

EVIDENCE 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

EVIDENCE OF THE REBIRTH
A SNAPSHOT OF THE COURSE

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To help the church member know whether he is saved or not

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IT IS POSSIBLE TO KNOW WHETHER YOU ARE SAVED OR NOT

Do you believe that you are going to heaven when you die? And 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 you possess eternal life?” And if you are not sure whether you belong to God or not, would you like to know for certain?

According to the Author of salvation, it *is* possible for one to be sure that he is going to heaven:

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, *Evidence of the Rebirth*, is addressed to all who say they know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Many who have made this claim have at one time or another doubted the reality of their profession of faith. “Have I really believed in Christ? How can I be sure that my faith is real?” Most certainly, this inner struggle can be an unsettling process to go through.

The purpose of this study is to help us answer that question:

“AM I REALLY SAVED ... OR AM I JUST GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION?”

This is not the concern of an individual who is overly introspective. On the contrary, it is a valid question. The Word of God itself urges every individual who professes to know Christ as Savior to evaluate his status 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)

We should observe two things from this verse. First, it is possible for one to be *deceived*. To believe he is “in the faith” ... but is not.

*“TEST YOURSELVES TO SEE IF YOU ARE IN THE FAITH ...
JESUS CHRIST IS IN YOU — **UNLESS INDEED YOU FAIL THE TEST.**”*

Second, it is possible for one to *determine* if he is “in the faith” or not, using a “test” of some sort. Some kind of examination. 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 *INCREASING* (AT VARIOUS RATES)

in the life of one who is truly born of God.

But before we investigate the *specific* evidence of one's rebirth, we would do well to understand how this "test" is even possible. Is this not a heart issue? How can the condition of a person's heart be known?

TWO KINDS OF FAITH

According to the Bible a person is saved “by grace through faith.” But the Bible also tells us that there are two *kinds* of faith. And *one* of them does not save.

THE FAITH THAT DOES NOT SAVE

The faith that does not save is one that is generated by *man*. The reason man cannot generate saving faith is because – before salvation – he is spiritually dead. There is not one spark of life in an unbeliever. He is, in fact, a spiritual corpse.

AND YOU WERE DEAD IN YOUR TRESPASSES AND SINS (EPHESIANS 2:1)

The only kind of faith a dead man *can* produce is a *dead* faith. And a dead faith produces a dead life, one having “no works.” That is, it will be ⁽¹⁾ void of spiritual vitality, ⁽²⁾ indifferent or hostile to God’s Word, ⁽³⁾ characterized by unbelief and disobedience, and ⁽⁴⁾ empowered by the flesh). ¹ It is this kind of faith, one having “no works,” that God rejects.

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 " (JAMES 2:14, 17)

THE FAITH THAT DOES SAVE

On the other hand, the faith that *does* save is one that is generated by *God*. Without question, the Giver of life is the only One capable of producing this kind of faith. Man cannot. It is impossible for a spiritually dead man to produce a life-giving faith. The living God is the only One who can.

Not only *generated by God*, this saving faith is also *given by God* to sinful man. Unable to produce this life-giving faith on his own, the sinner must *receive* it from the hand of His Savior. It is, most surely, a gift from the God of mercy.

¹ A man-generated faith can only produce a man-generated righteousness. This is why the good works of an unbeliever cannot save him. His sin-tainted deeds may be held in high esteem by a sinful world; but to the Holy One who demands perfection, they are unacceptable. (Even an atheist can build a hospital.) In His estimation the best that imperfect man has to offer is nothing more than filthy rags produced by a dead faith.

*FOR ALL OF US HAVE BECOME LIKE ONE WHO IS UNCLEAN, AND ALL OUR **RIGHTEOUS DEEDS** ARE LIKE A **FILTHY GARMENT**. (ISAIAH 64:6)*

*SIMON PETER, A BOND-SERVANT AND APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST, TO THOSE WHO HAVE **RECEIVED** A FAITH OF THE SAME KIND AS OURS, BY THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF OUR GOD AND SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST. (2ND PETER 1:1)*

The kind of faith that God generates and gives to man is a *living* faith ... one that produces a life that is “alive to God” (Romans 6:1) ... one that has “works.” That is, this life will be ⁽¹⁾ spiritually vibrant, ⁽²⁾ responsive to God’s Word, ⁽³⁾ characterized by faith and obedience, and ⁽⁴⁾ motivated and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The living God can produce nothing less than a living faith. ²

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 2:18)

This same contrast between “no works” and “works” was made by the Lord Jesus. Using agriculture to teach these same spiritual truths, He explains why the quality of some fruit is “good” whereas the quality of other fruit is “bad.”

THE QUALITY OF A TREE **DETERMINES** THE QUALITY OF ITS FRUIT

EVERY GOOD TREE BEARS GOOD FRUIT, BUT THE BAD TREE BEARS BAD FRUIT. A GOOD TREE CANNOT PRODUCE BAD FRUIT, NOR CAN A BAD TREE PRODUCE GOOD FRUIT. (MATTHEW 7:17-18) ³

According to Christ,

THE QUALITY OF A TREE **DETERMINES** THE QUALITY OF ITS FRUIT.

A good tree bears good fruit.

A bad tree bears bad fruit.

This same principle applies within the spiritual realm,

THE QUALITY OF ONE’S FAITH **DETERMINES** THE QUALITY OF HIS SPIRITUAL LIFE.

A living faith produces a life of spiritual vitality
(one that responds to God’s Word in faith and obedience)

A dead faith produces a life of spiritual deadness
(one that does not respond to God’s Word in faith and obedience)

² A God-generated faith is the only kind of faith that can produce “the righteousness of God,” the only righteousness God will accept. (The dead faith of sinful man cannot produce that level of righteousness.)

*HE MADE HIM WHO KNEW NO SIN TO BE SIN ON OUR BEHALF, SO THAT WE MIGHT BECOME **THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD** IN HIM. (2ND CORINTHIANS 5:21)*

THE QUALITY OF THE FRUIT *REVEALS* THE QUALITY OF THE TREE

Using this same “good fruit / bad fruit” illustration but reversing the order (from tree / fruit to fruit / tree), Jesus introduces another spiritual principle, one that makes a significant contribution to this study, *Evidence of the Rebirth*.

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

That is to say,

THE QUALITY OF THE FRUIT **REVEALS** THE QUALITY OF THE TREE.

Good fruit comes from a good tree.

Bad fruit comes from a bad tree.

Once again, this same principle applies within the spiritual realm:

THE QUALITY OF ONE’S SPIRITUAL LIFE **REVEALS** THE QUALITY OF HIS FAITH.

A life that is responsive to God’s Word reveals a living faith.

A life that is unresponsive to God’s Word reveals a dead faith.

WHETHER ONE’S FAITH IS LIVING OR DEAD, IT WILL BECOME EVIDENT.

It is important that we do not miss that. A person’s faith is something that can be **seen**.

BY OBSERVING ONE’S *DESIRE* (OR ONE’S *INDIFFERENCE*) *TO BELIEVE AND OBEY GOD’S WORD*,
THE QUALITY OF HIS FAITH — LIVING OR DEAD — CAN BE DETERMINED.

Both kinds of faith are *on display*.

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

Since the quality of a person’s faith can be observed by the quality of his spiritual life, how is it possible for one who is *not* right with God be deceived into thinking he *is*? How could he possibly miss such obvious evidence? What has given him this false assurance of salvation?

3

Although the context of Matthew 7:15-20 has to do with exposing false prophets, Jesus’ comparison between good trees and bad trees / good fruit and bad fruit would also hold true for everyone in general.

FALSE ASSURANCES OF THE REBIRTH

Matthew 7:17-23 presents a scene in which “many” individuals ⁴ are standing before the Son of God in judgment. The verbal exchange between these defendants and their Judge is sobering, for it reveals *how* a person can be deceived into thinking he is saved when he is not.

SO EVERY GOOD TREE BEARS GOOD FRUIT, BUT THE BAD TREE BEARS BAD FRUIT. A GOOD TREE CANNOT PRODUCE BAD FRUIT, NOR CAN A BAD TREE PRODUCE GOOD FRUIT. EVERY TREE THAT DOES NOT BEAR GOOD FRUIT IS CUT DOWN AND THROWN INTO THE FIRE. SO THEN, YOU WILL KNOW THEM BY THEIR FRUITS.

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, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS." (MATTHEW 7:17-23)

We should first take note that these individuals are not atheists. These are religious people who believe in God. We find them expecting to be admitted into “*the kingdom of heaven.*”

Next, we should observe that they had labored in various – even extraordinary – ministries: “*Did we not prophesy ... (Did we not) cast out demons ... (Did we not) perform many miracles?*” ⁵ In fact, this “resume” of their ministries is the defense they offer as to *why* they should be allowed to enter the kingdom of heaven. But did you notice? Neither the cross of Christ nor His empty tomb was ever mentioned.

Furthermore, consider the title they use when addressing Christ. They call Him “*Lord.*” Although this title can serve as an expression of respect, it is evident that these people viewed Him as having supernatural authority. (They claimed to have performed their miraculous ministries “*in Jesus’ name.*”) Thus, their use of this title “*Lord*” indicates that none of them followed the belief system of Islam or Hinduism or Buddhism or any of the other countless religions. Here, they identify themselves as “Christ-followers.”

But what catches our attention the most is the inconsistency between their profession of faith and how they lived. Referring to Him as “*Lord,*” they acknowledge “His right to rule” over them. But they do so only with their words, not with their lives. Instead of obeying “*the will of*

⁴ With a somber heart we should observe from this passage that those expelled from Christ’s presence are not few. There are “many.”

⁵ Satan, and those to whom he gives his power and authority, can perform miracles (Revelation 13:2, 11-14).

My Father who is in heaven,” their way of life had been to “practice lawlessness.”

