

EVIDENCES OF THE REBIRTH

***A STUDY TO HELP THE CHURCH MEMBER KNOW
WHETHER HE IS SAVED OR NOT***

MARTIN PURYEAR

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*TEST YOURSELVES TO SEE IF YOU ARE IN THE FAITH. EXAMINE YOURSELVES!
OR DO YOU NOT RECOGNIZE THIS ABOUT YOURSELVES, THAT JESUS CHRIST IS
IN YOU – UNLESS INDEED YOU FAIL THE TEST?*

– 2ND CORINTHIANS 13:5

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EVIDENCES OF THE REBIRTH

Do you believe that you are going to heaven when you die?

If so, why do you believe that? What gives you that assurance? The question is *not*, “What did you do to *get* saved?” (We will come back to that later.) The question is, “What *proof* do you have that, if you were to die right now, you would spend eternity in the presence of Jesus Christ?”

And if you are not sure about your eternal destiny, would you like to be?

IT IS POSSIBLE TO KNOW THAT YOU ARE SAVED ... OR NOT

According to the Author of salvation, it *is* possible for one to know what his eternal destiny is before he dies.

THESE THINGS I HAVE WRITTEN TO YOU WHO BELIEVE IN THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD, SO THAT YOU MAY KNOW THAT YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE. (1ST JOHN 5:13)

This study, *Evidences of the Rebirth*, is addressed to all who say they belong to Jesus Christ. Its purpose is to help us answer the question, “Am I really saved ... or am I just going through the motions of the Christian religion?”

These are not the concerns of an overly introspective person. Every individual who claims to be a follower of Christ is expected to ask such questions. He is expected to evaluate the relationship he claims to have with the Son of God. Is he in a right relationship with Him ... or not?

TEST YOURSELVES TO SEE IF YOU ARE IN THE FAITH. EXAMINE YOURSELVES! OR DO YOU NOT RECOGNIZE THIS ABOUT YOURSELVES, THAT JESUS CHRIST IS IN YOU — UNLESS INDEED YOU FAIL THE TEST? (2ND CORINTHIANS 13:5)

Imbedded within this verse is the assumption that there is *a way* to know if one is “in the faith” or not. A plumb line, so to speak. In fact, the Bible presents *several* proofs that salvation has taken place in a life. And *every one of these qualities*

*WILL BE PRESENT (IN VARYING DEGREES) AND
WILL BE INCREASING (AT VARIOUS RATES)*

in the life of *every* person who is truly born of God. But before we look into these *God-generated* evidences of the rebirth, we would do well to acquaint ourselves with certain *false* “assurances” that can cultivate within the individual a false sense of security.

A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY

According to the Bible, there are *two* kinds of faith. And one of them does not save. The faith that saves is a “living” faith. It displays – to some degree – spiritual vitality. The faith that does not save is a “dead” faith. As we are about to see, this kind of faith allows one to be religious ... on the surface; yet it displays no evidence of true spiritual health.

WHAT USE IS IT, MY BRETHREN, IF SOMEONE SAYS HE HAS FAITH BUT HE HAS NO WORKS? CAN THAT FAITH SAVE HIM? ... FAITH, IF IT HAS NO WORKS, IS DEAD, BEING BY ITSELF ... SOMEONE MAY WELL SAY, "YOU HAVE FAITH AND I HAVE WORKS; SHOW ME YOUR FAITH WITHOUT THE WORKS, AND I WILL SHOW YOU MY FAITH BY MY WORKS." (JAMES 2:14, 17-18)

The Lord Jesus Himself made a distinction between these two kinds of faith, one producing “good fruit” and the other producing “bad fruit.”

THERE IS NO GOOD TREE WHICH PRODUCES BAD FRUIT, NOR, ON THE OTHER HAND, A BAD TREE WHICH PRODUCES GOOD FRUIT. FOR EACH TREE IS KNOWN BY ITS OWN FRUIT. (LUKE 6:43-44)

According to Christ’s Own words, the quality of the fruit is determined by the quality of the tree. A good tree bears good fruit. A bad tree bears bad fruit. Likewise, a living faith produces one kind of life and a dead faith produces another kind of life. This means that the condition of one’s spiritual life can be *known*.

*EACH TREE IS **KNOWN** BY ITS OWN FRUIT. (LUKE 6:44)*

Whatever Jesus means by these terms “good fruit” and “bad fruit,” they are things that *can be observed* in someone’s life. Both kinds of faith – living and dead – are on public display.

Tragically, some who claim to know Christ have been lulled into a false sense of security, wrongly equating their religious behavior with spiritual vitality. (Remember, the ones who had Israel’s Messiah impaled to a Roman cross were religious men.)

NOT EVERYONE WHO SAYS TO ME, "LORD, LORD," WILL ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN ... MANY WILL SAY TO ME ON THAT DAY, "LORD, LORD, DID WE NOT PROPHECY IN YOUR NAME, AND IN YOUR NAME CAST OUT DEMONS, AND IN YOUR NAME PERFORM MANY MIRACLES?" AND THEN I WILL DECLARE TO THEM, "I NEVER KNEW YOU; DEPART FROM ME" (MATTHEW 7:21-23)

From this sobering passage, we should observe – with a somber heart – that those who will be expelled from Christ’s presence are not few in number. Jesus tells us that a day is coming when “many” will hear the shocking declaration: “I *never* knew you.”

Let us take note of this word “never.” It’s not that these Matthew 7 individuals were, at one time, saved but somewhere along the way they lost their salvation. Jesus states that those lacking good fruit had *never* been saved to begin with. Can you imagine what that would be like: for one to come to the end of his life, assuming he was saved, only to find out that he never had been!

We would, therefore, do well to compare the lives of those who *say* they know Christ ... and *do*, with those who *say* they know Christ ... but *do not*. What is it that deceives those who are religious – but lost – into having this false sense of security? What are these deadly “false assurances” that fall short of the real thing?

FALSE ASSURANCES OF SALVATION

ALL VOLKSWAGENS ARE CARS.
BUT NOT ALL CARS ARE VOLKSWAGENS.

PUBLIC PROFESSION OF FAITH

NOT EVERYONE WHO SAYS TO ME, "LORD, LORD," WILL ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN (MATTHEW 7:21)

We are told in Matthew 7 that some of those who are expelled from the Presence of Christ address Him as “Lord.” And that is true ... Jesus *is* Lord. But it does not take a living faith to make that declaration. It is evident from this passage that even those with a dead faith can learn to speak the language of a Christian. With their *mouths*, even the lost can acknowledge that Jesus carries the title “Lord.”

Dear friends, the people in Matthew 7 are not atheists. These are religious people. And the religion they claim to follow is not Islam or Buddhism. They claim to be Christ-followers. The reason these individuals will hear the words “Depart from Me” is not because they failed to submit their *lips* to His lordship. Jesus does not say,

YOU WILL KNOW THEM BY THEIR PROFESSION OF FAITH.

He says,

*YOU WILL KNOW THEM BY THEIR **FRUITS**. (MATTHEW 7:20)*

So yes, it is true:

ALL WHO ARE SAVED WILL PROFESS THEIR FAITH IN CHRIST AS LORD.

*... IF YOU CONFESS WITH YOUR MOUTH JESUS AS LORD **AND** BELIEVE IN YOUR HEART THAT GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD, YOU WILL BE SAVED. (ROMANS 10:9)*

BUT NOT ALL WHO PROFESS THEIR FAITH IN CHRIST AS LORD ARE SAVED.

Even those with a dead faith can do that. One does not have to be born of the Holy Spirit to acknowledge the lordship of Jesus Christ. *As important as that is*, one's public profession of faith in Christ as Lord (usually before a local church) does not *prove* that he is saved.

ACTIVE IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

MANY WILL SAY TO ME ON THAT DAY, "LORD, LORD, DID WE NOT PROPHECY IN YOUR NAME, AND IN YOUR NAME CAST OUT DEMONS, AND IN YOUR NAME PERFORM MANY MIRACLES?" AND THEN I WILL DECLARE TO THEM, "I NEVER KNEW YOU." (MATTHEW 7:22-23)

We should also notice from Matthew 7 that some of those expelled from the presence of the Son of God were involved in Christian ministry. Some had declared God's Word to others (i.e., they had "prophesied in His Name"). Others had even performed "many miracles." Their service in the Name of Christ had been extraordinary. But being active in Christian ministry does not *prove* that one is saved.

Consider Judas Iscariot.

AND (JESUS) SUMMONED THE TWELVE AND BEGAN TO SEND THEM OUT IN PAIRS, AND GAVE THEM AUTHORITY OVER THE UNCLEAN SPIRITS ... THEY WENT OUT AND PREACHED THAT MEN SHOULD REPENT. AND THEY WERE CASTING OUT MANY DEMONS AND WERE ANOINTING WITH OIL MANY SICK PEOPLE AND HEALING THEM. (MARK 6:7, 12-13)

We should not overlook the fact that Judas Iscariot was one of "the twelve." He, too, was sent forth to preach that men should repent ... to cast out many demons ... and to heal many sick people. This tells us that one can have a dynamic ministry and still be dead in his sins. For that matter, one can even perform miracles and still be lost.

So yes, it is true:

ALL WHO ARE SAVED SHOULD BE ACTIVE IN CHRISTIAN SERVICE.

AS EACH ONE HAS RECEIVED A SPECIAL GIFT, EMPLOY IT IN SERVING ONE ANOTHER AS GOOD STEWARDS OF THE MANIFOLD GRACE OF GOD. (1ST PETER 4:10)

BUT NOT ALL WHO ARE ACTIVE IN CHRISTIAN SERVICE ARE SAVED.

Even those with a dead faith can do that. One does not have to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God to sing in the choir ... or serve on the Finance Committee ... or be an usher ... or teach a Bible study group ... or, for that matter, preach a sermon. *As important as that is*, being active in Christian ministry does not *prove* that one is saved.

BELIEF IN GOD

Obviously, to believe in God is foundational to being in a right relationship *with* God. (In fact, the Scriptures tell us that those who do *not* believe in God are “fools,” Psalm 14:1.) But to be convinced that God exists does not prove that one is saved. Indeed, many false religions promote belief in (a false) god (e.g., the Muslim faith).

Furthermore, the whole demonic realm believes in God. And let us not miss this: the God *they* believe in is *the one, true God*. In fact, they have *seen* Him in all His glory ... and tremble at the thought of His judgment.

YOU BELIEVE THAT GOD IS ONE. YOU DO WELL; THE DEMONS ALSO BELIEVE, AND SHUDDER. (JAMES 2:19)

This includes the devil himself. Satan believes in God. And the God he believes in is the God of the Bible. Even today he stands in His presence “day and night” in order to accuse the true and living Church.

*AND THE GREAT DRAGON WAS THROWN DOWN, THE SERPENT OF OLD WHO IS CALLED THE DEVIL AND SATAN, WHO DECEIVES THE WHOLE WORLD; HE WAS THROWN DOWN TO THE EARTH, AND HIS ANGELS WERE THROWN DOWN WITH HIM ... THE ACCUSER OF OUR BRETHREN HAS BEEN THROWN DOWN, HE WHO ACCUSES THEM BEFORE **OUR GOD** DAY AND NIGHT. (REVELATION 12:9-10)*

So yes, it is true:

ALL WHO ARE SAVED BELIEVE IN GOD.

*DO NOT LET YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED; BELIEVE IN GOD, BELIEVE ALSO IN **ME**. (JOHN 14:1)*

BUT NOT ALL WHO BELIEVE IN GOD ARE SAVED.

Even those with a dead faith can do that. One does not have to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit to believe in God. *As important as that is*, this belief does not *prove* that one is saved.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

It is possible for one to be a church member and still be lost. This fact prompted the Apostle Paul to exhort each member of the Corinthian church to make sure he was “in the faith.” He did not want the members of this church to just assume they were born of God.

TEST YOURSELVES TO SEE IF YOU ARE IN THE FAITH. EXAMINE YOURSELVES! OR DO YOU NOT RECOGNIZE THIS ABOUT YOURSELVES, THAT JESUS CHRIST IS IN YOU — UNLESS INDEED YOU FAIL THE TEST? (2ND CORINTHIANS 13:5)

In other words church membership does not prove salvation. This can also be seen from Matthew 18. Within this chapter Christ outlines the steps (and the care) one should take as he confronts a fellow church member about his sinful pattern of behavior.

IF YOUR BROTHER SINS, GO AND SHOW HIM HIS FAULT IN PRIVATE; IF HE LISTENS TO YOU, YOU HAVE WON YOUR BROTHER.

BUT IF HE DOES NOT LISTEN TO YOU, TAKE ONE OR TWO MORE WITH YOU, SO THAT BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED.

IF HE REFUSES TO LISTEN TO THEM, TELL IT TO THE CHURCH.

