10:15). How important is it? Paul said "I also please all men in all things . . . so that they may be saved" (1Co 10:33). However, you encounter many kinds of "religious" people who will counter with their rendition which challenges your understanding and commitment. John warns "make sure no one deceives you" (1Jn 3:7). Even Jesus warned, "These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling" (Jn 16:1). It is by "the living and enduring word of God" (1Pe 1:23). These words are instrumental in one being "born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable" (:23). But you must be one "accurately handling the word of truth" (2Ti 2:15). Peter says "whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God" (1Pe 4:11). You must be confident when you explain the gospel. Paul admitted "my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power" (1Co 2:4). Peter said "whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies" (1Pe 4:11). Your confidence is in God. Paul knew where it came from saying "knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men" (2Co 5:11).

Prepare Your Mind

Some Christians attend the Olympics to witness to people from around the world. They find out the time of certain events and which nations will be competing. They get tracts in the language of the spectators who will be present. World Missionary Press (www.wmpress.org) has booklets in over

340 languages. Peter instructed to be "ready to make a defense" (1Pe 3:15), but handing someone a tract is being on the offense, though taking it is implied communication. Jesus did warn that they will "persecute you" (Lk 21:12) and said "it will lead to an opportunity for your testimony" (:13). He instructed "make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves" (:14). Making a defense, then, pertains more to the meaning of apologetics which is proving the validity of Christianity.

A world view is how you understand things are, and with attendees to the Olympics being from around the world, you would expect many different perspectives. The following describes the situation. Many people have strong esoteric convictions even though they may represent only a select few. However, what they believe to be true may only be relative to their culture. Also, there are hundreds of religions in the world and each adherent believes he is right. How is it that the mind chooses a particular belief? Universalism says that each religion has its own truth. So if the mind is that flexible then a person can make an ephemeral choice in a transitory way on an existential basis. But Peter warned to "prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1Pe 1:13). Therefore, "be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Ro 12:2). Be a "workman . . . handling accurately the word of truth: (2Ti 2:15). Do you know where you stand? "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith" (2Co 13:5). Are you in touch? "You are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls" (1Pe 1:9). You "grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord" (2:2-3). Someone's explanation of another religion may sound intriguing, but "Beware, lest your hearts be deceived and you turn away and serve other gods and worship them" (Dt 11:16).

Guaranty of Salvation

How do you know you possess salvation? "Believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead you will be saved" (Ro 10:9). "The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself" (1Jn 5:10) for "he who has the Son has the life" (:12). "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed" (Ro 10:11) for "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). "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God" (Ro 8:16). "We have obtained an inheritance" (Eph 1:11) and are "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ" (Ro 8:17) "with a view of the redemption of God's own possession" (Eph 1:14). He "gave us the Spirit in our hearts" (2Co 1:22) "as a pledge of our inheritance" (Eph 1:14).

How do you experientially know that you are a "new creation in Christ" (2Co 5:17). "By grace you have been saved through faith; and that it is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph 2:8). It is "bestowed on us" (1:6) and "He has "blessed us with every spiritual blessing" (:3). "The love of God was manifested in us" (1Jn 4:9) and "God is for us" (Ro 8:31) and "intercedes for us" (:34). It is "an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1Pe 1:4). "He is able to guard" (2Ti 1:12) and "perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Php 1:6). You are "protected by the power of God through faith" (1Pe 1:5).

Is there a guaranty that what you believe in will be fulfilled? Abraham was "fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform" (Ro 4:21). "The one who endures to the end will be saved" (Mk 13:13) "if we hold fast . . . until the end" (Heb 3:14). Some have commented that if there wasn't any ongoing responsibility of the believer to continue in faith then maybe God would rapture each one

at the point of salvation. Calvinists believe that those "He foreknew, He also predestined" (Ro 8:29) takes away the threat of backsliding. But why would Peter warn "brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you" (2Pe 1:10). He answers "as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble" (:10). There are many scriptures you can rely on but they must experientially become a part of you. Therefore make sure you are "building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 20). It requires your effort to "keep yourselves in the love of God (:21). Furthermore, you must be "waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord" (:21). Anxiously means with anticipation and diligence.

John the Baptist

The Jews were expecting the prophetic appearance of the Messiah. Then "John the Baptist came preaching . . . 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Mt 3:1-2) and "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Lk 3:3). He was asked, "'Who are you?'" (Jn 1:19) and answered, "'I am a voice crying in the wilderness'" (:23). Then he elaborated, "'One is coming who is mightier than I . . . [who] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire'" (Lk 3:16). He explained, "'I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me . . . this is the One'" (Jn 1:33). "The people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ" (Lk 3:15). One day "John was standing with two of his disciples and he looked at Jesus as He walked and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God!'" (Jn 1:35-36). Those disciples heard, began following Jesus, and Jesus saw them (:37-38). When Jesus spoke, they addressed him as "'Rabbi (which translated means Teacher)'" (:38). John the Baptist's disciples even called him "'Rabbi'" (Jn 3:36). One of those disciples was Andrew and the other is assumed to be John, the author

of that gospel. "They stayed with Jesus that day" (1:39). This was before Jesus encountered them fishing at the beach. Andrew then located "his own brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah'" (:41). Then Jesus went to Galilee and found Philip who was from the same town as Peter and Andrew (:43-44). "Jesus said to him, 'Follow Me.'" (:43) It is as if Jesus is completing a small checklist of disciples for his twelve apostles. However, he already had disciples following him as "Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were" (Jn 4:2). Nonetheless, "'Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one'" (18:9).

Catching Fish

One of the first priorities on Jesus' agenda must have been to officially choose his inner circle of disciples. The Bible is somewhat condensed so it can give the impression a longer process can appear compacted. However, "immediately He called" (Mk 1:20) James and John, and "immediately . . . began to teach" (:21) and "immediately the news spread" (:28). Accordingly "while the crowd was . . . listening to the word of God" (Lk 5:1) Jesus "saw the two boats" (:2) and "got into one" (:3). After asking Simon to launch his boat Jesus "began teaching the people" (:3). Teaching everyone was one of his most important purposes. Next Jesus instructed them to go fishing and "Simon answered and said, 'Master, we worked all night and caught nothing'" (:5). Simon recognized Jesus as "Master" which shows he acknowledged who he was. The "signs Jesus did in Cana . . . manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him" (Jn 2:11). Afterwards "amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish they had taken" (Lk 5:9). Then "Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men'" (:10). Mark relates it as "'Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men'" (Mk 1:17). "Becoming" shows that it does not instantly transpire.

Next Jesus saw James and John "in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets" (Mt 4:21). "Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him" (Mk 1:20). At first glance it may seem that the "calling" was a shout (call) over the noise of the crowd. But it was more than that. Much later "Jesus answered them, 'Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve?'" (Jn 6:70). The meaning was encapsulated in the invitation. Jesus said to Simon and Andrew, "Follow Me" (Mt 4:19). "When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him" (Lk 5:11). They knew what serious disciples did. The concordance says it is literally to "come here after Me" where "after" means "back behind" as the teacher leads the way. The concordance also points out that the Greek word *akoloutheo*, to follow, means to "reach out to be in the same way with, to accompany" as a disciple would do.

Follow Me

Luke does not quote Jesus directing Simon and Andrew to follow him. Also, Matthew does not say they brought their boats ashore, but he does quote Jesus saying, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Mt 4:19). As their teacher, he would "make" it happen. They "went away to follow Him [and] went into Capernaum" (Mk 1:20-21). "He saw a man called Matthew . . . and He said to him, 'Follow Me!' and he got up and followed Him" (Mt 9:9). Mark phrases it "as He passed by, He saw Levi . . . and said to him, 'Follow Me'" (Mk 2:14). "He left everything behind, and got up and began to follow Him" (Lk 5:28). It is a positive decision to deliberately respond because it wasn't the proverbial "lightning bolt" that hit them. However, they were steeped in Jewish teaching and undoubtedly were associating their learning with what Jesus was accomplishing in the community. They would have had time to think about it,

otherwise it would have been impulsive. It was decisive because Simon and Andrew "left their nets" (Mt 4:20), James and John "left the boat and their father" (:22) and Levi "left everything behind" (Lk 5:28). Later Peter stated, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You" (Mt 19:27). Jesus' reply was, "Everyone who has left . . . [much] for My name's sake will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life" (:29). The goal is to "enter the kingdom of heaven" (:23) and "the kingdom of God" (:24). He later stated, "None of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions" (Lk 14:33). The purpose is, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions" (Mt 19:21). Then "give to the poor . . . and come follow Me" (:21).

The Teacher

A disciple must be dedicated to his teacher. It is a cooperative venture because "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also" (Jn 12:26). "Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant" (Mk 10:43). "A pupil is not above his teacher, but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher" (Lk 6:40). It is about support and obedience. "Whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven" (Mt 12:50) is Jesus' disciple. God's desire is for people to be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Ro 8:29) and "these whom He predestined, He also called" (:30). The calling is serious business. To be conformed to someone is to become like him. Paul said to "be imitators of God" (Eph 5:1) and "imitators of us and of the Lord" (1Th 1:6). In these verses from the NASB and also 1Co 4:16, 11:1, 1Th 2:14 and Heb 6:12 the KJV translates "imitators" as "followers." The concordance defines the Greek word mimeomai as to imitate, meaning to follow an example. Therefore followers are imitators. "You have been called for this purpose, since Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in

His steps" (1Pe 2:21). The Greek word epakoloutheo means to follow after.

Be an Imitator

Paul taught to "be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1Co 11:1), be "imitators of the churches of God" (1Th 2:14), and "imitators of those who . . . inherit the promises" (Heb 6:12). The concordance translates the Greek word mimetes as an imitator. It is not just a superficial reflection. "Who is that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good" (1Pe 3:13 KJV) "if you prove zealous for what is good?" (:13 NASB). "Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me'" (Mt 16:24). It is a personal commitment. To "come after" is to pursue. It is not just an occasional pursuit but to "take up his cross daily" (Lk 9:23). Apparently his listeners were familiar with the metaphor of the cross. "Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it" (Mk 8:35). It has to do with the existence of the soul (:36,37). Literally if you lose your life you will die, but in this case, you will live again. So to "deny yourself" (Mt 16:24) is to put something more important first before selfish preoccupation. That means to recognize that there is a higher priority. "He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me" (10:38). "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate . . . even his own life, he cannot be My disciple" (Lk 14:26). The concordance says the Greek word misco is derived from "to detest" but is by extension "to love less."

Walk with God

Was Jesus' job just to train a group of twelve disciples so he could have twelve apostles? Teaching happens by instruction and example. At the start "He sat down and began

teaching the people" (Lk 5:5). He directed some of them to "go and learn what this means" (Mt 9:13). "All the people were coming to Him, and He was teaching them" (Mk 2:13). "He was stating the matter plainly" (8:32) and "summoned the crowd with His disciples" (:34). He was "sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 15:24) but they asked, "Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?" (Mt 9:11). "On the sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach" (Mk 1:21). They asked if it was "a new teaching with authority!" (:27). The concordance defines it as "with competency and strength with right and jurisdiction." One time James and John asked, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of You" (Mk 10:35) Jesus responded, "Are you able?" (:38).

Jesus was building upon what was presented in the Old Testament. One thing which was required back then was "to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways" (Dt 10:12). It was to fulfill that covenant. To walk in this way is to follow God. Their problem was that "they forsook the Lord . . . and followed other gods" (Ju 2:12). They were a "rebellious people, who walk in the way which is not good, following their own thoughts" (Isa 65:2). Peter also cited that "many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be maligned" (2Pe 2:2). Elijah asked, "If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him" (1Ki 18:21). However if you "walk by the Spirit, you will not carry out the desire of the flesh" (Gal 5:16). His "sheep follow him because they know His voice; (Jn 10:4). "A stranger they simply will not follow" (:5). "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; (10:27). "Whoever does not . . . come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Lk 14:33).

Believer and Disciple

One group adheres to a doctrine that being a believer is just rudimentary. Paul told Timothy to "show yourself an example of those who believe" (1Ti 4:12 NASB) who are "believers" (KJV). Being an example should be convincing and persuasive. Abraham was "fully assured [of] what God had promised" (Ro 4:21). Jesus told them to "'be not faithless, but believing'" (Jn 20:27 KJV) and "do not be unbelieving" (NASB). The concordance translates "believers" from the Greek word *pistos* meaning "trusting in a sure and true way." It is from the Greek word *peithe* meaning you have "confidence from an inner certainty." Believers "added to the Lord" (Acts 5:12 KJV) were "believers in the Lord" (NASB). With the Greek word *pisteuo* they have faith in something by entrusting and committing themselves beyond their own limitations to God. In terms of the Greek word *pistis*, they place their reliance and assurance on God's fidelity. This is beyond being just rudimentary.

The groups that promulgate a rudimentary believer is in a precarious position and must undertake discipleship in order to survive, argue that to "'make disciples of all nations'" (Mt 28:20) means to sign them up in a program to do that. They observe that "by this time you ought to be teachers" (Heb 5:12) and some endeavor to become official mentors to accomplish this. But to go to "'all the world . . . to all creation'" (Mk 16:15) to "'make disciples of all nations'" (Mt 28:20) does not mean that each person must get a degree in theology. We are to "teach" (:20), "preach" (Mk 16:15) and "proclaim" (Lk 24:47). But "the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you" (1Jn 2:27). "You have an anointing from the Holy One" (:20). By "beholding . . . the glory of the Lord, [you] are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as

from the Lord, the Spirit" (2Co 3:18).

Baptism of the Holy Spirit

The Spirit and the Bride Say, "Come" (Rev. 22:17)

Moses received the plans for the Jewish tabernacle from God on Mt. Sinai. Then the Lord told Moses to make sure that he constructed the temple "after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount (Exodus 25:40)." But we, ourselves, are the "true tabernacle (Hebrews 8:2)" and "temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:17)." Therefore we must be careful to make sure that our lives conform to God's plan for us.

The plan begins at salvation when we are introduced to this "city of the living God (Hebrews 12:22)" and "church of the firstborn (Hebrews 12:23)." Jesus is the "minister of the sanctuary (Hebrews 8:2)." He "pitches" our tabernacle (Hebrews 8:2) from His "throne . . . in the heavens (Hebrews 8:1)." He establishes us after the pattern of the tabernacle which is an "example and shadow of heavenly things (Hebrews 8:5)." Heavenly things can only be created by God Himself, because He is the "builder and maker (Hebrews 11:10)" and "except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it (Psalm 127:1)." This is why Jesus will "baptize [us] with the Holy Ghost (Matthew 3:11)."

We are to "go on unto perfection (Hebrews 6:1)" and be "perfect, even as [our] Father which is in heaven is perfect (Matthew 5:48)." How do we do this? "This is the work of God, that [we] believe on him whom he hath sent (John 6:29)" and "by him . . . offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually (Hebrews 13:15)." We are then "weaned from the milk (Isaiah 28:9)" as the righteousness of God is revealed unto us from

"faith to faith (Romans 1:17)." Then we are "changed into the same image from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18)" if we behold Him with "open face (v.18)."

Solomon's temple illustrates this changing process toward perfection. In the temple "there was an enlarging, and a winding about still upward (Ezekiel 41:7)." Jesus has promised that when you and I are baptized in the Holy Spirit "[we] shall receive power . . . and [we] shall be witnesses (Acts 1:8)." This empowering also increases our ability to "worship the Father in spirit and truth (John 4:23)."

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is symbolically the second chamber of Solomon's temple because we go from the "lowest chamber to the highest by the midst (Ezekiel 41:7)." Also, it represents the inner court of the tabernacle of Moses or the holy place. One of the items in the Holy Place is the lampstand which symbolizes the seven spirits of the Lord. It was this same Holy Spirit who was poured forth on the day of Pentecost when the disciples were celebrating this "feast of weeks (Deuteronomy 16:10)." Therefore, since it was on Pentecost that the Holy Spirit was given (Acts 2:4), we study this event in relation to the Old Testament feasts of the Lord to better understand the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The priest had to go from the Outer Court through the Inner Court to enter the Holy of Holies. That's why the baptism of the Holy Spirit is an important step in our Christian walk. We are to "come boldly before the throne (Hebrews 4:16)." This is the place in the tabernacle where the ark of God's presence is. We are citizens of God's holy city (Hebrews 12:22,23) because He writes the name of that city upon us, "which is New Jerusalem (Revelation 3:12)." However, we must continually seek the city, (Hebrews 13:14) because we have to make ourselves "ready (Revelation 19:7)" as a "bride

adorned for her husband (Revelation 21:2)." As the Lord prepares us, the city comes "down from God out of heaven (Revelation 21:2)." The shadow of the heavenly tabernacle is transformed into the Bride of Christ.