These individuals are not saved. Nor had they, at an earlier time, been saved but somewhere along the way lost their salvation. Jesus clearly states that they had never been saved to begin with. *“I never knew you.”*

What compounds the horror of their situation is that, until they heard Christ’s sentence, they did not seem to know that anything was wrong. Apparently, they believed they were rightly related to Him. Can you imagine what that would be like: for someone to appear before the Son of God in judgment, assuming that he was heaven-bound, only to be told – to his stunned horror – that he never had been!

Whatever Jesus means by “good fruit,” it is obvious that these individuals did not possess it. Even though they believed in God ... even though they had been active in ministry ... even though they *professed* to believe that Christ was “Lord” and, therefore, had the right and authority to reign over their lives ... despite all this, they were cast into a Christless eternity.

How did they miss it? What caused them to be blinded to their plight?

Dear friends, this passage is a warning that should not be ignored. Countless church members believe they are going to heaven because they ⁽¹⁾ serve in the ministries and ⁽²⁾ agree with the doctrines and ⁽³⁾ perform the rituals their churches have encouraged them to observe. These are the **reasons** “many” believe they are saved: because they say and do what saved people say and do. Observing the *externals* of the Christian faith is proof to them that their faith is “living” (and not “dead”) and that they are ready to bow before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Before we continue, we must be clear about this:

Each of the following confessions and actions *will be present* in the lives of those who are *truly born of God*.

But *none* of these confessions and actions serve as **proof** that someone is prepared for eternity. Indeed, every one of them can easily be performed by an **unbeliever**.

Therefore, let us not be deceived. No one needs the indwelling Spirit of God to observe any of the following *externals* of Christianity.

THE EXTERNALS OF CHRISTIANITY

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

Likewise

*ALL WHO ARE BORN OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD CAN AND SHOULD OBSERVE THE FOLLOWING PRACTICES.
BUT NOT ALL WHO OBSERVE THE FOLLOWING PRACTICES ARE BORN OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD.*

PUBLIC PROFESSION OF FAITH

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

In Matthew 7:21 those expelled from the presence of Christ addressed 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."

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,

ALL WHO ARE REBORN WILL PROFESS 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 FAITH IN CHRIST AS LORD ARE REBORN.

One does not have to be saved to verbally acknowledge the lordship of Jesus Christ. We can see from Matthew 7:21 that even those with a dead faith can do that. *As important as this acknowledgment is*, one's public profession of faith (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; DEPART FROM ME" (MATTHEW 7:22-23)

In Matthew 7:22-23 the individuals expelled from the presence of the Son of God had been involved in Christian ministry. Some had "prophesied" God's revelation to others. Some had "cast out demons." And still others had performed "many miracles." Their service in the Name of Christ had been extraordinary. Yet, the message from this passage is clear: 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, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

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, even a miraculous ministry, and still be dead in his sins.

So yes,

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 be involved in a ministry. 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 a deacon ... or teach a Bible study group ... or, for that matter, stand behind a pulpit. As *important as these ministries are*, being active in Christian service 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. But to be convinced that He exists does not prove that one is saved. Indeed, many *false* religions promote belief in god (even though they are false).

Furthermore, the entire demonic realm believes in God. And let us not miss this: the God *they* believe in is *the one true God*, the God of the Bible. 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, of course, includes the devil himself. Satan believes in God. Even today he stands in His presence “day and night” 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,

ALL WHO ARE BORN AGAIN 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 BORN AGAIN.

Even unbelievers and demons 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 an individual to be a church member and still be lost. This reality 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 in a right relationship with 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)

Church membership does not prove that one is saved. If that were true, this exhortation from Paul would not have been necessary.

Furthermore, consider 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." (In other words, he is to be *treated* as an unbeliever.) 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 DIOTREPHES, 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" within the leadership of a local church. The activities of this self-promoting church leader are described as "evil" in the sight of God, performed by a pastor who "has not seen God" (i.e., he is not a believer).

So yes,

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.

OBSERVING CHRISTIAN RITUALS

A person does not have to possess a living faith to go through the motions of a God-ordained ritual. This would include those rituals prescribed within the Old and New Covenants. Even those with a *dead* faith can appear – on the surface – to have a healthy relationship with God as they physically illustrate these spiritual realities.

Consider the Pharisees of Jesus' day. Some of the same men who faithfully performed circumcisions (as they had been commanded to do in the Law of Moses) were the ones who arranged to have the Son of God nailed to a Roman cross.

Would every *true believer* who lived *before* the Cross observe the rituals found within the Old Covenant? Most certainly. But not every Jew who practiced these rituals was rightly related to Yahweh by grace through faith.

Likewise, participating in the external rituals of the Christian religion (in particular, water baptism and the Lord's Supper / Communion) does not *prove* that salvation has taken place. Even those with a dead faith can do that. One does not have to be born of the Spirit of God to participate in a Christian ritual. For one to observe a New Testament ritual does not *prove* that he is saved.

So yes,

ALL WHO ARE SAVED SHOULD BE BAPTIZED AND OBSERVE THE LORD'S SUPPER.

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)

FOR I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD THAT WHICH I ALSO DELIVERED TO YOU, THAT THE LORD JESUS IN THE NIGHT IN WHICH HE WAS BETRAYED TOOK BREAD; AND WHEN HE HAD GIVEN THANKS, HE BROKE IT AND SAID, "THIS IS MY BODY, WHICH IS FOR YOU; DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME." IN THE SAME WAY HE TOOK THE CUP ALSO AFTER SUPPER, SAYING, "THIS CUP IS THE NEW COVENANT IN MY BLOOD; DO THIS, AS OFTEN AS YOU DRINK IT, IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME." FOR AS OFTEN AS YOU EAT THIS BREAD AND DRINK THE CUP, YOU PROCLAIM THE LORD'S DEATH UNTIL HE COMES. (1ST CORINTHIANS 11:23-26)

BUT NOT ALL WHO ARE BAPTIZED AND OBSERVE THE LORD'S SUPPER ARE 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, *whether his faith is living or dead*. We have called these declarations and practices *the externals of Christianity*.

- 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 rituals prescribed in the New Testament (water baptism and the Lord's Supper / Communion).

Each of these declarations and practices is, of course, expected of all New Testament believers; but none of them *prove* one's rebirth. Even those who are *not* indwelt by the Holy Spirit can say and do these things. We will have to look elsewhere for the 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 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 is *already saved*, characteristics generated by the indwelling Spirit of God. As mentioned above, *every one of these qualities*

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

in the life of one who is born of God.

So, what are these proofs of the rebirth? The Scriptures do not leave us in the dark. We have seen what they are not. Let us now see what they are. And as we do, we should carefully note that, unlike the "externals of Christianity" which only require the efforts of man to be present,

EACH PROOF **REQUIRES A WORK OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD** TO BE PRESENT
(EACH PROOF IS A MIRACLE.)

EVIDENCE 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 reflects his attitude toward the one, true God. If he honors the Son, then he honors the Father. If he rejects the Son, then he rejects 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 evidence 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 SERVICE

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 proofs 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 HUMANITY OF JESUS?

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT EVERYTHING THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT HIS HUMANITY IS TRUE
(INCLUDING HIS VIRGIN BIRTH)?

... OR DO YOU BELIEVE THAT, INSTEAD OF BEING AN HISTORICAL FIGURE,
HE IS A MERE LITERARY SYMBOL OF PERFECT HUMANITY
AND, THEREFORE, WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT HIS HUMANITY SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN LITERALLY
(INCLUDING HIS **PHYSICAL** DEATH AND **BODILY** RESURRECTION)?

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 perfect. Only God is unblemished and spotless. This is why the One Who shed His blood for the crimes of sinful 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 from ⁽¹⁾ the Scriptures, ⁽²⁾ by His sinless life, ⁽³⁾ by His infallible words, and ⁽⁴⁾ by His supernatural works.

For one to say, “I believe that *Jesus* is God” raises the bar considerably 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 proofs 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 DEITY OF JESUS?

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT HE IS THE ONE TRUE GOD, HAVING DIVINE AUTHORITY AND POWER?

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

... OR PERHAPS ONLY A PROPHET FROM GOD?

He Believes that Jesus Is the LORD'S Messiah

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

Therefore, those within whom the Spirit of God dwells 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

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

It is a conviction that is not hidden. On the contrary, the faith of those who are born again is on public display. Only those indwelt by the Spirit of God have supernatural *power* to exalt the Living Word of God before an unbelieving world. And they will testify to that conviction

IN WORD ... IN CHARACTER ... AND IN SERVICE

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

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

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT HE IS THE LORD'S MESSIAH
AND, THEREFORE, HAS THE RIGHT TO RULE YOUR LIFE
AS KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS?

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

... OR, PERHAPS, THAT THE MESSIAH IS NOT REALLY AN INDIVIDUAL
(HE IS A LITERARY FIGURE THAT REPRESENTS THE NATION ISRAEL)?

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 respect) given toward the New Testament letters is no small matter.

One who is born of the Spirit of God will hold these writings in high esteem. Having this attitude, *he will **submit** his life to the Word of God's authority*, whether its teachings agree with the prevailing attitudes of his upbringing / culture or not.

ONE'S LIFESTYLE OF OBEDIENCE IS THE PROOF OF THIS CONVICTION.

To accept as divine truth the apostles' teachings – both verbal and written – is to **accept the One who sent the apostles** (Jesus Christ) ... which, in turn, is to *accept the One who sent Him* (God the Father).

TRULY, TRULY, I SAY TO YOU, HE WHO RECEIVES WHOMEVER I SEND (THE APOSTLES) RECEIVES ME (GOD THE SON); AND HE WHO RECEIVES ME RECEIVES HIM WHO SENT ME (GOD THE FATHER). (JOHN 13:20, PARENTHESES ADDED)

On the other hand, the one in whom the Spirit of God does not dwell will reject the integrity of the Scriptures. Having this attitude, *he will **disregard** the Bible's authority over his life*.

ONE'S LIFESTYLE OF **DISOBEDIENCE** IS THE PROOF OF THIS REJECTION.

