

God's Guiding Light

By Robert Waters



Sound teaching on carefully selected topics that will bring you out of the darkness of false teaching, guide you to the light and help keep you there.

1 John 1:5 *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

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Introduction

This book is intended to help people understand God's view of darkness and light and to see the need to look to the Creator of light for the blessings He offers. The light to which one needs to be guided is Jesus, the Son of God who gave himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. He proved His claims by performing many wonders, signs, and miracles, which not even His enemies denied (John 20:30-31). He rose from the dead to fulfill prophecy, abolish the Old Testament (Eph. 2:15), bring in the New Testament (Heb. 10:9), and establish His kingdom (John 18:36). Because of the atonement Jesus made for our sins it is possible to be reconciled to God and have freedom from sin and guilt as we exercise faith based upon available evidence, as well as experience hope, peace, and joy (Rom. 5:11).

The Bible portrays light as a symbol of holiness, goodness, knowledge, wisdom, grace, hope, and revelation from God. It portrays darkness as being associated with evil, sin, and despair. While many seem to enjoy the darkness of this world, those who look ahead, beyond life on earth, for something greater than physical pleasures, seek spiritual light. But often, in the spiritual realm, people need help finding the light (see Acts 8:27-32). Unfortunately, many are being helped to miss seeing the truth (1 Kings 13:8). Peter warned that false teachers would arise among the Christians (2 Pet. 2:1). Jesus said, **“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves”** (Matt. 7:15). Because false teachers exist, many people are being deceived about important matters relating to salvation (see verses 7, 8). Every person is responsible to **“test the spirits, whether they are from God”** (1 John 4:1) and needs to do as the noble Bereans who **“searched the scriptures daily”** to see if even the most respected teachers were telling the truth (Acts 17:11). Every preacher and teacher should be motivated by love: love for God and the truth found in the Bible, to include Jesus' prayer for His disciples to be united so that the world might believe (John 17:17-21).

Without God there would be total darkness. He created light and He is light. His light, as revealed in the Bible, exposes the darkness of this world (evil) and provides the remedy. Jesus, through the New Testament, reveals the gospel light to all humanity. Each person has the freedom to choose the path to eternal life in heaven. Jesus said, **“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”** (Matt. 11:28-30).

Joshua declared to the people of Israel, **“And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD”** (Joshua 24:15).

The wise man said, “In the way of righteousness *is* life; and *in* the pathway *thereof there is* no death” (Prov. 12:28). Jesus stated, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12 ESV). The Christian life is that pathway to heaven through which God will rescue us from sin when we begin the “walk in the light” that brings us out of darkness and keeps us there.

In the passage below, the prophet Zacharias speaks prophecy and notes the promises of God to save His children and a lost world. John would go forth first in preparing the way for Jesus.

Praise the Lord God of Israel! He has come to take care of his people and to set them free. 69 He has raised up a mighty Savior for us in the family of his servant David. 70 He made this promise through his holy prophets long ago. 76 You, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High. You will go ahead of the Lord to prepare his way. 77 You will make his people know that they can be saved through the forgiveness of their sins. 78 A new day will dawn on us from above because our God is loving and merciful. 79 He will give light to those who live in the dark and in death's shadow. He will guide us into the way of peace (Luke 1:68 G.W.).

Darkness Is Important for Your Health, and Your Faith

By Ken Cadette (by permission)

God did not abolish darkness at creation. God added light. But for many, darkness symbolizes all that is negative, harmful, evil and fearful. God gave equal importance and prominence to darkness and light; and all life, including human life, begins and develops in the dark.

Scientists have referenced the importance of darkness in the circadian rhythm—the sleep wake cycle—and they advise that we sleep in the dark. If this dark/sleep cycle is disrupted, our health can be affected. A disrupted circadian rhythm can increase the chances of cardiovascular events, obesity and neurological problems.

We need darkness to make our immune systems work. Also, in the dark, our bodies produce the hormone called melatonin, which helps fight diseases, such as breast and prostate cancer.

In the scientific world, we can appreciate the value of darkness, but what of the spiritual world? In the experience of religion and the church, darkness, the opposite of light, has come to mean all that separates us from God, because God is light. Light is the symbol of salvation, spiritual growth and discernment. But it can be understood and appreciated only when we contrast and compare it to the darkness.

Some notable quotes:

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.” – Martin Luther King Jr.

“We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light.” – Plato

“Don’t fight darkness—bring the light, and darkness will disappear.” – Yogi

"You can't discover light, by analyzing the dark." – Wayne Dyer

“Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12 ESV).

“To open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me” (Acts 26:18 ESV).

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105 ESV).

“This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:5-7 ESV).

“In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:4 ESV).

“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son” (Colossians 1:13 ESV).

“I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness” (John 12:46 ESV).

Permission is hereby given to share this book through printing or Internet (social media or e-mail). Preaching and teaching (sharing) the word of God is not a waste of time. God said, “For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: 11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it” (Isa 55:10). Share the messages found herein and pray for positive results.

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CHAPTER 1:

God's Guiding Light for Heavenward Travelers

J.F. Poulter, B. A.

Psalm 119:105 **Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path....**

I. It directs the intending traveler to the STARTING-POINT—to the point whence he must set out on his heavenward journey. It takes him to the Cross; it bids him look to Jesus, and then to set out with holy resolution for the celestial city.

II. It warns the traveler—having now commenced his journey—of the PERILS THAT WILL BESET HIS PATH.

III. It shows the traveler how he may safely ADVANCE ALONG HIS JOURNEY STEP BY STEP. It is not only "a light to the path," showing which is the right way, but a "lamp to the feet," showing whether the traveler is keeping in that path. This step-by-step help it furnishes by laying down general principles to be faithfully and conscientiously applied by the Christian ([Romans 12:1](#)). By plying him with motives, the force of which, if he is a Christian, he must feel ([1 Corinthians 6:20](#)), in all the details of his life, and by giving specific precepts, as notably is done in the closing portions of some of the epistles ([Ephesians 4](#), etc.).

IV. It assures the traveler that the HOPED-FOR TERMINATION WILL BE REACHED. It is important that there should be light on the traveler's starting point; of equal importance that there should be light on the goal at which he hopes to arrive. If this be shrouded in darkness he will lack the stimulus of expectation to hold on his way. He will be ready to halt by reason of the discouragements and difficulties he meets with.

The Impending Judgment

It is hard for many to live more than one day at a time. To the young, old age and death seem to be an eternity away. The thought of death and judgment seldom comes to their mind. Yet we are all getting closer every day, until FINALLY, it will happen, and there is no doubt about it. Perhaps the following illustration will help us come to grips with this reality (our death) that we might endeavor to be prepared for our meeting with God regarding our eternal destiny:

When traveling in an automobile to a distant destination, a little child, from time to time, might ask, “How much farther is it?” “How much longer before we are there?” or “Are we getting close?” At various points in the travel to the destination parents give an update—assuring the children that they are getting closer all the time and will soon arrive. Finally, the destination is reached.

We are all traveling through life on our way to judgment. We are getting closer every day, every hour, and every minute. WE WILL ARRIVE. It is just a matter of time. But will we be prepared when we get there? Whether we are prepared or not will determine whether the meeting is anxiously awaited and a joyous occasion or dreaded with fear and trembling. Indeed, there will be a day of judgment.

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad. 11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...” (2 Cor. 5:10, 11).

This is a day for which we can be prepared and for which we hope, which means “desire plus expectation.”

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Tit 2:13).

Barnes Commentary

Looking for - Expecting; waiting for. That is, in the faithful performance of our duties to ourselves, to our fellow-creatures, and to God, we are patiently to wait for the coming of our Lord.

- (1) We are to believe that he will return;
- (2) We are to be in a posture of expectation, not knowing when he will come; and,
- (3) We are to be ready for him whenever he shall come

CHAPTER 3:

“Don’t Be Deceived”

“Don’t be deceived” is a command from God. It is found in two places in the New Testament (1 Cor. 15:33; Gal. 6:7). The passage is also rendered as “Be not tricked” and “Stop being deceived”. A similar command is found in Ephesians 5:6 (“Let no one deceive you”).

How naive it is to think there are not people in the world who intend to deceive others! The New Testament contains both warnings and examples. Below are a few passages of note:

Matthew 7:15 “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.”

Matthew 24:24 “For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”

2 Timothy 4:3 “For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.”

1 John 4:1 “Dear friends, 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.”

2 Peter 2:1-3 “But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories.”

Acts 20:28-30 “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.”

2 Corinthians 11:13 “For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ.”

Jeremiah 9:6 “You live in the midst of deception.”

Romans 6:18 “For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.”

2 Timothy 3:13 “While evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.”

Colossians 2:8 “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.”

Jeremiah 14:14 “Then the LORD said to me, ‘The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I have not sent them or appointed them or spoken to them. They are prophesying to you false visions, divinations, idolatries and the delusions of their own minds.’”

Jeremiah 23:16 This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD.

2 Peter 14-17 “So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position.”

Romans 16:17-18 “Now, it is my desire, brothers, that you will take note of those who are causing division and trouble among you, quite against the teaching which was given to you: and keep away from them. For such people are not servants of the Lord Christ, but of their stomachs; and by their smooth and well-said words the hearts of those who have no knowledge of evil are tricked.”