The New Creature Life

Our walk begins with being "born again (John 3:7)." We know that we depend upon the Creator for our very life. "The Lord God . . . breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (Genesis 2:7)." But He breathes again upon a man if that person will "believe on his name (John 1:12)." This is how we receive our "new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17)" life.

When Jesus appeared to His disciples the first time after His resurrection, "he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost (John 20:22)." The word *breath* in Greek is *pneuma* and means "spirit" or "wind." It is this Holy Spirit which is breathed into our being. In the Bible there are only two times (which represent the two kinds of life) that God breathed upon man in this way.

The Disciples Receive the Holy Spirit After the Resurrection

It is important to see that the disciples were "born again" when they received the Spirit after Jesus breathed upon them. Jesus had the Holy Spirit to give because "being by the right hand of God exalted, [he had] received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:33)." Jesus told Mary, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father (John 20:17)."

Up until that time "the Holy Ghost was not yet given;

because that Jesus was not yet glorified (John 7:39).” Then “by his own blood he entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us (Hebrews 9:12).” When He returned after entering the Holy Place, the disciples could not “touch him” for we read that He said to Thomas, “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands (John 20:27).”

If you remember, Jesus had previously said, regarding His ascension, “Touch me not (John 20:17).” Also, He would not have told Mary about His ascension at that time if it had not had meaning for the disciples to be able to receive the Spirit when He appeared to them upon His return. We also remember the disciples discussing Jesus' statement: “A little while, and ye shall see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father (John 16:16).”

Jesus had said, “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you (John 14:18)” and “we [the Godhead]. . . will make our abode with [you] (John 14:23).” “At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you (John 14:20).” “When Jesus returned to them, He came with the Comforter. The “Lord is that Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17).” Paul says, “Know ye not . . . that Jesus Christ is in you (2 Corinthians 13:5)?”

The Disciples Sealed in Christ at Salvation

Up to this point the disciples knew the Holy Spirit because Jesus had told them “for he dwelleth with you (John 14:17).” But since their names had already been “written in heaven (Luke 10:20)” when Jesus appeared to them upon His return and breathed upon them, they “received him, [and] to them gave he power to become the sons of God (John 1:12).”

Therefore, because they had been “born of the Spirit (John 3:6)”, the prophecy that they would receive the Holy

Spirit (John 7:39) was fulfilled since they now knew Christ no more "after the flesh (2 Corinthians 5:16)" but "in the Spirit (Romans 8:9)." "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his (Romans 8:9)." This is the message of salvation. "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body . . . and have been all made to drink into one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13)." "There is one body, and one Spirit, . . . one Lord, one faith, [and] one baptism (Ephesians 4:4,5)."

When you are confronted with the baptism of the Holy Spirit you must know what you have to start with at salvation so you can judge what it is that is to be added and how it relates to your position as a believer. As believers, we are "one body: so also is Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12)." As members of His body, He has "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3)." It is in Christ "in whom we have redemption (Ephesians 1:7)" and "in whom also we have obtained an inheritance (Ephesians 1:11)." And since it is He "in whom [we] also trusted, after that [we] heard the word of truth, the gospel of [our] salvation", it is He "in whom. . . [we] were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise (Ephesians 1:13)."

In other words, "by one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13)" we are "baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27)." We are "complete in him (Colossians 2:10)" at redemption, so the baptism of the Holy Spirit only contributes to our position as believers. These blessings are all available to the person who will "believe on his name (John 1:12)", who has been baptized into Christ, and sealed by the Holy Spirit.

Passover as a Picture of Salvation

We see that the disciples received the Holy Spirit from Jesus when He appeared to them, and that they were baptized into the body of Christ "by" and "with" the Holy Spirit.

This is accomplished by the blood of Christ at Calvary. But to understand it from the perspective of the feasts of the Lord, we must understand the meaning of the blood of the lamb killed at Passover as a type of the blood of Christ. "We have redemption through his blood (Ephesians 1:7)." Jesus "hath purchased [us] with his own blood (Acts 20:28)."

The children of Israel were told by God, "And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you (Exodus 21:13)." In Egypt when the Lord passed over the houses with the blood over the door, He "sealed" or "protected" the people within from the plague. Without this protection "every open vessel, which hath no covering bound upon it, is unclean (Numbers 19:15)."

This is why the celebration of Passover requires that "there be no leaven found in [the] houses (Exodus 12:19)." Leaven is a type of sin, and our "sins are forgiven (1 John 2:12)." Therefore, since no leaven is "in our house" because we are "clean through the word which [Jesus has] spoken unto [us] (John 15:3)", we are protected by the "seal" or "covering" of the Holy Spirit at redemption.

Israel's Journey as a Picture of Being Sealed and Led by the Holy Spirit

As believers we are "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:18)" just as Israel was brought "out of the land of. . . Egypt through a land that no man passed through (Jeremiah 2:6)." It was a walk "in the Spirit (Galatians 5:25)" by following the Lord "Who went in the way before [them] . . . in fire by night, to shew [them] by what way [they] should go, and in a cloud by day (Deuteronomy 1:33)."

Israel was all "under the cloud (1 Corinthians 10:1)" which illustrates that God seals us with the Holy Spirit when we are saved. He does not take "away the pillar of the cloud (Exodus 13:22)." In the same manner the disciples received the Holy Spirit (John 20:22) when they were baptized into the body of Christ (Galatians 3:27) and "sealed. . . , and given the earnest of the Spirit in [their] hearts (2 Corinthians 1:22)."

Therefore, as believers, in order for us to do the "work of God . . . [we must] believe on him whom he hath sent (John 6:29)." That's all that is necessary to be "led by the Spirit of God (Romans 8:14)." Just as Israel was sealed and led from Egypt to Mt. Sinai, so we as believers are sealed and guided in our lives.

Israel's Celebration of the Feasts of the Lord

How else is Israel's experience an example for us, or a pattern by which to better understand our own relationship with God? Israel continued to celebrate the feast of Passover on its journey through the wilderness, just as we daily celebrate our being saved. The Lord said to them, "This day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord through your generations (Exodus 12:14)." In addition, the Lord said, "Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year (Exodus 23:14)." Leviticus 23:2,3 shows that feasts are sabbaths, and God has commanded, "Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you (Exodus 31:13)."

The feasts are separate, individual celebrations in Israel's history as well as experientially in our lives. "But when the people of the land shall come before the Lord in the solemn feasts, he that entereth in . . . shall not return by the way of the gate whereby he came in (Ezekiel 46:9)." Each time we meet with the Lord, we are changed and "leave by another

gate" which illustrates that the feasts are unique but celebrated in the context of the believers' spiritual lives "three times a year."

You see, then, that there is a continuity in the feasts. There is a progression between Passover and Pentecost in our spiritual lives just as Israel journeyed between Egypt and Mt. Sinal. The progression is fulfilled by observing to "keep the feast of unleavened bread (Exodus 23:15)" and then the "feast of harvest (Exodus 23:16)." Also, "Thou shalt keep the feast of weeks (Deuteronomy 16:10)."

Passover Leads to Pentecost

"In the fourteenth day of the first month . . . is the Lord's Passover (Leviticus 23:5)." Then "it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt (Exodus 12:41)." Next "in the third month . . . the same day came they unto the wilderness of Sinai (Exodus 19:1)." If God causes an event to take place on exactly the "selfsame day," then it behooves us to consider the timing of other events as well.

For instance, there is about one-half of a month after Passover remaining in the first month and at least three days (Exodus 19:11) transpire in the third month, which is a passage of approximately fifty days (the word Pentecost means "fiftieth"). The Lord said, "shall ye number fifty days (Leviticus 23:16)" and celebrate the Feast of Pentecost. "The day of Pentecost was fully come (Acts 2:1)" when the Spirit was poured forth because God waited until precisely the right day for it to happen.

We see a similar passage of time in the New Testament between the resurrection and Pentecost where Jesus

"shewed himself . . . forty days (Acts 1:3)", and after He departed the disciples returned to Jerusalem, which was a "sabbath day's journey (Acts 1:12)" away. Then in the Old Testament "the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them. . . and be ready against the third day (Exodus 19:10,11)." So Moses and Joshua waited for God to invite them up to Mt. Sinai (Exodus 24:13). In the New Testament Jesus "commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me (Acts 1:4)." So they tarried in Jerusalem (Luke 24:49) and "continued with one accord in prayer and supplication (Luke 24:49)" in the "upper room (Acts 1:13)" in preparation for the Feast of Pentecost. We see that the travel, consecration, and waiting situations are similar in the Old and New Testaments.

Pentecost as Separate From Passover

When we see that "all these things happened unto [Israel] for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition (1 Corinthians 10:11)", we can understand how the event of Passover has meaning in our lives. In addition, we see clearly because the Old Testament "veil is done away in Christ (2 Corinthians 3:14)." Finally, we know that the scriptures "beginning at Moses (Luke 24:27)" concern Jesus because in His life He fulfilled the Old Testament types of Passover and Pentecost.

Since Calvary is a fulfillment of the historical event of Passover, and since a direct parallel exists between the expiration of time and experience of Old Testament Israel and the New Testament disciples, then Pentecost must be a fulfillment of the historical event of Israel's Mt. Sinai experience. Consequently, since Calvary is a picture of redemption, Pentecost must be a picture of what is called the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

"Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance (Psalm 89:15)." The "joyful sound" is the trumpet which signals the feasts, and those who understand its implication are able to personally celebrate the feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles in their lives.

Day of Pentecost as a Separate Experience for the Disciples

We remember that the disciples received the Holy Spirit when Jesus breathed upon them. Then we know that they were sealed and had the Holy Spirit in them. But next, Jesus said, "Behold, I send the promise of my father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49)" for "ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence (Acts 1:5)." How could they be baptized after they had been baptized into His body when they received the Spirit?

The answer concerns the Greek word *bapto*, which was a common term used in the garment industry. It has the connotation of being made fully wet with fluid in the manner of staining as with a dye. The disciples had received the promise of the Spirit in their hearts (2 Corinthians 1:22) and now they were to receive the promise in the form of power "upon" them. This is shown by the fact that "all were baptized unto Moses in the cloud (1 Corinthians 10:2)." "A cloud covered the mount (Exodus 24:15)." "And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount (Exodus 24:18)."

Therefore, the word *baptism* applied here is a picture of another "immersion" of the believer into an additional truth or capacity within God. The Holy Spirit comes "upon" him as if the Spirit has approached (i.e. come upon) him in a new way. We remember that the believer "entereth in (Ezekiel 46:9)" to

a new worship experience or meeting with God in each of the three feasts of the Lord (Exodus 23:14).

Day of Pentecost Fulfills Historical Event of Israel on Mt. Sinai

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come . . . there came a sound from heaven (Acts 2:1,2)" "and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:4)" and they received "the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38)." The disciples had waited fifty days since receiving the Spirit when Jesus breathed upon them, and now had received the gift of the Spirit "upon" them from "on high."

Therefore, we conclude that the first feast of Pentecost after the resurrection was not the official beginning of the ministry of the Holy Spirit on earth, but that He was already present when Jesus breathed upon the disciples. In this sense, the proximity of Passover and Pentecost (being only fifty days apart) is significant. Jesus said, "Behold, I send (ie. am continuously sending) the promise of my Father upon you (Luke 24:49)." The disciples had received, were receiving, and would receive again the presence of the Holy Spirit as He was poured forth.

It is clear that New Testament Pentecost is related to Israel's Mt. Sinai experience. The disciples in the upper room heard God's voice such as it was "a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind (Acts 2:2)", whereas Israel said, "Let not God speak with us, lest we die (Exodus 20:19)." At Mt. Sinai "there fell of the people that day about three thousand men (Exodus 32:28)", and at Jerusalem "there were added unto them about three thousand souls (Acts 2:41)."

Since the disciples had already received the Holy Spirit, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh (Acts 2:16,17)." So if we wait for Him

(Isaiah 64:4), we will experience this outpouring and see the greatness of God because He will do "terrible things which we looked for (Isaiah 64:3)."

Speaking in Tongues Is Initial Evidence

With . . . other tongues . . . will I speak unto this people (1 Corinthians 14:2)." The Spirit gives the "utterance (Acts 2:4)." Isaiah says, "This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest (Isaiah 28:12)." God said, "I create the fruit of the lips (Isaiah 57:19)" and will therefore heal, lead, and bring us into rest and peace (Isaiah 57:18,19). Noah would bring rest because it was prophesied that "comfort concerning our work (Genesis 5:29)" would result from his obedience in building the ark.

If you are in Christ, you will be saved because you will "know that (your) redeemer liveth (Job 19:25)." Speaking in tongues is a restful sign that we have received a "Comforter, that he may abide with (us) for ever (John 14:16)." "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief (Hebrews 4:11)."

"These signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues (Mark 16:17)." It is a personal privilege for any believer who has "heard the word (Acts 10:44)." At Pentecost, "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues (Acts 2:4)." Also, in the case of Cornelius and his household "the Holy Ghost fell on all them (Acts 10:44)" and "they [those present] heard them speak with tongues (Acts 2:4)." Also, in the case of Cornelius and his household "the Holy Ghost fell on all them (Acts 10:44)" and "they [those present] heard them speak with tongues (Acts 10:46)." Furthermore, Peter and John went to Samaria to help believers receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17). As the people were baptized in the Holy Spirit, Simon observed (Acts 8:18)

what he could "see and hear (Acts 2:33)." It was the same in Ephesus. When the Holy Spirit fell upon the believers, they "spake with tongues (Acts 19:6)."

But some ask, "What meaneth this (Acts 2:12)?" Can't we be baptized in the Holy Spirit without speaking in tongues? Paul was baptized, for he said, "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all (1 Corinthians 14:18)." He also said, "I would that ye all spake with tongues (1 Corinthians 14:5)" and he ordered the Corinthians to "forbid not to speak with tongues (1 Corinthians 14:39)."

How is this manifested? God pours "out of [His] Spirit upon all flesh (Acts 2:17)." When the Holy Spirit falls upon you, you are filled, and the utterance of tongues is communicated by the Spirit through your spirit (Acts 2:4). Paul says, "If I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth (1 Corinthians 14:14)." This is a heavenly language for he said, "I speak with the tongues of men and of angels (1 Corinthians 13:1)." You can also "sing with the spirit (1 Corinthians 14:15)." However, some might object that with the spirit the "understanding is unfruitful (1 Corinthians 14:14)." But if "we know not what we should pray (Romans 8:26)", the Holy Spirit knows what another person needs (Romans 8:27)." Intercession occurs when we pray "unto God (1 Corinthians 14:2)" in tongues for that person. You can also "pray that [you] may interpret (1 Corinthians 14:13)" to understand what has been spoken.

The reward for a person who prays in the spirit is that he "edifieth himself (1 Corinthians 14:4)" and a person is established in the Spirit by "praying in the Holy Ghost (Jude 20)." Some argue that speaking in tongues is not for everyone because 1 Corinthians 12:30 asks, "Do all speak with tongues?" However, this reference pertains to one of the nine

gifts to the Church wherein "if any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three (1 Corinthians 14:27)." This gift is for certain people in specific situations where the "whole church be come together (1 Corinthians 14:23)." It is a means by which the unbeliever becomes aware of the existence of God (1 Corinthians 14:22).

Pentecost as a Separate New Testament Experience

Hearing that certain converts in "Samaria had received the word of God (Acts 8:14)", Peter and John went and "prayed for them (Acts 8:15)." Paul also went to Ephesus and found "certain disciples (Acts 19:1)." These apostles wanted to make sure that the new believers received the Holy Spirit. Paul "said unto them, have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed (Acts 19:2)?" When they replied that they had "not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost", Paul asked them, "Unto what then were ye baptized (Acts 19:2,3)?"