To reject the authority of the apostles' teachings – either with indifference or hostility – is to **reject the One who sent the apostles** (Jesus Christ) ... which, in turn, is to *reject the One who sent Him* (God the Father).

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, PARENTHESES ADDED)

Therefore, one's attitude toward the *written* Word of God reflects his attitude toward the *Living* Word of God. It is impossible to deny the integrity and authority of God's Word, yet claim to believe in the one, true God. He may *say* he has faith in Christ Jesus; but his faith is dead. The Spirit of God does not reside within his innermost being.

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)

This belief in the integrity and authority of the Scriptures is evidence of one's rebirth. He will not understand *everything* written by the prophets and apostles; but he will *believe* that what they wrote is the very Word of God. ⁶

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 TRUSTWORTHY?

... OR DO YOU DOUBT ITS CREDIBILITY?

DO YOU ACKNOWLEDGE ITS FULL AUTHORITY OVER YOUR LIFE
(INCLUDING THOSE TEACHINGS THAT RUN COUNTER TO YOUR UPBRINGING OR 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 WHATSOEVER OVER YOUR LIFE?

⁶ The Apostle Paul informs us that the *entirety of Scripture* (both Old and New Testaments) is God-generated.

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

Furthermore, according to the Lord Jesus, the *degree of inspiration* extends to the very *letters* of words, even to the *parts (strokes)* of letters. (An example of a "stroke" is the small mark that distinguishes between the capital letters "P" and "R.")

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 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, the Spirit of God establishes a permanent residence within him. As a result of God's indwelling presence, the believer's spiritual senses are miraculously awakened to the instruction of God's Word. He now can understand what he had previously been unable to grasp ... *the spiritual truths of God*. He once was blind; but now, he sees.

The unbeliever does not have this ability. Because he has rejected the *Living Word of God* (Jesus Christ), he cannot comprehend the *written Word of God*. Since the Spirit of Truth does not live within him, his mind is dead to the Truth. He cannot "hear" it. That is why an unbeliever will often say:

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

WHY DO YOU (THOSE WHO REJECT CHRIST) NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT I (JESUS) AM SAYING? IT IS BECAUSE YOU CANNOT HEAR (COMPREHEND) 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)

So, the only ones who can understand God's Truth are those in whom God lives. Those who do not have the abiding presence of God (known as "natural" men) cannot understand the thoughts of God.⁷

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)

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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 many lost theologians out there. Consider the Jewish Supreme Court before whom Jesus was tried.) The trait under consideration does not refer to one's ability to grasp academic information; it refers to one's ability to discern spiritual truth. The one whose faith is dead cannot do that.

At this point, it is appropriate for us to acknowledge the existence of *differing levels of understanding*. The *depth* of one's comprehension of Scripture varies from Christian to Christian, each level dependent upon certain factors:

- the length of time the believer has been in Christ (*time*)
- the degree to which he looks to the Lord to give him understanding (*faith*)
- the degree to which he has saturated his mind with the Scriptures (*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 one's ability to grasp spiritual truths, each based upon (1) his *time* in Christ, (2) his level of *faith*, (3) his *knowledge* of the Scriptures, and (4) the level of his commitment to *obey* the Truth he already knows. (We should not expect a 3-year-old to behave like a 23-year-old.) But there is one thing *constant* about every true believer, no matter what his situation. The one who has a living faith in Christ has *a God-given ability to understand* the Bible's spiritual truths.

EXAMINE YOURSELF: HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO THE BIBLE?

WHEN YOU READ THE WORD OF GOD, DO YOU HAVE A GROWING UNDERSTANDING OF IT?

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

THE 4TH EVIDENCE

HE IS ABLE TO DETECT ERROR IN SOMEONE'S TEACHING

THE BRETHREN IMMEDIATELY SENT PAUL AND SILAS AWAY BY NIGHT TO BEREA, AND WHEN THEY ARRIVED, THEY WENT INTO THE SYNAGOGUE OF THE JEWS. NOW THESE WERE MORE NOBLE-MINDED THAN THOSE IN THESSALONICA, FOR THEY RECEIVED THE WORD WITH GREAT EAGERNESS, EXAMINING THE SCRIPTURES DAILY TO SEE WHETHER THESE THINGS WERE SO. (ACTS 17:10-11)

There is a reason people attend the church they attend.

Those who are spiritually alive are attracted to churches that are Bible-centered, having a leadership that is born of God. Indwelt by the Holy Spirit, these reborn Christ-followers can distinguish between truth (Biblical values) and falsehood (worldly values that contradict the Scriptures) as various moral and ethical teachings come and go.

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

On the other hand, those who are spiritually dead are drawn to churches with a low view of Scripture and, consequently, have 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 TEACHING AND 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 is not that they knew God at one time but now they do not. 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 a church. They may even be leaders in a 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 THAT CONTRADICT SCRIPTURE?

THE 5TH EVIDENCE

HE STRIVES (THOUGH IMPERFECTLY) TO OBEY THE WILL OF GOD ⁸

BY THIS WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE COME TO KNOW HIM (JESUS CHRIST), 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. BY THIS WE KNOW THAT WE ARE IN HIM. (1ST JOHN 2:3-5, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

As mentioned above under *The 1st Evidence*, "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 rejects the Son, then he rejects the Father." ⁹

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)

Likewise, if God is one's Father, then he will *love* Jesus Christ. It is impossible for a person to follow the one, true God yet hate (or be indifferent toward) God's Son.

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)

To be sure, one's love for the Son of God is a *personal* love; but it is not a *private* love (that is, it is not hidden, nor can it be). To the contrary, a believer's love for Christ is on public display; and it will be demonstrated in the form of obedience.

OBEDIENCE PROVES ONE'S LOVE FOR CHRIST.

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

At this point, we should take care. This *proof* of one's love for Christ is not a life of sinless perfection. On the other hand, it is not an "every now and then" kind of obedience either. It is *a lifestyle of obedience one strives* (though imperfectly) *to practice*, both in attitude and action. In so doing, he is demonstrating evidence of his rebirth.

⁸ Obedience is the *proof* of salvation, not the *cause* of salvation. We are not saved by obeying a set of laws. We are saved by depending on Christ's death to serve as the Payment for our sins. Salvation is by grace alone ... through faith alone ... in Christ alone.

⁹ Those who say they believe in "God" but reject Jesus Christ have, in fact, rejected God (that is to say, they have rejected the one, true God). The god they say they believe in is a false god, making them idolaters.

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

One who is indwelled by the Holy Spirit will be inwardly motivated to obey the moral will of God. To be sure, he may or may not know *how* to depend upon the Spirit of God to provide the wisdom, motivation, and power He needs to submit to His Father's will. Indeed, during his early years as a believer, for every three steps forward he takes, he may stumble two steps back. (It takes time to learn how to live life in the power of the Holy Spirit.)

Nevertheless, if one *longs* to submit to God's commandments and tries (*though imperfectly*) to obey His will, this proves that he loves the Son. His *struggle* to "practice righteousness" is *evidence* that he has a personal relationship with the Father through Jesus Christ.

But if his *way of life* is one that ignores God's commandments, he does not love Christ (no matter what his testimony before the church has been). And if that is his attitude toward Christ, then that is his attitude toward God the Father.

*LITTLE CHILDREN, MAKE SURE NO ONE DECEIVES YOU; THE ONE WHO **PRACTICES** RIGHTEOUSNESS IS RIGHTEOUS, JUST AS HE (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, PARENTHESIS ADDED)*

This, then, is another proof of the rebirth: a longing for righteousness.

A LIFESTYLE THAT STRIVES (THOUGH IMPERFECTLY) TO OBEY GOD'S WORD
(A LIFE THAT IS EMPOWERED BY THE INDWELLING HOLY SPIRIT AND GRADUALLY INCREASING IN OBEDIENCE OVER TIME)
IS WHAT DISTINGUISHES THOSE WHO ARE BORN AGAIN FROM THOSE WHO ARE NOT

EXAMINE YOURSELF: WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARD SUBMITTING TO GOD'S WILL?

ARE YOU SERIOUS ABOUT OBEYING HIS COMMANDMENTS?

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

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

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

ARE YOU GRADUALLY BECOMING MORE OBEDIENT TO THE WILL OF THE FATHER?

... OR HAS YOUR LIFE SEEN NO CHANGE IN CHRISTLIKE ATTITUDE AND CONDUCT OVER TIME?

THE 6TH EVIDENCE

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

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

YOUR BODY IS A TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WHO IS IN YOU (1ST CORINTHIANS 6:19).

Once the Holy Spirit enters a life (that is, when salvation takes place), that individual acquires – *over time* – an entirely different set of values than those held by the world. Under *The 2nd Evidence* we learned that two of these values concern one's attitude toward

- the Bible's *perfect integrity*
- and
- the Bible's *divine authority*

These changes in the believer's attitude produce changes in his behavior. Because of his ever-increasing appreciation of the Bible's integrity and authority, his desire to submit to its life-changing influence progressively increases.

BY THIS WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE COME TO KNOW HIM (JESUS CHRIST), 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. BY THIS WE KNOW THAT WE ARE IN HIM. (1ST JOHN 2:3-5, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

The power to "keep His commandments" comes, of course, from the Holy Spirit. However, this divine Helper is not the only influence that resides within the one born of God. To be sure, it does not take long for him to realize that something else is "pulling him" in the opposite direction.

I FIND THEN THE PRINCIPLE THAT EVIL IS PRESENT IN ME, THE ONE WHO WANTS TO DO GOOD. (ROMANS 7:21)

We should be clear about this: When the Spirit of God enters someone's life, the sin nature that influenced his life *before* salvation is *not removed*. The believer's inclination to sin remains. But now, having been saved, the sins toward which he was once indifferent or even enjoyed have begun to vex his soul. Why? The reason is obvious:

THE INDWELLING PRESENCE OF A **HOLY** GOD WILL NOT ALLOW HIS REDEEMED ONE TO *ENJOY* SIN.