Deceptive speech and tactics are not limited to religious teachers. It ever remains true that “the love of money is the root of all evil.” Therefore, know that there are people who are willing to hurt others if they can benefit monetarily. Be careful what you accept as facts. Consider the source and the person's possible motives, which might be money or political affiliation.

Honesty Demands One Follow the Evidence

Several years ago, I was working in a building when a man came in and said there was a “hit and run” in the parking lot. He said he saw it and got the license plate ID before the man left the scene. I called the police and an officer arrived in a couple of minutes. The witness stated what he saw (including a description of the automobile), gave the officer the plate ID, and told him the direction the man went, as well as pointing the direction with his finger.

Another witness stated who the man was, since he had just left her office. The officer got into his patrol car and sped away—but, to our amazement, he went in the wrong direction.

How can one take the wrong trail or get on the wrong track when there is ample and clear evidence indicating the correct way?

God exists and there is a multitude of evidence that the Bible, which tells us how to go to heaven, is inspired of God, who cannot lie.

Yet many people go the other way. Why?

Why did the police officer go the wrong way? Did he not think the witnesses were credible? Did he know the man who fled the scene and, because the officer was afraid, he went the other way? Could it have been that he was a friend of the lawbreaker and did not want to confront and charge him with the crime? Was he incompetent? Did emotion cloud his thinking?

There are two trails: One was left by Jesus, and it leads to heaven. The other trail leads the opposite way—it leads to destruction. One is the wrong way; the other is the right way (Matt. 7:13-14).

While in the decision stage, several thoughts might go through your head; but if you are honest, competent, unafraid, and have your emotions under control, you will go the right way—you will follow Jesus to heaven.

Does God Speak Directly to People Today?

In times past God communicated to men in various ways (Heb. 1:1). That He spoke directly with an audible voice, such as when He told King Nebuchadnezzar he was no longer king (Dan. 4:31), is not questioned. God communicated with men through visions and dreams (Nu 12:6). He interacted using the Urim and Thummim (Lev. 8:8; Nu. 27:21). He addressed men through angels, as He did at the “burning bush” (Ex. 3:2). He conversed with the people through prophets (Deut. 18:20-22; 1 Sam. 28:6). And, on one occasion after the cross, he spoke to men using “lots” to tell the apostles who would replace Judas (Acts 1:23-26).

All the above is not questioned by Bible believers. But some, seemingly having failed to read the SECOND verse of Hebrews 1, insist that God speaks directly to them today. (This is true even though MOST would not claim that God talks to them in ANY of the ways noted above.) However, Hebrews 1:2 tells us that in these last days God speaks to us through His Son—meaning through His inspired word, the New Testament.

So how is God speaking to those who claim to hear Him today? Is it through prayer? No, prayer is man talking to God. And God's answering prayer is simply a response to the prayer—not communication. Does God speak to us through nature? No. Nature may cause one to think and conclude that there must be a Creator, but this is not really communication; it is certainly not an audible voice revealing to one something that is not disclosed to others. Does God speak through other Christians? No, when other Christians seek to bring another in line with God's word it is THEY who are speaking as they are directed by the word of God (Gal. 6:1). **“After the reading of the Law and the Prophets the synagogue officials sent to them, saying, ‘Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it’”** (Acts 13:15). The people were hearing from God when the Bible was being read. This passage puts words of exhortation related to the message into a different category—men speaking.

I believe God causes things to happen today through divine providence. This is how He accomplishes His will—through the laws of nature, which is not considered to be a miraculous deed. (A miracle is an act of God that transcends the law of nature. Such happenings have “ceased” [1 Cor. 13:8-11].) We may pray for something we need, and God might cause it to happen, but we cannot know for sure that He did. Oh, we may feel moved by it and THINK God has said something to us. It may even prick our conscience and result in repentance. But if we want to HEAR from God and know for certain He is speaking to us, we just need to open His book and read.

I shall end this study by quoting some passages related to the benefits of reading the Bible to hear from God.

Romans 10:17 “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”

Hebrews 4:12 “For the word of God [is] quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17 “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

Psalms 119:11 “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.”

CHAPTER 6:

Throwing Jesus Under the Bus

Is your tradition important enough to you that you are willing to throw Jesus under the bus, so to speak, in the way you interpret and argue scripture? If so, you need to consider the following.

The Bible does not contradict itself. This is because it is from God, and it is truth. Christians are expected to treat the word of God in a manner that shows they understand this. Unfortunately, human tradition too often wins out when a disciple of Christ is presented with the choice of receiving truth and giving up tradition or simply closing their mind to truth and saying whatever helps to defend that which has become their standard.

Jesus set forth the Jews, who rejected Him, as an example of being lost because of love of tradition.

Mark 7:6 He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from me. 7 Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men. 8 For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. 9 And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

The apostle Paul reiterated Jesus' teaching to Christians.

Col. 2:9 (ESV) See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ" (Col.

Col. 2:22 (GNB) All these refer to things which become useless once they are used; they are only human rules and teachings.

Perhaps you are guilty of throwing the word of God under the bus in defense of your tradition. If you are guilty but willing to reject tradition for truth, then you simply need to learn good hermeneutics. We should get all the scriptures on a subject before drawing a conclusion. The conclusion we come to should be one that allows the scriptures to harmonize. Study the meaning of words, observe context, and pray for wisdom to understand (James 1:5). Then and only then can you fully comprehend what the Bible teaches.

Take, for example, the following passage:

Eph. 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Christians often argue with those who say we are saved by faith alone. But the use of proper hermeneutics could quell the need to become embroiled in such discussions. When you see clear teaching that indicates the necessity of obedience to comply with God's written conditions to be saved, don't be too quick to defend the position that one is saved by faith only, or at the point of faith. Look into the possibility that the word "believe" is inclusive or comprehensive, which means that when you read that believers will be saved it is to be understood that it is talking about their life as a believer rather than that they merely acknowledge that Jesus is who He said He is (See 1 John 1:7). It is BAD hermeneutics to construe one passage to contradict another. We are indeed saved by faith. We simply must understand what that means. We are also saved by grace, and a host of other considerations could be added to this list. Thus, the absurdity of arguing that a person is saved by any one factor is apparent. (See the link below on "things involved in salvation.")

Generally, those who teach "faith only" also teach "once saved always saved," which is another extremely harmful doctrine to the cause of Christ. There is no biblical subject that has more passages to support it than the idea that a Christian can fall from grace. The teaching is scattered through the Bible from the beginning to the end. Here are a few scriptures for your consideration: Gal. 5:4; 2 Pet. 1:5-10, 3:17; 1 Tim. 1:19; Luke 8:13.

By using good hermeneutics, we can teach truth without compromising the word of God or throwing Jesus under the bus to win an argument. We can be assured that the Bible will never contradict itself, and we can let it speak for itself.

Links to study on hermeneutics:

<https://www.totalhealth.bz/spiritual-health-things—involved-in-salvation.htm>

<https://www.totalhealth.bz/spiritual-health-faith-only.htm>

<https://www.totalhealth.bz/marriage-divorce-remarriage-hermeneutics.htm>

Eternal Security of the Believer in Christ

A debate between Dr. Lloyd Olson and Robert Waters

<http://www.totalhealth.bz/EternalSecurity.pdf>

Spiritual Security

It is common, especially as people get older, to realize that life on earth is temporary and to seek spiritual security—hope of something better and lasting after this life. Realizing this need, many have become involved in professions in which they get paid to learn the truth and educate others on this important matter. Unfortunately, the order of the day, among religionists, is to overemphasize love and put little or no emphasis on obedience. Love is very important, but this philosophy is not sound teaching and will not result in true hope of heaven. There are three possible reasons for such failures: 1) these teachers are ignorant regarding what the scriptures teach; 2) they no longer look to the word for authority and guidance; or 3) they know the truth but choose to preach what is popular and acceptable.

The Bible, from beginning to end, teaches the need for obedience. The following New Testament passages stand out and are irrefutable:

Matt. 7:19-24 **Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.**

Heb. 5:9 **And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.**

An important passage of scripture for one to consider and obey to become spiritually secure, which is to have hope of heaven, is:

2 Tim. 4:7 **I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.**

Here Paul sets forth the criteria for spiritual security: 1) FIGHT; 2) FINISH THE COURSE; and 3) KEEP THE FAITH. To get into the “fight” you must first learn the fundamental truths and become a Christian (faith, repentance, and obedience, Acts 2). Then you must learn foundational doctrinal truths that are important and fight those who seek to undermine them.

We must not end this paper without noting John’s teaching relevant to this topic: **“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin”** (1 John 1:6-7). To “walk in the light” is to be obedient to the teaching of the Bible. In view of this and other clear passages, the doctrines of “faith only” and “once saved always saved” are exposed as being nothing but teaching of men.