People are water baptized into the truth they receive. A disciple, then, is a follower of the truth he has learned because he has to "bear his cross (Luke 14:27)" in order to follow Jesus. The new disciples replied that they had been baptized "unto John's baptism (Acts 19:3)" with the baptism of repentance (Acts 19:4)." The truth they had been baptized with was like that of Apollos' teaching. He "taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John (Acts 18:25)" which was "that [people] should believe on him [Jesus] which should come after him [John] (Acts 19:4)." But when Aquila and Priscilla took Apollos and "expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly (Acts 18:26)", showing that "Jesus was Christ (Acts 18:28)", Apollos received the complete gospel. Thus the new converts "were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:5)."

Peter and John discovered that the Samaritans, too, were

"baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 8:16)" but that the Holy Ghost "was fallen upon none of them (v.16)." We know that we become "sons of God" when we believe "on his name (John 1:12)." But where is the Holy Spirit at salvation such that He might have "fallen upon" us? In the Scriptures we see that:

1. "He that believeth . . . shall be saved (Mark 16:16)."

2. "Thy faith hath saved thee (Luke 7:50)."

3. "By grace are ye saved (Ephesians 2:8)."

Thus, we conclude that we are saved when we believe with the faith we receive by grace from God. Furthermore:

4. "This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified (John 7:39)."

5. "He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost (John 20:22)."

Therefore, since Jesus had been glorified, the disciples properly received the Holy Spirit because they were recognized as believers. Finally:

6. "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise (Ephesians 1:13)."

7. "Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts (2 Corinthians 1:22)."

When you believe, you are sealed with the Holy Spirit. So it is simply by the exercise of faith (nos. 1-3) that you receive (nos. 4-5) the Holy Spirit in your heart (nos. 6-7). Therefore, we have the Holy Spirit within us when we are saved through belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So when Peter and John prayed for the Samaritans that "they might receive the Holy Ghost (Acts 8:15)", they were expecting another anointing of the Holy Spirit. When they laid

hands upon the believers, "they received the Holy Ghost (Acts 8:17)" just as "when Paul had laid hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on (Acts 19:6)" the Ephesians. Scripture doesn't require that hands be laid on a person for him to be saved, but "Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given (Acts 8:18)." This shows that Passover and Pentecost are separate New Testament experiences.

A distinction is also seen in the feasts concerning leaven. At Passover "shall there be no leaven found in [the] houses (Exodus 12:19)." Whereas at Pentecost "two wave loaves. . . shall be baked with leaven (Leviticus 23:17)." However, both feasts have in common the requirement to "be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18)" by "singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord (Colossians 3:16)." But with the baptism of the Holy Spirit there is a step of faith involved, for "how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him (Luke 11:13)?"

Pentecost in the Life of Jesus

We see that Jesus was obedient to partake of the baptism of the Holy Spirit in His life. Jesus was born of the Spirit (i.e. Passover) because Joseph was told that "that which is conceived in [Mary] is of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 1:20)." Then He received the promise of the Holy Spirit for "John [the Baptist] bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him (John 1:32)."

This was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 11:2 in which Jesus later stated, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach . . . heal. . . [and] set at liberty them that are bruised (Luke 4:18)." The feast of Pentecost is therefore kept by exercising the power inherent in the spiritual gifts of the promise as a "freewill offering . . . according as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee

(Deuteronomy 16:10).” "And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof (Leviticus 25:10)."

The Jubilee is the bringing forth of the continuous sound of the silver trumpet. It signals the festival and year of Jubilee and is symbolic of the feast. A church which blows this trumpet flows in this ministry and says "to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves (Isaiah 49:9).” "Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubile to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month (Leviticus 25:9).” The impact of the feast of Pentecost carries into the feast of Tabernacles.

Pentecost as Open Heaven

The uniqueness of this feast in Jesus' life is also seen in His baptism when "the heavens were opened unto him (Matthew 3:16).” In his dream, Jacob saw the Lord God standing in heaven at the top of a ladder and speaking (Genesis 28:12,13) just as when Jesus said to His disciples, "Ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man (John 1:51)."

Jacob called the place where he was "Beth-el (Genesis 28:19)" which means "God is in this place.” Jesus sought to be baptized by John (Matthew 3:13) and had a meeting with God. The divine communication that resulted under the open heaven followed Him throughout His ministry because "it abode [remained] upon him (John 1:32).” Jesus even spoke of Himself as "the Son of man which is in heaven (John 3:13)."

Be Baptized With the Holy Spirit

God gives the Holy Spirit "to them that obey him (Acts 5:32).” Jesus was obedient to be baptized by John because

He said, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness (Matthew 3:15)." It took place when Jesus was praying (Luke 3:21)," You don't have to do anything extraordinary to qualify because on Pentecost the disciples were just "sitting (Acts 2:2)" in "one place (Acts 2:1)." However, "these all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication (Acts 1:14)."

Peter said, "Repent,. . . be baptized. . . and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost(Acts 2:38)." But it is possible to "receive not, because ye ask amiss (James 4:3)." So "ask in faith, nothing wavering (James 1:6)." "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him (Luke 11:13)?" Therefore, "what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them (Mark 11:24)." "Every one that asketh receiveth (Luke 11:10)." "No good thing will [the Lord] withhold from them that walk uprightly (Psalm 84:11)." The Lord promises to "pour water upon him that is thirsty (Isaiah 44:3)." So make sure that you don't come behind in [this] gift (1 Corinthians 1:7)" because you know "it shall be given you (Matthew 7:7)."

The Way To Go (Psalm 32:8)

Must have Vision

"Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Pr 29:18 KJV). A synonym for "vision" is to have a revelation of the direction you are going. If it is the wrong direction you may get out of control. The Greek word "perish" means to cast off restraint. When you restrain yourself you hold back from doing the wrong thing and keep yourself under control. But if you make only arbitrary choices you go your own way. "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Jdg 17:6). In Micah's case he had a "graven image" (:4) and "household idols" ("5). By neglecting responsibility you don't discipline yourself to do the correct thing. You have to focus on the vision or goal. You need a roadmap for your future.

"Would that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would discern their future!" (Dt 32:29). Perhaps you have a map but haven't looked at it. Furthermore, God says "I know the plans that I have for you . . . plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope" (Jer 29:11). If you follow God's revelation there is a guaranty. "My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all my good pleasure" (Isa 46:10). "The counsel of the Lord, it will stand" (Pr 19:21). Your "descendants will inherit the land" (Ps 25:13). If you trust in these promises it will happen.

Know God's Will

How do you discover the vision? "The God of our fathers has appointed you to know his will" (Ac 22:14). How do you discern God's will? "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God" (Jas 1:5). God gives wisdom "to all men generously and

without reproach" (:5). Ask God "that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will" (Col 1:9). Then you will be able to "stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God" (Col 4:12). "Do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph 5:17). It is your privilege since "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work" (Jn 4:34). It is "the work to which I have called them" (Ac 13:2). There are "good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Eph 2:10).

Understanding comes with knowledge. "I will instruct you and teach you" (Ps 32:8). Counseling is intimate. "With Your counsel You will guide me" (Ps 73:24). Directions can come spontaneously, or instructions and teaching can be received over time. The Bible is the main resource because "Your testimonies also are my delight; they are my counselors." (Ps 119:24). "From Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (:104-105). "The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple" (:130).

There's no reason to waste your time for you want to be "making the most of your time, because the days are evil" (Eph 5:16). Since God gives you "the desires of your heart" (Ps 37:4) then is it okay to just do what we feel like doing? "The mind of man plans his way" (Pr 16:9) but "many plans are in a man's heart" (Pr 19:21). There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Pr 16:25). However, there is a "way you should go" (Isa 48:17) because only God can "instruct him in the way he should chose" (Ps 25:12). It is personal. It is the "way which you should go" (Ps 32:8).

God had a job for Gideon and He would provide the power to get it done (Jdg 6:34). Since both were involved it was "for

the Lord and for Gideon" (7:18). By obedience we take up our cross (Mt 16:24) acknowledging that it is by grace and follow (:24) indicating that practical endeavors in life must spiritually work themselves out. We are to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (Php 2:12). The Greek word for salvation is the same one Paul uses in Philippeans 1:19 for being saved (delivered) from prison. This is the practical side of working it out. "I will show you my faith by my works" (Jas 2:18). But we are saved "not as a result of works" (Eph 2:9). How do we keep from doing it our own way? We "walk by faith" (2Co 5:7). Then God "leads you" (Isa 48:17) and "directs his steps" (Pr 16:9). "It is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Php 2:13). But we aren't robots. However, we must pay attention because in the Tribulation they "follow the Lamb wherever He goes" (Rev 14:4). Therefore, exercise your faith through your actions because God enables you to properly carry it out.

Plans are Dynamic

How do we implement these plans? You must "be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is" (Ro 12:2). It is through "spiritual wisdom and understanding" (Col 1:9). It is with a renewed mind (Eph 4:23) that it is discerned. "The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the innermost parts" (Pr 20:27) which lights up the things to see. The "Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God" (Ro 8:16). "The anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and . . . His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and . . . you abide in Him." (1Jo 2:27). "Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night" (Ps 16:7).

His "sheep follow him because they know his voice" (Jn 10:4). Hearing implies that you stay close. This means close

by because "You have taken hold of my right hand" (Ps 73:23). "I will counsel you with My eye upon you" (Ps 32:8). "The Lord knows the way of the righteous" (Ps 1:6). You begin to spiritually see because "your eyes will behold your Teacher" (Isa 30:20). "Your ears will hear a word behind you, 'This is the way, walk in it,' whenever you turn to the right or to the left" (:21). The result is peace of mind. It is the "peace of God, which . . . will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Php 4:6). It happens because of letting "the peace of Christ rule in your hearts" (Col 3:15).

Start moving in a logical direction because you can't steer a ship unless it's underway. Don't presume that you know everything that God wants to do "for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa 55:9). God realizes "who is blind but My servant?" (42:19). However he says "I will lead the blind by a way they do not know" (42:16). Therefore "do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight" (Pr 3:5-6). "Commit your works to the Lord, and your plans will be established" (Pr 16:3). The results are positive since he "teaches you to profit" (Isa 48:17). You will "abide in prosperity" (Ps 25:13).

It is God's purpose to build you up and protect you. "He restores my soul; He guides me" (Ps 23:3). "Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." (:4). A shepherd leads and protects his flock with these implements. "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies" (:4). "You are my rock and my fortress . . . [and] will lead me and guide me." (Ps 31:3). "The Lord will continually guide you, and satisfy your desire in scorched places" (Isa 58:11). "He leads me beside quiet waters" (Ps 23:2). Therefore "cease striving and know that I am God" (Ps 46:10).

Walk with God

To lead or guide means to direct someone by a certain route to a destination and be involved on the way. "Plans" (Pr 16:3), "purpose" (Isa 46:10), and "the steps of a man are established by the Lord; and He delights in his way" (Ps 37:23). "He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake" (Ps 23:3). A path is a trail and doesn't zig-zag all over the place. "He will make your paths straight" (Pr 3:6). God will "make darkness into light before them and rugged places into plains" (Isa 42:16).

Walking with God depends on relationship. Enoch was taken because he "walked with God" (Ge 5:24). "We are his workmanship . . . for good works . . . that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10). Walking is step by step. Since "the Lord will continually guide you" (Isa 58:11) that explains how steps can be established. It works because "I am continually with You" (Ps 73:23). To be able to hear effectively we have to improve our hearing by "practice" (Heb 5:14) having our "senses trained" (:14). You've heard the saying "use it or lose it." Through practice you protect against becoming "dull of hearing" (:11). "The complacency of fools shall destroy them. But he who listens to me shall live securely" (Pr 1:32-33).

Abraham is a prime example of how God can guide you. "The Lord said to Abram: 'Go forth from your country . . . to the land which I will show you'" (Ge 12:1). Abraham was attentive in that "he who has an ear, let him hear" (Rev 2:7). He also concurred with "prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers" (Jas 1:22). Abraham "with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Ro 4:20). God promised "'I will make you a great nation; and I will bless you'" (Ge 12:2). It would work out over the years. Abraham was "fully assured

that what God had promised, He was able also to perform" (Ro 4:21). "So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him" (Gen 12:4). You can only act on what God has spoken to you. Any other basis is presumption.

Walk by Faith

How can you be sure it's God speaking? There are "many kinds of languages in the world" (1Co 14:10). "Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1Jn 4:1). Fortunately we have "the Spirit of truth" (Jn 14:17) in us. With the Holy Spirit there is no guesswork. "You will know the truth" (Jn 8:32) convincingly. Communication that comes abruptly and disturbs is not from God. Instructions demanding to do something quickly before it's too late are not God's. "God is not a God of confusion" (1Co 14:33).

Because the Spirit is in you, guidance speaks as "deep calls unto deep" (Ps 42:7). A higher plateau of interaction exists because God says "I will make all My mountains a road, and My highways will be raised up" (Isa 49:11). You become aware of what to expect ahead of time. Reminders may come regularly as inner assurances or observable confirmations. Long-term conviction will persist and it may grow as evidence of anticipated fulfillment. With Abraham "the Lord appeared to Abram" (Ge 12:7), "the Lord said to Abram" (13:14), Melchizedek "blessed him" (14:19), "the Lord came to Abram in a vision" (15:1) and "the word of the Lord came to him" (:4). It must transpire "according to that which had been spoken" (Ro 4:18). It is for today because "it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham" (Gal 3:7) and "blessed with Abraham" (:9).

"All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Gal 3:27). You have "laid aside the

old self" (Col 3:9) and have "put on the new self" (:10). This is only possible with the help of the Holy Spirit. "The mind set on the Spirit is life and peace" (Ro 8:6). It is activated by those who "set their minds on . . . the things of the Spirit" (:5). You then serve in the "newness of the Spirit" (7:6). The result is "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal 5:22).

"You are saved, if you hold fast" (1Co 15:2) to "the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand" (:1). Initially it is with that "same spirit of faith . . . we also believe" (2Co 4:13). "God was causing the growth" (1Co 3:6). It demonstrates that "your faith would not rest in the wisdom of men, but on the power of God" (1Co 2:5). Then we are to "stand firm in the faith" (1Co 16:13). In a human way you get tired when you stand or hold on to something for a long time. But God handles that too. It is "He who establishes us" (2Co 1:21). "In your faith you are standing firm." (:24). Therefore it is God giving you the faith to stand.

You then become aware that you "walk by faith, not by sight" (2Co 5:7). It's possible to "take pride in appearance, and not in heart" (:12). But you live by what is in your heart. This is no surprise because God "gave us the Spirit in our hearts" (2Co 1:22). Then "your faith grows" (2Co 10:15). You can depend on God's help because he "is faithful, through whom you were called" (1Co 1:9). There will be challenging moments but "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able" (1Co 10:13). Monitor your standing and "test yourselves to see if you are in the faith" (2Co 13:5).

Rejoice in Hope

"We exult in hope of the glory of God" (Ro 5:2). To rejoice is to celebrate something rewarding, and God's glory would

certainly qualify. But since it is a hope it is unseen because "hope that is seen is not hope" (Ro 8:24). "Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off" (Pr 23:18). Central to this hope is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27). This is the "hope that is in you" (1Pe 3:15) because it is the "hope of salvation" (1Th 5:8). Through rejoicing you proclaim "the hope and resurrection" (Ac 23:6). You rejoice because your "faith is the assurance of things hoped for" (Heb 11:1) since you know "hope does not disappoint" (Ro 5:5).

Hope is in being "fellow heirs" (Ro 8:17) in terms of "the revealing of the sons of God" (:19) regarding "the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (:21). We rejoice knowing "we have a building from God . . . eternal in the heavens" (2Co 5:1). We don't rejoice selfishly because "a horse is a false hope for victory" (Ps 33:17). Consequently one's "hope is in the Lord his God" (Ps 146:5) and "my hope is from Him" (Ps 62:5). Therefore rejoicing means resting on "the hope of eternal life" (Tit 1:2) and "looking for the blessed hope" (2:13).