As a result, there exists within every individual who is born of the Holy Spirit an internal "civil war," an on-going conflict between the holy desires generated by the indwelling God and the sinful cravings of his flesh.

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, then, is the reality of every person in whom the Holy Spirit resides: an ever-increasing *anguish* toward sin's presence within him.

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 ... 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 7:15, 18-21)

One who is born of the Spirit of God will never be *satisfied* with the status quo of his spiritual life. Instead, he will be compelled to distance himself from his former worldly values and patterns of godless behavior, a longing that will exist within him for the rest of his days. It will be a life of struggle; yet *it is this very struggle with sin that proves the Spirit of God lives within him*. This conflict may begin slowly; or it may begin immediately. But most surely, it will take place. And as he learns to trust the Holy Spirit to take control of his life, he will sin *less*; but when he does sin, it will bother him *more*.

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 (PLEASE TAKE NOTE: THIS IS A PROCESS), YOU WILL LIVE. FOR ALL WHO ARE BEING LED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD, THESE ARE SONS OF GOD. (ROMANS 8:12-14, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

On the other hand, a *professing believer* with only a *dead* faith will not experience this struggle. Because the third Person of the Trinity is absent from his life, no inner conflict is taking place between the will of God and the will of his flesh. As a result, he can easily shrug off the sins he commits. He may ignore them. He may offer an excuse for them. He may even deny that they exist. In any case, they will not disturb him.

That is why some who are within our churches can practice lawlessness without giving it a second thought. Those who do are lacking the rebirth. Tragically, these are the “Christians” referred to in Matthew 7, those whom the Son of God will dismiss from His Presence.

NOT EVERYONE WHO SAYS TO ME, “LORD, LORD,” WILL ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, BUT HE WHO DOES THE WILL OF MY FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN WILL ENTER. 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, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.” (MATTHEW 7:21-23)

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

DO YOU STRUGGLE WITH THEM?

... OR DO YOU CASUALLY DISMISS THEM?

THE 7TH EVIDENCE

HIS LIFE WILL GRADUALLY BE TRANSFORMED INTO CHRISTLIKENESS

*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)*

As the believer abandons his old sinful practices (*The 6th Evidence*) while – at the same time – adopting new righteous practices (*The 5th Evidence*), his character will, of course, gradually become more Christlike. To be sure, deliverance from *sin's power* is proof that one has been delivered from *sin's penalty*.

Yet, this transformation into “the glory of the Lord” is not something the Christian wakes up one day and decides he wants to have, then does his best to achieve it. On the contrary, this goal for his life was determined for him *by the will of the Father*, a plan to conform all the children in His family into the image of His only begotten Son.

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

We should further observe that this work of ever-increasing glory (“from glory to glory”) was not only ⁽¹⁾ determined to take place in advance *by God* but was also ⁽²⁾ begun *by God* ... ⁽³⁾ is now being carried out *by God* ... and ⁽⁴⁾ will continue to be perfected in the lives of His people ... ⁽⁵⁾ until the Lord returns to gather His Church unto Himself (“the day of Christ Jesus”).

*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)*

This is God’s promise to His children. He *will* perfect the good work He began.

Furthermore, this perfecting work “from glory to glory” is God’s promise to *all* His children. “We *all* ... are being transformed” (2nd Corinthians 3:18). It is for “those whom God foreknew” (Romans 8:29). This should not surprise the redeemed of God in the least. It is *inconceivable* for the Spirit of God – the holy and all-powerful Third Person of the Trinity – to establish His residence in a life and that life does not change.

On public display for all to see, this miraculous work of God is another proof that salvation has taken place. And, as is true with all the other evidence of the rebirth, it cannot be mimicked by man’s feeble efforts. Radiating from the inside out, these supernatural changes in one’s life can only be generated by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

All believers, of course, do not mature at the same rate and to the same degree. The *ease*, *speed*, and *depth* of one’s growth in Christlikeness depends on several factors:

- the background out of which he is coming
- the time he invests in the Word of God
- the depth of his exposure to that Truth
- the guidance of a godly mentor
- his understanding of *God's* role in the growth process
- his understanding of *his own* role in the growth process

So no, all believers do not grow at the same rate. But there is one thing all believers do: *they grow*. Sanctification is a guarantee for *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.

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. 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. FURTHERMORE, WE HAD EARTHLY FATHERS TO DISCIPLINE US, AND WE RESPECTED THEM; SHALL WE NOT MUCH RATHER BE SUBJECT TO THE FATHER OF SPIRITS, AND LIVE? FOR THEY DISCIPLINED US FOR A SHORT TIME AS SEEMED BEST TO THEM, BUT HE 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 12:5-11)

Whether the one born of God reads eight chapters of the Bible per day or a few verses, he will grow in righteousness. Whether he has a steady exposure to sound Biblical instruction or is “on his own,” he will grow. Whether past choices have made his present situation smooth or rocky, he will grow. To be sure, the life of a true believer will never reach perfection ... at least on this side of the resurrection. (The Bible does not present sinless perfection as being possible in this life, Romans 7.) Nevertheless, throughout the rest of his life, the one who possesses a living faith *will be transformed* to reflect – more accurately and consistently – the life of Christ.

THIS IS WHAT THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST HAVE BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD TO DO ...
TO “WALK IN NEWNESS OF LIFE” (ROMANS 6:4)

THEREFORE IF ANYONE IS IN CHRIST, HE IS A NEW CREATURE; THE OLD THINGS PASSED AWAY; BEHOLD, NEW THINGS HAVE COME. (2ND CORINTHIANS 5:17)

EXAMINE YOURSELF: ARE YOU BECOMING MORE LIKE CHRIST

... IN YOUR THOUGHT LIFE, YOUR ATTITUDE, YOUR SPEECH, AND YOUR CONDUCT?

OR OVER THE YEARS, HAS THERE BEEN NO CHANGE?

THE 8TH EVIDENCE

HE SEEKS WHAT IS BEST FOR HIS SIBLINGS IN CHRIST

The love that God has for His people is, in essence, a commitment to do what He knows is best for them. Likewise, this same love permeates the hearts of those in whom the Spirit of God lives.

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

This supernatural love that one has for his brothers and sisters in Christ *proves the presence of God within his life*. No matter their nationality ... or their race ... or their political persuasions ... or their IQ ... or their social skills ... or their financial situation ... or their standing in the community. The one born of God will seek what is best for each of his siblings in Christ.¹⁰

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)

On the other hand, for one to *continually try to destroy* another believer – his feelings, his well-being, his reputation, his career, his life ... whether to his face or behind his back – is proof 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 3:14A-15, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

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)

This divine love for one's brothers and sisters in Christ is one of the proofs of the rebirth. If the love of God is present, salvation is present. If the love of God is *habitually absent*, salvation is absent.

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

¹⁰ It is possible for the believer to have *righteous anger* toward his brother / sister or to have *a clash of personalities* with him without laying aside his commitment to seek what is best for him.

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.

**EXAMINE YOURSELF: WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD'S SONS AND DAUGHTERS
(INCLUDING THE ONES WITH WHOM YOU HAVE A CONFLICT)?**

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

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

... OR WORSE, ARE YOU TRYING TO DESTROY ANY OF THEM IN SOME WAY?

THE 9TH EVIDENCE

HE EXPERIENCES SUFFERING FOR THE SAKE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The World *Persecutes* the Righteous to *Destroy* Their Witness

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 from 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. As we discover what is behind this adversity and why it is taking place, those born of God will be able to view persecution from an entirely different perspective: as proof of their salvation.

To begin with, *there are two spirits at work* within the world: “the spirit of truth” and “the spirit of error.” The “spirit of truth” is upon those who are under the influence of the indwelling Spirit of Christ (the God of Truth). The “spirit of error” is upon those who allow themselves to be swept along in the current of Satan’s influence (the father of lies). These two spirits – one “from God” and one “not from God” – are in competition for the souls of men.

BELOVED, DO NOT BELIEVE EVERY SPIRIT, BUT TEST THE SPIRITS TO SEE WHETHER THEY ARE FROM GOD, BECAUSE MANY FALSE PROPHETS HAVE GONE OUT INTO THE WORLD. BY THIS YOU KNOW THE SPIRIT OF GOD: EVERY SPIRIT THAT CONFESSES THAT JESUS CHRIST HAS COME IN THE FLESH IS FROM GOD; AND EVERY SPIRIT THAT DOES NOT CONFESS JESUS IS NOT FROM GOD; THIS IS THE SPIRIT OF THE ANTICHRIST, OF WHICH YOU HAVE HEARD THAT IT IS COMING, AND NOW IT IS ALREADY IN THE WORLD. YOU ARE FROM GOD, LITTLE CHILDREN, AND HAVE OVERCOME THEM; BECAUSE GREATER IS HE WHO IS IN YOU (THE HOLY SPIRIT WHO CIRCULATES TRUTH) THAN HE WHO IS IN THE WORLD (A DEMONIC SPIRIT WHO CIRCULATES ERROR). (1ST JOHN 4:1-4, PARENTHESES ADDED)

Because this antichrist spirit dominates the minds and hearts of unbelievers, their *values* conflict with the values of believers. Individuals who are dead in their sins live by and promote an *anti-Biblical* belief system. Those who are born of God live by and promote a belief system founded upon *the Word of God*.

THEY (FALSE TEACHERS OF FALSE DOCTRINE WHO ARE CONTROLLED BY DEMONIC SPIRITS THAT SPREAD DECEPTION) ARE FROM THE WORLD; THEREFORE, THEY SPEAK AS FROM THE WORLD, AND THE WORLD LISTENS TO THEM. WE ARE FROM GOD; HE WHO KNOWS GOD LISTENS TO US; 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)

Because of this difference in values and the driving spirits behind these values, a vast spiritual “chasm” exists between the two. To be sure, those who are spiritually alive and those who are spiritually dead are not “birds of a feather” and, therefore, do not “flock together.” Indeed, because of the Cross of Christ, the two could not be any further apart than they are. They are, in fact, “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)

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)

The reason for this “great divide” is simple: whereas the saved are identified with Christ Jesus, the lost are alienated from Him.