Another very important passage is 2 Pet. 1:5-11. Here Peter notes several behaviors we are to endeavor to put into practice in our lives. He concludes by admonishing us to **“give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance**

shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

CHAPTER 8:

Some Basic Facts Relating to Biblical Authority that All Bible Students Need to Know:

The Bible is the inspired word of God. It is the most translated book of all time, and more copies of it have been sold than any other book. Its intent, if seriously studied, serves many purposes; but the basic thing we should understand is that it is God's message to man. It is how He speaks to us. We should receive it as coming from a just and loving authoritative figure—even as a soldier in an army does if he respects and looks to higher authority for instruction. Many figures throughout history have benefited from the Bible. Here are a few noted quotes from respected authors who looked upon the Bible as coming from God:

Quotes:

“I have a fundamental belief in the Bible as the Word of God, written by those who were inspired. I study the Bible daily.” Isaac Newton

“The Bible is one of the greatest blessings bestowed by God on the children of men. It has God for its author; salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture for its matter. It is all pure.” John Locke

“The Bible, as a revelation from God, was not designed to give us all the information we might desire, nor to solve all the questions about which the human soul is perplexed, but to impart enough to be a safe guide to the haven of eternal rest.” Albert Barnes

“The Bible is proved to be a revelation from God, by the reasonableness and holiness of its precepts; all its commands, exhortations, and promises having the most direct tendency to make men wise, holy, and happy in themselves, and useful to one another.” Adam Clarke

“We can never learn too much of His will towards us, too much of His messages and His advice. The Bible is His word and its study gives at once the foundation for our faith and an inspiration to battle onward in the fight against the tempter.” John D. Rockefeller

“It does not require great learning to be a Christian and be convinced of the truth of the Bible. It requires only an honest heart and a willingness to obey God.” Albert Barnes

“A thorough knowledge of the Bible is worth more than a college education.” Theodore Roosevelt

“Within the covers of the Bible are the answers for all the problems men face.” Ronald Reagan

“The Bible is the rock on which this Republic rests.” Andrew Jackson

“In all my perplexities and distresses, the Bible has never failed to give me light and strength.” Robert E. Lee

“I am blessed to receive a word from God every day in receiving the scriptures and reading the scriptures. And God speaks through the Bible.” Ted Cruz

“The Bible is worth all the other books which have ever been printed.” Patrick Henry

“If Christians will obey the instructions given to them by Christ and his inspired apostles, they will adorn the religion of the Bible, and save themselves much perplexity and severe trials, which they attribute to their afflictions in consequence of believing unpopular truth.” Ellen G. White

I. The Bible Must be Rightly Divided.

[“Rightly Dividing the Word of God” (2 Tim. 2:15)]

It is important to “rightly divide” the Bible. This involves understanding that there is an Old Testament and a New Testament. 2 Tim. 2:15 states: “**Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**”) Both testaments are referred to as law, but neither stands alone—one complements the other.

The “old law” is known as the **Law of Moses** (Josh. 8:32), which was a covenant between God and Israel. While the Old Law was inspired of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17) and has timeless laws, like marriage and divorce, its days were numbered. The Old Testament’s replacement was prophesied by the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31-33).

Jeremiah 31:31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: 33 But

this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

The Old Law was not faultless because it needed the second (the new covenant, law, or testament) to make the word of God complete so God's redemptive plan could come to fruition. Heb. 8:7 states: "For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second."

Hebrews 10:1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

The Old Law was abolished, or made inactive, as far as being THE law for the true people of God.

Ephesians 2:15-16 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; 16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

II. Misunderstandings Regarding the Importance of the Old Testament

Some insist that the Old Testament is not important. First, we shall briefly deal with its importance, and then we will speak regarding its applicability.

Importance and value of the Old Testament (OT):

1. It makes up 75 percent of the inspired word of God —the Bible.
2. It contains important history, poetry, proverbs, and prophecy.
3. It was the only scripture that Jesus used.
4. Many passages in the New Testament (NT) would be meaningless if we did not have the Old Testament (OT).
5. We learn about the same God in both testaments.
6. The OT announces the good news about Christ.
7. Both covenants call for love.
8. The OT is involved in a preacher's responsibility to declare the "whole counsel of God" ([Acts 20:26–27](#)).
9. The OT has been a guide for archeologists to find historical artifacts, which, by the way, is strong evidence it is not a book of fiction.
10. The OT contains statements pertaining to science, which men

did not know in that day and time and which prove God inspired these men in what they wrote. This fact is useful for Christians to teach unbelievers that there is a God and that the Scriptures are inspired. All these truths attest to the fact that the OT is important.

Some assert that the OT is **not applicable** to Christians today. In view of the facts noted above that attest to the importance of the OT, it becomes apparent that it is applicable in many ways. But we do agree on certain things the Old Testament does not do: 1) the OT is not a source for determining **how to become a Christian** (cf. Acts 4:12; Rom. 1:16); 2) the OT is not a guide **for Christian worship** (cf. Col. 3:17; 2 Jn. 9); 3) the OT is not a **pattern for the church** (cf. 1 Cor. 3:11; Heb. 10:1), nor is any part of it to be substituted for the instruction the apostles gave to churches through the Book of Acts and the Epistles to various churches. The OT is applicable because it was given for Christians. Peter stated of the OT prophets, “**It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you**” ([1 Pet. 1:12](#)). Thus, the OT authors understood that they were writing for a future audience—Christians identified with the NT church.

Paul understood that what the OT authors wrote was for NT believers, living on this side of the death and resurrection of Christ.

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope ([Rom. 15:4](#); cf. 4:23–24).

Now these things happened to [the Israelites] as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come ([1 Cor. 10:11](#)).

The apostle told Timothy, who was raised on the OT by his Jewish mother and grandmother ([Acts 16:1](#); [2 Tim. 1:5](#)), that the “*sacred writings*” of his upbringing “**are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus**” ([2 Tim. 3:15](#)). People today can be saved from God’s wrath and from the enslavement of sin by reading the OT through the lens of Christ.

Finally, the OT is applicable because Jesus said that all of the OT points to Him. After His first encounter with Jesus, Philip announced to Nathaniel: “**We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophet wrote**” ([John 1:45](#)).

III. Jesus Was an Old Testament prophet Who Respected the Law as Being God’s Word.

Some today accuse Jesus of teaching concepts contrary to the Law, but the fact of the matter is that He explained the Law as He refuted the false notions of the Jews regarding various issues. Let us take a close look at Matthew 5:17-19:

Matthew 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. 18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. 19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus made two important statements: 1) that He did not come to destroy the Law, but rather to fulfill it; and, 2) that nothing pertaining to the Law would pass before it was fulfilled. This would involve His crucifixion and resurrection. Therefore, it becomes apparent that when Jesus said “it has been said...but I say unto you” (multiple times), He could not possibly have been taking issue with the Law of Moses (contradicting it) but with the false notions of the Jews. That said, the Law was in fact abrogated and replaced with a new one, as prophesied by Jeremiah.

IV. Since Some Professed Christians Insist that the Old Testament Is Still in Force, Let Us Look at Some Passages that Shed Light on This Matter:

Col. 2:14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

Romans 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

Hebrews 10:9b He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

Hebrews 8:6-13 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. 7 For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. 8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: 9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they

continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. 10 For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: 11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. 12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. 13 In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old *is* ready to vanish away.

Acts 13:39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

Galatians 3:23-24 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. 24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

4:21-31 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? 22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. 23 But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman *was* by promise. 24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. 25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. 26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. 27 For it is written, Rejoice, *thou* barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. 28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. 29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him *that was born* after the Spirit, even so *it is* now. 30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. 31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

Galatians 5:18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

2 Corinthians 3:6-16 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. 7 But if the ministration of death, written *and* engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which *glory* was to be done away: 8 How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? 9 For if the ministration of condemnation *be* glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. 10 For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. 11 For if that which is done away *was* glorious, much more that which remaineth *is* glorious. 12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: 13 And not as Moses, *which* put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: 14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which *vail* is done away in Christ. 15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. 16 Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.

V. The New Testament

We have talked about the Old Testament (Law of Moses). We shall now proceed to address the New Testament —the second law, which is referred to as “*the perfect law of liberty*” (James 1:25, 2:12; Gal. 6:2; Tit. 3:9).

K & D Commentary

“The re-establishment of Israel reaches its completion in the making of a new covenant, according to which the law of God is written in the hearts of the people; thereby Israel becomes in truth the people of the Lord.”

This new covenant is not with the people of the current nation of Israel, but the true people of God who make up the church Jesus established, which is made up of both Jews and Gentiles. 1 Cor. 12:13 states: “*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*”

The written word is complete (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jude 1:3). This means there are no prophets to guide us who are not mentioned specifically by name in the Bible.

The last prophet was John (Luke 16:16). Jesus was a prophet, but He was born before John. Jude exhorted his readers to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3).

Barnes:

“It was done once in the sense that it is not to be done again, and, therefore, in the sense that it was then complete, and that nothing was to be added to it. There is indeed the idea that it was formerly done, but with this additional thought, that it was then complete.”

The Ten Commandments are all taught in the New Testament except for #4: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”

The Sabbath was not changed to Sunday, and the fact that Christians did not continue the Sabbath but worshipped on the first day of the week (Sunday) has nothing to do with any sun god or the Roman Catholic Church. New Testament churches assemble for worship “upon the first day of the week” (Acts 20:7) because the early church did so according to the guidance of the apostles of Christ, who were inspired of God to teach what God wanted.