Hope is the end product of tribulation because it "brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope" (Ro 5:3-4). We are to rejoice in hope and persevere in tribulation (Ro 12:12). "This hope we have as an anchor" (Heb 6:19). The expectation is for "the redemption of our body" (Ro 8:23) because "in hope we have been saved" (:24). Tribulation causes you to remember and "this I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope" (La 3:21). "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing" (Ro 15:13).

Permissive will

"He who has an ear, let him hear" (Rev 3:13). But if you hear will you also obey? Be careful not to dismiss what God

is saying to you. Balaam had this problem even though he proclaimed "the Lord [is] my God" (Nu 22:18). Balak had asked him to curse Israel (:6). Then Balaam sought God for direction and God said, "Do not go with them" (:12). He talked to God, heard his voice, and got his answer. Then Balak said, "I will indeed honor you richly" (:17). Balaam was enticed and rationalized thinking "what else" (:19) God might say. When asked again God permitted him to proceed but cautioned him (:20). Furthermore "God was angry because he was going" (:22). Why did God allow it the second time? Romans 12:2 says there is a "good and acceptable and perfect" will of God. In Balaam's case God acceded to a less than perfect compromise. Some call this God's permissive (i.e. not perfect) will. If a person lacks faith then "let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord" (Jas 1:7). But if you "delight yourself in the Lord He will give you the desires of your heart" (Ps 37:4).

Israel's Attitude

God "leads the humble in justice, And He teaches the humble His way" (Ps 25:9). "Who is the man who fears the Lord? He will instruct him in the way he should chose" (Ps 25:12). Humility is the right attitude because then you'll be receptive to God. "None of those who wait for You will be ashamed" (Ps 25:3). "Trust in the Lord with all your heart" (Pr 3:5). Israel was guilty of going their own way. They "tempted God in the desert. So He gave them their request" (Ps 106:14-15). There are consequences to disobedience because he "sent a wasting disease among them" (:15). They "quickly forgot His works" (:13), and additionally, "forgot God their Savior" (:21). If we don't pay attention and pray we can forget too. When you follow the Lord he "will go before you . . . [and] be your rear guard" (Isa 52:12). "But you will not go out in haste" (:12). Making haste presumes you are doing your own

thing. Doing so represents lack of faith because he "who believes in it will not be disturbed" (Isa 28:16). Israel suffered the consequences of doing their own thing. We must realize that these things are "written for our instruction" (1Co 10:11).

Wait on God

We are to wait on God for an answer when we have a problem or decision to make. However, it is appropriate anytime as in waiting "for your God continually" (Hos 12:6). To wait means to tarry, hope for, or to expect. It doesn't mean to put yourself "on hold" or be sitting next to the telephone waiting for a call not knowing when it will come. You must be actively involved and positive. "I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (Ps 27:13).

Waiting isn't just academic. You might be in a "time of trouble" (Ps 37:39) or in a "pit of destruction" (Ps 40:2). The psalmist exclaimed "I am weary with crying; my throat is parched; my eyes fail while I wait for my God" (Ps 69:3). Another cried "I rise before dawn and cry for help; I wait for Your words" (Ps 119:147). A third professed "O Lord, by Your favor You have made my mountain to stand strong" (Ps 30:7). And there are times where "the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression" (Isa 30:20). Paul told the Corinthians about "our affliction which came to us in Asia" (2Co 1:8). The rationale is that "the sufferings of Christ are ours" (:5). He said "we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so we despaired even of life" (:8). The purpose is "so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God" (:19). God said "'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness'" (2Co 12:9). Jesus said "'apart from Me you can do nothing'" (Jn 15:5). The result is that God "comforts us . . . so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any

affliction" (:4). Paul cited that God "delivered us from so great a peril of death" (:10).

God has "acted on our behalf" (Ps 68:28). He "acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him" (Isa 64:4). God "delivers the afflicted from him who is too strong for him" (Ps 35:10). "He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power" (Isa 40:29). "He is their strength in time of trouble . . . [and] helps them and delivers them . . . and saves them, because they take refuge in Him" (Ps 37:39-40). God is "my rock and my salvation, My stronghold; I shall not be shaken." (Ps 62:6). He is "the rock of my strength, my refuge is in God" (:7). God has said, "'I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,' so that we may confidently say, 'the Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?'" (Heb 13:5-6).

"Those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength" (Isa 40:31). It applies to all ages because even "youths grow weary and tired" (:30). "Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage" (Ps 27:14). "With the heart a person believes" (Ro 10:10). Therefore, without this strength you will lose heart (Ps 27:13). But remember it is "'not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit'" (Zec 4:6). Make sure you aren't trying to save your own life for you "'shall lose it'" (Mk 8:35). But whoever "loses his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it" (:35). You defend against being self-centered with this mindset. "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men" (Col 3:23).

Trust God

Waiting on the Lord has benefits. "May those who wait for You not be ashamed" (Ps 69:6). "The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him" (La 3:25).

"The Lord favors those . . . who wait for His lovingkindness" (Ps 147:11). "They all wait for You to give them their food in due season" (Ps 104:27). Trust in God and you will be blessed (Ps 40:4). To Israel possessing the Promised Land meant to seize or occupy it. "Those who will wait for the Lord, they will inherit the land" (Ps 37:9). "Keep His way, and He will exalt you to inherit the land" (:34).

"Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him" (Ps 37:7). "Wait in silence for God only" (Ps 62:5). "It is good that he waits silently" (La 3:26). When you are quiet you can hear God when you pray. It is God's character your faith is based on, therefore "I will wait on Your name" (Ps 52:9). "In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence" (Pr 14:26). "The people who know their God will display strength and take action" (Da 11:32). Therefore "let the weak say 'I am a mighty man'" (Joe 3:10).

Wait for God's response because it is the intervention you require. "I wait for Your word" (Ps 119:74, 81). "In His word do I hope" (Ps 130:5). "We do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us . . . according to the will of God" (Ro 8:26-27). Then God's "EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER" (1Pe 3:12). As a result "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Ro 10:17). It is the "conviction of things not seen" (Heb 11:1) because it's component of faith convinces you. "Wait for the Lord, and He will save you" (Pr 20:22). Then you must appropriate the solution.

Be Strong

God told Joshua to "'cross this Jordan . . . to the land which I am giving . . . to the sons of Israel'" (Jos 1:2). God said "'no man will be able to stand before you'" (:5) because "'the Lord

your God is with you wherever you go" (:9). He commanded "be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed" (:9). He promised "I will not fail you or forsake you" (:5). But he warned "be careful to do according to all the law . . .that you may have success" (:7).

To be courageous you "let your heart take courage" (Ps 31:24). You believe in and focus on God's promises. "The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You" (Isa 26:3). Jesus, himself, was resolute because he said "the Lord God helps Me . . . therefore, I have set My face like flint" (Isa 50:7). Courage means to make your heart firm. You hold firm to your goal when circumstances try to dissuade you. You will have to persevere to prevail. Encourage yourself by cultivating your faith so it develops. A tiny mustard seed grows into a tree (Mt 13:32). Be assured that "for all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God" (Ro 8:14). "For such is God, our God forever and ever; He will guide us until death" (Ps 48:14).

If you need help you have the assurance of Psalm 91:15. "He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him, and honor him." It is more than God just coming to the rescue. "With a long life I will satisfy him, and let him behold My salvation" (:16). "You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created" (Rev 4:11).

Work to Eat

God's guidance requires that "whatsoever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Col 3:23). The commandment is clear. "Do your own business and work with your own hands so that . . . you will not be dependent on anybody" (1Th 4:11-12). However, "do not merely look out for

your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others" (Php 2:4). You should have the mindset to, "Give to him who asks you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you" (Mt 5:42). "With humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves" (Php 2:4). But your primary responsibility is based on "if any will not work, neither should he eat" (2Th 3:10). Do "not be a burden" (1Th 2:9). "We worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you" (2Th 3:8). "Nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it" (:7).

However, there are ideologies that don't agree with this teaching. They think that personal orientation is selfish and that group emphasis is more meaningful. "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit" (Php 2:3). But that can be deceptive when a person suggests "cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse" (Pr 1:14). Someone can take advantage of the group's resources being a member but not having contributed. "So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of the owners thereof" (:19). "We were not idle when we were with you" (1Th 3:7). "We did this . . . in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow" (2Th 3:9). "Work so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders" (1Th 4:12). "Warn those who are idle" (5:14). "Some among you are idle. Such people we command . . . to settle down" (3:11-12) and "to . . . earn the bread they eat" (2Th 3:11-12).

Your faith heals you (Mk 5:34)

God's Plan

Healing is a facet of God's plan. His plan for Abram was to "make you into a great nation" (Ge 12:2). In addition, God said "To your offspring I will give this land" (:7). The location was at Shechem and the Canaanites were there (:6). The Lord confirmed it by making a covenant with Abram (:18). "Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness" (:6). Many years later God said to Abram "I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers" (Ge 17:2). He even changed his name to Abraham (:5). God again promised to give Canaan to his descendants (:8). Furthermore he said "my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you" (:21).

Another part of God's plan unfolded when he brought "the Israelites out of Egypt" (Ex 12:51). Moses reminded them that Canaan was their destination because it was "the land he swore to your forefathers to give you" (13:15). After they crossed the Red Sea "the Lord made a decree and a law for them, and there he tested them" (15:25). Not only did he deliver them from Egypt but he became "the Lord, who heals you" (:26). However, their responsibility was to "listen carefully . . . [and] pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees" (:26). If they were disobedient he would not protect them against the diseases the Egyptians suffered (:26). Healing was one of God's provisions for the Israelites but it was conditional. "Worship the Lord your God, and . . . I will take away sickness from you" (Ex 23:25). "The Lord will keep you free from every disease. He will not inflict on you the horrible diseases you knew in Egypt" (Dt 7:15). "However, if you do not obey the Lord your God and do not

carefully follow all his commands and decrees . . . all these curses will come upon you" (Dt 28:15).

Basis of Healing

God's choosing and leading Israel is valuable history. "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come" (1Co 10:11). Old Testament content is meaningful to Christians even though "Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant" (Heb 7:22). Are we permitted then to copy-and-paste only what we feel applies from the Old Testament to the New Testament? You can only be selective if the New Testament states that something has been superseded. We must realize that "I the Lord do not change" (Mal 3:6). "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8). Therefore, his desire to heal continues.

The Psalms confirm this. The Lord "forgives your sins and heals all your diseases" (Ps 103:3). Some ills are your own fault. They "became fools . . . and suffered affliction" (107:17). Then they called for help and "he sent forth his word and healed them" (:20). Was this physical or spiritual? It was partly the former since they "loathed all food and drew near the gates of death" (:18). Is it strange that God's word was involved in the healing? Not scripturally. God's words are "life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body" (Pr 4:22). If you follow the instructions you can be healed. Then you must profess the advice because "the tongue of the wise brings healing" (12:18). "The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit" (8:21).

Took Infirmities

Is the healing manifested in the Old Testament in effect today? "Christ is the mediator of a new covenant . . . to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant" (Heb 9:15). How are the old and new connected? The new cites that he "healed all the sick . . . to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: 'He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases'" (Mt 8:17). Isaiah 53 is quoted. The word "diseases" used by Matthew refers to Isaiah's "sorrows" (:4). That fulfillment occurred when "Jesus went throughout Galilee . . . healing every disease and sickness among the people" (Mt 4:23). "The punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed" (Isa 53:5). The meaning is that it applies currently. At the Last Supper regarding his crucifixion Jesus said "'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you'" (Lk 22:20). Those wounds cover our healing today.

Anointing

Jesus "stood up [in the synagogue] to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him" (Lk 4:17). He read the prophetic message about the Messiah which includes "the Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me" (Isa 61:1). It prophesied that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power" (Ac 10:38). "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you" (1:8). "He went around doing good and healing all who were under power of the devil, because God was with him" (10:38). Jesus said, "'it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work'" (Jn 14:10). God's "power had gone out of him" (Mk 5:30). Jesus acknowledged "'the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees the Father doing'" (5:19).

Jesus also read, "He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind" (Lk 4:18). To Isaiah this was "release from darkness for the prisoners" (Isa 61:1). This happened literally since Jesus directed them to tell John "the blind receive sight" (Mk 11:5). For others "these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name . . . they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well" (Mk 16:17,18). "Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father" (Jn 14:12). "The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people" (Ac 5:12). "People brought the sick into the streets . . . so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them" (:15). "Stephen . . . did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people" (6:8). "God did extraordinary miracles through Paul . . . and their illnesses were cured" (19:11).

Is there a method to follow for healing? There is usually a point of contact through which God's power flows. A woman in a large crowd thought "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed" (Mk 5:28). Then "she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering" (:29). "She [had] heard about Jesus" (:27) and approached him from behind in the crowd. Others had heard also. "When the men of that place recognized Jesus . . . [people] begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed" (Mt 14:35,36). Also Paul's "handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured" (Ac 19:12). Did God impregnate the cloth with supernatural energy? That would be science fiction. God is omnipresent. In his omnipotence he knows when to personally manifest his power. "I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled" (Jer 1:12).

Another point of contact is touch. "Jesus put forth his hand and touched him . . . and immediately his leprosy was cleansed" (Mt 8:2,3). "He touched her hand and the fever left her" (Mt 8:14). He "put fingers into his ears . . . and touched his tongue" (Mk 7:33) and his "ears were opened . . . and he spoke plainly" (:35). "They brought a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him" (Mk 8:22).

Laying on Hands

You might say the official method for healing is "the foundation of . . . the laying on of hands" (Heb 6:1). People were aware of this because "they begged him to place his hand on the man" (Mk 7:32). Jairus "pleaded earnestly with him . . . come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live" (Mk 5:23). Laying on of hands is doctrine because it was part of the Old Covenant and used in the annual festivals. The priests were to "lay their hands on its head" (Ex 29:10). This transferred the sins of the people to the sacrifice which was a type of Christ.

"Jesus put his hands on the [blind] man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored" (Mk 8:25). In the synagogue where he was teaching Jesus saw a crippled woman. He said to her "you are set free from your infirmity" (Lk 13:12). "Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God" (:13). Then after the resurrection Jesus told them "these signs will accompany those who believe" (Mk 16:17). "They will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well" (:18). The father of the chief official of Malta was ill. On Paul's visit "after prayer, [he] placed his hands on him and healed him" (Ac 28:8). We can surmise that the miracles God did through the apostles (5:12), Stephen (6:8), and Paul (19:11) were accomplished by the laying on of hands.

Motivation

Healing is a two-way street. It is available to everyone because Jesus "went around doing good and healing all" (Ac 10:38). "The people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all" (Lk 6:19). But you have to be open to accept the healing. You can't have a closed mind. For example, Jesus made a trip to the town where he was born and raised. The people remarked "Isn't this the carpenter?" (Mk 6:3). Then "they took offense at him" (:3). Consequently "he could not do any miracles there, except lay hands on a few sick people and heal them" (:5). It is more than just a lack of cooperation. "Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of the miracles had been performed, because they did not repent" (Mt 11:20). Few allowed miracles in Nazareth. Jesus was saying "it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you" (:22). He was "amazed at their lack of faith" (Mk 6:6) of the people in his hometown.

You've heard "necessity is the mother of invention." If you are sick you have a motivation to become well. If there is hope for a cure you optimistically take advantage of the opportunity. "A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing you can make me clean" (Mt 8:2). A centurion asked for help saying, "Lord, . . . my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering" (:4). "A ruler came and knelt before him and said, "My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live" (9:18). "Two blind men followed him, calling out, 'Have mercy on us, Son of David!'" (:27). "Ten men who had leprosy met him . . . and called out in a loud voice, 'Jesus, Master, have pity on us!'" (Lk 17:13). Notice that they all had confidence in who he was and that he was capable of healing them.

Believe

It requires a commitment on the part of the recipient to receive healing. It had to be ascertained verbally or in some way spiritually substantiated. Jesus asked the blind man "'Do you believe that I am able to do this?'" (Mt 9:28). A Canaanite woman even had to provide proof by saying "'even the dogs eat crumbs that fall from their masters' table'" (15:27). Although Jesus said he'd go to the centurion's house to heal his servant, the centurion had confidence in orders and said, "I am a man under authority . . . [and] say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it" (8:9). Therefore he said to Jesus "'just say the word, and my servant will be healed" (:8).