Through the cross of Christ, God has reconciled the believer to Himself. (He has restored their ruptured relationship.) Now, those who have been rescued through Christ’s work on the Cross are “at peace” with God.

The relationship between God and the unbeliever, however, is still broken. This discord between the unbelieving community and Christ is one that the world is allowing to continue. God is reaching out to them; but they are not reaching back.

The lost have not merely “agreed to disagree” with God. Because their evil deeds are exposed by “the Light of the world” (Jesus Christ), these “sons of disobedience” **hate** that Light.

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)

Furthermore, the world’s hatred of God also extends to those who are born of God. Just as they hate God’s “Light” (both His *Living* Word [God’s Son] and His *written* Word [the Bible]), these “children of darkness” also **hate** the “children of light.”

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

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)

Stemming from this animosity, those who are rebellious toward the authority of God’s Word *persecute* those who are submissive to that authority.

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)

To be sure, the believer has been forewarned: persecution for the sake of Christ *will come*.

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, granted to those who “believe in (Christ).” It serves as proof of one’s rebirth.

*(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 RIGHTEOUS 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?

The Father *Disciplines* His Children to *Cultivate* Their Righteousness

We have seen that persecution comes from *those who follow the world’s anti-Biblical value system*. (Tragically, these antagonists can be found both on the outside of the church ... and on the inside). Energizing these flesh-and-blood attacks is a demonic spirit whose *intent* is to *somehow destroy the believer’s life and witness*: 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 suffering that every true believer *will* experience; and it comes from a *Source* that is holy.

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)

Differing from persecution that comes from a hostile world, *discipline comes from God the Father*. And although it can be painful, these corrective measures should not be viewed as a form of punishment as though God were making His children pay for their sins. That payment has already been made when Christ took upon Himself the penalty of death for our sins.

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

According to the Bible God does not punish His sons and daughters. But He does discipline them. And what motivates Him to do so is the *love* He has for His children.

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 children? The greatest gift he could possibly give them would be to *cultivate purity and righteousness in their lives*. Rather than trying to destroy His children (as the world seeks to do), the *purpose* of divine discipline is to correct, to restore, and to strengthen.

(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, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

*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)*

In this familiar passage from Romans 8, we are assured that every situation the believer experiences is used by the Father to conform His child into the image of His Son. And He will waste nothing to perform this miraculous work:

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

The Father knows exactly *what* is needed – and to what *degree* it is needed – to transform 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 situations He uses, and to whatever degree, God the Father is willing to allow pain to enter the lives of His children for the short term so that they might share in His glory throughout eternity.

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)

So, for their good and for His glory, the Father will chasten all His true sons and daughters. If that discipline is not present in the life of a professing believer, then the salvation he claims to have does not exist. 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)

Therefore, God's corrective measures, His discipline, provide evidence of the rebirth.

EXAMINE YOURSELF

ARE YOU BEING TRANSFORMED – BY GOD'S DISCIPLINE – INTO THE IMAGE OF CHRIST JESUS ...
YOUR THOUGHTS AND ATTITUDE AND SPEECH AND CONDUCT?

THE 10TH EVIDENCE

HIS FAITH PERSEVERES DURING TRIALS

It *Is* Possible for True Believers to Compromise Their *Moral Values*

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

When it comes to pain in the lives of believers, God's goal is clear: He wants His reborn children to be transformed into the likeness of His Son. His *purpose* is to perfect those who carry His holy Name; 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. During his trial, the reborn child of God will often cry out, "Lord, get me out of this!" But until God's purpose is realized, that is not something the Father will 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.). And though there are times to appropriately do so, he may be tempted to recklessly ... foolishly ... separate himself from a relationship in which he struggles (with his employer, his co-worker, his parents, his siblings, his spouse, perhaps even someone in his church). These acts of the flesh may give relief; but the relief is *always temporary* ... and his soul will *always feel some level of emptiness afterwards*.

Accompanying each of these inappropriate "means of escape" comes the whispered lie from Satan, "You do not need God to deliver you from this suffering. This 'painkiller' I offer will do that for you." But we should not miss this: whereas the God of love uses trials to *strengthen* His child's faith, these "spiritual Ibuprofens" from Satan are meant to *destroy* the believer's faith. 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 admit defeat ... to give up ... to quit.

GOD'S TRIALS ARE ALWAYS CONSTRUCTIVE. THE SERPENT'S TEMPTATIONS ARE ALWAYS DESTRUCTIVE.

No believer has ever endured an affliction without being enticed to forsake his obedience to God. And the fact is, even a true believer will sometimes compromise his moral values. But let us be warned: If he does; if he gives sin “a free reign,” he will not be able to remain in that state forever. He will either suffer *conviction* to the point of repentance, or he will face some form of *judgment* from God: whether ⁽¹⁾ indirectly through the church, or ⁽²⁾ directly from the hand of God.

IT IS ACTUALLY REPORTED THAT THERE IS IMMORALITY AMONG YOU, AND IMMORALITY OF SUCH A KIND AS DOES NOT EXIST EVEN AMONG THE GENTILES, THAT SOMEONE HAS HIS FATHER'S WIFE. YOU HAVE BECOME ARROGANT AND HAVE NOT MOURNED INSTEAD, SO THAT THE ONE WHO HAD DONE THIS DEED WOULD BE ⁽¹⁾ REMOVED FROM YOUR MIDST. FOR I, ON MY PART, THOUGH ABSENT IN BODY BUT PRESENT IN SPIRIT, HAVE ALREADY JUDGED HIM WHO HAS SO COMMITTED THIS, AS THOUGH I WERE PRESENT. IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS, WHEN YOU ARE ASSEMBLED, AND I WITH YOU IN SPIRIT, WITH THE POWER OF OUR LORD JESUS, I HAVE DECIDED TO ⁽²⁾ DELIVER SUCH A ONE TO SATAN FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF HIS FLESH, SO THAT HIS SPIRIT MAY BE SAVED IN THE DAY OF THE LORD JESUS. (1ST CORINTHIANS 5:1-5)

We should take note that the Apostle Paul considered this individual to be a believer (“so that his spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus”). Even a true believer will sometimes compromise his *moral values*. That is why God has given us this promise in 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? Is it possible for a true believer to abandon his *faith* in the God of his salvation? Or will he always persevere in the faith? God's Word has the answer.

It Is Not Possible for True Believers to Forsake *The 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) as long as 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.

I GIVE ETERNAL LIFE TO THEM, AND THEY WILL NEVER PERISH; AND NO ONE WILL SNATCH THEM OUT OF MY HAND. MY FATHER, WHO HAS GIVEN THEM TO ME, IS GREATER THAN ALL; AND NO ONE IS ABLE TO SNATCH THEM OUT OF THE FATHER'S HAND. (JOHN 10:28-29)

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, pronounced sfra gid’ zo) means “to stamp (with a signet or private mark) for security or preservation.” It is the same word used to describe what the Roman government did to the tomb of Christ. Wanting to prevent Jesus’ disciples from removing 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.

- (1) Because of the squad of soldiers, it was protected by the *power* of the Roman government.
- (2) Because of the seal, it was secured by the *authority* of the Roman government. (To break the seal would be to defy Rome – a crime punishable by death – providing one could get past the Roman guard to do so!)
- (3) This seal continued for three days, *until the Day of His Resurrection* (when Jesus 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*.

- (1) The Church’s 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)

- (2) Because of the Seal of the Holy Spirit, the Church’s salvation is secured by the *authority* of God.

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

- (3) This Seal will continue *until the day of the Church’s resurrection* (when Her members receive their glorified bodies at the Appearing of Christ Jesus).

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

The point of the above is this: The believer does not *keep himself saved* any more 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 until Her Savior returns for Her. 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)*

To this one whose living faith has been *confirmed* by his steadfastness during 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)*

Therefore, for one to *walk away from the faith he once professed* indicates that he was never saved to begin with.

This includes the 36-year-old who joined a local church when he was nine years old ... who regularly met with a church while growing up ... graduated from high school ... left home ... and now, years later, makes no claim of being a Christian. He may have learned – when he was young – to use correct words to profess his belief in Christ; but his departure from the faith reveals the true character of that faith. He did not lose his salvation; he had never been born of God to begin with (Hebrews 3:6).

It also includes the man who served as a deacon in his church for fifteen years ... who then left his wife for another woman ... but instead of repenting of his sin, turned away from following Christ ... and remained in that state to the day of his death. He may have ministered within his local church for years; but the *kind* of faith he claimed to have was, over time, revealed to be what it had always been: dead rather than living.

Perseverance in the faith is another evidence 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 "LEFT THE FAITH" YOU ONCE PROFESSED?

SUMMARY

Ten so-called “good fruits” have now been presented, each offering evidence that the miracle of salvation has taken place in a person’s life. Every one of these qualities

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

in the lives of those who are born of God.

- 1) They will hold the *Living* Word of God, Jesus Christ, in high esteem
- 2) They will hold the *written* Word of God in high esteem
- 3) They will be able to understand spiritual truths
- 4) They will be able to detect error in someone’s teaching
- 5) They will strive (though imperfectly) to obey the will of God
- 6) They will struggle with their personal sins (of which they are aware)
- 7) Their lives will gradually be transformed into Christlikeness
- 8) They will seek what is best for their siblings in Christ
- 9) They will experience suffering for the sake of righteousness
- 10) Their faith will persevere during trials

These qualities all share something in common: each requires a supernatural work of the Spirit of God. They are not like the “externals” of the Christian religion which man can perform in his own strength. These attitudes and actions can only be accomplished by the power of God who resides within every believer. They are what the Bible presents as *evidence of the rebirth*.¹¹

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There are many church members who say they know Christ as Savior yet display no Holy Spirit-generated evidence of the rebirth. They possess no understanding of divine Truth, no “fruit of the Spirit” in character, no passion to serve their Savior. To address this situation, those who *are* born of God should not treat these individuals as though they were wayward Christians who have not matured. Instead, they should be treated as those who are spiritually dead in need of salvation. To do so, believers should express *genuine concern* for their spiritual wellbeing, then *lovingly* direct them to bow before God in prayer and plead for His merciful salvation (trusting in Christ’s Death as payment for their sins).