AND IF HE REFUSES TO LISTEN EVEN TO THE CHURCH, LET HIM BE TO YOU AS A GENTILE AND A TAX COLLECTOR. (MATTHEW 18:15-17)

According to this passage, a church member's *true* relationship with God becomes evident when he is confronted about his sinful lifestyle. If he refuses to repent even after his on-going sinful conduct is brought before the church, the church is to view him as "a Gentile and a tax collector." That is, he is to be *treated* as an unbeliever ("a Gentile and a tax collector"), that is, as a prospect for evangelism rather than as a brother in Christ. His unwillingness to repent has revealed his true colors.

Obviously, for one to be disciplined *by* a local church, he must first be *in* the church. Yet, for one to identify himself with an assembly of the redeemed is no guarantee that he himself is redeemed. The fact is unbelievers can be found sitting in the pew.

They can also be found standing behind the pulpit.

*I (THE APOSTLE JOHN) WROTE SOMETHING TO THE CHURCH; BUT DIOTREPES, WHO LOVES TO BE FIRST AMONG THEM, **DOES NOT ACCEPT WHAT WE SAY ...** AND NOT SATISFIED WITH THIS, HE HIMSELF **DOES NOT RECEIVE THE BRETHREN**, EITHER, AND HE **FORBIDS THOSE WHO DESIRE TO DO SO** AND **PUTS THEM OUT OF THE CHURCH**. BELOVED, DO NOT IMITATE WHAT IS EVIL ... THE ONE WHO DOES EVIL HAS NOT SEEN GOD.*
(3RD JOHN 1:9-11, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

In this passage we find "a wolf in sheep's clothing" at work. The activities of this self-promoting church leader are described as "evil" in the sight of God, performed by the pastor of a local church who "has not seen God" (i.e., he is not a believer).

So yes, it is true:

ALL WHO ARE SAVED SHOULD BE IDENTIFIED WITH A LOCAL CHURCH.

LET US CONSIDER HOW TO STIMULATE ONE ANOTHER TO LOVE AND GOOD DEEDS, NOT FORSAKING OUR OWN ASSEMBLING TOGETHER, AS IS THE HABIT OF SOME, BUT ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER; AND ALL THE MORE AS YOU SEE THE DAY DRAWING NEAR. (HEBREWS 10:24-25)

BUT NOT ALL WHO ARE IDENTIFIED WITH A LOCAL CHURCH ARE SAVED.

Even those with a dead faith can do that. One does not have to be born of the Spirit of God to join a church. *As important as that is*, church membership does not *prove* that one is saved.

WATER BAPTISM (CHRISTIAN RITUALS)

Water baptism is a physical picture of a spiritual reality. For one to be immersed in water is an illustration of his being immersed “in Christ.” It is a *public* declaration to the world of one’s *complete identification with Christ: his death to sin and his resurrection to newness of life*.

This public testimony is being made by one who is *already saved* (by grace through faith in Christ’s payment for his sins). He is not being baptized so that he *can* be “in Christ”; he is being baptized because he *already is* “in Christ” and wants the whole world to know it. If water baptism were a necessary step of salvation, the Apostle Paul would ***never*** have made the statement

CHRIST DID NOT SEND ME TO BAPTIZE, BUT TO PREACH THE GOSPEL, NOT IN CLEVERNESS OF SPEECH, SO THAT THE CROSS OF CHRIST WOULD NOT BE MADE VOID. (1ST CORINTHIANS 1:17)

This declaration comes from one who later (in the same letter) stated that it was the Gospel that saves a person:

NOW I MAKE KNOWN TO YOU, BRETHREN, THE GOSPEL WHICH I PREACHED TO YOU, WHICH ALSO YOU RECEIVED, IN WHICH ALSO YOU STAND, BY WHICH ALSO YOU ARE SAVED (1ST CORINTHIANS 15:1-2)

If water baptism were part of the salvation process, the Apostle Paul would not have separated performing baptisms from preaching the Gospel message. He would have treated it as a part of the Gospel message and baptized every single individual he led to the Lord.

Other religions do not observe Christian baptism. This ritual, therefore, separates those who *profess to follow Christ* from those who *reject Christ*. But it does not separate church members who are *truly born of God* from church members who are *not*. A person does not have to possess a living faith to go through the motions of a Christian ritual. Even those with a dead faith can appear – on the surface – to have a living relationship with God. Consider the Pharisees of Jesus’ day. Some of these same men who observed circumcision, Passover and the Sabbath (all according to the Law of God through Moses) also arranged to have Christ nailed to a Roman cross.

Observing the external rituals of the Christian religion does not *prove* that salvation has taken place. It is likely that the “many” of Matthew 7 who are expelled from the Presence of Christ were, at some point in their lives, baptized.

So yes, it is true:

ALL WHO ARE SAVED SHOULD BE BAPTIZED.

BUT WHEN THEY BELIEVED PHILIP PREACHING THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST, THEY WERE BEING BAPTIZED, MEN AND WOMEN ALIKE. (ACTS 8:12)

BUT NOT ALL WHO ARE BAPTIZED ARE SAVED.

Even those with a dead faith can do that. One does not have to be born of the Holy Spirit of God to be baptized in water (or, for that matter, participate in *any* Christian ritual). As *important as this testimony to the world is*, water baptism does not contribute to one's salvation nor does it *prove* that one is saved.

INTEREST IN GOD'S WORD

HEROD WAS AFRAID OF JOHN (THE BAPTIZER), KNOWING THAT HE WAS A RIGHTEOUS AND HOLY MAN, AND HE KEPT HIM SAFE. AND WHEN HE HEARD HIM, HE WAS VERY PERPLEXED; BUT HE USED TO ENJOY LISTENING TO HIM. (MARK 6:20)

We should notice that Herod Antipas, the man who sheared off the head of John the baptizer, enjoyed listening to him preach. In other words, even the lost can enjoy a good sermon. For one to be intrigued by what the Bible has to say does not necessarily mean that he is a sincere follower of Christ Jesus.

So yes, it is true:

ALL WHO ARE SAVED SHOULD BE INTERESTED IN GOD'S WORD.

... LIKE NEWBORN BABIES, LONG FOR THE PURE MILK OF THE WORD, SO THAT BY IT YOU MAY GROW IN RESPECT TO SALVATION. (1ST PETER 2:2)

BUT NOT ALL WHO ARE INTERESTED IN GOD'S WORD ARE SAVED.

Even those with a dead faith can have that. One does not have to be indwelt by the Spirit of God to be interested in what the Bible has to say. As *important as that is*, being intrigued with the Word of God does not *prove* that one is saved.

SUMMARY

We have now considered several traits that can be observed in the life of *anyone* who *claims* to be a follower of Christ Jesus:

- 1) He can publicly profess his faith in Christ Jesus as Lord (usually before a local body of believers).
- 2) If he is able, he can be active in some type of Christian ministry.
- 3) He can believe in God.
- 4) He can identify himself with a local church (and attend, if possible).
- 5) He can observe the New Testament commandment of water baptism.
- 6) And he can be interested, to some degree, in what God's Word has to say.

Of course, every one of these traits *should* exist in those who are born of God. Yet, they are all "surface" activities or professions which can easily be *imitated* by those who are *not* born of the Holy Spirit. No one needs the indwelling God to believe or do any of these things. Every one of these traits can be performed by one who claims to be a Christian but is, in reality, lost ... which means that *none* of these traits *prove* that one is born of God. We are going to have to look elsewhere for those traits that distinguish those who are saved from those who are not.

BUT BEFORE WE GO ANY FARTHER

Lest we stray from the Gospel of grace, we need to keep in mind that whatever the "good fruit" of Matthew 7 looks like, it is the *evidence* of salvation, not the *cause* of salvation. A tree does not bear good fruit in order to *become* a good tree. It bears good fruit because it *already is* a good tree.

EVERY GOOD TREE BEARS GOOD FRUIT (MATTHEW 7:17)

Likewise, one does not bear *wholesome spiritual* fruit to *get* saved; he bears *wholesome spiritual* fruit because he *already is saved* ... by grace ... through faith (and through faith alone) ... in the finished work ... of the resurrected Christ. "Good fruit" is the *proof* of salvation, not the *means* of salvation.

*MY FATHER IS GLORIFIED BY THIS, THAT YOU BEAR MUCH FRUIT, AND SO **PROVE** TO BE MY DISCIPLES.*
(JOHN 15:8)

This is important to keep in mind. The following discussion does not present a list of activities one must do to *get* saved. It presents the traits present in the life of one who *already is saved*, traits generated by the indwelling Spirit of God.

So, what are these evidences of the rebirth? The Scriptures do not leave us in the dark. We have seen what they are not. Now let's take a look at what they are.

EVIDENCES OF THE REBIRTH**THE 1ST EVIDENCE****HE HOLDS THE LIVING WORD OF GOD, JESUS CHRIST, IN HIGH ESTEEM****HE EXALTS THE PERSON OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST**

*... KNOW FOR CERTAIN THAT GOD HAS MADE HIM BOTH LORD AND CHRIST – THIS JESUS WHOM YOU CRUCIFIED.
(ACTS 2:36)*

According to the Word of God, one's attitude toward Jesus Christ is a reflection of his attitude toward the one, true God. If he honors the Son, then he honors the Father. If he dishonors the Son, then he dishonors the Father.

HE WHO RECEIVES ME RECEIVES HIM WHO SENT ME. (JOHN 13:20) ... (BUT) HE WHO REJECTS ME REJECTS THE ONE WHO SENT ME. (LUKE 10:16)

It is impossible for one to reject the Son of God yet be – at the same time – “devoted to God.” Jesus explains why:

I AND THE FATHER ARE ONE. (JOHN 10:30)

HE WHO HAS SEEN ME HAS SEEN THE FATHER. (JOHN 14:9)

To have an exalted view of Jesus Christ is one of the evidences of the rebirth. It is the attitude of one who is rightly-related to the true and living God,

*AN ATTITUDE THAT IS EXPRESSED THROUGH THE PUBLIC TESTIMONY OF
HIS WORDS ... HIS CHARACTER ... AND HIS CONDUCT*

What, then, determines one's attitude toward Jesus?

THE ATTITUDE ONE HAS TOWARD JESUS IS DETERMINED BY WHAT HE *BELIEVES* ABOUT JESUS.

HE BELIEVES THAT JESUS IS A FLESH-AND-BLOOD HUMAN BEING

The one who is born of the living God believes that Jesus Christ *died* on the Cross to pay for his sins so that he would not have to die for those sins himself. To be able to die for the sins of the world, it was necessary for the Savior of man to take upon Himself the body of a man. The true believer, therefore, is one who believes in the incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity.

*FOR IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE BLOOD OF BULLS AND GOATS TO TAKE AWAY SINS. THEREFORE, WHEN HE COMES INTO THE WORLD, HE SAYS, "SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, BUT A **BODY** YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME ... "BEHOLD, I HAVE COME ... TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD." (HEBREWS 10:4-7)*

The reborn Christ-follower will believe that the one, true God implanted Himself in the uterus of a young virgin, developed as a human fetus for nine months and, having been born, matured in all aspects as a human being. As the Scriptures declare

(W)HEN THE FULLNESS OF THE TIME CAME, GOD SENT FORTH HIS SON, BORN OF A WOMAN (GALATIANS 4:4)

SINCE THE CHILDREN SHARE IN FLESH AND BLOOD, HE HIMSELF LIKEWISE ALSO PARTOOK OF THE SAME (HEBREWS 2:14)

It is the testimony of every true believer that the eternal Son of God clothed himself with the flesh of man to become the God-Man ... fully God (100%) and fully Man (100%). This conviction is one of the evidences of the rebirth: the humanity of Jesus.

BY THIS YOU KNOW THE SPIRIT OF GOD: EVERY SPIRIT THAT CONFESSES THAT JESUS CHRIST HAS COME IN THE FLESH IS FROM GOD. (1ST JOHN 4:2)

EXAMINE YOURSELF: WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PERSON OF JESUS?

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT HE EXISTED AS A FLESH-AND-BLOOD MAN?

**... OR DO YOU BELIEVE THAT, INSTEAD OF BEING AN HISTORICAL FIGURE,
HE IS A MERE LITERARY SYMBOL OF PERFECT HUMANITY?**

HE BELIEVES THAT JESUS IS GOD

We have just seen why the humanity of Jesus is so important. He had to have a body to die on the cross for the sins of the world. But God would not be satisfied by just any man's death. The only Sacrifice God would accept for the sins of man was one that was sinless ... spotless ... pure.