The result of being healed was predicated on the petitioner's belief. When the blind men answered "'Yes, Lord'" (Mt 9:28) Jesus said, "'According to your faith will it be done' . . . and their sight was restored" (:29-30). To the Canaanite woman "Jesus answered, 'Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour" (15:28). In reply to the centurion Jesus said, "'I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith'" (8:10). Then he directed the centurion, "'Go! It will be done just as you believed it would.' And his servant was healed at that very hour" (:13).

Faith

Jesus is willing to heal, for when the leper asked, he said "'I am willing, . . . Be clean!'" (Mt 8:3). But you have to be ready to receive. When the blind man said he was ready Jesus replied, "'According to your faith will it be done to you'" (9:29). You have to have faith to believe. "It is with your heart that you believe" (Ro 10:10). "Faith comes from hearing" (:17) so you must have input. But it is with your inner self and not

exclusively with your intellect that you believe in spiritual things. "Everything is possible for him who believes" (Mk 9:23).

Jesus said, "Have faith in God" (Mk 11:22). To believe is having faith. "If you believe you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer" (Mt 21:22). "Therefore all things which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you" (Mk 11:24). Verse 24 beginning with "therefore" is predicated on the preceding one. Jesus explained "if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him" (:23). The person commands something to happen and then believes he has already received it. Also he does not doubt it will be done. When Peter "saw the wind, he was afraid and beginning to sink, cried out" (Mt 14:30). Jesus caught him saying, "You of little faith . . . why did you doubt?" (:31). Peter had the faith because Jesus said, "Come" (:29), but doubt cancelled faith.

Your Words

The centurion knew that all Jesus had to do was "just say the word" (Mt 8:8). "He drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick" (:16). Faith is released by words. "By your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned" (12:37). "The tongue has the power of life and death" (Pr 18:21). "The tongue of the wise brings healing" (12:18). Jesus taught "out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks" (Mt 12:34). The faith you have is expressed in speech. "What he says will happen" (Mk 11:23). It works because of the characteristics of the communication. Jesus said "the words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life" (Jn 6:63). He also reveals "I am in the Father . . . [and] the words I say to you are not just my own" (14:10).

Authority

God gave Jesus "the name that is above every name: (Php 2:9). He had "the highest place" (:9). "At the name of Jesus every knee will bow" (Php 2:10). By this authority he commissioned the disciples to spread the Good News (Mk 16:15). They would manifest this power "in My name" (:17) and "signs will accompany" them (:17). Their efforts would be "greater things . . . because I am going to the Father" (Jn 14:12). This would "bring glory to the Father" (:13). Jesus said "I will do whatever you ask" (:13). He had said "in that day you will no longer ask me anything" (Jn 16:23). When he was with them their questions were posed to him. But with Jesus in heaven "my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name" (:23) "so that your joy may be made full" (:24).

Peter knew because he told the cripple "what I have I give you" (Ac 3:6). He had the faith because he understood that "by his wounds we are healed" (Isa 53:5). Peter got the man's attention by looking "straight at him" (Ac 3:4) and the man was "expecting to get something from them" (:5). Peter transmitted the faith because he gave (:6) it. It was a heavenly request because he expressed "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk" (:6). The Father "will give you" (Jn 16:23) the response and Jesus "will do" (Jn 14:13) what you ask. So when Peter "helped him up . . . the man's feet and ankles became strong . . . and [he] began to walk" (Ac 3:7,8). The people "were filled with wonder and amazement" (:10).

Pray

Prayer is communication with God. We are to "pray to God" (1Co 11:13, 2Co 13:7). Jesus instructed "pray to your Father who is in secret" (Mt 6:6). In a sense it is talking because Jesus said, "When you pray, say" (Lk 11:2). Daniel

was "speaking in prayer" (Da 9:21). However, Jesus warned, "you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray on the street corners" (Mt 6:5). He instructed rather to "go into your inner room, [and] close your door and pray to your Father . . . who sees what is done in secret" (:6). How can you be sure the message has been received? We know that "if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us . . . [and] we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him" (1Jo 5:14-15). Even Jesus stated, "I knew that You always hear Me" (Jn 11:42). Daniel expected the communication to succeed. He prayed, "Our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplications, and . . . let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary" (Da 9:17). Solomon expressed, "O my God, I pray, let Your eyes be open and Your ears attentive to the prayer offered in this place" (2Ch 6:40). "The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and his ears attend to their prayer" (1Pe 3:12). Healing is connected to prayer. In Joppa, Tabitha "fell sick and died" (Ac 9:37). The disciples sent for Peter, and when he arrived, he "knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, 'Tabitha arise.' And she opened her eyes" (:40). Also, Publius' father was sick and "Paul went in to see him and after he had prayed, he laid his hands on him and healed him" (28:8).

Prayer

How and when do you pray? "Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness to pray" (Lk 5:16). "He came out and proceeded as was His custom to the Mount of Olives" (22:39). "In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there" (Mk 1:35). "After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone" (Mt 14:23). "It was

at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God" (Lk 6:12). However, it didn't require Jesus to be in isolation to pray. "Praying alone, the disciples were with him" (Lk 9:18). But for a little privacy he said, "Sit here while I go over there and pray" (Mt 26:36).

Prayer originated in the Old Testament. Worship occurred during the Feasts of the Lord such as when "the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering" (Lk 1:10). Daniel was devoted to prayer and "continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God" (Da 6:10). Even Cornelius, a Roman soldier, explained, "I was praying in my house during the ninth hour . . . [and he was told] your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God" (Ac 10:30-31). Paul said "I want men in every place to pray" (1Ti 2:8). Methods vary. Jesus "knelt down and began to pray . . . [and then] rose from prayer" (Lk 22:41,45). He referred to when you "stand praying" (Mk 11:25). It is a matter of relationship and respect. Jesus taught them to pray, "Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name" (Mt 6:9). "Jesus spoke these things; and [lifted] up His eyes to heaven" (Jn 17:1).

Prayerful

Prayer is serious as when someone is ill. "The prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up" (Ja 5:15). Times are tough because "the end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer" (1Pe 4:7). You are to take it seriously and "devote yourselves to prayer" (Ro 12:12, 1Co 7:5, Col 4:2). To be devoted is to be focused and attentive by "keeping alert in it" (Col 4:2) and "on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints" (Eph 6:8). Paul

urges that prayers "be made on behalf of all men" (1Ti 2:1) and wants "men in every place to pray" (2:8). He directs to pray "in everything" (Php 4:6) "at all times" (Eph 6:18) "without ceasing" (1Th 5:17). Jesus taught "that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart" (Lk 18:1). Paul said he was "always offering prayer with joy in my prayer for you all" (Php 1:4). "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (Ja 5:16).

Praying

"One of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples'" (Lk 11:1). Paul said "we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will" (Col 1:9). Prayer and asking are associated. You can't ask without praying, but you can pray without necessarily asking for anything. However, asking is commonly associated with prayer because "we know we have the requests which we have asked from Him" (Jn 11:42). "In all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive" (Mt 21:22). Jesus said, "All things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted to you" (Mk 11:24). "In that day you will not question Me about anything . . . [for] if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you" (Jn 16:23).

There are certain characteristics of prayer. "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit" (Eph 6:18) A petition is composed of requests. "Be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints" (:18). Paul also instructed "that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men" (1Ti 2:1). He said "be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplications with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Php 4:6). Daniel said "I gave my attention to

the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications" (Da 9:3). He had been "praying and giving thanks before his God" (6:10). Solomon emphasized the value of prayer when he interceded for Israel. He said God would deliver them if they "repent and make supplication to You in the land of their captivity" (2Ch 6:37) and "pray to their land which You have given to their fathers" (:38). Of course, preventive maintenance is also important. Jesus said, "Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone" (Mk 11:25). He also said, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not enter into temptation" (Lk 22:46).

Entreat

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).

Intercede

Jesus asked them to keep watch while he prayed, but when he returned, he found them asleep (Mt 26:38,45). He warned them to "'keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation" (:41). Prayer has its part in survival. He told them to pray so they would "'have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place" (Lk 21:36). You need God's protection both physically and spiritually. It is a spiritual endeavor. Paul said "pray at all times in the Spirit" (Eph 6:18). But Jesus pointed out that "'the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mt 26:41). That is why you must be consistent and "devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving" (Col 4:2). "'Keep on the alert at all times'" (Lk 21:36). "Be on the alert with all perseverance and petition" (Eph 6:18). Paul followed the advice saying "unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers" (Ro 1:9-10). He engaged in intercessory prayer on the behalf of others "with all perseverance and petition for all the saints" (Eph 6:18). Peter pointed out to "be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer" (1Pe 4:7). Jesus' parable showed a judge bringing justice to a widow who petitioned him continually for action (Lk 18:1-8). Jesus also taught to pray to "'not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil'" (Mt 6:13). For when you "encounter various trials" (Ja 1:2) you will have prayed "to escape" (Lk 21:36) so "with

the temptation [God] will provide the way of escape also, so that you may be able to endure it" (1Co 10:13).

Ask

There is liberal permission for what to ask of God. "Ask, and it will be given to you; . . . for everyone who asks receives" (Mt 7:7,8). Your Father will "give good things to them that ask him" (:11). "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Php 4:6). "You do not have because you do not ask" (Ja 4:2). "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives" (:3). "Your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Mt 6:8). Paul "implored the Lord three times that it might leave me" (2Co 12:8) but God said 'My grace is sufficient for you' (:9). "If our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him" (1Jn 3:21-22).

Therefore "if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know we have the requests which we have asked from Him" (1Jn 5:14-15). Then do like Paul who said "I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told" (Ac 27:25). "We who have believed enter that rest" (Heb 4:3). Therefore "Do not fear or be dismayed . . . for the battle is not yours but God's" (2Ch 20:15). However we are to "fight the good fight of faith" (1Ti 6:12) because "for without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Heb 11:6). But to fight doesn't mean self-effort. "Are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Gal 3:3). God works miracles among you by hearing with faith (:5).

Receive

Years ago a "name it and claim it" doctrine surfaced. It sounded like guarantying something on your gift list or getting money to miraculously materialize as in winning the lottery. "Your heavenly Father knows that you need" (Mt 6:32) provisions to eat, drink and wear (:31). If you seek God first "all these things will be added to you" (:33). The Bible says this and Jesus is "the Word" (Jn 1:14). He said "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 deceptive doctrine says that you can speak just about anything into existence you wish. But it doesn't consider that it has to be in accordance with God's words "in you" (:7). The words are there if you meditate on the book of the law (Jos 1:8). They are there because "Your word I have treasured in my heart" (Ps 119:11). "Jesus answered, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God'" (Mt 4:4). He repeats it being written in verses 7 and 10. "If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa 8:20).

By the Church

God officially established healing in the church. "To each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1Co 12:7). One is "gifts of healing" (:9). In this case the gift is a ministry through the one assigned. We know that you need faith to receive healing. "Faith by the same Spirit" (:9) is provided so you possess it to receive healing. You might say the gifts are interactive. Faith to operate and receive the gift of "miraculous powers" (:10) is necessary. "God has appointed . . . workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing" (:28). "Do all have gifts of healing?" (:30). "He gives them to each one, just as he determines" (:11).

In the church if anyone is sick he should call the elders (Ja 5:14). They should "pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord" (:14). It will heal him and "the Lord will raise him up" (:15). It is a collective endeavor to "pray for each other so that you may be healed" (:16). "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (:16). This is illustrated in the case of a fig tree (Mt 21:18-20). Jesus told them they could "do what was done to the fig tree" (:21). Furthermore "if you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer" (:22). "Believe you have received it, and it will be yours" (Mk 11:24). "By his wounds you have been healed" (1Pe 2:24). It has already been done and just needs to be manifested. Jesus instructed the centurion, "Go! It will be done just as you believed it would" (Mt 8:13). He told the woman, "Go in peace and be freed from your suffering" (Mk 5:34). Healing is the "children's bread" (Mt 15:27). Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour" (:28).

Your faith heals you (Mk 5:34). You have faith because "My words abide in you" (Jn 15:7). Paul said "the word is . . . in your heart" (Ro 10:8). "Let the word of Christ richly dwell in you" (Col 3:16). It "comes from hearing" (:17). It's "by the word of Christ" (:17). It's "the word of faith which we are preaching" (:8). Faith is confidence built on the trust that the word is "forever . . . settled in heaven" (Ps 119:89). Faith is inspiration because the "unfolding of Your words gives light" (Ps 119:130). Therefore "walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light" (1Jo 1:7) and it will work out.

Overcoming Depression

"You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). If you are in a depression you are not free. A doctor told me that the reason it is called depression is that it

depresses the functions of the body. You might not be able to explain it, but you have a sense that something isn't right. This example sounds gruesome, but you've probably heard the rendition of the frog in a pot of water on a stove where, when the heat is turned up, it will cook and not even realize it should jump out of the pot. It didn't know the truth, but the scripture says you will know it and it will set you free.

You are healthy when your body works properly. But there are holistic aspects of your being involving emotions, feelings, mood, thoughts and behavior. It is said this is your mental health. If you get physically sick it is called an illness. Most people don't worry about catching a cold. A mental problem would be categorized as mental illness. Unfortunately that can have a negative connotation. But it might have a biological source and it is regarded as a medical disorder. It is treatable and should be treated. It is more common in our society than you might think. But depressed people often don't seek treatment possibly because they don't even recognize they have a treatable disorder.

Symptoms

Depression is identified by its symptoms. A common attribute is sadness. When people have an ordinary mood swing they'll say they are depressed. But if it lasts for over two weeks and you "can't pull yourself up by your own bootstraps" then it may be a symptom of a disorder. At that point it is good to seek help. Otherwise it may go on for week after week, month after month, and year after year. That kind of prolonged problem is called a clinical depression because it requires treatment. Symptoms persist and strongly affect thinking, feelings and behavior. They can become so disabling that they interfere with the ability to work, sleep, eat, and enjoy once pleasurable activities. But not all symptoms may be present and their severity may

vary. Serious manifestations may indicate a major depression. Less severe signs may point to dysthymia which is chronic, though manageable, but will prevent you from functioning at full potential and make you susceptible to further depression.

If you're depressed the symptoms pertain in a large way to your feelings. There's a tendency to think of this as psychological. You might say to yourself you have to "shake yourself out of it." Others might counsel "pull yourself together." But you hear of many people who just can't even get out of bed in the morning. This is why its an organic, medical disorder. But how can a biological cause be responsible for emotional manifestations in the mental realm? Its because brain chemistry is unbalanced which affects thinking and nerve functioning.

One of the characteristics is the persistence of the symptoms 24 hrs/day with no end in sight (not even a "light at the end of the tunnel"). One person said its like having the flu which never goes away--at least with a virus or germs the body will eventually heal. Even though the source is biological it has the result of affecting you emotionally because your thoughts monitor the predicament and your hope suffers because you can't visualize a solution. You, in effect, become helpless to figure out your own dilemma. This inadequacy leads to lack of confidence in yourself and feeling worthless. If you've always been a responsible person you may even begin to feel guilty. Then pessimism could be right around the corner. Pessimism is a tendency to look at everything negatively. One person commented that you become a different person. If your condition is chronic then its possible to lose sight of who you once were. Also, with your will power strained its possible to make bad decisions. If your behavior changes its good to get counseling so you don't go off in the wrong direction.