Paul sought to bring to Christ his brethren who were under the Law.

Galatians 5:3 “For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.”

Galatians 5:4 “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.”

Romans 10:4 “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”

Romans 4:14 “For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:”

Romans 7:6 “But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.”

Romans 6:14 “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”

CHAPTER 9:

Did Paul Say He Did Not Baptize Anyone?

(Is 1 Cor. 1:17 to be understood as teaching that baptism is not essential?)

To get the context that shows the reason for what Paul said, we must carefully read the following:

1 Corinthians 1:10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. 11 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them *which are of the house of Chloe*, that there are contentions among you. 12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. 13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; 15 Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. 16 And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. 17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. 18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

The first thing we need to see is that Paul did baptize some, whom he named: Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanas.

The second observation we can make, from reading the context, is that Paul was addressing the problem of division among a church in which parties had developed among the members, most of whom were calling themselves after various men. Some were even saying “I am of Paul,” which was not to his liking.

The third thing we should notice is that the great commission was given to the apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel (Mark 16:15-16). The result of the gospel's being effectively preached would result in believers being baptized and saved (1 Pet. 3:21). Thus, it was Paul's mission to preach the gospel and assure that those drawn to God by his preaching (John 6:44) were baptized, by him or someone else.

Barnes Comments:

For Christ sent me not to baptize - That is, not to baptize as my main business. Baptism was not his principal employment, though he had a commission in common with others to administer the ordinance, and occasionally did it. The same thing was true of the Saviour, that he did not personally baptize, Joh 4:2. It is probable that the business of baptism was entrusted to the ministers of the church of inferior talents, or to those who were connected with the churches permanently, and not to those who were engaged chiefly in traveling from place to place. The reasons of this may have been:

That which Paul here suggests, that if the apostles had themselves baptized, it might have given occasion to strifes, and the formation of parties, as those who had been baptized by the apostles might claim some superiority over those who were not.

it is probable that the rite of baptism was preceded or followed by a course of instruction adapted to it, and as the apostles were traveling from place to place, this could be better entrusted to those who were to be with them as their ordinary religious teachers. It was an advantage that those who imparted this instruction should also administer this ordinance.

it is not improbable, as Doddridge supposes, that the administration of this ordinance was entrusted to inferiors, because it was commonly practiced by immersion, and was attended with some trouble and inconvenience, while the time of the apostles might be more directly occupied in their main work.

But to preach the gospel - As his main business; as the leading, grand purpose of his ministry. This is the grand object of all ministers. It is not to build up a sect or party; it is not to secure simply the baptism of people in this or that communion; it is to make known the glad tidings of salvation, and call people to repentance and to God.

Clark Commentary:

For Christ sent me not to baptize - Bp. Pearce translates thus: For Christ sent me, not so much to baptize as to preach the Gospel: and he supports his version thus - "The writers of the Old and New Testaments do, almost every where (agreeably to the Hebrew idiom) express a preference given to one thing beyond another by an affirmation of that which is preferred, and a negation of that which is contrary to it: and so it must be understood here,

for if St. Paul was not sent at all to baptize, he baptized without a commission; but if he was sent, not only to baptize but to preach also, or to preach rather than baptize, he did in fact discharge his duty aright.” It appears sufficiently evident that baptizing was considered to be an inferior office, and though every minister of Christ might administer it, yet apostles had more important work. Preparing these adult heathens for baptism by the continual preaching of the word was of much greater consequence than baptizing them when thus prepared to receive and profit by it.

Jamison Faucit Brown Commentary:

Paul says this not to depreciate baptism; for he exalts it most highly (Rom 6:3). He baptized some first converts; and would have baptized more, but that his and the apostles’ peculiar work was to preach the Gospel, to found by their autoptic testimony particular churches, and then to superintend the churches in general.

Gil Commentary:

For Christ sent me not to baptize,.... “...He had the same mission the rest of the apostles had, which was to baptize as well as preach; and indeed, if he had not been sent at all to baptize, it would have been unlawful for him to have administered baptism to any person whatever; but his sense is, that baptism was not the chief and principal business he was sent about; this was to be done mostly by those preachers of the word who travelled with him, or followed after him: he was not sent so much about this work, but to preach the Gospel....”

Conclusion:

The men whom I have quoted were all denominational preachers —none “Church of Christ.” Yet they fully understood what Paul meant, and they stood for the truth regarding whether Paul considered baptism to be important. To view Paul's words otherwise would be to ignore or disregard the unequivocal teaching he did in writing by inspiration. See Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:10-12; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:27; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:5.

Does the Bible Justify Denominationalism?

While it cannot be denied that people who claim faith in Jesus Christ are associated with many different denominations, the ever-looming question is, “Does the Bible justify denominationalism?” Do denominations, by teaching different doctrines and practicing unauthorized traditions, cause confusion? Indeed, they do; and because so many counterfeit churches exist (and the number continually grows), it becomes increasingly more difficult to find the one true church.

No, my statement “one true church” is not an assumption —the concept is clearly taught in the New Testament. First, Jesus said **“I will build my church”** (Matt. 16:18). He said “church” —not churches. Also, Paul, in writing to Timothy, said, **“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”** (1 Tim. 3:15). “The” in the passage indicates ONE —as opposed to a plurality.

Jesus said, **“I am the vine, ye are the branches.”** Some read that and, in their attempt to promote the idea that the Bible justifies denominationalism, contend that the “branches” are churches. However, the passage clearly indicates that the “branch” is an individual —not a church. Note whom is addressed in the text below: **“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. 6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned”** (John 15:5-7). Clearly, individuals, rather than various religious bodies, are the branches of the vine (Christ).

In view of the Bible’s teachings (noted above), it should be clear that there is only one true church; yet many denominations are present in the world today. Such division is contrary to Jesus’ prayer for unity (John 21:17) and it is the cause of much confusion. Paul wrote, **“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace”** (1 Cor. 14:33a), so the problem must be due to man’s desires, misunderstandings, and unauthorized actions.

Since the church is the saved (Acts 2:47), shouldn’t the question “What must one do to be saved?” be answered to help determine whether a particular church is the one we read about in the Bible? (Anyone can establish a church.) The most profound issue to consider relative to whether a particular church is composed of the saved is whether the people in it have put their trust in God and obeyed Him by repenting and being baptized

(Acts 2:36-47; Rom. 6:3-4, 17-18), which results in their being added to the body or church (1 Cor. 12:13; Col. 1:24; Eph. 4:4). This is something virtually no group (church, denomination, or non-denomination) does except one —the group generally known as "Church of Christ."

The true church is pre-denominational, and it exists today in basically the same form (organization, doctrine, and practice) as it did 2,000 years ago. It may not bear a particular known name and the people in it are not perfect. It may even get a few things wrong. This does not necessarily condemn a church, as is evident from reading what God said about the seven churches of Asia in the book of Revelation. Thus, when we consider God's grace, mercy, and patience, the circles of fellowship many draw are likely significantly smaller than they should be.

However, circles must be drawn when a group refuses to abide by the basic tenets of biblical teaching regarding salvation and the work and worship of the body of Christ. Denominations do not follow biblical teaching in this regard, and therefore denominationalism is unjustified and unauthorized by the Bible.

Suggested reading:

[Total Health — Spiritual Health: Is the Church of Christ a Denomination?](#)

[Total Health — How To Identify the True Church](#)

[Total Health — Selecting A Church](#)

Can One Know WHEN He Is Saved, or IF He Is Saved?

One of the most important questions that we can ask is: “At what point is one saved?” Or the question might be asked this way: “At what point does a person become a Christian and child of God?”

Many preachers contend that one receives the grace of God at the point of faith. Others argue that salvation comes when a sinner “prays through.” The former may point to passages that teach the necessity of faith, but they make no effort to explain the comprehensive nature of “faith” nor to use good hermeneutics that require one to seek a conclusion that allows other passages on the matter to harmonize. Such teaching often leaves a person wondering when he is saved or if he is saved at all.

Let us look now at two passages that explain when a person becomes a Christian. The most logical conclusion that we might reach as to the meaning of these passages will not contradict other passages, and we can have full assurance that we know, with certainty, the point when we are saved.

Romans 6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. . . 16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? 17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. 18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

Colossians 2:10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: 11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: 12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. 13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

One more passage to consider:

1 John 5:13 **These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.**

Here Paul answers whether we may know we have eternal life and how we may know. First, yes, we can know. Second, “knowing” is based on what is “written.”

These passages do not really need to be explained. They clearly give the answer that many seek. But a warning is in order. If your preacher has not been teaching the truth, and you ask him about this, he will likely seek to persuade you not to listen to this teaching, to this teacher, or to others of like faith who would direct you to these passages.

**Is One Sin as Bad as Another?
Are There Sins That Are Greater Than Others?
Are All Sins the Same in the Eyes of God?**

I cannot keep my mouth shut when people say “no sin is greater than another” because it is false, and the idea is harmful. It makes no sense, and it is contrary to the teaching of the Bible. We all recognize that one sin, any sin, can cause one to be a sinner and lost once the age of accountability is reached. This would be what was in the mind of James when he said, “**For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it**” (James 2:10). He was talking about Christians who would seek to be justified by the Law of Moses under which one could not be saved without Christ unless he committed no sins. Jesus is the only man who ever lived a sinless life. So, the passage is simply misunderstood and misapplied to teach the idea that all sins are the same.