... YOU WERE NOT REDEEMED WITH PERISHABLE THINGS LIKE SILVER OR GOLD FROM YOUR FUTILE WAY OF LIFE INHERITED FROM YOUR FOREFATHERS, BUT WITH PRECIOUS BLOOD, AS OF A LAMB UNBLEMISHED AND SPOTLESS, THE BLOOD OF CHRIST. (1ST PETER 1:18-19)

No mere man is sinless. Only God is unblemished and spotless. This is why the One Who shed His blood for the moral crimes of man must be fully God. The true believer, therefore, is one who believes that *Jesus of Nazareth* is the eternal God. Jesus proved that *He* was the living God by His teaching, by His miracles and, ultimately, by His resurrection.

For one to say, “I believe that *Jesus* is God” raises the bar a lot higher than for one to say, “I believe in God.” The Muslims believe in God. But they do not believe that Jesus is God.

This, too, is one of the evidences of the rebirth: belief in the deity of Jesus.

FOR WHATEVER IS BORN OF GOD OVERCOMES THE WORLD ... WHO IS THE ONE WHO OVERCOMES THE WORLD (WHO IS THE ONE BORN OF GOD), BUT HE WHO BELIEVES THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD?
(1ST JOHN 5:4-5, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

EXAMINE YOURSELF: WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PERSON OF JESUS?

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT HE IS NOT ONLY A FLESH-AND-BLOOD MAN BUT ALSO THE ONE, TRUE GOD?

... OR DO YOU BELIEVE THAT HE WAS MERELY AN EXTRAORDINARY TEACHER?

... OR PERHAPS ONLY A PROPHET FROM GOD?

HE BELIEVES THAT JESUS IS ISRAEL'S LONG-AWAITED MESSIAH

Furthermore, it is impossible to be in a right relationship with God while, at the same time, rejecting Jesus as Israel's Messiah.

WHO IS THE LIAR BUT THE ONE WHO DENIES THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST (MESSIAH)? THIS IS THE ANTICHRIST, THE ONE WHO DENIES THE FATHER AND THE SON. (1ST JOHN 2:22, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

WHOEVER BELIEVES THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST IS BORN OF GOD (1ST JOHN 5:1)

Those who know the one, true God believe that Jesus is the God-anointed King of kings. That belief is yet another evidence of the rebirth.

EXAMINE YOURSELF: WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PERSON OF JESUS?

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT HE IS ISRAEL'S LONG-AWAITED MESSIAH
AS PROPHESIED IN THE JEWISH SCRIPTURES (THE OLD TESTAMENT)

... OR DO YOU BELIEVE THAT HIS CLAIMS TO BE THE MESSIAH WERE LIES?

... OR, PERHAPS, THAT THE MESSIAH IS NOT REALLY AN INDIVIDUAL?

Those upon whom the Spirit of God and of glory rests are fully convinced that the Jesus of the Gospels is

100 % God ... He is “Lord”

100 % human ... He is a flesh-and-blood historical figure, Jesus of Nazareth

Israel's anointed King of kings ... He is “the Christ”

It is a conviction that is not hidden. To the contrary, this belief is on public display. Only those indwelled by the Spirit of God have the power to exalt the Living Word of God before an unbelieving world. And they will do so

IN *WORD* ... IN *CHARACTER* ... AND IN *CONDUCT*

HE IS "THE LORD ... JESUS ... CHRIST."

THE 2ND EVIDENCE***HE HOLDS THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD IN HIGH ESTEEM******HE VIEWS THE BIBLE AS TRUSTWORTHY AND AUTHORITATIVE***

According to the Lord Jesus, after He departs from His apostles, the Spirit of God would then be sent to instruct them.

BUT WHEN HE, THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH, COMES, HE WILL GUIDE YOU (THE APOSTLES) INTO ALL THE TRUTH; FOR HE WILL NOT SPEAK ON HIS OWN INITIATIVE, BUT WHATEVER HE HEARS, HE WILL SPEAK; AND HE WILL DISCLOSE TO YOU WHAT IS TO COME. (JOHN 16:13, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

We should not miss the significance of this statement. What the apostles taught – in their preaching and in their writings – was given to them by the Holy Spirit ... and *His* instruction came from the Throne of God. Therefore, the respect (or lack of) given toward the New Testament letters is no small matter. One's attitude toward the *written* Word of God is a reflection of his attitude toward the *Living* Word of God.

*THE ONE WHO LISTENS TO YOU (THE APOSTLES) LISTENS TO ME (JESUS), AND THE ONE WHO REJECTS YOU REJECTS ME; AND HE WHO REJECTS ME REJECTS THE ONE WHO SENT ME (GOD THE FATHER). (LUKE 10:16, PARENTHESIS ADDED)*¹

So, the one indwelt by the God of the Bible will have a high respect *for* the Bible and will, therefore, submit his life to its authority (whether its teachings mesh with the prevailing attitudes of his culture / upbringing or not). The one from whom the Spirit of God is absent will reject the integrity of the Scriptures and will, therefore, disregard its authority over his life. He may claim to have faith in Christ Jesus; but his faith is dead.

WE ARE FROM GOD. HE WHO KNOWS GOD LISTENS TO US (APOSTLES); HE WHO IS NOT FROM GOD DOES NOT LISTEN TO US. (1ST JOHN 4:6, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

To believe in the integrity and authority of the Scriptures is one of the evidences of the rebirth. The one who is born of God will not *understand / be able to explain to others all* that the prophets and apostles wrote; but he will *believe* that what they wrote is the very Word of God.

WE ALSO CONSTANTLY THANK GOD THAT WHEN YOU RECEIVED THE WORD OF GOD WHICH YOU HEARD FROM US, YOU ACCEPTED IT NOT AS THE WORD OF MEN, BUT FOR WHAT IT REALLY IS, THE WORD OF GOD, WHICH ALSO PERFORMS ITS WORK IN YOU WHO BELIEVE. (1ST THESSALONIANS 2:13)

EXAMINE YOURSELF: WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE BIBLE?

DO YOU CONSIDER IT TO BE FULLY RELIABLE?

(DO YOU BELIEVE THE SUN STOOD STILL FOR JOSHUA AND THAT JESUS WALKED ON WATER?)

... OR ARE YOU SUSPECT OF ITS CREDIBILITY?

DO YOU ACKNOWLEDGE ITS FULL AUTHORITY OVER YOUR LIFE

(INCLUDING THOSE TEACHINGS THAT RUN COUNTER TO A POLITICALLY-CORRECT CULTURE)?

... OR DO YOU PICK AND CHOOSE WHICH PARTS YOU WILL OBEY AND WHICH PARTS YOU WILL IGNORE?

... OR DO YOU REJECT IT AS HAVING NO AUTHORITY OVER YOUR LIFE WHATSOEVER?

HE IS ABLE TO UNDERSTAND SPIRITUAL TRUTHS*EVERYONE WHO IS OF THE TRUTH HEARS MY VOICE. (JOHN 18:37)*

When someone places his faith in Christ Jesus for salvation, his spiritual senses are marvelously awakened to the instruction of God's Word. By the power of God, he is *given the capacity to understand* what he had previously been unable to grasp ... *the spiritual truths of God*. He once was blind; but now, he sees.

THEN (CHRIST JESUS) OPENED (THE DISCIPLES') MINDS TO UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES. (LUKE 24:45, PARENTHESES ADDED)

But the one who does not have the indwelling Spirit of God is unable to *understand* the words of Christ. His mind is deadened to the Truth. He cannot "hear" it. Because he has rejected the *Living Word of God*, Jesus Christ, he cannot comprehend the *written Word of God*. This is why an unbeliever will often say:

"WHEN I READ THE BIBLE, I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT."

WHY DO YOU (WHO REJECT CHRIST) NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT I (JESUS) AM SAYING? IT IS BECAUSE YOU CANNOT HEAR (RECEIVE) MY WORD ... HE WHO IS OF GOD HEARS THE WORDS OF GOD; FOR THIS REASON YOU DO NOT HEAR THEM, BECAUSE YOU ARE NOT OF GOD. (JOHN 8:43, 47, PARENTHESES ADDED)

That is *why* a believer is able to accept spiritual truths but the unbeliever is not. The believer is indwelt by the Spirit of God and is, therefore, able to receive and understand the things of God. But the one who does not have the abiding Presence of God within him (the "natural man") does not have the capacity to understand the thoughts of God.

FOR WHO AMONG MEN KNOWS THE THOUGHTS OF A MAN EXCEPT THE SPIRIT OF THE MAN WHICH IS IN HIM? EVEN SO THE THOUGHTS OF GOD NO ONE KNOWS EXCEPT THE SPIRIT OF GOD. NOW WE HAVE RECEIVED, NOT THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD, BUT THE SPIRIT WHO IS FROM GOD, SO THAT WE MAY KNOW THE THINGS FREELY GIVEN TO US BY GOD ... 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. (1ST CORINTHIANS 2:11-12, 14)

THE ONLY ONES WHO ARE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND GOD'S TRUTH ARE THOSE IN WHOM GOD LIVES.

But it is also true that there are different levels of understanding. The *depth* of one's spiritual understanding varies from believer to believer, determined by several factors:

- the length of time he has been in Christ (*time*)
- the degree to which he has trusted the Lord to give him understanding (*faith*)
- the degree to which he has saturated his mind with the Scriptures (*knowledge of the Word of righteousness*) and
- the degree to which he has obeyed the will of the Father (*practice*).

*FOR THOUGH BY THIS **TIME** YOU OUGHT TO BE TEACHERS, YOU HAVE NEED AGAIN FOR SOMEONE TO TEACH YOU THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF THE ORACLES OF GOD, AND YOU HAVE COME TO NEED MILK AND NOT SOLID FOOD. FOR EVERYONE WHO PARTAKES ONLY OF MILK IS NOT ACCUSTOMED TO **THE WORD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**, FOR HE IS AN INFANT. BUT SOLID FOOD IS FOR THE MATURE, WHO BECAUSE OF **PRACTICE** HAVE THEIR SENSES TRAINED TO DISCERN GOOD AND EVIL. (HEBREWS 5:12-14)*

So, there are *varying degrees* of understanding; but there is one thing *constant* about every true believer. The one who has a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ has a God-given ability to understand the Bible's spiritual truths.

This capacity to understand God's Word does not refer to an ability to accumulate Bible facts. An unbeliever can list the names of the twelve disciples; and he can be a student of Christian doctrine. (There are a lot of lost theologians out there. Consider the Jewish Supreme Court before whom Jesus was tried.) We are not talking about the ability to grasp academic information. We are talking about one's ability to discern spiritual truth. The one whose faith is dead cannot do that. And it will show in his conversation. The "light will not be on."

EXAMINE YOURSELF: HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO THE BIBLE?

WHEN YOU READ IT, DO YOU UNDERSTAND IT?

... OR DOES ITS MESSAGE SEEM "CONFUSING" OR "MEANINGLESS" TO YOU?

HE ACCEPTS TRUTH (BIBLICAL VALUES) AND REJECTS ERROR (WORLDLY VALUES)

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE, AND I KNOW THEM, AND THEY FOLLOW ME. (JOHN 10:27)

There is a reason why people attend the church they attend.

Those who are spiritually alive are attracted to churches that have Bible-centered values and a leadership that is born of God. Indwelt by the Holy Spirit, these reborn Christ-followers are able to distinguish Biblical values from those that contradict the Scriptures as various moral and ethical teachings come and go.

On the other hand, those who are spiritually dead are drawn to churches with a spiritually dead leadership. (The blind *willingly* follow the blind.) Those with a dead faith will reject – either with indifference or contempt – the wisdom of God because they do not have the Spirit of God within them. In place of God’s Truth, they will follow the world’s evil value system: its anti-Biblical philosophies and its foolish practices.

THEY (FALSE PROPHETS) ARE FROM THE WORLD; THEREFORE THEY SPEAK AS FROM THE WORLD, AND THE WORLD LISTENS TO THEM. WE (APOSTLES) ARE FROM GOD. HE WHO KNOWS GOD LISTENS TO US (ACCEPTS OUR WRITINGS); HE WHO IS NOT FROM GOD DOES NOT LISTEN TO US. BY THIS WE KNOW THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND THE SPIRIT OF ERROR. (1ST JOHN 4:5-6, PARENTHESES ADDED)

Church members who defect from God’s Truth to follow the anti-Biblical values of their culture (inspired by demons) do not know God. It isn’t that they knew God at one time but now they don’t. They had never known Him. They may have grown up in a Christian home. They may have learned to use the language of a Christian. They may be active in the church. They may even be leaders in the church. But if they turn away from sound doctrine, the faith they profess to have is a dead faith.

ANYONE WHO GOES TOO FAR AND DOES NOT ABIDE IN THE TEACHING OF CHRIST, DOES NOT HAVE GOD; THE ONE WHO ABIDES IN THE TEACHING, HE HAS BOTH THE FATHER AND THE SON. (2ND JOHN 1:9)

EXAMINE YOURSELF: HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO THE BIBLE’S TEACHINGS?