Depression is more than feeling blue (i.e. down in the dumps). It is also a matter of exhaustion and fatigue. It is not only psychological but physiological. You don't feel energetic and you may feel slowed down. It is not a matter of being deprived of calories because depression "depresses" the whole body. You feel fatigued all the time and it's difficult to motivate yourself. Thinking can be tiring and making a decision may seem impossible. Concentrating and remembering things may be beyond your capabilities. You may feel restless and unable to focus. You may not be able to accomplish your work properly and could be ineffective in other areas. A mental burden weighs you down and it seems you must carry it wherever you go. Activities you previously enjoyed no longer interest you. It's like someone's turned on a low frequency wave generator which neutralizes all positive and meaningful expression and leaves the world with only superficial activity. Another symptom of depression is not sleeping very well or sleeping too much. Any solution for a Christian is contained in God's promises. This one is "he grants sleep to those he loves" (Psalm 127:2). Therefore, to overcome this concern "cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

Road to Recovery

Recovery will take a different approach. "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord, it will stand" (Proverbs 19:21). If you are genuinely depressed then grandiose plans are beyond your capabilities. "The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps" (16:9). You need to take it one step at a time. Even taking a step can be baffling. You still have responsibilities but multi-tasking may be too difficult. The old saying "necessity is the mother of invention" applies. Deep in your heart man believes" (Romans 10:10). If you know in your heart something needs to be done then your mind won't mislead

you. You can feel confident and at rest when you take that step. God does "enlarge my steps under me" (Psalm 18:36).

Accomplishing each manageable task satisfies. But if too much is attempted it disappoints. It's easy to become disappointed. Self-condemnation may result leading to thoughts of suicide. At the state employment office they interview a person before they send him out to a job interview. They want to determine if the applicant is qualified and don't want to waste the employer's time. But just as importantly they know that a person will become disappointed if he gets rejected for one job after another. You know the old saying "variety is the spice of life." Vary your activities and do things differently where applicable because one of the contributors to your depression may be too rigid a mind set and expecting too much of yourself.

At some point you must exercise your will power to give yourself a push to get going. But shelving this phase may reinforce not trying, and this attitude may become self-perpetuating. A rationale for it may be necessary. If you can apply your thought processes to solving a real-world problem then practical feedback will encourage you. If the project has a realistic application in your life then it will build you up because you perceive that you can succeed at something. It provides a direction to go in instead of around in circles without any goal. But without pacing yourself you'll "jump out of the frying pan and into the fire." You need periods of rest and exercise. Pushing yourself too hard unnecessarily for too long causes fatigue and loss of ground gained. You must have some realistic long term goals, but locking yourself into them prevents the freedom and flexibility you need to work yourself out of your depression. "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

Professional Help

There are various causes of depression and it will take a doctor to diagnose it. The solution might involve a combination of medicine and counseling. An aspect of the latter is changing cognitive behavior. Stress is a major factor and its possible you precipitate it yourself as with a Type A personality who constantly pressures himself. If "survival of the fittest" is your motivation then stress is very likely to result. Jesus said "all who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Matthew 26:52). "Whatever a man sows, this he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7). But the answer is in the other direction for "whoever wants to save his life will lose it" (Mark 8:35). Counseling will give you the chance to change your behavior to alleviate stress and overcome depression. If you cooperate then God "will give you the treasures of [this] darkness" (Isaiah 45:13) for answers. You have the opportunity to learn the meaning of "you are not your own; you were bought at a price" (1 Cor 6:19-20).

Professional advice in pamphlets suggests not to make major life decisions without consultation. Does that mean depression makes your mind vulnerable as if "not running on all cylinders?" Research indicates that vulnerability could be due to imbalances in the brain neurotransmitters serotonin and norepinephrine. Deficiency in the first may cause sleep problems, irritability and anxiety. The same in the second may contribute to fatigue and depressed mood. What's interesting is that when you read labels on memory enhancement supplements some ingredients are supposed to build up transmitters which cause brain cells to communicate with one another.

This communication takes place within the neuron or nerve cell. It takes place when an electrical pulse is transmitted along the cell's axon connected to another neuron. There are neurotransmitters stored in small vesicles

which get released by the electric current into the synaptic gap between two neurons which activates the adjacent cell. These molecules are then either destroyed by enzymes or reabsorbed into the neuron. But there is an antidepressant called SSRI which stands for **S**elective **S**erotonin **R**euptake **I**nhibitor. This antidepressant postpones the neurotransmitter's recycling so it can operate longer.

Treatment

One of the primary causes of depression is stress. But it can also have biological, genetic, or psychological sources. Therefore a doctor's diagnosis is essential. However, if it is complicated a misdiagnosis is possible. As a patient you are entitled to ask questions you might have and you should not hide any information which might be crucial. You should not be so cooperative that you just take drugs without thorough investigation. Going the wrong direction will just postpone a solution. You are entitled to becoming informed, but doctor's visits are costly. Printed material should be made available so you aren't kept "in the dark" and would worry all the more about what you don't understand.

Antidepressants are supposed to speed recovery by eliminating symptoms and enhancing motivation and energy. Therefore, drugs are not meant to be curative in themselves like an anti-biotic would be. Newer antidepressants target different or combined brain chemicals. A significant number of patients find relief within 6-8 weeks and most on the first or second drug tried. But a third may require further refinements. There are also side effects to consider. Most medication is approved for shorter periods, but long term use depends on successful intervals without occurrences of depression. You see testimonies of people who find the correct drug and have to stay on it permanently. It's important to resolve the problem early because major depression is a recurrent illness and the more episodes you

have, the worse they can get, and the less stress it takes to trigger them. But recent research has discovered that anatomical changes are reversible and complete recovery is possible.

The brain needs energy. It uses 20% of the body's supply, 50% of the sugar in the blood, 20% of all inhaled oxygen, and 25% of the body's metabolic activity takes place there. Proteins are crucial to the brain. They are composed of amino acids and there are ten essential ones obtained only from the diet. Foods contain different combinations of them but they must be balanced and over the limiting amount to prevent deficiencies of them. Lack of certain amino acids causes depression. You might think that gobbling up a lot of them will load up the brain. But there is a brain-blood-barrier that prevents water-soluble toxins from entering. Since most major brain nutrients are water-soluble this complicates things. For this reason, if you wanted to manufacture brain neurotransmitters you'd have to use precursor loading which involves eating more of the nutrients that the body converts to neurotransmitters.

In order to be processed efficiently these amino acids cannot be bound up in molecular chains but must be in free form. A proper precursor is the chemical starting point for changes made which result in the desired neurotransmitter. Serotonin is an important end product. L-tryptophan is its precursor which, midway through its conversion process, becomes 5-hydroxytryptophan. Today there is a product called 5-HTP which represents this state and would create serotonin. Another important neurotransmitter is norepinephrine and a precursor to it is L-tyrosine which goes through a couple of conversions requiring additional chemical input. You can increase the effectiveness of the process by ensuring that the required vitamins (e.g. vitamin B6) and other ingredients are present. A factor to consider

is that amino acids compete with one another for absorption by the body, so the precursors should be taken at different times to avoid conflict. However, self-medication may, at best, just be supplemental. Proper treatment should be by a doctor and possibly a therapist.

You aren't worthless for "God said, 'Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness.'" (Ge 1:26). "Thou didst form my inward parts...for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." (Ps 139:13-14). You aren't helpless for Jesus said, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, that he may be with you forever, that is the Spirit of Truth." (Jn 14:16-17). "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Ps 46:1). You aren't hopeless for "the plans that I have for you,' declares the Lord, [are] 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope'" (Jer 29:11). "My soul, wait in silence for God only, for my hope is from him." (Ps 62:5).

Be Diligent Until the End (Hebrews 6:11)

Don't Drift Away

"God" (Heb 1:1) "in these last days has spoken to us in His Son" (:2). "After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard" (2:3). It is "what we have heard" (:1). "For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard" (:1). "We must pay more careful attention therefore" (:1 NIV). It was "the word spoken through angels" (:2) and "are they not . . . sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?" (1:14). It was salvation "spoken through the Lord, [and] it was confirmed to us" (2:3). "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard" (:2 KJV). What was heard? It was the Gospel. But we must be careful "that we do not drift away from it" (:2 NIV) which is "what we have heard" (:2). We can forget if we are careless and ignore it. The author therefore says to them "it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing" (5:11). The process is illustrated by drifting away which is being swept along by a water current or washed away. The Gospel can be seen as a boat dock which you grab on to for safety, security and to have the truth. But if you're not attentive you can lose your handhold and drift away. Worse yet you can refuse to accept it and deliberately push off from the dock back into the current. Rejecting it represents unbelief. "Therefore do not throw away your confidence" (10:35). Prolonging that process results in apostasy because that person has neglected to "pay more careful attention" (2:2 NIV) or "pay much closer attention" (:2 NASB). The Gospel represents "the things which we have heard [and not] at any time . . . should [we] let them slip" (:2 KJV). It represents salvation and heaven to the believer.

You are Partakers

You might respond that this warning doesn't apply to me because I am saved. But the author addresses the "holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling" (Heb 3:1). "He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him" (7:25). You have "been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit" (6:4). "Beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation" (:9). Therefore they are Jewish believers. So why warn them about backsliding? Perhaps they are vulnerable because the New Covenant requires a different kind of faith than the Old Covenant.

Scripture should have been clear enough to them. "He who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life" (Jn 6:40). "I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand" (10:28). You would think that without science fiction sources to distract them they would take eternal life literally. Jesus promised, "He who believes in Me will never thirst" (6:32). It is a matter of trust, and when Hebrews was written, a number of people were still alive who had heard Jesus. He said "the one who comes to Me, I will certainly not cast out" (:37). "All that [the Father] He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day" (:39).

Maybe they missed the security of the religious routines of Tabernacle worship. But Jesus has become the New Covenant. "Christ was faithful as a Son over His house-whose house we are" (Heb 3:6). "Through Him we both have our access in the Spirit to the Father . . . and are of God's household" (Eph 2:18-19). Paul asks "who will separate us from the love of Christ?" (Ro 8:35). "For I am convinced that . . . [nothing] will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (:38-39).

Danger of Apostasy

Bible teachers explain that our position in Christ is based upon the foundation of the scriptures. However, each believer didn't have his own personal Bible like we do today. But the author of Hebrews reminded them "to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard" (Heb 2:2 KJV). Those Jews had been taught weekly on the Sabbath about the Old Covenant. Those "things" included "the man who finds wisdom and the man who finds understanding" (Proverbs 3:13). "The Lord by wisdom founded the earth, by understanding He established the heavens. By His knowledge the deeps were broken up" (:19-20). Hebrews was warning them not to "drift away" but to keep focused. "Let them not vanish from your sight; keep sound wisdom and knowledge" (:21).

Hebrews urges them to persevere. "Solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained" (Heb 5:14). "Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about Christ, let us press on to maturity" (6:1). They must have known "in Him you have been made complete" (Col 2:10) and that "He made you alive together with "Him" (:13). "Having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance (Eph 11:13-14) and "by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (4:30). They should have put their eyes on the future and not be returning to the past which would represent apostasy. "By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb 10:10). "For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (:14). Hebrews is warning them not to reject the Gospel. "In later times some will fall away from the faith" (1Ti 4:1) but the day of the Lord "will not come unless the apostasy comes first" (2Ti 2:3). "How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled

under foot the Son of God . . . by which he was sanctified?" (Heb 10:29).

Salvation is Escape

The author predicates asking, "For if . . . every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape?" (Heb 2:2-3). It is a cause and effect. God told Moses, "When you enter the land . . . when you eat of the food of the land, you shall lift up an offering to the Lord" (Nu 15:19). "But when you unwittingly fail" (:22) you "shall offer one bull for a burnt offering . . . with its grain offering and its drink offering . . . and one male goat for a sin offering" (:24). This was to illustrate "how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" (Heb 2:3). To escape is to avoid the consequences. "If the righteous will be rewarded in the earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner!" (Pr 11:31). Salvation means that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1Ti 1:15) and "having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Ro 5:10). The Lord is "not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2Pe 3:9). The result of not escaping is to perish. It is an either-or proposition. Unfortunately "the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing" (1Co 1:18). But the author of Hebrews is addressing "those who are sanctified . . . [and Jesus] is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb 2:11) because they are "holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling" (3:1). They are referred to in the same way in Hebrews 3:12, 10:19 and 13:22. Therefore believers are being addressed with the question "how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" (2:3). The cross is "to us who are being saved . . . the power of God" (1Co 1:18). Why had Israel "turned away in continual apostasy? They hold fast to deceit, they refuse to return" (Jer 8:5). Peter advised to "repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away" (Ac 3:19) and Jesus preached "'repent and believe in the gospel'"

(Mk 1:15).

Signs and Miracles

The author is concerned about those who may disregard salvation. He first makes it clear that it isn't because there wasn't enough evidence. "It was confirmed to us by those who heard" (Heb 2:3). Luke cites that "they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word" (Lk 1:2). It was "Jesus, because of the suffering of death . . . that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone" (Heb 2:9) whereby "bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings" (:10). This is not just a generalization for posterity's sake in accordance with "'Has it not been written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods?'" (Jn 10:34). "You have appointed him over the works of Your hands; you have put all things in subjection under His feet" (Heb 2:6). It is in accordance with the brethren because "beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation" (6:9). For this "reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (2:11). "I will proclaim Your name to My brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will sing Your praise" (:12).

At first glance Hebrews 2:1-4 could be looked at as a brief mention of importance. Verse one is apostasy, two the Law, three the gospel and four miracles. The Hebrews being addressed would remember when reminded. One would think a subject of such importance would require more emphasis. Peter's sermon reiterates Jesus' "miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know" (Ac 2:22). "Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles" (:43). Hebrews then repeats that it was "God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and

by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will" (Heb 2:4). Paul thought it important to ask the Galatians "does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it . . . by faith?" (Gal 3:5). Revelation came "to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven" (1Pe 1:12). But even today cessationists believe that miracles ceased when the apostles died. The author of Hebrews is reminding them of the applicability of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Jesus highlighted the tendency of "'unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe" (Jn 4:48). Also, "'You seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled'" (6:26). The Hebrews should have been challenged by this message.

A Firm Root

It is "His house-whose house we are" (Heb 3:6). But there is a contingency because the next phrase starts with "if." "If we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end" (:6). There is a parallel regarding the sower of seed where some "'fell on the rocky ground . . . [but] it had no depth of soil'" (Mk 4:5). It represents people who "'when they hear the word immediately receive it with joy; and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away'" (:16-17). If they receive the word joyfully you would assume it had been understood. "But 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). However, it is predicated on whether they have a "'firm root in themselves'" (Mk 4:16). You are motivated "'with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind'" (Mt 22:37). It is more than just your mind saying to itself that something is true. If that was the only criteria then if you drink

in this way you "will thirst again" (Jn 4:13). "Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" (Mt 16:25). He who "drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day" (6:54). They are to then hold on to it firmly "until the end" (:6). But for these it is only "temporary" (:17) and they "fall away" (:17) which is defined as apostasy.

In Hope Believed

Christ was "a Son over His house whose house we are if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope" (Heb 3:6). The word "hope" is used several times in the book of Hebrews. Having hope means that you have an expectation that something will come to pass. It can be based on justification or reasonableness, otherwise it would be hopeless. You can even have hope in a person who you feel can accomplish what you expect. Hope can have a connotation of doubt because if what you expect seems impossible, you wouldn't say "I hope so" questioning it. Therefore "hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees?" (Ro 8:24). "But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it" (:25). There is an eager anticipation not normally there as we are "looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). To Paul it was "according to my earnest expectation and hope" (Php 1:20).

One piece of the armor of God is the "helmet, the hope of salvation" (1Th 5:8). It protects the mind. When you get an understanding of something you reply, "I see what you mean." Seeing is a physical experience and a metaphor for mentally comprehending something. When it is established "our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing" (2Co 1:7). It is a deliberate decision. Paul advised "instruct those who are rich in this present world not . . . to fix their hope on the uncertainty

of riches" (1Ti 6:17). It shows you can misplace your hope as the Jews were told it is "Moses, in whom you have set your hope" (Jn 5:45). The proper focus is that "we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men" (1Ti 4:10) and it is "He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us" (2Co 1:10).

There are attributes which include "believes all things, hopes all things" (1Co 13:7). The two are separated. Also "now faith, hope, love, abide these three" (:13). Separate words have individual meanings which sometimes need careful interpretation. Abraham is said that "in hope against hope he believed" (Ro 4:18). Both hope and believing are cited incorporating two meanings. Hope is fixing or setting your mind on a probable future result. "Against hope" (:18) means you wouldn't logically expect something to happen because the chance of it is almost zero. Abraham nonetheless hoped in it anyway and "in hope . . . he believed" (:18). These two words must have different uses or else they'd be redundant together. For instance, "we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness" (Gal 5:5). "We have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and exalt in hope of the glory of God" (Ro 5:2). Paul prayed that "the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (15:13). We "through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God" (1Pe 1:21). Abraham "believed in hope" (Ro 4:18 KJV) because he trusted in the promise "that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken" (:18).