Is MURDER not greater than a slap in the face? Is adultery not greater than a lustful look—something done only “**in the heart**” (Matt. 5:28)? Is driving 100 mph in a 20-mph school zone not a greater sin than driving 21 mph at the same location? The answers to these questions are a no-brainer and the Bible clearly supports this position.

The word “abomination” is found seventy-six times in the KJV. The word is used to put emphasis on certain sins that God hates more than others (Prov. 6:16-19). Some sins are not in this category.

Also, some sins are “sins of *ignorance*” as opposed to “*presumptuous* sins” or “willful sins” (Numbers 15:28-31; Heb. 10:25). Peter explains that it is better not to be aware that what one is doing is a sin than for one to sin knowingly (2 Peter 2:20-21). Even if you don’t get it that a sin committed in ignorance is not as great as a sin committed *presumptuously*, the fact that the consequences are different should dispel from the mind the idea that “one sin is as great as another.”

Consider the word “rebellion.” It is just a fact that people commit sins against God (and people) that are not considered to be rebellious. Such sins are not sins that cause separation between family members. Fathers don’t severely punish a child who tells an untruth that he thought was true. John made it clear that there are sins that are “**not unto death**” and there is a sin “**unto death**” (1 John 5:16-17). Thus, the idea that all sins are the same is just a ridiculous idea.

Jesus answered Pilate (the man who turned Him over to the Jews), “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore, he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin” (John 19:11). It was Caiaphas (the Jewish high priest) who had the greater sin. It was he who was responsible for the mock trial that violated every aspect of the normal procedure for such trials. Also, as a priest he should have been familiar with the numerous prophecies (more than 300) that detailed Jesus as the Messiah. Pilate sinned by caving to political pressure to turn Jesus over to the Jews, but Jesus said the sin Caiaphas committed was greater.

Moses spoke of the sin of bowing before the golden calf as a “great sin” (Ex. 32:30-31). God considered it so because He is a jealous God and will punish those who worship false gods (Deut. 5:9).

The Bible makes it clear that teaching error is sin, but some errors are obviously greater than others. A false doctrine that jeopardizes souls is a greater error than advocating a position that technically may be incorrect but has no eternal consequence. For instance, to argue that there is no future resurrection of the body is a teaching connected with “overthrowing the faith” of some and is obviously an error of much greater gravity than some other sins (2 Tim. 2:16-18; James 3:1).

Finally, the Bible speaks about degrees of punishment based upon the magnitude of the sin (Matt. 11:21-22, Rev. 20:12-13).

Luke 12:47-48 **And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.”**

Conclusion:

The problem with thinking and teaching that all sins are the same is that the notion makes it difficult for people to have confidence that they are continually cleansed by the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7). Or, worse, it results in some believing they are living totally above sin, which is their basis for thinking they are saved—an idea against which the Scriptures are clear (1 John 1:8, 10).

Suggested Reading:

Presumptuous Sins: <http://www.totalhealth.bz/spiritual-health-presumptuous-sins.htm>

Continual Cleansing Versus Perfectionism (tract)

<http://www.totalhealth.bz/continual-cleansing.pdf>

The Security of The Believer – An Exchange between Donnie Rader and Robert Waters,
published in “Searching the Scriptures.”

http://www.totalhealth.bz/The_Security_of_the_Believer.pdf

1 John 1:7 “For if we walk in the light...”

Considering its importance, 1 John 1:7, in my opinion, is the most overlooked (even disregarded) passage in the Bible. It is ignored mainly by the proponents of two extreme views. One, that once a person becomes a Christian it does not matter how he lives—he can never fall from grace. Two, a Christian falls from grace automatically when he sins and is lost until the point that he repents and prays for forgiveness. The first group, because of the word “if,” which gives a condition for keeping saved, simply must ignore this passage altogether, which is what they do. The second group would prefer to ignore it, but when pressed they argue that to “walk in the light” is to live like Jesus—sinless. But the truth is, the “walk” John is taking about is one’s life, as translated by some versions. In making judgments God looks at the life—not just one sin. The text implies that one whose life is pleasing to God is continually cleansed by the blood of Christ IF he walks in the light. This is a great comfort, for we know God is just and merciful and that He loves us.

Barnes comments:

Walking in the light may include the three following things:

- (1) Leading lives of holiness and purity; that is, the Christian must be characteristically a holy man, a light in the world, by his example.
- (2) Walking in the truth; that is, embracing the truth in opposition to all error of paganism and infidelity, and having clear, spiritual views of truth, such as the unrenewed never have. See [2 Co 4:6](#); [1 Co 2:9-15](#); [Eph 1:18](#).
- (3) Enjoying the comforts of religion; that is, having the joy which religion is fitted to impart, and which it does impart to its true friends. See [Psa 94:19](#); [Isa 57:8](#); [2 Co 1:3](#); [2 Co 13:11](#). Compare the notes at [Joh 12:35](#).

As he is in the light - In the same kind of light that He has. The measure of light which we may have is not the same in degree, but it is of the same kind. The true Christian in his character and feelings resembles God.

We have fellowship one with another - As we all partake of His feelings and views, we shall resemble one another. Loving the same God, embracing the same views of religion, and living for the same ends, we shall of course have

much that is common to us all, and thus shall have fellowship with one another.

Repentance is one of the requirements to be saved. Jesus said, **“Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.”** With the word "and" repentance was given the same level of importance as obedience in baptism (Acts 2:38). Repentance is a change of heart and direction. Christians who are walking in the light are going in the right direction with their lives, even though they are not sinlessly perfect. They sin from time to time, and some of those sins are apparent but of some they are not aware. Part of "walking in the light" is to seek to grow, which involves learning of sin and seeking to overcome. Also, part of that "walk" is to "confess our sins" (1 John 1:9). But where I think people miss the boat is in assuming that this passage is just about specific sins. It is not. It is about confessing our sins rather than denying them. This does involve confessing specific sins, but the text does not suggest that every sin must be confessed before it can be forgiven.

The idea that every sin must be confessed to be forgiven has a serious consequence. No babe would be saved, or at least not for long, and EVERY adult would be lost because **"there is none righteous, no not one."** To help assure that none would come to the idea that spiritual security is based on sinlessness, rather than the blood of Christ, as we walk in the light, John put verse 8 before verse 9 and followed with verse 10—passages that indicate that perfection is not even possible—, or at least it is not going to happen.

There is an element in the church that insists that a Christian falls from grace when he sins—, no matter what the sin—whether inadvertent or in ignorance and no matter the circumstances or the attitude. With those who teach this, it is automatic. But this leaves God, who is Judge of all, out of the picture, rather than letting Him be Judge. Certainly, God has not put His judgment in auto mode, as some errantly assume. Did God not make this clear?

Exodus 33:19b **And he said, I...will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.**

Imagine a church filled with men who truly think they must be right on everything, or they will go to hell. There could never be compromise regarding anything doctrinal, regardless of the importance of it. Preachers would have to be “right” on everything. Church leaders and teachers would have to agree on everything or there would be division. And that is pretty much what we have seen across the country, which has crippled the church.

Imagine a church whose preachers base their spiritual security on their thinking that they are living above sin. In Bible study they would never admit to having been in error, for that would be an admission that they were lost; and their very basis for security, their ability to live sinlessly, would be seen to be nothing but hopelessness.

Additional Reading (free material):

A debate between Dr. Lloyd Olson and Robert Waters

<http://www.totalhealth.bz/EternalSecurity.pdf>

Continual Cleansing Versus Perfectionism

“My thanks to you for sending me a copy of your excellent booklet, CONTINUAL CLEANSING VS PERFECTIONISM. It is a very forthright, effective and convincing presentation. I believe you to be right in each argument therein. I have preached this comforting doctrine for nearly sixty years. I never heard it questioned until recently. All scholarly men among us of every persuasion have taught it either directly or indirectly.
— Guy N. Woods

<https://www.totalhealth.bz/continual-cleansing.pdf>

Move Forward but Don't Move Forward

Christians are to keep “moving forward” —we must keep growing in grace and knowledge of the Lord (Phi. 3:12-14; 2 Pet. 3:18). We are not to go backward or even become idle (Matt. 20:6). We should be diligent to add to our lives the Christian graces to assure that we “never fall” (2 Pet. 1:5-10).

Yet once we are grounded in the faith, we must not move forward for this would be tantamount to LEAVING the faith.

1 Cor. 15:58 **Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”**

John Gil wrote: **“be ye steadfast, unmovable;** in all the doctrines of the Gospel.”

The Israelites were grounded in their faith, for a period, in following God's government. He had set up judges to rule. But the people wanted to be like the nations about them and demanded a king (1 Sam. 8:3-7). God said to Samuel, **“They have not rejected you, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.”** Even after being warned of the many tribulations that would be inflicted upon them, if they followed man's ways instead of God's, the people refused to obey (verses 11-20). And guess what? All the calamities Samuel had foretold came to pass, and there was great suffering.