ARE YOUR PERSONAL CONVICTIONS IN ALIGNMENT WITH GOD’S WORD?

... OR ARE THEY IN SYNC WITH THE PREVAILING VALUES OF YOUR CULTURE?

- 1 The Apostle Paul informs us that the *entirety of Scripture* (both the Old and New Testaments) is God-generated.

ALL SCRIPTURE (BOTH TESTAMENTS) IS INSPIRED BY GOD (LITERALLY, "GOD-BREATHED") AND PROFITABLE FOR TEACHING, FOR REPROOF, FOR CORRECTION, FOR TRAINING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS. (2ND TIMOTHY 3:16, PARENTHESES ADDED)

Furthermore, according to the Lord Jesus, the *degree* of inspiration extends to the very *letters* of the words:

FOR TRULY I SAY TO YOU, UNTIL HEAVEN AND EARTH PASS AWAY, NOT THE SMALLEST LETTER OR STROKE SHALL PASS FROM THE LAW UNTIL ALL IS ACCOMPLISHED. (MATTHEW 5:18)

THE 3RD EVIDENCE***HE STRIVES (THOUGH IMPERFECTLY) TO OBEY THE WILL OF GOD***

WHY DO YOU CALL ME, "LORD, LORD," AND DO NOT DO WHAT I SAY? (LUKE 6:46)

According to the Bible, if God is one's Father, then he will love the Son. But if one does not love the Son, then he does not have a personal relationship with God.

JESUS SAID TO THEM, "IF GOD WERE YOUR FATHER, YOU WOULD LOVE ME, FOR I PROCEEDED FORTH AND HAVE COME FROM GOD; FOR I HAVE NOT EVEN COME ON MY OWN INITIATIVE, BUT HE SENT ME. (JOHN 8:42)

This love for Christ is, to be sure, a *personal* love; but it is not a *private* love. (*It is not hidden.*) Rather, it is a love that is on public display, one that should be – and will be – translated into *obedience*.

HE WHO HAS MY COMMANDMENTS AND KEEPS THEM IS THE ONE WHO LOVES ME (JOHN 14:21)

Whether or not an individual truly loves the Son can be observed by what is usually true about his moral / ethical lifestyle ... the kind of life he *typically practices*, both in attitude and action.

BY THIS WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE COME TO KNOW HIM, IF WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS. THE ONE WHO SAYS, "I HAVE COME TO KNOW HIM," AND DOES NOT KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS, IS A LIAR, AND THE TRUTH IS NOT IN HIM; BUT WHOEVER KEEPS HIS WORD, IN HIM THE LOVE OF GOD HAS TRULY BEEN PERFECTED. (1ST JOHN 2:3-5)

IN ATTITUDE

The lifestyle of an individual begins with his *attitude* toward God's moral will. Does he *desire* to obey God's Word? Or does he typically disregard it with an air of indifference ... or even reject it with a spirit of hostility?

According to the Bible the God of holiness lives within every true believer.

YOUR BODY IS A TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WHO IS IN YOU (1ST CORINTHIANS 6:19) ... JESUS CHRIST IS IN YOU. (2ND CORINTHIANS 13:5)

But the Spirit of God is not all that resides within the believer. Remaining within him is his "flesh," his "inclination to sin." As a result, there exists within every true Christ-follower a struggle between the evil cravings of his flesh and the holy desires of the indwelling God.

FOR THE FLESH SETS ITS DESIRE AGAINST THE SPIRIT, AND THE SPIRIT AGAINST THE FLESH; FOR THESE ARE IN OPPOSITION TO ONE ANOTHER (GALATIANS 5:17)

This is a reality every child of God faces: he will never (in this life) be *satisfied* with his spiritual life. To the contrary he will *grieve* over the sins he commits and will *struggle* to rid himself of them. Godly sorrow for one's sins and the desire to turn away from them is an on-going trait of the believer.

*FOR I KNOW THAT NOTHING GOOD DWELLS IN ME, THAT IS, IN MY FLESH; FOR **THE WILLING IS PRESENT** IN ME, BUT THE DOING OF THE GOOD IS NOT. FOR **THE GOOD THAT I WANT**, I DO NOT DO, BUT I PRACTICE THE VERY EVIL THAT I DO NOT WANT. BUT IF I AM DOING THE VERY THING I DO NOT WANT, I AM NO LONGER THE ONE DOING IT, BUT SIN WHICH DWELLS IN ME. I FIND THEN THE PRINCIPLE THAT EVIL IS PRESENT IN ME, THE ONE WHO **WANTS TO DO GOOD**. (ROMANS 7:18-21)*

This is one of the evidences of the rebirth: a longing for holiness. This Holy Spirit-generated desire for purity is so persistent that the believer will struggle against sin the rest of his life. As a result, he will sin less and less. And when he does sin, he will be bothered about it more and more.

On the other hand, the one who possesses a dead faith can easily shrug off his disobedience. He may ignore his sins. He may offer an excuse for them. He may even deny that they exist. In any case, he will not be all that bothered by them. "Bad fruit" does not simply refer to gross immorality; it also carries the idea of being indifferent toward personal sin.

EXAMINE YOURSELF: WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD'S MORAL LAW?

ARE YOU SERIOUS ABOUT OBEYING HIS COMMANDMENTS?

... OR DO YOU DISREGARD HIS MORAL WILL WITH INDIFFERENCE?

... OR DO YOU REJECT IT WITH A SPIRIT OF HOSTILITY?

IN ACTION

*IF YOU KNOW THAT **HE** IS RIGHTEOUS, YOU KNOW THAT EVERYONE ALSO WHO PRACTICES RIGHTEOUSNESS IS BORN OF **HIM**. (1ST JOHN 2:29)*

Every true child of God will be motivated by the Spirit of God to obey the moral will of his Father.

*WHOEVER DOES THE WILL OF **MY FATHER** WHO IS IN HEAVEN, HE IS **MY BROTHER AND SISTER AND MOTHER**. (MATTHEW 12:50)*

*JESUS WAS SAYING TO THOSE JEWS WHO HAD BELIEVED **HIM**, "IF YOU CONTINUE IN (HOLD FAST TO, OBEY, PRACTICE) **MY WORD**, THEN YOU ARE TRULY DISCIPLES OF **MINE**." (JOHN 8:31, PARENTHESIS ADDED)*

All believers, however, do not grow at the same rate. The “ease” and “speed” of one’s growth in righteousness will depend on various factors:

- the background out of which he is coming
- the believer’s exposure to the Word of God
- the influence of a godly mentor
- the believer’s understanding of God’s role in the growth process
- and his own role in that process

No, all believers do not grow at the same rate. But there is one thing all believers do: *they grow*. Sanctification is not a promise reserved only for those who decide they want to be mature. It is the reality of *every* reborn follower of Jesus Christ. To protect the reputation of His Name and the wellbeing of His children, the Father will see to that.

THOSE WHOM GOD FOREKNEW, HE ALSO PREDESTINED TO BECOME CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON, SO THAT HE WOULD BE THE FIRSTBORN AMONG MANY BRETHREN. (ROMANS 8:29)

BUT WE ALL ... BEHOLDING AS IN A MIRROR THE GLORY OF THE LORD, ARE BEING TRANSFORMED INTO THE SAME IMAGE FROM GLORY TO GLORY. (2ND CORINTHIANS 3:18)

FOR I AM CONFIDENT OF THIS VERY THING, THAT HE WHO BEGAN A GOOD WORK IN YOU WILL PERFECT IT UNTIL THE DAY OF CHRIST JESUS. (PHILIPPIANS 1:6)

Whether they have eight versions of the Bible on their book shelf or only portions of the Word of God, they will grow in righteousness. Whether they sit under sound Bible teaching or they are “on their own,” they will grow. Whether past choices have made their present situation smooth or rocky, they will grow.

Gradually ... over time ... a sense of security will replace insecurity and understanding will replace confusion. Defeat will surrender to joy. Hatred will dissolve into love. Impatience will give way to patience. And anxiety will yield to peace. Throughout the rest of their lives, those born of the Spirit of God *will grow* to reflect – more accurately and more consistently – the life of Christ.

*LITTLE CHILDREN, MAKE SURE NO ONE DECEIVES YOU; THE ONE WHO **PRACTICES** RIGHTEOUSNESS IS RIGHTEOUS, JUST AS (CHRIST JESUS) IS RIGHTEOUS; 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. NO ONE WHO IS BORN OF GOD **PRACTICES** SIN, BECAUSE HIS SEED ABIDES IN HIM; AND HE CANNOT SIN, BECAUSE HE IS BORN OF GOD. BY THIS THE CHILDREN OF GOD AND THE CHILDREN OF THE DEVIL ARE OBVIOUS: ANYONE WHO DOES NOT **PRACTICE** RIGHTEOUSNESS IS NOT OF GOD. (1ST JOHN 3:7-10)*

A LIFESTYLE OF REPENTANCE AND OBEDIENCE
— EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD AND GRADUALLY INCREASING OVER TIME —
IS WHAT SEPARATES THE “SHEEP” FROM THE “GOATS”

*[Remember, obedience is the **proof** of salvation, not the **cause** of salvation. We are saved by depending on Christ's death to serve as the Payment for our sins. Salvation is by grace through faith ... and by faith alone.]*

EXAMINE YOURSELF: HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO GOD'S MORAL LAW?

ARE YOU GRADUALLY BECOMING MORE AND MORE OBEDIENT TO HIS MORAL WILL?

(ARE YOU GRADUALLY BECOMING MORE LIKE CHRIST?)

... OR HAS THERE BEEN NO CHANGE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS OVER TIME?

THE 4TH EVIDENCE

HE STRUGGLES WITH HIS PERSONAL SINS (OF WHICH HE IS AWARE)

FOR THIS YOU KNOW WITH CERTAINTY, THAT NO IMMORAL OR IMPURE PERSON OR COVETOUS MAN, WHO IS AN IDOLATER, HAS AN INHERITANCE IN THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST AND GOD. (EPHESIANS 5:5)

When the Holy Spirit enters a life, that life acquires – *over time* – an entirely different set of values than those held by the world. We have already considered some of those changes that take place in his life:

He has a different attitude toward the Bible's trustworthiness. (He holds it in high esteem.)

He also acknowledges the Word of God's authority over his life. (He accepts his responsibility to obey its moral teachings.)

Not only does he begin to pursue a more righteous lifestyle, he also – at the same time – begins to distance himself from his own immoralities. Those sins toward which he once was indifferent now vex his soul. Gradually, as he trusts the Spirit of God to take control over more and more of his life, he begins to be repulsed by his own sinful behavior, an attitude toward evil that does not bother others – both outside the church and, tragically, within its (professing) membership.

This act of turning away from *known* sins is repentance; and it does not happen overnight. But for those who possess a living faith, it will – in varying degrees – most surely take place.

A LIFE OF STRUGGLE

The life of a true believer will, of course, never reach perfection ... at least on this side of the resurrection. Rather, it will be a life of struggle between the cravings of his flesh and the promptings of the indwelling Spirit of God.

FOR THE FLESH SETS ITS DESIRE AGAINST THE SPIRIT, AND THE SPIRIT AGAINST THE FLESH; FOR THESE ARE IN OPPOSITION TO ONE ANOTHER, SO THAT YOU MAY NOT DO THE THINGS THAT YOU PLEASE. (GALATIANS 5:17)

This battle exists in every person born of the Holy Spirit, a conflict that will last throughout the lifetime of the believer. Yet, it is this very struggle that proves the Spirit of God's presence in his life.

WHAT I AM DOING, I DO NOT UNDERSTAND; FOR I AM NOT PRACTICING WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO DO, BUT I AM DOING THE VERY THING I HATE ... I KNOW THAT NOTHING GOOD DWELLS IN ME, THAT IS, IN MY FLESH; FOR THE WILLING IS PRESENT IN ME, BUT THE DOING OF THE GOOD IS NOT. FOR THE GOOD THAT I WANT, I

DO NOT DO, BUT I PRACTICE THE VERY EVIL THAT I DO NOT WANT ... I FIND THEN THE PRINCIPLE THAT EVIL IS PRESENT IN ME, THE ONE WHO WANTS TO DO GOOD. (ROMANS 7:15, 18-19, 21)

This is the attitude of one who loathes the presence of sin in his life. Consequently, he will strive to separate himself from those sins (he will “put to death the deeds of the body”). He will seek to rid his life of sinful practices through a reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit.