Hope in God

The "hope of Israel" (Ac 28:20) is "the promise to which our twelve tribes hope to attain" (26:7). It is the "hope of the promise made by God to our fathers" (:6) regarding "the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago" (Titus 1:2). God has "given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace" (2Th 2:16) and we are "made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7). "There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling" (Eph 4:4). Paul prayed "that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling" (2:12).

How do you have hope? Hoping must be directed properly. It is necessary to "hope in God" (Ac 24:15) and to "hope in Christ" (Eph 1:12) because it is "Christ Jesus, who is our hope" (1Ti 1:1). Next we are to "take hold of the hope set before us" (Heb 3:18) and then your "flesh also will live in hope" (Ac 2:26). Where is the source of hope? "In earlier times [it] was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Ro 15:4). "Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts" (5:5). "In His name the Gentiles will hope" (Mt 12:21). It is "this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27). There is a "hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel" (:5). "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil" (Heb 6:19).

What is our position? "His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1Pe 1:3). "Everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself" (1Jn 3:3). "Show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until

the end" (Heb 6:11). "Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1Pe 1:13). "If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied" (1Co 15:19). Therefore be "steadfast in hope" (1Th 1:3) and "continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation" (Col 1:23). "Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, 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).

Confess your Hope

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (Heb 10:23). The Greek word for confession means to say the same thing or to agree with. Another way to look at it is to speak out of as with a public declaration. Since it is confessing your hope it is agreeing with the expectation which you have identified. That is what you "hold fast . . . without wavering" (:23). Your faith depends on that "He who promised is faithful" (:23). "The promise was approaching which God had assured Abraham" (Ac 7:17). But make sure you aren't a "double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (Ja 1:8). If you waver you're not holding fast and you can drift away. The most important aspect of this is when "you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord" (Ro 10:9). There's a saying that you should put your mind in motion before setting your mouth in gear. But with the engine running in neutral you'll never get anywhere if you don't engage the transmission. So when you "believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (:9) and "with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation" (:10). The first part of the verse says "with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness" (:10). Its as if without the second half of the verse the process is incomplete. Some

have pointed out that even though doctrine itself is truth, if its only treated mentally, it isn't alive and has to be activated before it can be used.

Jesus said that "everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My father who is in heaven" (Mt 10:32) and "also before the angels of God" (Lk 12:8). Its as if it was a requirement to speak it out openly "before men" (Mt 10:32). But the Pharisees said "if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue" (Jn 9:22) so "they were not confessing him" (12:42). Paul advised to "fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called" (1Ti 6:12). He recognized that "you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses" (1:12). So as "partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus" (Heb 3:1) who is the "great high priest who has passed through the heavens" (4:14) and the "High Priest of our confession" (3:1).

The author of Hebrews warns to hold on to the "confession of our hope" (Heb 10:23). Should the word's use be limited to just declaring, agreeing and praising? Or should its understanding be expanded to the larger context to where it is also used? If it means to audibly profess before men then when they were baptized in the Jordan River "they confessed their sins" (Mt 3:6) applies. Doctrinally "if we confess our sins He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins" (1Jn 1:9). The big picture is "your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ" (2Co 9:13). "The one who confesses the Son has the Father also" (1Jn 2:23) and "whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God" (4:15). "Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Php 2:11) and "every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God" (1Jn 4:2). In the longer perspective "all these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and

having welcomed them from a distance" (Heb 11:13). They had "confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth" (:13).

Assurance of Hope

It is "whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end" (Heb 3:6). "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (11:1). We can have confidence if we're assured in our faith and have a conviction of what we're convinced of. When you are assured about something you know enough of the facts about it so that you can predict its behavior. It must be logical so that you can depend on its performance. You must feel good about it to place your faith in it. In fact, "faith is the assurance of things hoped for" (Heb 11:1). If your hope in something is well-founded based on evidence and how confident you feel about it then assurance is produced which represents faith in something. It is "the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding" (Col 2:2). To understand is to know. But there is the starting point where "we were dead in our transgressions" (Eph 2:5). Then there is "the beginning of our assurance" (Heb 3:14). Next, God makes "known to us the mystery of His will" (Eph 1:9) "resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery that is, Christ Himself" (Col 2:2). It is so "you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God" (4:12). Then "we will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him" (1Jn 3:19). In their desperation "men's hearts were failing them for fear . . . [of what was] coming on the earth" (Lk 21:26 KJV) and God's solution is, "Cease striving and know that I am God" (Ps 46:10). Scripture has been written "so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1Jn 5:13). "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (Jn 17:3).

God "gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). "I give eternal life to them" (Jn 10:28). I've heard many people ask how does one comprehend eternal life? The Father sent Christ "into the world so that we might live through Him" (1Jn 4:9). "He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him" (Heb 7:25). "The testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son" (1Jn 5:9) and "that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (:11). "The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself" (:10) and "he who has the Son has the life" (:12). Your confidence is predicated on "that you may stand perfect and fully assured" (Col 4:12). But you don't stand on what you have personally figured out all by yourself. It is "He who began a good work in you" (Php 1:6) by way of "His calling and choosing you" (2Pe 1:10). His "great mercy has caused us to be born again" (1Pe 1:3). There is deliberation to it because "whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Ro 10:13). It is "what I have entrusted to Him" (2Ti 1:12). "After listening to the message of the truth, the gospel" (Eph 1:13) "everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me" (Jn 6:45). Paul states "you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you unless you believed in vain" (1Co 15:2). It is "on the basis of faith in His name" (Ac 3:16) and a choice to "repent and return" (Ac 3:19) in "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (20:21).

Guaranty of Salvation

How do you know you possess salvation? "Believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead you will be saved" (Ro 10:9). "The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself" (1Jn 5:10) for "he who has the Son has the life" (:12). "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed" (Ro 10:11) for "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). "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God" (Ro 8:16). "We have obtained an inheritance" (Eph 1:11) and are "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ" (Ro 8:17) "with a view of the redemption of God's own possession" (Eph 1:14). He "gave us the Spirit in our hearts" (2Co 1:22) "as a pledge of our inheritance" (Eph 1:14).

How do you experientially know that you are a "new creation in Christ" (2Co 5:17). "By grace you have been saved through faith; and that it is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph 2:8). It is "bestowed on us" (1:6) and "He has "blessed us with every spiritual blessing" (:3). "The love of God was manifested in us" (1Jn 4:9) and "God is for us" (Ro 8:31) and "intercedes for us" (:34). It is "an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1Pe 1:4). "He is able to guard" (2Ti 1:12) and "perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Php 1:6). You are "protected by the power of God through faith" (1Pe 1:5).

Is there a guaranty that what you believe in will be fulfilled? Abraham was "fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform" (Ro 4:21). "The one who endures to the end will be saved" (Mk 13:13) "if we hold fast . . . until the end" (Heb 3:14). Some have commented that if there wasn't any ongoing responsibility of the believer to continue in faith then maybe God would rapture each one at the point of salvation. Calvinists believe that those "He foreknew, He also predestined" (Ro 8:29) takes away the threat of backsliding. But why would Peter warn "brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you" (2Pe 1:10). He answers "as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble" (:10). There are many scriptures you can rely on but they must experientially become a part of you. Therefore make sure you are "building

yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 20). It requires your effort to "keep yourselves in the love of God (:21). Furthermore, you must be "waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord" (:21). Anxiously means with anticipation and diligence.

Hold Confidence Fast

"Christ was faithful as a Son over His house whose house we are if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope" (Heb 3:5-6). We are "Christ's body, and individually members of it" (1Co 12:27). "You are a temple of God" (3:16) "of the Holy Spirit who is in you" (6:19). This is contingent "if we hold fast our confidence" (Heb 3:6). The phrase "hold fast" doesn't sound modern but it does have the connotation of to fasten something which is to firmly attach securely in place. The NIV translates it to "hold on to our courage" (:6) which means it is highly recommended. The word "courage" seems to denote positive thinking, and "holding on" self effort. The NASB uses the word "confidence." But the spiritual interpretation is, "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit" (Zec 4:6). The author of Hebrews warns "do not throw away your confidence, which has great reward" (10:35). That shows at least that it is a matter of will power. The NIV expresses that "we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first" (3:14). To hold connotes grasping with your hand, and if you don't have a firm handhold, you might drop it. Does it imply that you might get tired of holding it and set it down? The starting point is marked as "the beginning of" (:14 NASB) or "at first" (:14 NIV). Then you are to "show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure" (6:11 NIV) "so as to realize the full assurance of hope" (:11 NASB). We are to "hold unswervingly to the hope we profess" (10:23 NIV) "without wavering" (:23 NASB). You will receive "God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off" (Ro 11:22).

Another facet of perseverance is to "hold fast the word which I preached to you" (1Co 15:2). The understanding is in your mind, memory and comprehension. Paul applied this telling Timothy "continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them" (2Ti 3:14). Becoming convinced shows that it is not instantaneous but a process of study. "They observed the confidence of Peter and John . . . and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus" (Ac 4:13). Paul stated "we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him" (Eph 3:12) and "before Him" (1Jn 5:14). "Such confidence we have through Christ toward God" (2Co 3:4) and "great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus" (1Ti 3:13). "We have confidence in the Lord concerning you" (2Th 3:4), "in you in the Lord" (Gal 5:10) and "am convinced in the Lord Jesus" (Ro 14:14). There is always an object associated with confidence. You are "convinced of this" (Php 1:25) and your "confidence is this" (2Co 1:12). Also you "confidently say" (Ac 2:29), "speak confidently" (Titus 3:8), and "make confident assertions" (1Ti 1:7). Furthermore, servants are to "speak Your word with confidence" (Ac 4:29) and you are to "speak to him [the king] also with confidence" (26:26). "By this, love is perfected with us, so we may have confidence in the day of judgment" (1Jn 4:17). "Abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence" (2:28) "because as He is, so also are we in this world" (4:17).

Don't Harden Heart

"Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Heb 11:1 NIV). "I know whom I have believed" (2Ti 1:12). "Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind" (Ro 14:5). "Our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience . . . not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God" (2Co 1:12). "We are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and

put no confidence in the flesh" (Php 3:3). "If anyone is confident in himself that he is Christ's, let him consider this again within himself, that just as he is Christ's, so also are we" (2Co 10:7). "If our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God" (1Jn 3:21). We are composed of body, soul and spirit and the heart is, spiritually speaking, connected with the last two whereby each person is "convinced in his own mind" (Ro 14:5). Accordingly Paul warns, "Do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness" (Heb 3:8). "They rebelled against Me and were not willing to listen to Me" (Eze 20:8). "Today, if you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" (Heb 3:7) "as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness" (Ps 95:8). This can result in apostasy which is to reset your position by standing away from where you had previously associated yourself. "The Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith" (1Ti 4:1) when "apostasy comes" (2Th 2:3). "In time of temptation [they] fall away" (Lk 8:13). "Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, 'The Lord knows those who are His'" (2Ti 2:19).

The author then quotes Psalm 95:7-11. In the first two chapters he quoted the Old Testament logically because he was appealing to Jews. He precedes this quote with, "Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says" (Heb 3:7). "Therefore" signifies a conclusion. Also he is specifying God as this speaker as well as having written the psalm. Unbelief and rebellion are the subject. Consequences of this are emphasized with the parallel that "they shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who spurned Me see it" (Nu 14:23). The wording of the Psalm 95:8-9 quote is a little different than Hebrews 3:8-9 but the content is the same. "Do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness" (Heb 3:8). The psalm specifies "at Meribah, as in the day of

Massah in the wilderness" (Ps 95:8). The Greek word for "provoked" is dokimazo meaning to test with a view toward approval. It is associated with the geographical location Meribah which is called the place of strife. In the wilderness Israel stayed at Kadesh. "There was no water for the congregation . . . [and] the people thus contended with Moses" (Nu 20:2-3). God told Moses, "Take the rod . . . and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water" (:8). "Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and the water came forth abundantly" (:11). "He split the rocks in the wilderness and gave them abundant drink" (Ps 78:15). "Those were the waters of Meribah, because the sons of Israel contended with the Lord, and He proved Himself holy among them" (Nu 20:13).

Tried and Tested

Then they "camped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink" (Ex 17:1). "The people quarreled with Moses . . . [and he] "said to them, 'Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord'" (:2). The Greek word for "test" is peirazo meaning to test with a view toward destruction. It is associated with the geographical location Massah which is called temptation. Moses said, "What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me" (:4). God told Moses, "I will stand before you on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock [with your staff], and water will come out of it" (:6). Moses "named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the Lord, saying, 'Is the Lord among us, or not?'" (:7). The author quotes, "Your fathers tried Me by testing Me, and saw My works for forty years" (Heb 3:9). The psalm phrased it, "When your fathers tested Me, they tried Me, though they had seen My work" (Ps 95:9). The words 'try' and 'test' are reversed but synonymous in context. "Surely all the men who have seen My glory and My signs

which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice" (Nu 14:22).

"The Lord said to Moses, 'How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst?'" (:11). "Yet they still continued to sin against Him, to rebel against the Most High in the desert, and in their heart they put God to the test by asking food according to their desire. Then they spoke against God; they said, 'Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?'" (Ps 78:17-19). "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who are grumbling against Me? I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel, which they are making against Me" (Nu 14:27). "'I, the Lord, have spoken, surely this I will do to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be destroyed, and there they will die'" (:35). It is the result of a people who "'always go astray in their heart, and they did not know My ways'" (Heb 3:10). A rule was later made official when Moses said, "This is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the Lord your God has commanded me to teach you" (Dt 6:1). "'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah'" (:16).

Result of Disobedience

"Do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me" (Heb 3:15). "Who provoked Him when they heard?" (:16). "Was it not those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness" (:17) and "who were disobedient?" (:18). "They were not able to enter because of unbelief" (:19). Therefore, be careful "that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God" (:12). Make sure that "none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (:13). Disobedience results in sin due to hardness and unbelief. It leads to falling away from God. But

why would the author of Hebrews bring this up to Jews who were now living under a New Covenant where the old one had been superseded? They would know not to make those same mistakes again. However, the reason is that "these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they craved" (1Co 10:6). They were not to "be idolaters" (:7). They said to Aaron, "Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses . . . we do not know what has become of him" (Ex 32:1). "They were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ" (1Co 10:4). The lesson is "that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe" (Jude 5).

One event in the wilderness was when they didn't have any water. God told Moses, "Take the rod . . . and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water" (Nu 20:8). "Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his hand" (:11). But he was told to only speak to it. God then responded, "Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them" (:12). Later Moses recounted, "The Lord was angry with me also on your account, saying 'Not even you shall enter there'" (Dt 1:37). The decision was that they "shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers . . . but My servant Caleb, because he had a different spirit and followed Me fully" (Nu 14:23-24). Entering the promised land is a picture of God's plan. "His works were finished from the foundation of the world" (Heb 4:3). "By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done" (Ge 2:2). The land God was giving Israel is symbolic of the result of the work he had finished which he was now resting from. However, "to whom did He swear that they would not enter

His rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief" (Heb 3:18-19). "Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to come short of it" (4:1). "We who have believed enter that rest" (:3).

Enter that Rest

"Just as has been said before, 'Today . . . hear His voice'" (Heb 4:7) such that "we have had good news preached to us, just as they also" (:2) because they "had good news preached to them" (:6). Therefore ignorance isn't an excuse. "The word they heard did not profit them" (:2) "because of disobedience" (:6). They ignored the advice to "not harden your hearts" (:7) and "unbelief" (3:19) interfered "because it was not united by faith in those who heard" (4:2). "There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God" (:9) and "it remains for some to enter it" (:6). "We who have believed enter that rest" (:3) "for the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works as God did from His. Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest" (:10-11). "Since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus" (10:19) "let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith" (:22). "We through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness" (Gal 5:5). But there is the other side of the coin. "The Lord said to Moses, 'Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book'" (Ex 32:33). No one "who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God" (Eph 5:5).