We must move forward in our faith, but in doctrine we must remain steadfast. (Those who are steadfast in the truth will be able to successfully defend their beliefs, teaching and practices in honorable debate.) Moving forward for the sake of pleasing ourselves or the world is tantamount to moving backward, from which there is likely to be no return (Jer. 8:5). Our attitude should be that we can be wrong on some doctrinal issue and therefore we must have the desire to find out if we are, and be willing to give up our false notions and lay hold on the truth. Our goal should be to find the truth, remain in it, and never move away from it.

A Little Church History and Some Enlightenment from the Scriptures

You can search your New Testament from front to back and you not only will not see any justification for denominations (many churches) but you will see clear teaching that Jesus established only one church (Matt. 16:18; Col. 1:18; Eph. 4:2-6). Jesus prayed for this church to be “one so that the world might believe” (John 17:20-21). You will also see that the apostle Paul condemned division (1 Cor. 1:10-11). Those who needlessly divide churches are heretics. Paul wrote, “A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself” (Titus 3:10-11).

Barnes

A man that is an heretic - The word “heretic” is now commonly applied to one who holds some fundamental error of doctrine, “a person who holds and teaches opinions repugnant to the established faith, or that which is made the standard of orthodoxy.” Webster. The Greek word here used αἰρετικὸς *hairetikos* occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The corresponding noun (αἵρεσις *hairesis*) occurs in the following places: Act 5:17; Act 15:5; Act 24:5; Act 26:5; Act 28:22, where it is rendered “sect;” and Act 25:14; 1Co 11:19; Gal 5:20; 2Pe 2:1, where it is rendered “heresy,” and “heresies;” see the notes at Act 24:14. The true notion of the word is that of one who is a promoter of a sect or party. The man who makes divisions in a church, instead of aiming to promote unity, is the one who is intended. Such a man may form sects and parties on some points of doctrine on which he differs from others, or on some custom, religious rite, or special practice; he may make some unimportant matter a ground of distinction from his brethren, and may refuse to have fellowship with them, and endeavor to get up a new organization. Such a man, according to the Scripture usage, is a heretic, and not merely one who holds a different doctrine from that which is regarded as orthodoxy.

JFB

heretic — Greek “heresy,” originally meant a *division* resulting from individual self-will; the individual doing and teaching what he *chose*, independent of the teaching and practice of the Church.

Why do you suppose God warned about division and condemned the dividers? Perhaps because **“a house divided against itself will not stand”** (Luke 11:17). And because division among Christians, though not God’s fault, is “confusion” that causes the world not to believe (John 17:20-21).

Illustration:

A man was alone on a deserted island for twenty years. When he was finally noticed by a passing ship and rescued, the ship captain asked about the two elaborate identical buildings he had built. The rescued man pointed at one and said, “That is where I have been going to church.” “What about the other one?” the captain asked. “Oh, that is where I **used** to go.” The disunity among professed Christians is just about that bad.

The Roman Catholic Church claims to be the one true church we read about in the Bible. Furthermore, they claim the Pope is “God on Earth” with power not only to establish new laws but to change what God has established. Their basis for the claim is that Peter was “the rock” upon which Jesus built His church and that he was a church leader (elder) whom Jesus told to “feed my sheep.” Yet according to their own creed Peter was not qualified to be an elder because he was married (1 Tim. 3:2). Catholics don’t allow their Pope to marry, nor do they allow their priests to marry. Ironically, God **requires** elders to be married. Which, by the way, was another thing that God warned about. “Forbidding to marry” is in the category of “doctrines of devils” (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

That Peter was the “rock” upon which Jesus built the church has no foundation—no basis in Scripture. First, Peter was weak. When his faith was tried, he denied the Lord three times (Matt. 26:33-75). Second, Jesus is the Rock upon which He built His church. Catholics pervert the text when they insist Peter was the rock. The truth is, after Jesus asked His disciples who they thought He was, Peter replied, **“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”** (Matt. 16:16-18). This is when Jesus said, **“Thou art Peter** [meaning pebble or stone] **and upon this rock**” (“bolder,” according to Robertson, and meaning the confession that Peter had made that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God).

Third, there is no basis for a Pope. The word is not found in the Bible. It is made up. Furthermore, the apostle Paul warned about this hieratical position (2 Thess. 2:2-10). Moreover, the idea of one leader in a local church, let alone the universal church, is contrary to New Testament teachings. **“Feed the flock which is among you”** (1 Pet. 5:2).

We are to look to the Scriptures for guidance (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Anyone who would add to them has a problem with God (Deut. 12:32; Rev. 22:18). Jesus said to call no man

“father” (Matt. 23:9) and Paul taught that we are “not to think of men above that which is written” (1 Cor. 4:6).

Is “Faith Only” In and “Obedience” Out?

False teachers are using Facebook and other forums to promote a dangerous doctrine—one that not only has no scriptural support, but which is contradicted by numerous clear Bible teachings. Search for and study the scriptures that contain the following words: obey, obeyed, obeyeth, obedience, do, doeth, keep, if and keepeth. If necessary, adjust your thinking and teaching accordingly. And don't be tempted to reject these teachings and cling to a few passages that false teachers have interpreted and twisted in a way that has God's word contradicting itself. When you take an honest look at these passages it will be clear to you that OSAS (once saved always saved) is a false teaching, and that continued obedience is required.

Matthew 7:26 **Everyone who hears these words of mine and doesn't obey them is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.**

Matthew 28:20 **Teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you each and every day until the end of the age."**

Mark 1:27 **All the people were so stunned that they kept saying to each other, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He tells even the unclean spirits what to do, and they obey him!**

John 3:36 (ESV) **Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.**

Acts 5:29 **Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.**

Acts 5:32 **And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.**

Romans 2:8 **But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,**

Romans 6:16 **Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?**

Romans 1:5 **By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:**

Romans 6:16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

Romans 6:17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

Romans 10:16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

2 Corinthians 7:15 And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him.

Galatians 3:1 O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

Galatians 5:7 Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?

2 Thessalonians 1:8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

2 Thessalonians 3:14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

1 Peter 1:17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:

1 Peter 4:17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

James 1:25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

Matthew 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

1 John 2:17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Luke 6:47 Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like:

Revelation 22:14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

2 Peter 1:10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

1 Thessalonians 5:24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

Philippians 4:9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Acts 9:6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

Acts 22:10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

Acts 2:37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

John 15:14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

Exodus 16:28 And the LORD said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? ("God is the same yesterday, today and forever.")

John 15:10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

John 14:21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

Revelation 2:26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

1 Corinthians 3:14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

John 15:10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

Revelation 22:12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

Suggested reading:

<https://www.totalhealth.bz/spiritual-health-earn-salvation.htm>

“Born of Water” (John 3:5) What Does It Mean to Be Born of Water?

“Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

Wide differences of opinion—at least five different views—exist as to what Jesus meant by “born of water.” Perhaps the two most widely accepted views are as follows: 1) “born of water” refers to being born physically (water being the amniotic fluid surrounding the baby in the mother’s womb); and 2) “born of water” refers to baptism in water, whether Jewish baptism or Christian baptism. Generally, those who do not believe “born of water” is Christian baptism either do not believe that baptism is essential or assert that the one baptism (Eph. 4:5) is Holy Spirit baptism rather than water baptism. This article will be limited to discussion of the two views noted above.

To gain a confident understanding of the text one must consider the circumstance surrounding the discussion between Jesus and Nicodemus. It is also important that we study other passages relating to baptism and the new birth. But first we will take a close look at this amniotic fluid argument—what it is and what it is not—and focus on understanding the true intent of the phrase “born of water.”

Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews who believed in Jesus because of the miracles He had performed. Nicodemus approached Jesus in the dark of night, evidently to find out what he needed to do to be saved. Jesus, knowing his circumstances, told him, **“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”** (John 3:5). This was puzzling to Nicodemus. His immediate thought was that Jesus was speaking of a physical birth. He asked, **“How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?”**

According to the amniotic fluid interpretation, Jesus’ words refer to the biological birth (hence the amniotic fluid inside the mother’s womb) and another birth through the Spirit. But there are a few problems with this view.

First, we must not let Nicodemus’ misunderstanding and question lead us to a wrong conclusion. We must draw a conclusion that makes sense in view of Jesus’ statement to a man who believed in God but who evidently had not been baptized by John for the remission of sins (Luke 3:3). Remember, Jesus said **“except a *man* be born of water.”** First, obviously men are already born and therefore can obey that command. Second, if Jesus had been referring to an unborn baby, then it would be a command to them. But unborn infants have no control over whether they are born or not. If Jesus intended to

teach Nicodemus of John's baptism, He would not have changed His comment to mean something totally different simply because of a somewhat silly question. Remember, the question was in response to Jesus' statement that one must be "born again." It would be expected that a ruler of the Jews would have understood what was meant by "born again" in view of John's teaching on baptism. Thus, to conclude that Jesus was not referring to baptism but to a physical birth is imprudent. It was a new birth and spiritual one, but not TWO births. Jesus did not say "one must be born—first of water and then later of the Spirit." The language implies that this second birth is both a birth of water and of the Spirit and something that happened simultaneously.