SO THEN, BRETHREN, WE ARE UNDER OBLIGATION, NOT TO THE FLESH, TO LIVE ACCORDING TO THE FLESH – FOR IF YOU ARE LIVING ACCORDING TO THE FLESH, YOU MUST DIE; BUT IF BY THE SPIRIT YOU ARE PUTTING TO DEATH THE DEEDS OF THE BODY, YOU WILL LIVE. FOR ALL WHO ARE BEING LED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD, THESE ARE SONS OF GOD. (ROMANS 8:12-14)

This is the lifestyle of a true “son of God”: gradually abandoning his old sinful practices while gradually adopting new righteous practices. As a result, his character will – over time – become more and more Christ-like.

BUT WHEN HE SAW MANY OF THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES COMING FOR BAPTISM, HE SAID TO THEM, "YOU BROOD OF VIPERS, WHO WARNED YOU TO FLEE FROM THE WRATH TO COME? THEREFORE BEAR FRUIT IN KEEPING WITH REPENTANCE." (MATTHEW 3:7-8)

SO, KING AGRIPPA, I DID NOT PROVE DISOBEDIENT TO THE HEAVENLY VISION, BUT KEPT DECLARING ... THAT THEY SHOULD REPENT AND TURN TO GOD, PERFORMING DEEDS APPROPRIATE TO REPENTANCE. (ACTS 26:19-20)

But those who do not back up their profession of faith with *a life of struggle against their lawless deeds* are the ones the Son of God will dismiss from His Presence.

AND THEN I WILL DECLARE TO THEM, "I NEVER KNEW YOU; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS." (MATTHEW 7:23)

EXAMINE YOURSELF: WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARD YOUR OWN SINS?

DO THEY BOTHER YOU?

... OR DO YOU JUST SHRUG THEM OFF?

DO YOU STRUGGLE TO RID YOURSELF OF YOUR SINFUL PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR?

... OR DO YOU TRY TO JUSTIFY THE PRESENCE OF IMMORALITY IN YOUR LIFE?

THE 5TH EVIDENCE**HE SEEKS WHAT IS BEST FOR HIS SPIRITUAL SIBLINGS IN CHRIST**

The love that God has for His people is a commitment to do what He knows is best for them (without violating His will or sacrificing His glory). This love is something more than a warm emotion; it is a resolve ... a choice ... an act of the will ... to bring about in His children's lives what is in their best interest.

This same love permeates the hearts of God's people in whom the Spirit of God lives. The presence of God's love proves the presence of God within every true believer.

(T)HE LOVE OF GOD HAS BEEN POURED OUT WITHIN OUR HEARTS THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT WHO WAS GIVEN TO US. (ROMANS 5:5)

Love for one's brothers and sisters in Christ is a reality of the rebirth. No matter his nationality ... or his race ... or his political persuasions ... or his IQ ... or his social skills ... or his financial situation ... or his standing in the community. It does not matter whether he even *likes* his brother or sister in Christ or not. The one born of the Spirit of God will seek what is best for each of his spiritual siblings in Christ.

WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE PASSED OUT OF DEATH INTO LIFE, BECAUSE WE LOVE THE BRETHREN. (1ST JOHN 3:14)

On the other hand, for one to *habitually* try to destroy a fellow believer – his feelings, his well-being, his reputation, his life ... whether to his face or behind his back – is an indication that the love of God does not reside in his heart.

HE WHO DOES NOT LOVE (THE BRETHREN) ABIDES IN DEATH. EVERYONE WHO HATES HIS BROTHER IS A MURDERER; AND YOU KNOW THAT NO MURDERER HAS ETERNAL LIFE ABIDING IN HIM. (1ST JOHN 3:14-15)

BY THIS THE CHILDREN OF GOD AND THE CHILDREN OF THE DEVIL ARE OBVIOUS: ANYONE WHO DOES NOT PRACTICE RIGHTEOUSNESS IS NOT OF GOD, NOR THE ONE WHO DOES NOT LOVE HIS BROTHER. (1ST JOHN 3:10)

THE ONE WHO DOES NOT LOVE DOES NOT KNOW GOD, FOR GOD IS LOVE. (1ST JOHN 4:8)

If the love of God is present, salvation is present. But if the love of God is *habitually absent*, salvation is absent.

Furthermore, the reality of God's love goes much farther than mere words, extending into "deeds and truth."

LITTLE CHILDREN, LET US NOT LOVE WITH WORD OR WITH TONGUE, BUT IN DEED AND TRUTH. WE WILL KNOW BY THIS THAT WE ARE OF THE TRUTH (1ST JOHN 3:18-19)

How does one do that? The Scriptures abound in practical ways a believer can display God's love for the brethren. One such example is his response to one in need:

BUT WHOEVER HAS THE WORLD'S GOODS, AND SEES HIS BROTHER IN NEED AND CLOSES HIS HEART AGAINST HIM, HOW DOES THE LOVE OF GOD ABIDE IN HIM? (1ST JOHN 3:17)

This is one way the believer can love "in deed." If he seeks to meet the *practical* needs of his spiritual siblings, the love of God is present in his heart. But the one who ignores the needs of God's children has something less than God's love in his heart.

Love for one's brothers and sisters in Christ is one of the evidences of the rebirth.

BELOVED, LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER, FOR LOVE IS FROM GOD; AND EVERYONE WHO LOVES IS BORN OF GOD AND KNOWS GOD. (1ST JOHN 4:7)

**EXAMINE YOURSELF: WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD'S SONS AND DAUGHTERS
(INCLUDING THE ONES YOU DON'T LIKE)?**

DO YOU USUALLY TRY TO PROVIDE THEM WITH WHAT THEY NEED AND TO PROTECT THEM FROM RUIN?

... OR ARE YOU USUALLY INDIFFERENT TOWARD THEIR WELLBEING?

... OR DO YOU HABITUALLY SEEK TO DESTROY THEM IN SOME WAY?

THE 6TH EVIDENCE***HE EXPERIENCES SUFFERING FOR THE SAKE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS******HE IS PERSECUTED BY THE WORLD BECAUSE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS***

All the earth has been marred because of the disobedience of its God-appointed overseers, Adam and Eve. Ever since their act of rebellion, this couple and all their children – believers and unbelievers alike – have suffered the effects of this world-wide curse.

But those who follow Christ also suffer in a way that those who reject Christ know nothing about. In fact, it is the unbeliever that *causes* the believer to suffer. And he does so because of a difference in moral values.

Those who are reborn promote a *Biblical* belief system. Those who are dead in their sins promote an *anti-Biblical* belief system.

Those who submit their lives to Christ are guided by the *Spirit of Christ*. Those who don't, allow themselves to be carried along in the current of an *antichrist* spirit.

Because of this difference in values and the driving spirits behind these values, there is a huge gap between the two. A spiritual gap. Those who are spiritually alive and those who are spiritually dead are not "birds of a feather." Consequently, they do not "flock together." To the contrary, because of the Cross of Christ, the two are "dead" to each other.

THROUGH (THE CROSS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST), THE WORLD HAS BEEN CRUCIFIED TO ME, AND I TO THE WORLD. (GALATIANS 6:14)

The reason for this "disconnect" is simple: the lost are separated from the saved because they are separated from the Savior. They are alienated from Christ Jesus. They are at odds with Him. They are not speaking to Him.

SEE HOW GREAT A LOVE THE FATHER HAS BESTOWED ON US, THAT WE WOULD BE CALLED CHILDREN OF GOD; AND SUCH WE ARE. FOR THIS REASON THE WORLD DOES NOT KNOW US, BECAUSE IT DID NOT KNOW HIM. (1ST JOHN 3:1)

This estranged relationship between the unbelieving community and Christ is one the world has brought upon itself. He is reaching out to them; but they are not reaching back. They reject His rule over their lives ... and they also reject those who *do* submit to His rule. The "children of darkness" *hate* the "children of light" because their evil deeds are exposed by the righteous lives of God's people.

IF YOU WERE OF THE WORLD, THE WORLD WOULD LOVE ITS OWN; BUT BECAUSE YOU ARE NOT OF THE WORLD, BUT I CHOSE YOU OUT OF THE WORLD, BECAUSE OF THIS THE WORLD HATES YOU. (JOHN 15:19)

FOR EVERYONE WHO DOES EVIL HATES THE LIGHT, AND DOES NOT COME TO THE LIGHT FOR FEAR THAT HIS DEEDS WILL BE EXPOSED. (JOHN 3:20)

As a result, those who identify with the immoral values of this world *persecute* those who have aligned themselves with the righteousness of Christ.

INDEED, ALL WHO DESIRE TO LIVE GODLY IN CHRIST JESUS WILL BE PERSECUTED. (2ND TIMOTHY 3:12)

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN PERSECUTED FOR THE SAKE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. BLESSED ARE YOU WHEN PEOPLE INSULT YOU AND PERSECUTE YOU, AND FALSELY SAY ALL KINDS OF EVIL AGAINST YOU BECAUSE OF ME. REJOICE AND BE GLAD, FOR YOUR REWARD IN HEAVEN IS GREAT; FOR IN THE SAME WAY THEY PERSECUTED THE PROPHETS WHO WERE BEFORE YOU. (MATTHEW 5:10-12)

This suffering for the sake of Christ is to be expected by the believer. To be sure, he has been forewarned that it will come.

DO NOT BE SURPRISED, BRETHREN, IF THE WORLD HATES YOU. (1ST JOHN 3:13)

YOU YOURSELVES KNOW THAT WE HAVE BEEN DESTINED FOR THIS. FOR INDEED WHEN WE WERE WITH YOU, WE KEPT TELLING YOU IN ADVANCE THAT WE WERE GOING TO SUFFER AFFLICTION; AND SO IT CAME TO PASS, AS YOU KNOW. (1ST THESSALONIANS 3:3-4)

BELOVED, DO NOT BE SURPRISED AT THE FIERY ORDEAL AMONG YOU, WHICH COMES UPON YOU FOR YOUR TESTING, AS THOUGH SOME STRANGE THING WERE HAPPENING TO YOU; BUT TO THE DEGREE THAT YOU SHARE THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, KEEP ON REJOICING, SO THAT ALSO AT THE REVELATION OF HIS GLORY YOU MAY REJOICE WITH EXULTATION. IF YOU ARE REVILED FOR THE NAME OF CHRIST, YOU ARE BLESSED, BECAUSE THE SPIRIT OF GLORY AND OF GOD RESTS ON YOU. (1ST PETER 4:12-14)

Persecution for the sake of righteousness is to be expected by those who are reborn. It is one of the proofs that they have “become the righteousness of God in (Christ).” (2nd Corinthians 5:21)

(YOU ARE) IN NO WAY ALARMED BY YOUR OPPONENTS — WHICH IS A SIGN OF DESTRUCTION FOR THEM, BUT OF SALVATION FOR YOU, AND THAT TOO, FROM GOD. FOR TO YOU IT HAS BEEN GRANTED FOR CHRIST'S SAKE, NOT ONLY TO BELIEVE IN HIM, BUT ALSO TO SUFFER FOR HIS SAKE (PHILIPPIANS 1:28-29)

THE SPIRIT HIMSELF TESTIFIES WITH OUR SPIRIT THAT WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD, AND IF CHILDREN, HEIRS ALSO, HEIRS OF GOD AND FELLOW HEIRS WITH CHRIST, IF INDEED WE SUFFER WITH HIM SO THAT WE MAY ALSO BE GLORIFIED WITH HIM. (ROMANS 8:16-17)

EXAMINE YOURSELF: HOW DO THOSE WHO REJECT BIBLICAL VALUES RESPOND TO YOUR LIFESTYLE?

ARE YOU ATTACKED IN SOME WAY
BECAUSE YOUR GODLY CONDUCT SHEDS LIGHT ON THEIR UNBIBLICAL VALUES / IMMORAL LIFESTYLE?

... OR DO YOUR VALUES / MANNER OF LIFE POSE NO REAL THREAT TO THOSE
WHO DO NOT SUBMIT TO THE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES?

He Is Disciplined by the Father to Cultivate Righteousness

We have seen that persecution comes from *those who follow the world's anti-Biblical value system*. (These antagonists can be found both outside the church ... and within). Behind what seems to be a flesh-and-blood attack is, in reality, a demonic (antichrist) spirit. It is the *intent* of these enemies of the Cross *to somehow destroy the believer*: to draw him into their sinful lifestyle ... to discredit his testimony ... to convince him that he is a failure ... or perhaps even to kill him.

But there is another kind of affliction that every true believer will experience. And *this* suffering will come from a *Source* that is holy. His *purpose* is not to destroy but to strengthen.

MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES. (HEBREWS 12:5-6)

Discipline comes from *God the Father*. And although it is painful, His *intent* is to benefit His children. The love He has for each of them is what *motivates* Him to do so.

THOSE WHOM I LOVE, I REPROVE AND DISCIPLINE. (REVELATION 3:19)

To love someone is to seek his greatest good. So what does the Father consider to be the highest good for His sons and daughters? The greatest gift he could possibly give them would be *to purify their lives*.