The author of Hebrews addresses them as "beloved" (6:9) and "holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling" (3:1). He recognizes they "have become dull of hearing" (5:11) and warns accordingly "do not drift away" (2:1). He is not concerned about unbelievers because they would not need to "hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end" (3:6). They have been "enlightened and have tasted

of the heavenly gift" (6:4) and also of "the good word of God and the powers of the age to come" (:5). But he warns again for those who have "fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance" (:6). He is concerned about "better things" (:9) for them and to "press on to maturity" (:1). It is your "confidence, which has a great reward" (10:35) that "when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised" (:36). "He is able also to save forever those who draw near" (7:25) and "has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (10:14). To many this means eternal security as with the Calvinists who believe in eternal salvation. "Everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day" (Jn 6:40). "I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand" (10:28). Is this an automatic passport to heaven no matter what happens? Or is it possible to completely, irreconcilably "drift away"? (Heb 2:1). One qualification is to "be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (6:12). "We are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul" (10:39). Don't be like Esau who "even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance" (12:17).

Appropriate Promise

We are to be concerned about "entering His rest" (Heb 4:1). What is God's rest? "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Ge 1:1). Then "the heavens and the earth were completed and all their hosts" (2:1). "By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done" (:2). The Greek word for "completed" is "kalah" meaning that the endeavor was at an end, finished and accomplished. "His works were finished from the foundation of the world" (Heb 4:3). Also, "He rested on the seventh day from all His work

which He had done" (Ge 2:2). When God refers to his rest he calls it "My rest" (Heb 3:11; 4:3,5). The root Greek word is "katapauo" meaning to cause to cease which results in "katapausis" designating a repose or resting. It was not that God was tired and had to recuperate. God "rested on the seventh day" (Ex 20:11) "and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made" (Ge 2:3). In one sense it was a "Sabbath rest for the people of God" (Heb 4:9) because it was associated with the seventh day, in Greek a "sabbatismos."

Why is the rest "for the people of God" (Heb 4:9)? When Job wasn't able to answer God he was asked, "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?" (Job 38:4). The plan began an eternity ago. "Of old, You founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands" (Ps 102:25). "You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth" (Heb 1:10). Jesus was instrumental because "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (Jn 1:1). "Thus declares the Lord who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him" (Zec 12:1). Man is part of creation. "God created man in His own image" (Ge 1:27) as God explained "according to Our likeness" (:26). "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4). Jesus said his reply would be "inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Mt 25:34). This is based upon the acceptance of the gospel. In the Old Testament there were "those who formerly had good news preached to them" (Heb 4:6). "The Scripture . . . preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham" (Gal 3:8). Paul cited "the gospel which I preached to you" (1Co 15:1) "by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word" (:2). It is "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (:3) "and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day" (:4).

Israel's rest was a main implementation of God's plan. "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" (Ex 19:5). Then "all the people answered together and said, 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do'" (:8). Next God explained he would "bring you in to the land" (:33). God also related, "I am going to send an angel before you to guard you along the way and to bring you into the place I have prepared" (:20). Moses explained "you have not as yet come to the resting place and the inheritance which the Lord your God is giving you" (Dt 12:9). Furthermore, "when you cross the Jordan and live in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies around you [you will] live in security" (:10). But they didn't cooperate and God responded, "Therefore I swore in My anger, truly they shall not enter My rest" (Ps 95:11). The Hebrew word for rest is "menuelah" meaning a resting place. The promise of their inheritance was to be a place of rest.

Falling Away

There are warnings to the Jews in Hebrews about falling away. One theological premise is that it can be apostasy representing loss of salvation. That would have to be determined based on the definition of the words used and the context they are in. We have "a great high priest" (Heb 4:14) who David prophesied about saying, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" (:7). We are to "draw near" (:16) to him to "find grace to help in time of need" (:16). "The one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works" (:10). So we are to be "diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience" (:11). The example was when Israel failed to enter the promised land. If you don't enter that rest you will fall, and that generation "fell" in the wilderness. They died, so

does that mean that if you do not believe, you will not enter in to heaven? These Hebrews were told they had "need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God" (5:12) because they were "not accustomed to the word of righteousness" (:13). What does it mean that you can "fall" (4:11)? Apparently these Hebrew believers were jeopardizing their position because they were being warned. Their immaturity (:12) was eroding their standing and the solution was to "press on to maturity" (6:1). Without perseverance it is possible to become like them who "have fallen away" (:6).

Answering a particular question without addressing the overall theme it is a part of is almost taking it out of context. But compensating by explaining everything can be overkill. You could begin by citing the introductory statement of God that "in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things" (Heb 1:2). It follows that if we don't listen and "neglect" (2:3) it we can "drift away from it" (:1). It is "salvation" (:3) marked by "the beginning of our assurance" (3:14). This is tied to having "once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift" (6:4). They had shared and had become "partakers of a heavenly calling: (3:1) and "partakers of Christ" (:14). Furthermore God had testified "by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit: (2:4) and they "have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit" (6:4). The message necessitates that "for this reason we must pay much closer attention" (2:2) to be one "who partakes" (5:13) "therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ" (6:1).

Falls Away

Continuity is an important ingredient in comprehending the meaning of a treatise. The author mentions that they must "hold fast . . . firm until the end" (Heb 3:6,14). In previous sections of this paper the subjects addressed were

assurance, hope, confidence and confession. The author cautions there must not be "an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God" (3:12 NASB) since "they were not able to enter because of unbelief" (:19). It is also translated a "sinful" (:12 NIV) "heart of unbelief" (:12 KJV). "Falls away" (:12) is also phrased as "in falling away." It is a "heart that turns away" (:12 NIV) and one "in departing from the living God" (:12 KJV). The Greek word for "falls away" is *aphistemi* meaning to lead away or to depart from being composed of *apo* meaning away from and *histemi* meaning to make a stand. The connotation is that it is a wilful, irretrievable act in the sense of a deliberate repudiation. If it were just a temporary decision without permanent ramifications it would be so non-consequential that being mentioned in the first place would be questionable.

They will "press on to maturity" (Heb 6:1) "if God permits" (:3). They are "those who" (:4) have experienced God's provision and "then have fallen away" (:6 NASB). The KJV translates it "if they shall fall away" and the NIV "if they fall away." That Greek word is *parapito* meaning to fall in, into or away and even to fail. It is composed of *pipto* meaning to fall and *para* designating from beside, by the side of, by or beside. But it does not define what has been rejected or disconnected from. However the five substantival participles are grouped together by the article *tous* which means "those who" (:4). The first four speak of spiritual characteristics so it is the environment that those people are experiencing. How serious is this "falling away?" The Old Testament equivalent is the word *mahal* meaning to act unfaithfully. It is used in Ezekiel 14:13 referencing, "If a country sins against Me by committing unfaithfulness" and in Numbers 5:12 by, "If any man's wife goes astray and is unfaithful to him." In the latter it is a conscious turning her back on her husband which is why the word is translated "trespass." The word inherits the meaning

of "completely turning away from" which qualifies it as defined as "apostasy." This would designate "fallen away" as more serious because the context is that "it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame" (Heb 6:6). "It is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned" (:8). The act of the crucifixion "cancelled . . . the decrees against us . . . having nailed it to the cross" (Col 2:14). He gave "His life a ransom" (Mt 20:28) because that sacrifice was payment for our debt. Therefore he who recognizes and accepts this "he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me" (Lk 9:23). That takes repentance. But those who "have fallen away" (Heb 6:6) repudiate that by unbelief. However, God will not permit certain things (:3). That is why it is not possible "to renew them again" (:6) because "they again crucify" (:6) Christ. God told Moses to "strike the rock" (Lev 17:6) but then he "struck the rock twice" (Nu 20:11) and because of this, he was not able to bring them "into the land" (:12). "If we go on sinning willfully . . . there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins" (Heb 10:26). We know it isn't just being "caught in any trespass" (Gal 6:1) because there is forgiveness. However, anyone "who does *anything* defiantly" (Nu 15:30) and "who has set aside the Law of Moses" (Heb 10:28) "shall be cut off from among his people" (Nu 15:30) and "you shall not pity him" (Dt 19:13) because treating the cross as just a common death is to repudiate that sacrifice. "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall" (1Co 10:12).

Falls Down

We see God's "promise being left us" (Heb 4:1 KJV) since the "promise remains" (:1 NASB). A "sabbath rest remains open for the people of God" (:9) and "it remains for some to enter it" (:6). Christ accomplished it and it is available as a usable provision to appropriate. Just some entering it is

specified because only those who have "believed do enter into rest" (:3). It is called an entrance as we "draw near with confidence to the throne of grace" (:16). This restoration is an inward, spiritual relationship composed of an ongoing peaceful communion. It is explained as "the good news of the promise made to the fathers" (Ac 13:32) which "God fulfilled . . . in that He raised up Jesus" (:33). "Through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you" (:38) and "everyone who believes is freed from all things" (:39).

A logical argument is presented because "rest" is mentioned many times and clauses are connected by words such as "for" (Heb 4:8), "so" (:9) and "therefore" (:10). "For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His" (:10). It is timely for us since "He again fixes a certain day, 'Today' (:7). It was God "saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before" (:7). The situations at Meribah and Massah had been previously mentioned (Ps 95:8). David prophesied, "'Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts'" (:7). If it had only applied to Joshua then "He would not have spoken of another day after that" (:8).

The situation is composed of those believing the gospel versus Israel's trust in entering the promised land. They failed to enter because they had no confidence in God's promise which was "not mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Heb 4:2). Mixing is deliberately incorporating ingredients producing an actual substantial result. It is a deliberate decision because it says "let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall" (:11). The Greek word "pipto" means to fall or fall down. If you're not careful you'll fall "through following the same example of disobedience" (:11). It says that you'll fall and not just trip over something. Was God not angry "with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the

wilderness?" (3:17). Those bodies that fell died. Branches "were broken off for their unbelief" (Ro 11:20) and "to those who fell [it was] severity" (:22). However, "if they do not continue in their unbelief, [they] will be grafted in" (:23). Our insurance is that "we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, therefore let us hold fast our confession" (Heb 4:14).

If God Permits

One observer commented that Hebrews 6:4-6 and 10:26-27 are directly related because of fiery judgment. The first says "it ends up being burned" (6:8) and the second that there is "judgment and the fury of a fire" (10:27). Are you willing to bet your eternal destiny on how certain verses are exegeted? He said this judgment took place at "the great white throne" (Rev 20:11) and "if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (:15). To ensure that their destiny would be favorable the Hebrews were being encouraged to "press on to maturity" (Heb 6:1). A comment follows that "this we will do, if God permits" (:3). Why would there even be a question? "As many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes" (2Co 1:20). "For" (:4) predicates God's permission "in the case of those who have once been enlightened" (:4). There they are "partakers" (:4) because "we have become partakers of Christ" (3:14). But possibly those Jewish believers were being tempted to return to tabernacle worship because it was becoming inconvenient to walk by grace through faith in the new covenant. One solution was to "encourage one another day after day" (:13). However, believing is an individual decision which is based on a personal relationship with God when you "hear His voice" (:15). "Today, if you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah" (Ps 95:7-8). Israel had "put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice" (Nu 14:22). "With the heart a person believes" (Ro 10:10). The

Hebrew believers were warned not to harden their hearts as Israel did (Heb 3:15). How do you harden your heart? You are "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (:13). Israeli people were "those who sinned" (:17) "who were disobedient" (:18). It is one with "an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God" (:12). Therefore "they were not able to enter because of unbelief" (:19). Sin is a transgression of the law producing "people weighed down with iniquity, offspring of evildoers" (Isa 1:4). They "abandoned . . . [and] despised God" (:4). God didn't permit them to "enter His rest" (Heb 3:18) and it is only "if God permits" (6:3) questionably disobedient followers to "press on to maturity" (:1).

What then happens to "those who have once been enlightened" (Heb 6:4) "and then have fallen away" (:6)? Some have "set aside the Law of Moses" (10:28) and others "trampled under foot the Son of God" (:29). They continue "sinning willfully" (:26) and become "worthless" (6:8). They have "regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant" (10:29) and "again crucify to themselves the Son of God" (6:6). They have "put Him to open shame" (:6) and "insulted the Spirit of grace" (10:29). To "crucify to themselves" (6:6) is equivalent to Peter explaining "this Man . . . you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men" (Ac 2:23). "After receiving the knowledge of the truth" (Heb 10:26) it became "the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified" (:29). But now "there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins" (:26) and "it is impossible to renew them again to repentance" (6:6). In the Old Testament he "dies without mercy" (10:28) and now is "close to being cursed" (6:8). "How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve" (10:29)? "The Lord will judge His people" (:30). "It ends up being burned" (6:6) and there is "a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire" (10:27). Is one with an "evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God" (3:12) in irrevocable apostasy? Is he one

who has failed to "hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end" (:14)?

Saved in the End

The author of Hebrews bases his exhortation on teaching which was "first spoken through the Lord" (Heb 2:3) because God "has spoken to us in His Son" (1:2). There were "those who heard" (2:3) and "we have heard" (:1) and "have tasted the good word of God" (6:5). Therefore it is our responsibility "that we do not drift away from it" (2:1). What we have heard is alive and personal because "the word of God is living and active" (4:12). Our response should be to "hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end" (3:6). Therefore, "'Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts'" (:7-8). "We have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end" (:14).

I heard a seminary graduate state that there were differences between Calvinism and Arminianism, and another say in his book that it was a subject in school and the crux of the matter was eternal security, and it depended on how you interpreted the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. Apparently seminaries categorize reasoning regarding certain arguments as doctrines. But he didn't cite the scripture, so I found Revelation 14:12 which says, "here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus." People who keep something hold fast to it in faith. If you hold on you will retain your eternal security and Calvinists say all real Christians will persevere. But Arminians say you can lose it if you harden your heart. Jesus explained that in the last days "'the one who endures to the end will be saved" (Mk 13:13). Endurance is synonymous with the word perseverance in that doctrine. "'By your endurance you will gain your lives'" (Lk 21:19).

The doctrine of perseverance holds that saving your life at the end is salvation. One might say that "the end" represents the end of your life, or it may incorporate all those believers who overcome the trials of those last days. In the end "he will be saved" (Mt 24:13). However, "at that time many will fall away and betray one another" (:10). If they fall away then "the perseverance of the saints who keep . . . their faith in Jesus" (Rev 14:12) doesn't apply. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 7:21) because Jesus will say, "I never knew you" (:23). He "is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (10:28). There will be "retribution to those who do not obey God and the gospel . . . [and] these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction (2Th 1:8-9). "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned" (Mk 16:16). "He who believes in the Son has eternal life" (Jn 3:36).

Jesus said, "It is finished!" . . . and gave up His spirit" (Jn 19:30). Furthermore he "has passed through the heavens" (Heb 4:14), has been "exalted above the heavens" (7:26) and "has sat down at the right hand of God" (12:2). Israel celebrated Passover when they were delivered from Egypt, and our position is similar when we depend on what Christ did for us. But then Israel had to enter the promised land. You might conclude that since Jesus had fulfilled his responsibility and reached heaven, that by crossing the border into Canaan, Israel reached the identical fulfillment as a type of what Jesus had accomplished. Conversely, those who died in the previous generation failed and didn't make it to heaven. However, that would mean that Moses, Aaron and the others were not in heaven according to that interpretation. So Canaan can't be a picture of heaven because they had to fight their way over time into victory. Our condition also is one of having to rely on the ongoing provision and sufficiency of

Christ this side of heaven. However, "our citizenship is in heaven" (Php 3:20). But there is no record of anyone wanting to return to Egypt. Nonetheless, the warnings in Hebrews of apostasy and being deprived of rest weaken the position of some. But they came out of Egypt and into the promised land and God wasn't in the practice of expelling people just for arbitrary offenses. However, Achan had taken some "devoted things and [made] the camp of Israel a thing for destruction" (Jos 7:18). Therefore "all Israel stoned him [and] the rest [and] burned them" (:25).