If the one who is born again is not sure where another person stands with Christ, it is better to assume that a saved person is lost than to assume that a lost person is saved.

THE RESULTS OF OUR EXAMINATION

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)

This study is for all who say they know Christ as their Savior. According to James, those who make this claim can be divided into two groups: those who have “a living faith” and those who have “a dead faith.” Or as the Lord Jesus put it, those who bear “good fruit” and those who bear “bad fruit.”

YOU WILL KNOW THEM BY THEIR FRUITS. GRAPES ARE NOT GATHERED FROM THORN BUSHES NOR FIGS FROM THISTLES, ARE THEY? SO EVERY GOOD TREE BEARS GOOD FRUIT, BUT THE BAD TREE BEARS BAD FRUIT. A GOOD TREE CANNOT PRODUCE BAD FRUIT, NOR CAN A BAD TREE PRODUCE GOOD FRUIT. EVERY TREE THAT DOES NOT BEAR GOOD FRUIT IS CUT DOWN AND THROWN INTO THE FIRE. SO THEN, YOU WILL KNOW THEM BY THEIR FRUITS. (MATTHEW 7:16-20)

So now, the question for each of us is this:

WHAT KIND OF LIFE IS MY FAITH PRODUCING?

ASSURED OF YOUR OWN SALVATION

It may be that having examined yourself, you

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

If so, you are aware that the value of this gift God has given you is both priceless and eternal.

CONCERN FOR A LOVED ONE

At the same time, you may be concerned about a loved one. He, too, claims to be a Christian; but the only “fruit” he has displayed is limited to religious professions, rituals, and practices, none of which requiring divine power.

- There was a time when he publicly professed his faith in Christ before a local body of believers.
- He is active in Christian service.
- He believes in God.

- He is a member (perhaps even a leader) of a local church.
- He was water baptized and partakes of the Lord's Supper / Communion.

Yet, beyond these "externals of Christianity," there is no *supernatural evidence* of the indwelling Spirit of God within his life.

Beloved reader, are these "externals" the "fruit" you are clinging to that relieves your concern about a loved one's salvation? Because if it is, not only could you be deceiving yourself, but you are also doing him or her no favors by contributing to his self-deception. Wanting your relatives or friends to be saved (because you cannot bear the thought that they are not) is not going to *save* them.

We need to stop treating those who claim to be Christians – but who exhibit none of the miraculous fruit of the rebirth – as though they were immature church members who simply "have not grown up."

- We first need to make sure they have heard *a clear explanation of the Gospel*.
- We need to pray *that the Spirit of God would open the eyes of their souls, enabling them to understand the Gospel*.
- Our lives need to radiate *the difference Christ can make in their lives*.
- And we need to warn them of what they face if they do not repent of their sins and trust in Christ's death to be the Payment for those sins. Would it not be better for them to hear our warning while there is yet time to trust in Christ rather than for them to hear Christ's rejection of them when it is too late?

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

CONCERN FOR YOURSELF

But perhaps the salvation of a loved one is not your main concern. It may be that having examined *yourself*, you have come to realize that something is missing from your *own* claim to be a Christ-follower. Were you able to relate to the evidence presented in the New Testament regarding the presence of the Spirit of God in one's life? Or have you begun to sense that something is lacking in your own profession of faith?

Perhaps you have been depending on your involvement in a church to be the means of your salvation. Has this been your understanding ... that you got saved when you joined your church and became active in it (that you became a Christian the day you started

acting like one)? If that is the case, all you have been doing is going through the motions of the Christian religion.

Or perhaps no one has helped you understand what the cross of Christ has to do with *you personally* ... that for some reason, the connection between the death you deserve (because of your sins) and Christ's Death on your behalf was never made clear to you. Maybe you have come to realize that no one has ever explained the Gospel to you.

That is the purpose of our last section: to present how you can be rescued – by God's mercy – from the death sentence of God and transferred – by God's grace – into the eternal, radiant Kingdom of His beloved Son.

MY DEAR FRIEND, IT IS FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR ETERNAL SOUL
THAT THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE HAS BEEN PLACED IN YOUR HANDS.

YOU SHOULD BE PREPARED. IT WILL BEGIN WITH VERY BAD NEWS.

BUT IT WILL END WITH VERY "GOOD NEWS."

NO, IT WILL *NOT* END WITH *JUST* "VERY GOOD NEWS."

IT WILL END WITH "OVER-THE-TOP FANTASTIC NEWS."

"EXCEEDINGLY MAGNIFICENT NEWS."

"JOYFUL ... BREATHTAKING ... GLORIOUS NEWS."

IT WILL END WITH "*PRICELESS* NEWS."

THE PRICELESS NEWS OF GOD'S GRACE THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST

First, the one true and living God wants you to know that He loves you with a perfect love.

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)

He also wants you to know that He is not just a God of perfect love. He is also a God of perfect justice.

FOR THE LORD LOVES JUSTICE AND DOES NOT FORSAKE HIS GODLY ONES. THEY ARE PRESERVED FOREVER, BUT THE DESCENDANTS OF THE WICKED WILL BE CUT OFF. (PSALM 37:28)

And because He is a God of perfect justice, He wants you to know that He hates your sins.

FOR THE WRATH OF GOD IS REVEALED FROM HEAVEN AGAINST ALL UNGODLINESS AND UNRIGHTEOUSNESS OF MEN WHO SUPPRESS THE TRUTH IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS, BECAUSE THAT WHICH IS KNOWN ABOUT GOD IS EVIDENT WITHIN THEM; FOR GOD MADE IT EVIDENT TO THEM. (ROMANS 1:18-19)

He wants you to know that your acts of immorality are, in His sight, capital crimes deserving capital punishment.

FOR THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH (ROMANS 6:23A)

Furthermore, He wants you to know that He has every intention of executing this sentence of death. His perfect justice demands that it be carried out.

FOR AFTER ALL IT IS ONLY JUST FOR GOD TO REPAY WITH AFFLICTION THOSE WHO AFFLICT YOU ... DEALING OUT RETRIBUTION TO THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW GOD AND TO THOSE WHO DO NOT OBEY THE GOSPEL OF OUR LORD JESUS. THESE WILL PAY THE PENALTY OF ETERNAL DESTRUCTION, AWAY FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD AND FROM THE GLORY OF HIS POWER. (2ND THESSALONIANS 1:6, 8-9)

He wants you to know that He has designated a place where this punishment will be executed.

AND IF ANYONE'S NAME WAS NOT FOUND WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF LIFE, HE WAS THROWN INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE. (REVELATION 20:15)

OUT OF ALL THE PROBLEMS YOU WILL EVER FACE, THIS ONE IS THE MOST HORRIFIC.

AND BELOVED READER, THERE IS NOT ONE THING YOU CAN DO TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM.

BUT GOD CAN ... AND HAS.

Because of His love for you, God wants you to know that **He** has provided a way of deliverance for you from His sentence of death.

He wants you to know that He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to be executed in your place.

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

AND HE HIMSELF BORE OUR SINS IN HIS BODY ON THE CROSS, SO THAT WE MIGHT DIE TO SIN AND LIVE TO RIGHTEOUSNESS; FOR BY HIS WOUNDS YOU WERE HEALED. (1ST PETER 2:24)

He wants you to know that when you accept by faith Christ's death to serve as payment for your sins, all your crimes against Him will be forgiven – fully and forever.

WHEN YOU WERE DEAD IN YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS AND THE UNCIRCUMCISION OF YOUR FLESH, HE MADE YOU ALIVE TOGETHER WITH HIM, HAVING FORGIVEN US ALL OUR TRANSGRESSIONS, HAVING CANCELED OUT THE CERTIFICATE OF DEBT CONSISTING OF DECREES AGAINST US, WHICH WAS HOSTILE TO US; AND HE HAS TAKEN IT OUT OF THE WAY, HAVING NAILED IT TO THE CROSS. (COLOSSIANS 2:13-14)

AND BELOVED READER, THERE IS NOT ONE SIN IN YOUR PAST TOO GREAT TO EXCLUDE YOU FROM GOD'S FULL AND PERMANENT PARDON.

He wants you to know that in place of eternal death, He will give you eternal life.

JESUS SAID TO HER, "I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE; HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME WILL LIVE EVEN IF HE DIES." (JOHN 11:25)

FOR THIS IS THE WILL OF MY FATHER, THAT EVERYONE WHO BEHOLDS THE SON AND BELIEVES IN HIM WILL HAVE ETERNAL LIFE, AND I MYSELF WILL RAISE HIM UP ON THE LAST DAY. (JOHN 6:40)

He wants you to know that His salvation is not earned by performing good deeds but by receiving this priceless gift *through faith (and faith alone)* in what Jesus Christ has done for you.

FOR BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED THROUGH FAITH; AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES, IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD; NOT AS A RESULT OF WORKS, SO THAT NO ONE MAY BOAST. (EPHESIANS 2:8-9)

And did you notice? God's plan of salvation has *nothing* whatsoever to do with going to church. You do not have to set foot on a church campus to trust in Christ's Sacrifice to deliver you from eternal death and give you eternal life. (To join and be active with a local church comes later.)

THIS PRICELESS SALVATION THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST COULD NOT BE ANY MORE LOVING.

What are you going to do with what the Son of God has done for you?

APPENDIX A

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE “KNOW THEM”

The primary purpose of this study has been to help the church member know whether he is saved or not. To determine this, several God-generated, God-empowered proofs of the rebirth have been presented, traits to which one can compare his own life.