Second, since the verse reads "born of water and the Spirit," a problem with the grammar exists for those who hold to the amniotic fluid argument. The word translated "of" (*ex*) is used to mean both "of" and "from." The water being spoken of in the text is the source or cause of the person's birth. Therefore, since the "fluid" isn't what gives birth, because it is the mother that does this, the idea that being "born of water" refers to the amniotic fluid in the mother's womb is a piece from some other puzzle that someone has thrown in to disrupt the process of putting things together. Nowhere in Scripture is natural birth referred to as being born "of water." This is either an attempt to deny the simple truth of baptism, or an attempt to avoid condemnation of those who are not baptized. Whether it condemns all who are not baptized is not within the scope of this paper.

Third, amniotic fluid is not water.

"When the fluid first starts to form inside the amniotic sac (a few weeks after conception), it's mostly made of your own body fluids. But when baby's kidneys kick in and start putting out urine (at as early as 11 weeks), those new fluids start building up to help cushion and protect baby's growing body. After around week 20, the amniotic fluid is mostly urine." American College of Obstetrics and Gynecologists. *Your pregnancy and birth*. 4th ed. Washington, DC: ACOG; 2005.

Water, of which one must be born, is "pure water" (Heb. 10:22)—not urine or some other impure mixture. Therefore, "born of water" cannot refer to being born of amniotic fluid and must refer to baptism.

Fourth, if "water" in the text refers to the physical birth we have Jesus basically saying a truism—"except one be born." To put it another way, it would have been redundant for Jesus to say that one must be born of the flesh to enter the kingdom since Nicodemus had already met that condition. Who does not understand that one must be "born" to do ANYTHING? Surely Jesus was not saying one must be "born." Such a remark in our day would have caused one to say "Really?" or "You don't say?" What Jesus did say was that one must be "born of water"; and other passages bear out the fact that the phrase

has reference to baptism, which was being practiced at the time “for the remission of sins” (John’s baptism, Luke 3:3) and which would be something Christians would practice in the future dispensation. If indeed Jesus was saying that a person must FIRST be born, why did He not say, “One must be born and THEN he must be born of the Spirit”? Why add water to it? Why would Jesus mention water at all in view of what He could KNOW would take place in the future, i.e., that a huge number of scholars would think “born of water” was the same teaching as the Jewish baptism and the burial from which one rises “to walk in newness of life,” as taught to Christians (Rom. 6:3-4).)? It seems apparent that Jesus interjected water not to help Nicodemus understand that one must first be born physically, but to point out that the SPIRITUAL birth (not the physical) must be of water, at which point the recipient of water baptism is also born of the Spirit and made free from sin (Rom. 6:17-18).

Let’s now consider three categories of evidence showing that “born of water” has reference to baptism:

Scriptures

The concern of Nicodemus, and our concern today, is how to get into the kingdom that constitutes the saved (Acts 2:37-47). In Acts chapter 2, we read that Jews who heard the gospel and were cut to the heart asked, “**What shall we do?**” They were told to “**repent and be baptized...for the remission of sins**” (Acts 2:38). (Being born of the Spirit has to do with receiving the Holy Spirit, which happens when one is baptized for the remission of sins [Acts 2:38].)

On another occasion, Peter preached the same gospel to numerous people at Solomon’s porch. He said to them, “**Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out**” (Acts 3:19). This is what is called “a parallel passage.” It is a teaching that says basically the same thing as is said elsewhere, but in different words, and elaborates on the passage it parallels. Acts 3:19 parallels Acts 2:38, which was noted above. Repentance, as well as “**for the remission of sins,**” is mentioned as essential to being saved in both passages, but “**be converted**” replaces “**be baptized**” in this text. Thus, being baptized is evidently involved in being converted.

To be “**born of water and the spirit**” is to be converted to Christ. Those truly converted begin a new life in Christ. Paul wrote, “**Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new**” (2 Cor 5:17). (See also Col. 3:9.)

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul portrays the new life, telling us HOW and WHEN it happens.

Romans 6:3, 4 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. 18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

The doctrine being discussed (verses 17 and 18) included baptism, for Paul described it as a burial representative of Christ's birth from the death (His resurrection). Certainly the obedience from the heart would also include believing, repenting, and confessing Christ as being the Son of God (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38, 8:37). The penitent believer by faith is immersed in water and rises to "walk in newness of life." Evidently, when referring to the doctrine of baptism in water (something done outwardly for all to see), Paul was referring to its being an obedient act based on the heart (emotions, intellect, and will), at which point one is "then made free from sin" to become "servants of righteousness."

If we compare John 3:5 with 1 Corinthians 12:13 (a parallel passage) it becomes apparent that "water" in the former passage is the same as the "baptism" of the latter passage.

John 3:5 – Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God!

1 Corinthians 12:13 – For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body.

There can be no doubt that "born of water" is about being born again. To this all agree. But what logic is being used when one argues that by "born of water" Jesus was merely saying one must be born? The text is about being born AGAIN—not being born in the first place. It refers to being born again by means of *water and the Spirit*—one birth—not two. Nicodemus misunderstood, at first, and questioned how it could be done, which indicates that what Jesus said had nothing to do with a physical birth.

Commentaries:

Clark

“Baptism by water...was necessary to every Jew and Gentile that entered into the kingdom of the Messiah.”

Barnes

Be born of water - By “water,” here, is evidently signified “baptism.” Thus the word is used in Eph 5:26; Tit 3:5. Baptism was practiced by the Jews in receiving a Gentile as a proselyte. It was practiced by John among the Jews; and Jesus here says that it is an ordinance of his religion, and the sign and seal of the renewing influences of his Spirit. So he said Mar 16:16, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” It is clear from these places, and from the example of the apostles Act 2:38, Act 2:41; Act 8:12-13, Act 8:36, Act 8:38; Act 9:18; Act 10:47-48; Act 16:15, Act 16:33; Act 18:8; Act 22:16; Gal 3:27, that they considered this ordinance as binding on all who professed to love the Lord Jesus.

Vincent’s Word Studies

Under his list of 5 things to observe he says, “We may observe...that *water* points definitely to the rite of baptism.”

The Fourfold Gospel (McGarvey)

Except one be born of water and the Spirit. By far the vast majority of scholars consider the word "water" in this verse as a reference to Christian baptism. The Cambridge Bible says "the outward sign and inward grace of Christian baptism are here clearly given, and an unbiased mind can scarcely avoid seeing this plain fact. This becomes still clearer when we compare [Joh 1:26,33](#), where the Baptist declares, 'I baptize in water,' the Messiah 'baptizeth in the Holy Spirit.' The fathers, both Greek and Latin, thus interpret the passage with singular unanimity." Men would have no difficulty in understanding this passage were it not that its terms apparently exclude "the pious unimmersed" from Christ's kingdom. But difficulties, however distressing, will justify no man in wresting the Scriptures of God ([2 Pe 3:16](#); [Ro 3:4](#)). Water and Spirit are joined at [Mt 28:19](#); [Ac 2:38](#); [19:1-7](#); [Tit 3:5](#).

New Testament Commentary Vol. III, John (W.B. Johnson)

Concerning *born of water* we agree with Alford that it refers to baptism, while “*of the Spirit*” refers to the inward change. He adds: “All attempts to

get rid of these two plain facts have sprung from doctrinal prejudices by which the views of expositors have been warped.” Abbot says: “We are to understand Christ as he expected his auditor to understand him. The Jewish proselyte, as a sign that he had put off his old faiths, was baptized on entering the Jewish church. John the Baptist baptized both Jew and Gentile as a sign or purification by repentance from past sins. Nicodemus would then have certainly understood by the expression, *born of water*, a reference to this rite of baptism.” Milligan of Scotland, says: “John said: I baptize with water; the One coming baptizes with Spirit; but Christ says: The baptism of both is necessary. One must be born of water and of the Spirit.”

Jamison Faucet Brown

of water and of the Spirit — A twofold explanation of the “new birth,” so startling to Nicodemus. To a Jewish ecclesiastic, so familiar with the symbolical application of water, in every variety of way and form of expression, this language was fitted to show that the thing intended was no other than a *thorough spiritual purification by the operation of the Holy Ghost*. Indeed, element of *water* and operation of *the Spirit* are brought together in a glorious evangelical prediction of Ezekiel ([Eze 36:25-27](#)), which Nicodemus might have been reminded of had such spiritualities not been almost lost in the reigning formalism. Already had the symbol of water been embodied in an initiatory ordinance, in the baptism of the Jewish expectants of Messiah by the Baptist, not to speak of the baptism of Gentile proselytes before that; and in the Christian Church it was soon to become the great visible door of entrance into “the kingdom of God,” *the reality being the sole work of the Holy Ghost* ([Tit 3:5](#)).

Lightfoot's From the Talmud and Hebraica

[*Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit.*] He tells him, that the Jew himself cannot be admitted into the kingdom of the Messiah unless he first strip himself of his Judaism by baptism, and then put off his carnal and put on a spiritual state. That by *water* here is meant *baptism*, I make no doubt: nor do I much less question but our Saviour goes on from thence to the second article of the evangelical doctrine. And as he had taught that towards the participation of the benefits to be had by the Messiah, it is of little or of no value for a man to be *born of the seed of Abraham*, or to be originally an Israelite, unless he was also *born from above*.