(THE FATHER) DISCIPLINES US FOR OUR GOOD, SO THAT WE MAY SHARE HIS HOLINESS. ALL DISCIPLINE FOR THE MOMENT SEEMS NOT TO BE JOYFUL, BUT SORROWFUL; YET TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN TRAINED BY IT, AFTERWARDS IT YIELDS THE PEACEFUL FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. (HEBREWS 12:10-11)

This helps explain Romans 8:28-29:

AND WE KNOW THAT GOD CAUSES ALL THINGS TO WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THOSE WHO LOVE GOD, TO THOSE WHO ARE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE. FOR THOSE WHOM HE FOREKNEW, HE ALSO PREDESTINED TO BECOME CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON, SO THAT HE WOULD BE THE FIRSTBORN AMONG MANY BRETHREN. (ROMANS 8:28-29)

Everything that happens in the life of a believer is used by God to conform His child into the image of His Son; and He will not waste anything to do so:

- He will use life's exhilarating joys.
- He will use its excruciating pains.
- And He will use everything in between, even the mundane routine of each day.

The Father knows exactly *what* is needed – and to what *degree* it is needed – to sculpture His people into the image of Christ. At times His discipline might feel like sandpaper. At other times, it may feel like a jackhammer. But whatever form He uses, and to whatever degree, the God of love is willing to inflict pain upon His children for the short term that they might share in His glory for the long term ... for a very long term.

WE ARE AFFLICTED IN EVERY WAY, BUT NOT CRUSHED; PERPLEXED, BUT NOT DESPAIRING; PERSECUTED, BUT NOT FORSAKEN; STRUCK DOWN, BUT NOT DESTROYED; ALWAYS CARRYING ABOUT IN THE BODY THE DYING OF JESUS, SO THAT THE LIFE OF JESUS ALSO MAY BE MANIFESTED IN OUR BODY. FOR 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 MORTAL FLESH ...

THEREFORE WE DO NOT LOSE HEART, BUT THOUGH OUR OUTER MAN IS DECAYING, YET OUR INNER MAN IS BEING RENEWED DAY BY DAY. FOR MOMENTARY, LIGHT AFFLICTION IS PRODUCING FOR US AN ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY FAR BEYOND ALL COMPARISON (2ND CORINTHIANS 4:8-11, 16-17)

We are told that, if this *life-changing discipline* is not present in the life of a professing believer, then the faith he claims to have is *dead*. What he believes about himself is *false*. He is deceiving himself.

IT IS FOR DISCIPLINE THAT YOU ENDURE; GOD DEALS WITH YOU AS WITH SONS; FOR WHAT SON IS THERE WHOM HIS FATHER DOES NOT DISCIPLINE? BUT IF YOU ARE WITHOUT DISCIPLINE, OF WHICH ALL HAVE BECOME PARTAKERS, THEN YOU ARE ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN AND NOT SONS. (HEBREWS 12:7-8)

Every legitimate son of God will be chastened by his Father to produce in him “the peaceful fruit of righteousness.” This, too, is one of the proofs that one has been born into the family of God.

EXAMINE YOURSELF

ARE YOU BEING TRANSFORMED — THROUGH TRIALS — INTO THE IMAGE OF CHRIST JESUS?

... OR ARE YOUR THOUGHTS AND ATTITUDE AND SPEECH AND CONDUCT
PRETTY MUCH THE SAME AS THEY WERE 4 OR 5 YEARS AGO?

THE 7TH EVIDENCE***HIS FAITH PERSEVERES IN THE MIDST OF TRIALS******IT IS POSSIBLE FOR TRUE BELIEVERS TO COMPROMISE THEIR MORALITY***

Trials are common to all mankind. Believers and unbelievers alike have car wrecks and cancer. Both suffer over the loss of loved ones and homes and jobs. Both have had their reputations shredded by false accusations. Both know what it means to be forsaken by friends and family.

When it comes to affliction in the lives of believers, God's goal is clear: He wants those who carry His holy Name to be transformed into the likeness of His Son. His purpose is constructive, and His motive is love.

CONSIDER IT ALL JOY, MY BRETHREN, WHEN YOU ENCOUNTER VARIOUS TRIALS, KNOWING THAT THE TESTING OF YOUR FAITH PRODUCES ENDURANCE. AND LET ENDURANCE HAVE ITS PERFECT RESULT, SO THAT YOU MAY BE PERFECT AND COMPLETE, LACKING IN NOTHING. (JAMES 1:2-4; SEE ALSO ROMANS 8:28-29)

There is, of course, nothing easy about remaining faithful to one's testimony while suffering. In the midst of his affliction, the reborn child of God will often cry out, "Lord, get me out of this!" But until the lesson is learned, that is the last thing the Father intends to do.

And so, to relieve his pain, the believer will be tempted to remove *himself* from the problem. He may return to one of his pre-conversion vices (the deadening effect of alcohol or a drug, immoral sexual acts, overeating, oversleeping, overspending, overworking, et. al.). Or he may recklessly separate himself from the relationship in which he struggles (with his employer, his spouse, his parents, his siblings, his church). These acts of the flesh may sometimes give relief; but the relief is *always temporary* ... and his soul will *always feel some level of guilt afterwards*.

Imbedded within each of these "escapes" comes the whispered lie from Satan, "You do not need God to get you through this trial. The 'pain-killer' I offer will do that for you." Let us not miss this: whereas trials are meant by the God of love to *strengthen* His child's faith, these "spiritual Ibuprofens" from Satan are meant to *destroy* the believer's faith. God's purpose is constructive ... the serpent's purpose is destructive. And while God is motivated by love, the destroyer is motivated by hatred. He does not want the Christ-follower to persevere through the trial by trusting God. He wants him to throw in the towel.

No believer has ever endured affliction without being enticed to forsake his obedience to God. And the fact is, even a true believer will sometimes compromise his moral values (which is why he needs the promise of 1st John 1:9):

IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL AND RIGHTEOUS TO FORGIVE US OUR SINS AND TO CLEANSE US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. (1ST JOHN 1:9)

But what about his faith? Will a true believer ever *abandon his faith in the God of his salvation*? Or will he always persevere in the faith? God's Word answers this question.

It Is NOT POSSIBLE FOR TRUE BELIEVERS TO FORSAKE THEIR FAITH

BUT 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 FIRM UNTIL THE END. (HEBREWS 3:6)

What does this verse mean? Perhaps we should first determine what it does *not* mean.

At first glance Hebrews 3:6 *seems* to say that a believer will continue to be a part of God's house (that is, he will stay saved) *if* he "holds fast" to his faith. But if he does not persevere in the faith, he will stop being a part of God's house (that is, he will lose his salvation). This view, however, violates other verses that clearly describe the believer as being eternally secure in Christ.

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. (EPHESIANS 1:13)

DO NOT GRIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD, BY WHOM YOU WERE SEALED FOR THE DAY OF REDEMPTION. (EPHESIANS 4:30)

The Greek word translated "sealed" (sphragizo) is the same word used to describe what the Roman government did to the tomb of Christ. Wanting to prevent Jesus' disciples from robbing His body from the grave, the Roman governor Pilate gave his permission to the Jewish religious leaders to secure the tomb.

"YOU HAVE A GUARD; GO, MAKE IT AS SECURE AS YOU KNOW HOW." AND THEY WENT AND MADE THE GRAVE SECURE, AND ALONG WITH THE GUARD THEY SET A SEAL ON THE STONE. (MATTHEW 27:65-66)

The *physical* body of Christ could not have been made more secure in the tomb.

Because of the squad of soldiers, it was protected by the *power* of the Roman government.

Because of the seal, it was secured by the *authority* of the Roman government. (To break the seal would be to defy the Roman government — a crime punishable by death — providing one could get past the Roman guard to do so!)

This seal continued for three days, *until the Day of His Resurrection* (when He received His glorified body).

Likewise, the *spiritual* Body of Christ (the true and living Church) could not have been made more secure in Christ Jesus.

Her salvation is protected by the *power* of God.

(YOU) ARE PROTECTED BY THE POWER OF GOD THROUGH FAITH FOR A SALVATION READY TO BE REVEALED IN THE LAST TIME. (1ST PETER 1:5)

Because of the Seal of the Holy Spirit, Her salvation is secured by the *authority* of God.

(Y)OU WERE SEALED IN HIM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE. (EPHESIANS 1:13)

And this Seal will continue *until the day of Her resurrection* (when the Church receives Her glorified bodies at the Appearing of Christ Jesus).

(Y)OU WERE SEALED FOR THE DAY OF REDEMPTION. (EPHESIANS 4:30)

The point of the above is this: The believer does not *keep himself saved* anymore than he saved himself to begin with. It is by the power and authority of God that the Church is saved. And it is by the power and authority of God that She is *kept* saved. Therefore, Hebrews 3:6 *cannot* mean

THE ONE WHO "HOLDS FAST" TO THE FAITH WILL CONTINUE TO BE A PART OF GOD'S HOUSE ...
BUT IF HE DOES NOT "HOLD FAST," THEN HE WILL LOSE HIS SALVATION

What, then, does this verse mean? Hebrews 3:6 means

THE ONE WHO "HOLDS FAST" TO THE FAITH *PROVES* THAT HE IS A MEMBER OF GOD'S HOUSE
HIS PERSEVERANCE DOES NOT MAINTAIN HIS SALVATION; IT *VALIDATES* HIS SALVATION

*(YOU) ARE PROTECTED BY THE POWER OF GOD THROUGH FAITH FOR A SALVATION READY TO BE REVEALED IN THE LAST TIME. IN THIS YOU GREATLY REJOICE, EVEN THOUGH NOW FOR A LITTLE WHILE, IF NECESSARY, YOU HAVE BEEN DISTRESSED BY VARIOUS TRIALS, SO THAT **THE PROOF OF YOUR FAITH**, BEING MORE PRECIOUS THAN GOLD WHICH IS PERISHABLE, EVEN THOUGH TESTED BY FIRE, MAY BE FOUND TO RESULT IN PRAISE AND GLORY AND HONOR AT THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST. (1ST PETER 1:5-7)*

And to this one whose living faith has been *confirmed* by his steadfastness in the midst of adversity, the crown of eternal life is given.

*BLESSED IS A MAN WHO PERSEVERES UNDER TRIAL; FOR ONCE HE HAS BEEN **APPROVED**, HE WILL RECEIVE THE CROWN OF LIFE WHICH THE LORD HAS PROMISED TO THOSE WHO LOVE HIM. (JAMES 1:12)*

But for one to *walk away from the faith he once professed – and shows no real intention of returning* – indicates that he was never a part of God's "House" to begin with.

This includes the 36-year-old who joined his church when he was nine years old ... attended church while living at home with his parents ... then graduated from high school ... left home ... has only rarely “gone to church” since then ... and who shows no evidence whatsoever of the salvation he *still* claims to have. He may have learned – at the age of nine – to use the correct words to profess his faith; but the *kind* of faith he had when he said those words falls short of the kind of faith that saves.

*EACH TREE IS **KNOWN** BY ITS OWN FRUIT. (LUKE 6:44)*

It also includes the man who served as a deacon in his church for fifteen years ... who then ran off with the church secretary ... who – instead of repenting of his sin – turned away from following Christ ... and who then died 25 years later. He may have learned to use the correct words to profess his faith; but the *kind* of faith he had when he said those words falls short of the kind of faith that saves.²

*EACH TREE IS **KNOWN** BY ITS OWN FRUIT. (LUKE 6:44)*

Perseverance in the faith is one of the evidences of the rebirth.

*IF WE ENDURE, WE WILL ALSO REIGN WITH HIM.
IF WE DENY HIM, HE ALSO WILL DENY US. (2ND TIMOTHY 2:12)*

EXAMINE YOURSELF

OVER THE YEARS – WITH LIFE’S DOUBTS AND CONFUSIONS, ITS VICTORIES AND DEFEATS –
HAVE YOU REMAINED “TRUE TO THE FAITH”?

... OR HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO “LEAVE THE FAITH” YOU ONCE PROFESSED?

- ² The individuals in these two scenarios should not be urged to “get back in church.” That is not the answer to their problem, and the last thing we want to do is to encourage them to think that it is. Their long-term departure from exhibiting any evidence of the rebirth is an obvious symptom of the root problem: a dead faith. Those who are “dead in their sins” cannot be made “alive to God” by going back to church.

Instead of being directed to an assembly of redeemed sinners, professing Christians who show no long-term proof of spiritual life should be directed to the *Redeemer*. That is, they should not be treated as wayward Christians who need a place to grow. They need to be treated as those who are spiritually dead in need of the Gospel. They need the sin-Bearer.

WHAT IS THE RESULT OF YOUR EXAMINATION?