But what about the spiritual condition of *another person*? Is it even *possible* for someone to evaluate another person's salvation? And even if it is, would it ever be *appropriate*? According to the Bible, it is both possible and – *under certain conditions and guided by certain regulations* – necessary to do so.

We have already seen that these proofs of salvation are on public display for others to see. In Matthew 7:16 the Lord Jesus said

YOU WILL KNOW THEM BY THEIR FRUITS. (MATTHEW 7:16)

So yes, it is possible for someone to “know” whether the fruits of others are “good” or “bad.” But *who* has this ability? To whom is Jesus referring when He says “you”?

Clearly, He was not referring to God. Without dispute, the Father fully knows the spiritual condition of each person's heart. He would not need His Son to remind Him of that ability. Furthermore, in the Greek New Testament this pronoun is in the plural. So, the word “you” in this verse refers to *a plurality of human beings*.

To help us more fully answer this question, we need to identify the audience Jesus is addressing. To do so, we must go all the way back to the beginning of Matthew chapter 5. There, we find in verses 1-2 the introduction to a rather lengthy body of instruction known as “the Sermon on the Mount” (a sermon that extends *through* chapter 7).

*WHEN JESUS SAW THE CROWDS, HE WENT UP ON THE MOUNTAIN; AND AFTER HE SAT DOWN, **HIS DISCIPLES** CAME TO HIM. HE OPENED HIS MOUTH AND BEGAN TO TEACH **THEM** (MATTHEW 5:1-2)*

Once Jesus' disciples joined Him on the mountain, He began to teach *them*. So, the word “you” in Matthew 7:16 refers to *Christ's disciples*. According to the Word of God, *those who have a living faith in the Lord Jesus* can discern the integrity of someone else's profession of faith by observing the “fruits” of his rebirth (or lack of).

But *why* would they *need* to know the quality of someone else's fruits? Are there situations that call for the evaluation of another person's faith as being “living” or “dead”? Most surely, there are. Indeed, not to do so would be both disobedient and foolish.

One such occasion that *demand*s this evaluation is found in 2nd Corinthians chapter 6.

BEFORE ENTERING ANY BINDING AGREEMENTS (2nd Corinthians 6:14-18)

A young woman refuses to marry a young man she is dating because he does not claim to be a Christian. So, to "win her hand," he joins her church ... they then get married ... and within a year, he has returned to his old lifestyle, having denied the faith.

Two friends share a common interest in motorcycles. They enjoy weekend trips together touring their state; and during the weekends when they are not out riding, they often meet to work on their bikes. One day Bob (an unbeliever) mentioned to Bill (a believer) that they should start a retail motorcycle shop. Bill now faces a difficult decision. Should he agree to sign a contract with Bob in this startup business?

A group from a local church desires to plant a new church having a different focus (to be more traditional in their worship) than the more contemporary church they now attend. As they talk through the establishment of their leadership, one name is mentioned to serve in the role of elder that causes concern among some of them. Dave is well-liked, a fine husband, a fine father, and has a good reputation within the community. But Dave has always questioned the deity of Jesus.

DO NOT BE BOUND TOGETHER WITH UNBELIEVERS; FOR WHAT PARTNERSHIP HAVE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND LAWLESSNESS, OR WHAT FELLOWSHIP HAS LIGHT WITH DARKNESS? OR WHAT HARMONY HAS CHRIST WITH BELIAL, OR WHAT HAS A BELIEVER IN COMMON WITH AN UNBELIEVER? OR WHAT AGREEMENT HAS THE TEMPLE OF GOD WITH IDOLS? FOR WE ARE THE TEMPLE OF THE LIVING GOD; JUST AS GOD SAID, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. THEREFORE, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," SAYS THE LORD. "AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; AND I WILL WELCOME YOU. AND I WILL BE A FATHER TO YOU, AND YOU SHALL BE SONS AND DAUGHTERS TO ME," SAYS THE LORD ALMIGHTY. (2ND CORINTHIANS 6:14-18)

This passage is a warning against believers becoming entangled in any *binding* agreements with unbelievers, whether short-term or long-term. Common examples of such relationships would include marriage, business partnerships, and (more in line with the context of this passage) placing false teachers in leadership roles within a local church. Countless arguments, anxieties, heartaches, and losses have resulted from such spiritually mixed arrangements *because of the opposing values held by each side.* ¹²

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This does not mean that one should evaluate the spiritual condition of a dentist or car mechanic before he receives service from them. One can easily walk away from such non-binding business relationships. (For that matter, this is the reason God left us in the world: to present the Gospel to unbelievers. To do so, we must have contact with them.) Here, however, we are told to avoid entering *binding* relationships with unbelievers that are difficult / impossible to get out of.

"Though verses 14-15 are often applied to various sorts of alliances (for example, mixed marriages, improper business associations), Paul's primary association was probably ecclesiastical [church-related] ... The solution to the dilemma was for the Corinthians to *separate from the false apostles.*" (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, New Testament, 2nd Corinthians, David K. Lowery, page 570, brackets and italics added.)

Obviously, to prevent himself from being trapped in a distressing relationship, the believer must evaluate the spiritual condition of the other. But in doing so, he should not allow himself to be deceived. There is a wise way to do this ... and a foolish way. It is not enough to ask the prospective spouse, business partner, or church leader, "do you know Christ as your Savior" or "do you go to church somewhere," for the answer "Yes" is easy for someone to say. (You can train a parrot to say "Yes" to such questions.) Instead, the reborn one must *carefully* and *graciously* consider the evidence of salvation (through observation, conversation, and referrals). It will take time to do so; but it will be time well spent.

THROUGHOUT THE DIFFERENT PHASES OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE (Matthew 18:15-17)

A church member is caught embezzling money from the church where he works as its accountant. After one of the church trustees discovers the loss of money, he questions the accountant about the inconsistencies within the financial records. The accountant denies any wrongdoing. The trustee then takes the situation to the pastor and, together, they ask for an appointment with him. He refuses. Other attempts are made to confront him, all unsuccessful, until finally, the situation is taken before the church.

IF YOUR BROTHER SINS, ⁽¹⁾ GO AND SHOW HIM HIS FAULT IN PRIVATE. IF HE LISTENS TO YOU, YOU HAVE WON YOUR BROTHER. BUT ⁽²⁾ 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. ⁽³⁾ IF HE REFUSES TO LISTEN TO THEM, TELL IT TO THE CHURCH. AND ⁽⁴⁾ IF HE REFUSES TO LISTEN EVEN TO THE CHURCH, LET HIM BE TO YOU AS A GENTILE AND A TAX COLLECTOR (THAT IS, AN UNBELIEVER). (MATTHEW 18:15-17, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

According to the Lord Jesus, the members of a church are to *lovingly* confront an erring brother or sister about a sin he is practicing (respectfully increasing, with each step of the process, the number of those involved from ⁽¹⁾ one, to ⁽²⁾ "two or more," to ⁽³⁾ "the church").

Throughout this process, decisions are being made regarding the integrity of another person's faith. If those involved do not receive from him the desired response of *repentance*, then the body of Christ is to view and treat him as an unbeliever whose faith is dead ("a Gentile and a tax collector"). This step, of course, requires the church to come to a final decision regarding his spiritual condition.

I WROTE YOU IN MY LETTER NOT TO ASSOCIATE WITH IMMORAL PEOPLE; I DID NOT AT ALL MEAN WITH THE IMMORAL PEOPLE OF THIS WORLD, OR WITH THE COVETOUS AND SWINDLERS, OR WITH IDOLATERS, FOR THEN YOU WOULD HAVE TO GO OUT OF THE WORLD. BUT ACTUALLY, I WROTE TO YOU NOT TO ASSOCIATE

WITH ANY SO-CALLED BROTHER IF HE IS AN IMMORAL PERSON, OR COVETOUS, OR AN IDOLATER, OR A REVILER, OR A DRUNKARD, OR A SWINDLER — NOT EVEN TO EAT WITH SUCH A ONE. FOR WHAT HAVE I TO DO WITH JUDGING OUTSIDERS? DO YOU NOT JUDGE THOSE WHO ARE WITHIN THE CHURCH? BUT THOSE WHO ARE OUTSIDE, GOD JUDGES. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES. (1ST CORINTHIANS 5:9-13)

To be sure, this action can be abused (and often has been). For that reason, the believing community often avoids church discipline. “Who are we to point out someone else’s sins!” “Do not judge lest you be judged!” “Let him who has no sin cast the first stone!” all express this apprehension in many of our congregations.

However, the purposes of church discipline are not to destroy but to restore the erring party, purify the body, and protect the holy reputation of God. It is to be motivated by love and conducted with a spirit of humble grace. So, when the Bible says

OR HOW CAN YOU SAY TO YOUR BROTHER, “LET ME TAKE THE SPECK OUT OF YOUR EYE,” AND BEHOLD, THE LOG IS IN YOUR OWN EYE? YOU HYPOCRITE, FIRST TAKE THE LOG OUT OF YOUR OWN EYE, AND THEN YOU WILL SEE CLEARLY TO TAKE THE SPECK OUT OF YOUR BROTHER’S EYE.” (MATTHEW 7:4-5)

it encourages a Holy Spirit-controlled confrontation (“take the speck out of your brother’s eye”) based upon humility and spiritual discernment (“first take the log out of your own eye”).

BRETHREN, EVEN IF ANYONE IS CAUGHT IN ANY TRESPASS, YOU WHO ARE SPIRITUAL, RESTORE SUCH A ONE IN A SPIRIT OF GENTLENESS; EACH ONE LOOKING TO YOURSELF, SO THAT YOU TOO WILL NOT BE TEMPTED. (GALATIANS 6:1)

Therefore, to evaluate someone with an appropriate attitude and in an appropriate manner allows the believer / the local church to

- 1) *establish a spiritually wholesome relationship with his future spouse*
- 2) *establish a righteous work ethic with his business partners*
- 3) *maintain sound doctrine within the local church*
- 4) *restore the spiritual wellbeing of a wayward brother or sister in Christ*
- 5) *preserve purity within the local church and*
- 6) *protect the holy reputation of God*

These are reasons why it is important that we “know them.”

APPENDIX B**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS*****IT IS POSSIBLE TO KNOW WHETHER YOU ARE SAVED OR NOT*** (Pages 6-7)

- ? What do you think this course is trying to accomplish?
- ? What do *you* hope to gain from this course?

TWO KINDS OF FAITH**THE FAITH THAT DOES NOT SAVE** (Page 8)

- ? How is it that a man can perform good deeds, yet still have “no works”?

TWO KINDS OF FAITH**THE FAITH THAT DOES SAVE** (Pages 8-9)

Salvation, from start to finish, is a work of God. Its plan, the conviction of sin, the repentance that leads to life, saving faith ... it all originates with God and is given by God to the sinner. As a result, “no man may boast before God.”

... NO MAN MAY BOAST BEFORE GOD. BUT BY HIS DOING YOU ARE IN CHRIST JESUS, WHO BECAME TO US WISDOM FROM GOD, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS AND SANCTIFICATION, AND REDEMPTION, SO THAT, JUST AS IT IS WRITTEN, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD." (1ST CORINTHIANS 1:29-31)

This would also include the “works” that radiate from a living faith. These, too, are God-generated. Each of these living works that come from a living faith is supernatural in nature. To be sure, the works of James 2:18 are miracles.

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 2:18)

- ? What must the believer do to participate with God in His works?

TWO KINDS OF FAITH

THE QUALITY OF A TREE *DETERMINES* THE QUALITY OF ITS FRUIT (Page 9)

THE QUALITY OF THE FRUIT *REVEALS* THE QUALITY OF THE TREE (Page 10)

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 this verse the Apostle Paul exhorts those within the church to “test” themselves to determine “if (they) are in the faith.” Yet, there are those who *back away* from such an evaluation. They do not want to examine the quality of their faith, whether it is “real” or not.

- ? What do you think would cause someone to respond in this way?

- ? What do you think is at stake with such an evaluation?

FALSE ASSURANCES OF THE REBIRTH (Pages 11-12)

- ? Can you think of anything worse than someone who has been a church member for many years coming to realize one day that he is lost?

THE EXTERNALS OF CHRISTIANITY

PUBLIC PROFESSION OF FAITH (Page 13)

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

- ? Why do you think so many individuals (as well as their parents and grandparents) cling to their public professions of faith in Christ as Lord to be the *proof* of their salvation?

THE EXTERNALS OF CHRISTIANITY**ACTIVE IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY (Page 14)**

- ? How is it possible for a person to be active in his church without making the connection between his sins and the death of Christ?

THE EXTERNALS OF CHRISTIANITY**BELIEF IN GOD (Pages 14-15)**

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”?

THE EXTERNALS OF CHRISTIANITY**CHURCH MEMBERSHIP (Pages 15-16)**

- ? 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?

THE EXTERNALS OF CHRISTIANITY**OBSERVING CHRISTIAN RITUALS (Pages 16-17)**

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 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?

BUT BEFORE WE GO ANY FARTHER (Page 18)

It was stated in this section, “‘Good fruit’ is the *evidence* of salvation, not the *cause* of salvation.”

- ? What is the difference between “the evidence of salvation” and “the cause 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?

EVIDENCE 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 19)**

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 the Son of God?

HE HOLDS THE *LIVING* WORD OF GOD, JESUS CHRIST, IN HIGH ESTEEM**He Believes that Jesus Is a Flesh-and-Blood Human Being (Pages 19-20)**

To not believe in the humanity of Jesus Christ is to reject His virgin birth, His ability to die on the cross, His bodily resurrection, and His future authority over all creation as King of kings and Lord of lords (Genesis 1:26, 28; Psalm 8:3-8). None of these would / will be possible apart from having a human body.

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

HE HOLDS THE *LIVING* WORD OF GOD, JESUS CHRIST, IN HIGH ESTEEM**He Believes that Jesus Is God (Pages 20-21)**

- ? 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 confirmed His claim to be God?

- ? What are some ways one *outwardly proves* his belief that Jesus is God?

HE HOLDS THE *LIVING* WORD OF GOD, JESUS CHRIST, IN HIGH ESTEEM**He Believes that Jesus Is the LORD'S Messiah (Pages 21-22)**

- ? Can you think of any verses in which Jesus Himself claims to be the LORD's promised Messiah?

- ? What are some ways one *outwardly proves* his belief that Jesus is the promised Messiah?

THE 2ND EVIDENCE

HE HOLDS THE *WRITTEN* WORD OF GOD IN HIGH ESTEEM

He Views the Bible as Trustworthy and Authoritative (Pages 23-24)

- ? How do you know whether one views the Bible as “trustworthy and authoritative”?

THE 3RD EVIDENCE

HE IS ABLE TO UNDERSTAND SPIRITUAL TRUTHS (Pages 25-26)

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

- ? Why is that?

THE 4TH EVIDENCE

HE IS ABLE TO DETECT ERROR IN SOMEONE’S TEACHING (Page 27)

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

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

THE 5TH EVIDENCE

HE STRIVES (THOUGH IMPERFECTLY) TO OBEY THE WILL OF GOD (Pages 28-29)

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

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

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?

[For a resource to do this, visit www.stewardoftruth.com/products/7/The-Pleasure-of-My]

THE 6TH EVIDENCE

HE STRUGGLES WITH HIS PERSONAL SINS (OF WHICH HE IS AWARE) (Pages 30-31)

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 7TH EVIDENCE

HIS LIFE WILL GRADUALLY BE TRANSFORMED INTO CHRISTLIKENESS (Pages 32-33)

In this next section, there will be several miracles mentioned. As we read along, I would like to ask you to place some kind of mark besides each miracle mentioned. In doing so, we shall see that the believer's transformation "from glory to glory," could only be the results of the supernatural works of God. (It would be impossible for these changes to be mimicked by the feeble efforts of man.) This ever-increasing glory is, therefore, another evidence of the rebirth.

- ? As the believer is transformed into Christlikeness, what works are taking place that only God can perform?

THE 8TH EVIDENCE

HE SEEKS WHAT IS BEST FOR HIS SIBLINGS IN CHRIST (Pages 34-35)

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 9TH EVIDENCE

HE EXPERIENCES SUFFERING FOR THE SAKE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The World *Persecutes* the Righteous to *Destroy* Their Witness (Pages 36-38)

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 EXPERIENCES SUFFERING FOR THE SAKE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The Father *Disciplines* His Children to *Cultivate* Their Righteousness (Pages 38-40)

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 during a painful trial?

THE 10TH EVIDENCE

HIS FAITH PERSEVERES DURING TRIALS

It *Is* Possible for True Believers to Compromise Their *Moral Values* (Pages 41-42)

It Is *Not* Possible for True Believers to Forsake *The Faith* (Pages 42-45)

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

SUMMARY (Page 46)

- ? Would anyone like to comment on this summary, especially the paragraph beginning with the words, “These qualities all share something in common”? Anything especially *interesting* or *helpful* or *new* to you? Or anything *confusing* to you or that you *disagree* with?
- ? Would anyone like to comment on anything from footnote 11? Anything especially *interesting* or *helpful* or *new* to you? Or anything *confusing* to you or that you *disagree* with?

THE RESULTS OF OUR EXAMINATION**ASSURED OF YOUR OWN SALVATION (Page 47)****CONCERN FOR A LOVED ONE (Pages 47-48)**

When we show loving concern for those who claim to be believers (but who display no evidence in their lives that they are), we should be ready for certain responses that are less than appreciative. Some may be offended that “you think yourself better than they” or “you think yourself more religious than they.” Some may be offended that you should not be “judging them.” Even the most loving words of concern will not always be received well.

With these possible responses in mind, you may be inclined to stay silent.

- ? (A) If you remain silent, what do **you** stand to gain (both now and throughout eternity)?
- ? (B) If you remain silent, what do **you** stand to lose (both now and throughout eternity)?
- ? Based upon your answers above, which is the wiser course of action, (A) or (B)?
- ? (C) If you remain silent, what does **he** stand to gain (both now and throughout eternity)?

? (D) If you remain silent, what does **he** stand to lose (both now and throughout eternity)?

? Based upon your answers above, which is the wiser course of action, (C) or (D)?

THE RESULTS OF OUR EXAMINATION

CONCERN FOR YOURSELF (Pages 48-49)

THE PRICELESS NEWS OF GOD'S GRACE THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST (Pages 50-51)

? Any comments about this presentation?

APPENDIX A

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE "KNOW THEM" (Page 52)

Under "The 3rd Evidence" (pages 25-26), we learned that one who is born of the Spirit of God can understand spiritual truths. Furthermore, under "The 4th Evidence" (page 27), we learned that the one born of God can detect error in someone's teaching." Both abilities allow the believer to *discern* what is true and what is not. Or perhaps more accurately, it allows him to discern what is true and what is *almost* true (but not quite).

? Why is discernment a necessary ability to have and use when evaluating the spiritual condition of another person?

APPENDIX A

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE "KNOW THEM"

BEFORE ENTERING ANY BINDING AGREEMENTS (Pages 53-54)

"Countless arguments, anxieties, heartaches, and losses have resulted from such spiritually mixed arrangements *because of the opposing values held by each side.*"

- ? What issues are likely to surface between a *husband and wife* that could easily result in a lifetime of tension and regrets because one follows Christian values, and the other follows the values of the world?

- ? What issues are likely to surface between two *business partners* that could easily result in long-term tension and regret because one follows Christian values, and the other follows the values of the world?

- ? What problems will a local church face if one or more *church leaders* reject sound doctrine?

APPENDIX A

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE “KNOW THEM”

THROUGHOUT THE DIFFERENT PHASES OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE ^{(1) – (4)} (Pages 54-55)

- ? What will be the results if a local church knows that unrepentant sin is taking place within its Body but refuses to follow Biblical guidelines in carrying out discipline?