This study has been presented to all who claim to be Christians. According to the Savior, those who make this claim can be divided into two groups: those who bear “good fruit” and those who bear “bad fruit.” We have considered what **both** *the saved and the lost* can be and do (“False Assurances”); and we have considered what **only** *the saved* will be and do (“Evidences of the Rebirth”).

It may be that, having examined yourself, you have come to

KNOW THAT YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE. (1ST JOHN 5:13)

If so, you already know that the value of this gift you possess is beyond comprehension.

At the same time you may have become concerned about a loved one. He, too, claims to be a Christ-follower. Yet, the *only* “fruit” he displays is limited to words and actions that *do not require the presence of the indwelling Spirit of God*:

He made a public profession of faith that “Christ is Lord” (*but so did the “many” of Matthew 7:22-23*)

He is active in Christian service (*but so was Judas Iscariot, Mark 6:7, 12-13*)

He believes in God (*but so does the demonic realm, James 2:19*)

He is a member / leader of a local church (*but so was the unrepentant church member of Matthew 18:15-17 ... and so was the evil church leader Diotrephes, 3rd John 1:9-11*)

He has observed the Christian ritual of water baptism (*but according to the Apostle Paul, this ceremony is not to be considered a part of the Gospel message: 1st Corinthians 1:17, 15:1-2. Even the lost can participate in the rituals of Christianity.*)

He is interested in what the Bible teaches (*but so was Herod Antipas, Mark 6:20*)

It is true: those who are truly saved will say and do all of these things. It is also true that even the lost can say and do all of these things. None of this *proves* that the one you love is right with God. Anyone can learn to speak the language of a church member and go through the motions of the Christian religion.

Beloved reader, if *religious behavior* is what relieves your concern regarding your loved one’s eternal destiny (and that’s the *only* thing that does), you are grabbing for straws. To convince yourself that a loved one is saved (because you cannot bear the thought that he isn’t) is not going to *make* him saved. Not only are you deceiving yourself, you are doing him no favors by contributing to his self-deception.

We need to stop treating the one who claims to be a Christian – but who exhibits none of the evidences of the rebirth – as though he were an immature church member who simply “has not been disciplined.”

What he needs is *our on-going prayers that the Spirit of God would open the heart of his soul, enabling him to understand the Gospel.*

He needs *to see – through us – the difference Christ can make in one’s life.*

And he needs *to be warned* of what he faces if he does not repent of his sins and trust in Christ’s death to be the Payment for those sins. Would it not be better for him to hear our warning while there is yet time to repent rather than for him to hear Christ’s rejection when it is too late?

“I NEVER KNEW YOU; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.” (MATTHEW 7:23)

It may be that, having examined yourself, you have come to realize that something is wrong with your *own* claim to be a Christ-follower:

Perhaps it has occurred to you, for the first time, that you have based the assurance of your own salvation upon your religious behavior or church activities rather than the Cross of Christ ... that what you did was make yourself religious without really dealing with your sins.

Maybe you have begun to wonder if you have really understood the Gospel ... or possibly, you have come to realize that the Gospel has never been explained to you.

If you know you are *not* saved, would you like to be? That is the purpose of our final section: to present how you can be mercifully rescued from the death sentence of God.

MY DEAR FRIEND, IT IS FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR ETERNAL SOUL
THAT THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE HAS BEEN PLACED IN YOUR HANDS
MAY GOD HAVE MERCY ON YOU

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST
(Where God's Justice and God's Mercy Meet)

A SHARK IN THE WATER

During the summer of 1972, a friend of mine was a cast member with the outdoor drama, *"THE LOST COLONY."* Because his performances were in the evening, his days were free to enjoy one of his favorite sports – surfing. The area around Nags Head, North Carolina was known for its good surfing and had become a popular spot. The rest of this story is recorded in his own words:

"One day, while I was out in the surf with another cast member, something caught my attention just under the water's surface. Looking over my left shoulder, I noticed – not two feet from me – the dark form of a huge Hammerhead Shark.

I could clearly see the features of this grotesque shark ... its hideous, protruding eyes staring right at me. An indescribable feeling of panic and fear gripped me. I realized that I was totally at the mercy of this aggressive type of shark and could be dead in seconds.

As my friend and I frantically paddled toward shore, I wondered with each stroke if the next one would be my last. When I reached the beach, I was physically shaking all over. I remember looking down and seeing my knee caps quivering.

After settling down a bit, I noticed two other surfers about a hundred yards down the beach, sitting with their boards by their sides. Walking toward them, I wanted to warn them of what I had just seen.

'Hey! There's a huge Hammerhead Shark out there!'

I was absolutely shocked at their response:

'You mean he's still out there?'

They knew the shark had been out there! They had watched me paddle out into the surf; and yet, they had not bothered to warn me of the danger!

I could have been killed!"

YET, THEY HAD NOT BOTHERED TO WARN ME OF THE DANGER!

Tell me. What kind of person would do that ... someone who knows you are in danger of losing your life but does not care enough to warn you? What would you think of an individual who couldn't care less if you live or die?

This booklet has been placed in your hands for the sake of your eternal soul. Its purpose is to warn you of the danger you are in. As you read it though, you should be prepared because I intend to be lovingly blunt.

But I also intend to present a message of great hope. I want to explain how you can be delivered from this danger by accepting a priceless gift.

It will end with a choice you have to make.

A SURE AND PRESENT DANGER

IT IS A TERRIFYING THING TO FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE LIVING GOD. (HEBREWS 10:31)

Dear reader, you have a problem. Out of all the problems you will ever face, this one is the most serious.

YOU HAVE BROKEN THE MORAL LAWS OF A HOLY GOD

YOU HAVE SINNED ... AND (CONTINUALLY) FALL SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD. (ROMANS 3:23)

Do not be deceived. What is "right" and what is "wrong" is not determined by the sway of society. Moral law is based on the character of the Divine law-giver, One Who is not constantly changing in order to "fit into" the ever-changing values of your culture. Moral law does not change because God does not change.

Nor are you on good terms with God because "We are all God's children." Nothing could be further from the truth. You are not God's child. You are not even His friend. The fact is

YOU ARE A MORAL CRIMINAL IN THE SIGHT OF AN IMPARTIAL JUDGE ... AND HE IS ANGRY

Yes, it is true: God is a God of love. It is *equally* true that God is a God of *justice*. As a God of love, He wants what is best for you. But as a God of justice, He hates the immoral acts you have committed ... and He plans to deal with every one of them. His justice demands it.

A day is coming when you will stand in judgment before the God you have offended ... and not one of your moral crimes will escape His notice. At that time He will compare your life with His Own moral perfections ... you will be found guilty of capital offenses that carry the death penalty ... and you will be condemned to die.

... *THE WAGES OF SIN IS **DEATH**. (ROMANS 6:23)*

I am not telling you this because I hold you in contempt. I am telling you this because I care enough to warn you. You are in great danger. Because of your moral failures, you are on “death row,” facing the wrath of a just God.

BECAUSE OF YOUR STUBBORNNESS AND UNREPENTANT HEART YOU ARE STORING UP WRATH FOR YOURSELF IN THE DAY OF WRATH AND REVELATION OF THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT OF GOD, WHO WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS. (ROMANS 2:5-6)

A day is coming when your soul will be thrown into an eternal prison. This prison is known in the Bible as Hell. And there, you will suffer the wrath of God forever.

HELL: THE FULL MEASURE OF GOD’S WRATH ... FOREVER

I (JESUS) WILL WARN YOU WHOM TO FEAR: FEAR THE ONE WHO, AFTER HE HAS KILLED, HAS AUTHORITY TO CAST INTO HELL; YES, I TELL YOU, FEAR HIM! (LUKE 12:5)

Your situation could not be worse. According to the Bible, Hell is (something like) a “lake” that burns with (something similar to) “fire and brimstone (burning sulfur).”

BUT FOR THE COWARDLY AND UNBELIEVING AND ABOMINABLE AND MURDERERS AND IMMORAL PERSONS AND SORCERERS AND IDOLATERS AND ALL LIARS, THEIR PART WILL BE IN THE LAKE THAT BURNS WITH FIRE AND BRIMSTONE, WHICH IS THE SECOND DEATH. (REVELATION 21:8)

Whether this description of Hell has used literal or figurative language, either way, it refers to a real place. And there, you will remain conscious ... your torment will never cease ... you will never know rest ... and there is no hope of escape.

AND THE SMOKE OF THEIR TORMENT GOES UP FOREVER AND EVER; THEY HAVE NO REST DAY AND NIGHT. (REVELATION 14:11)

This is not an idle threat. It is a promise coming from One Who cannot lie. Because you have violated the moral laws of God, you are going to suffer

*THE PENALTY OF ETERNAL DESTRUCTION, AWAY FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD
AND FROM THE GLORY OF HIS POWER (2ND THESSALONIANS 1:9)*

There is only one thing that can satisfy the anger of this God of justice; and that one thing is not an apology from you. Nor is it your promise to try harder to live better. The only thing that can satisfy the anger of a holy and just God is *death*.

... *THE WAGES OF SIN IS **DEATH**. (ROMANS 6:23)*

THIS MEANS YOU CANNOT SAVE YOURSELF

Going through the motions of a religion – any religion – will not satisfy the penetrating justice of God. You can

- go to church
- join a church
- be baptized
- receive communion
- be active in your church
- get others to come to church with you
- become a church leader
- go to seminary
- be a pastor or a missionary ...

... yet none of this can help you. A person does not become a Christian by acting like one. Thousands upon thousands of church members will suffer eternal death because they tried to “make up” for their crimes against God by joining a church and getting baptized.

**GOD HAS NOT SENTENCED YOU TO LIVE A RELIGIOUS LIFE
HE HAS SENTENCED YOU TO DIE**

Nor can you calm the anger of God by obeying some system of law such as:

- the Ten Commandments
- the Law of Moses
- the Sermon on the Mount
- the Golden Rule
- the New Testament’s commandments

No code of conduct – presented in either the Old Testament or the New Testament – can help you.

**GOD HAS NOT SENTENCED YOU TO OBEY A SET OF MORAL RULES
HE HAS SENTENCED YOU TO DIE**

Nor will serving others satisfy the justice of God. You can

- love your spouse
- love your children
- perform community service
- volunteer for humanitarian relief
- work to preserve the environment

- be a responsible citizen
- serve in the military
- die for your country ...

... but being a good person – or trying to be a better one – is not going to solve your problem. As far as God is concerned,

*ALL (YOUR) **RIGHTEOUS** DEEDS ARE LIKE A FILTHY GARMENT. (ISAIAH 64:6)*

**GOD HAS NOT SENTENCED YOU TO A LIFE OF SELFLESS SERVICE
HE HAS SENTENCED YOU TO DIE**

THE ONLY THING THAT CAN SATISFY THE WRATH OF A HOLY AND JUST GOD IS DEATH

*... THE WAGES OF SIN IS **DEATH**. (ROMANS 6:23)*

But there is good news! No, there is exceedingly magnificent news ... news of freedom from the misery of spiritual bondage ... news of living water that quenches the thirst of a dry soul ... news that floods a broken and empty life with never-ending joy ... news of deliverance from eternal death! The God Who demands your death is offering you His pardon.

*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. (JOHN 3:16)*

FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD

According to the Bible, God loves the entire world: every race, every nation, every people-group, every tribe ... every person. But notice the *kind* of world He loves:

*GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS OWN LOVE TOWARD US ... **WHILE** WE WERE YET **SINNERS** ... **WHILE** WE WERE (HIS) **ENEMIES**. (ROMANS 5:8, 10)*

The world that God loves is not a world of His friends. Rather, it is a world of His enemies ... a world of rebels who are hostile toward Him ... who reject – with utter contempt – His good and wholesome will for their lives. The very ones God loves are those who shake their fist at Him, even as He offers to give them what their hearts long for ... but cannot find: *life that is abundant and eternal*.

Such is the depth of the love of God, a love that moved Him to rescue even His *enemies* from their danger of death. How did He show such love?

HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON

The deliverance God offers you is not through an organized religion ... or a house of worship ... or a set of religious duties ... or a religious ritual. The salvation God offers you is through a *Person*.

GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS OWN LOVE TOWARD US, IN THAT WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS, CHRIST DIED FOR US. (ROMANS 5:8)

God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die the death you deserve. He had His Own Son nailed to a Roman Cross to pay for the moral crimes you committed against Him. This is the magnitude of God's love for you.

Jesus Christ was born to be **your** *Substitute in death* ...

to be executed in your place ...

to die so you would not have to.

THIS IS THE WHOLE POINT OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST

To whom will God give so great a salvation?

WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM

The salvation of God is offered to everyone. No exceptions. His mercy toward you is higher than the heavens; and His grace is greater than *all* your sins combined ... past, present and future. *All* of them. Not one of your sins is too great to exclude you from this invitation:

"COME TO ME, ALL WHO ARE WEARY AND HEAVY-LADEN ... AND YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS."
(MATTHEW 11:28-29)

All are invited to receive the salvation of God by trusting in the *Person of Jesus Christ*. **All** are welcome to be restored to God.

WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED. (ROMANS 10:13)

My dear friend, are you able to hear this?

**THE ONLY WAY YOU CAN ESCAPE THE WRATH OF GOD
IS TO DEPEND UPON THE DEATH OF JESUS
TO SERVE AS PAYMENT FOR YOUR SINS AGAINST GOD**

Jesus Christ is your *only hope*.

I (JESUS) AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE; NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER BUT THROUGH ME.
(JOHN 14:6)

*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. (ACTS 4:12)*

Those who depend on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation ...

SHALL NOT PERISH

A just Judge will not execute two persons for the crimes committed by one person. Likewise, God will not punish anyone who embraces Christ's Death as the Payment for his moral crimes. Those sins have already been paid for – once and for all – on the Cross of Christ.

*THEREFORE THERE IS NOW NO CONDEMNATION (NO PUNISHMENT)
FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS. (ROMANS 8:1)*

The One Who cannot lie has given you His Word: He will rescue anyone who receives – by faith – His free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. Because of Christ's death on the cross, He has promised to pardon the believing one – *fully and forever* – from the capital punishment of Hell.

And there is more good news! In place of eternal death, the believer ...

SHALL HAVE ETERNAL LIFE

We know that God accepted Jesus' death on your behalf because He raised Him from the dead. (God would not have raised a liar from the dead.)

The bodily resurrection of Jesus is an *historical event*. Over 500 eyewitnesses *saw* the resurrected Christ (1st Corinthians 15:4-8), many of whom died martyrs' deaths rather than change their testimony.

This means that the One Who walked out of the tomb is able to give *you* eternal life.

NO RELIGIOUS LEADER WHO DECOMPOSED IN HIS GRAVE
CAN GIVE YOU ETERNAL LIFE

HOW CAN SOMEONE WHO IS STILL DEAD GIVE YOU LIFE?

Those who depend upon the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ to be their Savior are promised that they, too, will one day be raised from the dead and be given eternal life.

JESUS SAID, "I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE; HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME ... WILL HAVE ETERNAL LIFE, AND I MYSELF WILL RAISE HIM UP ON THE LAST DAY." (JOHN 11:25, 6:40)

I BEG YOU TO LISTEN

Your situation could not be more serious. Therefore, with loving firmness and compassion, you have been warned. (To have remained silent in a time of danger would have been an act of hatred.)

Dear reader, there's a shark in the water. Your immoral acts have made you the object of God's wrath. Someone must die for your sins. The justice of God demands it. You can depend upon the Death of Christ to be the Payment for your sins ... or you can pay for those sins yourself. But one of you must die for your moral crimes.

It does not have to be you. If you repent of your evil deeds and depend on the risen One Who died for you, you will be rescued from eternal death to live forever in the presence of God.

His pardon is right in front of you. The time for this decision is now. (No one is guaranteed another heartbeat, much less a deathbed.) Whether or not you accept God's offer of salvation is entirely your choice.

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH THE CROSS OF CHRIST?

APPENDIX: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS***IT IS POSSIBLE TO KNOW THAT YOU ARE SAVED ... OR NOT (PAGE 6)***

Every individual who claims to be a follower of Christ is urged to evaluate where he stands with God. Is he in a right relationship with Him ... or not?

TEST YOURSELVES TO SEE IF YOU ARE IN THE FAITH. EXAMINE YOURSELVES! OR DO YOU NOT RECOGNIZE THIS ABOUT YOURSELVES, THAT JESUS CHRIST IS IN YOU – UNLESS INDEED YOU FAIL THE TEST? (2ND CORINTHIANS 13:5)

? What do you think would cause someone to *back away* from such an evaluation?

A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY (PAGES 7 – 8)

? Can you think of anything worse than someone who has been a church member for many years, coming to realize – later in life – that he is lost?

FALSE ASSURANCES OF SALVATION***PUBLIC PROFESSION OF FAITH (PAGES 8 – 9)***

It is possible for a lost person to learn to speak the language of a Christian.

? Why do you think so many individuals (or their parents) cling to their public profession of faith in Christ as Lord to be the *proof* of their salvation?

ACTIVE IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY (PAGE 9)

? How is it possible for a person to be active in his church yet miss the point of the Cross?

BELIEF IN GOD (PAGE 10)

We are told that it is *belief in the Gospel* that saves.

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. (EPHESIANS 1:13)

? What is the difference between “belief in the Gospel” and “belief in God”?

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP (PAGES 10 – 12)

Turning a lost person into a religious person instead of a saved person has been likened to giving someone a flu shot. He gets just enough of the virus to keep him from getting “the real thing.”

- ? What can parents (grandparents) do to guide their children (grandchildren) toward trusting Christ for salvation without turning them into mere religious – but lost – church members?

WATER BAPTISM (CHRISTIAN RITUALS) (PAGES 12 – 13)

As important as it is, one’s baptism does not prove that he is saved.

- ? Have you ever known someone (perhaps yourself) that was baptized, then (perhaps years) later, was truly saved? If so, what did he do that he had not done before? What new understanding turned this religious – but lost – person into a saved person?

INTEREST IN GOD’S WORD (PAGE 13)

To know Bible facts does not prove that one is born of God.

- ? What is it about the Bible that would draw an unbeliever to study it?

BUT BEFORE WE GO ANY FARTHER (PAGE 14)

It was stated in this section, “‘Good fruit’ is the *proof* of salvation, not the *means* of salvation.” (A person does not *become* a Christian by acting like one.) Yet, this is precisely the belief of one who is merely religious, but lost.

- ? Why does an unregenerate mind have so much trouble distinguishing between being religious and being spiritually alive?

EVIDENCES OF THE REBIRTH**THE 1ST EVIDENCE****HE HOLDS THE LIVING WORD OF GOD, JESUS CHRIST, IN HIGH ESTEEM****HE EXALTS THE PERSON OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST (PAGE 15)**

To *not* exalt Jesus Christ is to make Him less than He is: to “belittle” Him, to “ridicule,” to “mock,” to “pour scorn on,” to “criticize,” to “laugh at,” to “vilify” ... even to ignore Him. It is any response toward the Son of God – in attitude, word or deed – that refuses to acknowledge His true value.

- ? Obviously, to verbally blaspheme the Name of Jesus Christ is to devalue His Person. But how else can one reject the worth of God’s Son?

HE BELIEVES THAT JESUS IS A FLESH-AND-BLOOD HUMAN BEING (PAGES 15 – 16)

- ? Is it possible for someone to *reject* the humanity of Jesus, and still be saved? If so, why? If not, why not?

HE BELIEVES THAT JESUS IS GOD (PAGES 16 – 17)

- ? Can you think of any verses in which Jesus Himself *claims* to be God?

... CONCERNING HIS SON, WHO WAS BORN OF A DESCENDANT OF DAVID ACCORDING TO THE FLESH, WHO WAS DECLARED THE SON OF GOD WITH POWER BY THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD, ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT OF HOLINESS, JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. (ROMANS 1:3-4)

- ? According to Romans 1:3-4, what event in the life of Jesus validated His claim to be God?
- ? What are some ways one *outwardly proves* his belief that Jesus is God?

HE BELIEVES THAT JESUS IS ISRAEL’S LONG-AWAITED MESSIAH (PAGES 17 – 18)

- ? Can you think of any verses in which Jesus Himself claims to be Israel’s promised Messiah?
- ? What are some ways one *outwardly proves* his belief that Jesus is the promised Messiah of Israel?

THE 2ND EVIDENCE***HE HOLDS THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD IN HIGH ESTEEM******HE VIEWS THE BIBLE AS TRUSTWORTHY AND AUTHORITATIVE (PAGES 19 – 20)***

- ? How do you know whether or not one views the Bible as “trustworthy and authoritative”?

HE IS ABLE TO UNDERSTAND SPIRITUAL TRUTHS (PAGES 20 – 21)

A common experience among believers is that, each time they read through a passage of Scripture, they often “see things they have never seen before.” They understand more and more.

- ? Why is that?

HE ACCEPTS TRUTH (BIBLICAL VALUES) AND REJECTS ERROR (WORLDLY VALUES) (PAGES 22 – 23)

*HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES, JUST AS CHRIST ALSO LOVED THE CHURCH AND GAVE HIMSELF UP FOR HER.
(EPHESIANS 5:25)*

- ? Do you agree with this, that husbands should love their wives? If so, *why* do you agree? If not, why do you *not* agree?

WIVES, BE SUBJECT TO YOUR OWN HUSBANDS, AS TO THE LORD. FOR THE HUSBAND IS THE HEAD OF THE WIFE, AS CHRIST ALSO IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH, HE HIMSELF BEING THE SAVIOR OF THE BODY. BUT AS THE CHURCH IS SUBJECT TO CHRIST, SO ALSO THE WIVES OUGHT TO BE TO THEIR HUSBANDS IN EVERYTHING. (EPHESIANS 5:22-24)

- ? Do you agree with this, that wives should be subject to their husbands? If so, *why* do you agree? If not, why do you *not* agree?

*OR DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT THE **UNRIGHTEOUS** WILL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD? DO NOT BE DECEIVED; NEITHER FORNICATORS, NOR IDOLATERS, NOR ADULTERERS, NOR EFFEMINATE, NOR HOMOSEXUALS, NOR THIEVES, NOR THE COVETOUS, NOR DRUNKARDS, NOR REVILERS, NOR SWINDLERS, WILL INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD.
(1ST CORINTHIANS 6:9-10)*

This passage, of course, refers to those who refuse to repent of their sins and turn to Christ Jesus for salvation.

- ? Do you agree with this, that every practice listed is “unrighteous”? If so, *why* do you agree? If not, why do you *not* agree?

THE 3RD EVIDENCE***HE STRIVES (THOUGH IMPERFECTLY) TO OBEY THE WILL OF GOD******IN ATTITUDE (PAGES 24 – 25)***

It was stated that one of the evidences of the rebirth is a longing to be holy.

? In what ways would this longing for holiness show up in one's prayer life?

IN ACTION (PAGES 25 – 27)

Let's say that a new believer asks you to mentor him / her.

? What would you teach / show him that would cultivate within his life a close fellowship with his Savior? That is, what does he need to know to *live* by faith and obedience?

THE 4TH EVIDENCE***HE STRUGGLES WITH HIS PERSONAL SINS (OF WHICH HE IS AWARE) (PAGES 28 – 29)***

When one who is born of the Holy Spirit sins against God, his soul *should* be troubled. It is a sign of spiritual health to be *bothered* by one's own sins. But to go through life *defeated* by one's sins is a different matter.

? Can you think of any promise(s) in the Bible that, *if believed*, will turn a spirit of defeat (over one's sins) into confidence and gratitude and joy?

THE 5TH EVIDENCE***HE SEEKS WHAT IS BEST FOR HIS SPIRITUAL SIBLINGS IN CHRIST (PAGES 30 – 31)***

It was stated: "If he (a professing believer) seeks to meet the *practical* needs of his spiritual siblings, the love of God is present in his heart. But the one who ignores the needs of God's children has something less than God's love in his heart."

? Is there ever a time when the love of God is best expressed by *not* meeting the needs of another?

THE 6TH EVIDENCE***HE EXPERIENCES SUFFERING FOR THE SAKE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS******HE IS PERSECUTED BY THE WORLD BECAUSE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (PAGES 32 – 34)***

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution begins with these words: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or *prohibiting the free exercise thereof*” This amendment is meant to protect one’s right to believe and live according to his personal religious convictions.

- ? Do you believe that the laws of *any* government can protect those citizens who are truly born again from being persecuted by citizens who are unrighteous? If so, why? And if not, why not?

HE IS DISCIPLINED BY THE FATHER TO CULTIVATE RIGHTEOUSNESS (PAGES 34 – 35)

The motive behind the Father’s discipline is love; and one of His purposes is to promote the righteousness and eternal glory of His sons and daughters.

- ? How would knowing this – the Father’s motive and purpose for discipline – strengthen the believer in the midst of a painful trial?

THE 7TH EVIDENCE***HIS FAITH PERSEVERES IN THE MIDST OF TRIALS******IT IS POSSIBLE FOR TRUE BELIEVERS TO COMPROMISE THEIR MORALITY (PAGES 36 – 37)***

But

IT IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR TRUE BELIEVERS TO FORSAKE THEIR FAITH (37 PAGES – 39)

- ? What enables a reborn Christ-follower to remain steadfast in faith during adversity? From where does this spiritual “grit” come?

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST***A SHARK IN THE WATER (PAGES 42 – 43)***

- ? What is the point of this story? Why do you think it was used to introduce the Gospel?