Coke

Ver. 5. Jesus answered, Verily, verily, &c.— Jesus replied, that he was not speaking of a natural, but of a spiritual regeneration; *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a "man be born of water,* that is, be baptized, the only appointed means of admission into the visible church; *and of the Spirit,* that is, have a new nature given him by the Spirit, and shew forth in his life the fruits of that new nature; he cannot be a subject of God's kingdom here, nor have a share in his glory hereafter."

"The receiving of this rite is highly necessary in all cases where it can be had. If so, persons who undervalue water baptism, on pretence of exalting the baptism of the Spirit, do *greatly err, not knowing the scriptures,* nor the commandment of Christ."

Great Texts

In religious circles in Jerusalem there was nothing being talked of but the Kingdom of God which John the Baptist had declared to be at hand. And when Jesus told Nicodemus that in order to enter this Kingdom he must be born again, He told him just what John had been telling the whole people. John had assured them that, though the King was in their midst, they must not suppose they were already within His Kingdom by being the children of Abraham. He excommunicated the whole nation, and taught them that it was something different from natural birth that gave admission to God's Kingdom. And just as they had compelled Gentiles to be baptized, and to submit to other arrangements when they wished to partake of Jewish privileges, so John compelled them to be baptized. The Gentile who wished to become a Jew had to be symbolically born again. He had to be baptized, going down under the cleansing waters, washing away his old and defiled life, being buried by baptism, disappearing from men's sight as a Gentile, and rising from the water as a new man. He was thus born of water, and this time born, not a Gentile, but a Jew. As the Gentile had to be naturalized and born again that he might rank as a child of Abraham, and enjoy the external privileges of the Jew, so must the Jew himself be born again if he is to rank as a child of God and to belong to the Kingdom of God. He must submit to the double baptism of water and of the Spirit—of water for the pardon and cleansing of past sin and defilement, of the Spirit for the inspiration of a new and holy life.

The Jewish doctors, it is said, not uncommonly described the Gentile as one who became a little child, who began his life anew, when he was received by baptism into the privileges of their outer court. If so, Nicodemus must have been familiar with the expression; but it must have been to him, and to most who availed themselves of it, a mere figure of rhetoric—one of those counters which pass among religious people, which have a certain value at first, but which become at length so depreciated that they serve no purpose but to impose on those who take and those who give them. However little Nicodemus might know of Jesus, he did know that He was not resorting to figures of rhetoric—that if He spoke of a birth, He meant a birth; and he must have perceived that what He said did not apply to sinners of the Gentiles, but to him, the religious ruler of the Jews. It was, therefore, a good and healthy sign, a proof of the power of the new Teacher, that he forgot the conventionalisms of the Sanhedrim, and spoke out coarsely and naturally, as a peasant might have done. Our Lord, surely, passed this judgment upon him; for, instead of rebuking him for his question, He meets it in the most direct manner possible: “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” The object of Nicodemus in coming to ask Him about His kingdom is still kept prominently forward; but there is a noticeable change in our Lord’s words. He had spoken of *seeing* the Kingdom of God; He now speaks of *entering* into it. Each expression may, unquestionably does, involve the other; still they are distinct. To *see* a kingdom is to have an apprehension of its reality and of its nature; to *enter* into a kingdom is to become a subject of it.¹ [Note: F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of John*, 90.]

Our Lord speaks of the second birth as completed by two agencies, water and the Spirit. To make the one of these merely the symbol of the other is to miss His meaning. The Baptist baptized with water for the remission of sins, but he was always careful to disclaim power to baptize with the Holy Ghost. His baptism with water was of course symbolical; that is to say, the water itself exercised no spiritual influence, but merely represented to the eye what was invisibly done in the heart. But that which it symbolized was not the life-giving influence of the Holy Spirit, but the washing away of sin from the soul. Assurance of pardon John was empowered to give. Those who humbly submitted to his baptism with confession of their sins went from it forgiven and cleansed. But more than that was needed to make them new men—and yet, more he could not give. For that which would fill them with new life they must go to a Greater than he, who alone could bestow the Holy Ghost.

These, then, are the two great incidents of the second birth—the pardon of sin, which is preparatory, and which cuts our connection with the past; the communication of life by the Spirit of God, which fits us for the future. Both of these are represented by Christian baptism because in Christ we have both; but those who were baptized by John’s baptism were only *prepared* for receiving Christ’s Spirit by receiving the forgiveness of their sins.

This passage brings out the deep truth of which Baptism was afterwards made an outward and visible exponent. Here we are shown the need of an external acceptance of promise and position, and of these being sealed on us, and still further the need of the Spirit dwelling in our hearts to make this outward confession a reality, and give us power for practicing it. And so, be it ever remembered, the mere form of baptism, unless the Holy Spirit be actually in the heart, can avail nothing. It is but, as it were, a husk, and can be no more, but the gift of the Holy Spirit is open to all; and as we read this passage, and are perhaps for the moment tempted to think it excludes some, or even ourselves, from the Kingdom, we should put beside it that other glorious passage of promise: “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” ([Luk 11:13](#)).¹ [Note: J. H. Rogers, *The “Verily, Verilys” of Christ*, 28.]

Imagine not infants, but crowds of grown-up persons already changed in heart and feelings; their “life hidden with Christ in God,” losing their personal consciousness in the laver of regeneration; rising again from its depths into the light of heaven, in communion with God and nature; met as they rose from the bath with the white raiment, which is “the righteousness of the saints,” and ever after looking back on that moment as the instant of their new birth, of the putting off of the old man, and the putting on of Christ. Baptism was to them the figure of death, burial, and resurrection all in one, the most apt expression of the greatest change that can pass upon man, like the sudden change into another life when we leave the body.¹ [Note: B. Jowett, *The Epistles of St. Paul*, i. 291.]

Popular New Testament

The first words have given rise to warm and continued controversy. Many have held that the birth ‘of water and spirit; can only refer to Christian baptism; others have denied that Christian baptism is alluded to at all. The subject is very important and very difficult. Our only safety lies in making the

Evangelist his own interpreter. We shall repeatedly find, when a difficulty occurs, that some word of his own in the context or in some parallel passage brings us light. (1) First, then, as to the very peculiar expression, 'of water and spirit.' We cannot doubt that this is the true rendering; no direct reference is made as yet to the personal Holy Spirit. The words 'water and spirit' are most closely joined, and placed under the government of the same preposition. A little earlier in the Gospel (chap. [Joh 1:33](#)) we find the same words—not, indeed, joined together as here, but yet placed in exact parallelism, each word, too, receiving emphasis from the context. Three times between chap. [Joh 1:19](#) and chap. [Joh 1:33](#). John speaks of his baptism with water; twice there is a reference to the Spirit ([Joh 1:32-33](#)); and in [Joh 3:33](#). John's baptizing with water and our Lord's baptizing with 'holy spirit' (see the note) stand explicitly contrasted. It is very possible that this testimony was well known to others besides John's disciples, to all indeed in Judea who were roused to inquiry respecting the Baptist and his relation to Jesus. (2) It is possible that the Jews of that age may have been familiar with the figure of a new birth in connection with baptism. It is confessedly difficult accurately to ascertain Jewish usages and modes of thought in the time of our Lord. The Talmud indeed contains copious stores of information, but it is not easy to distinguish between what belongs to an earlier and what to a later age. We know that converts to the Jewish religion were admitted by baptism to fellowship with the sacred people. The whole tenor of the law would suggest such a washing when the uncleanness of heathenism was put off, and hence no rite could be more natural. Yet we have no certain knowledge that this was practiced so early as the time of our Lord. There is no doubt that, at a later date, the proselyte thus washed or baptized was spoken of as born again. Here again, therefore, we have some confirmation of the view that in the words before us there is *in some sort* a reference to baptism, —at all events, to the baptism of John. (3) But what was John's baptism? We see from chap. [Joh 1:25](#) how peculiar his action appeared to the rulers of the people. Even if proselytes were in that age baptized, a baptism that invited all, publican and Pharisee alike, would but seem the more strange. John's action was new and startling; and from chap. [Joh 1:21-25](#) it appears that the leaders of Jewish thought beheld in it an immediate reference to the time of Messiah. It seems very probable that John's baptism was directly symbolic, a translation into visible symbol of such promises as [Eze 36:25](#), which looked forward to the new spiritual order of which he was the herald. To the sprinkling with clean water, the cleansing from all filthiness, of which Ezekiel speaks, answers closely John's 'baptism of repentance for the remission of sins' (compare also [Eze 36:31](#)). To the

promise which follows, 'A new spirit will I put within you. ... I will put my spirit within you,' answers just as closely John's testimony to Jesus, 'He it is that baptizeth with holy spirit.' (4) The two contrasted elements in the baptisms of chap. [Joh 1:33](#) are—(a) the covering and removal of past sin; and (b) the inbreathing of a new life. In that verse 'holy spirit' is the gift and not the Giver. The Giver is the Holy Spirit; but the gift, that which is the essential element in the new baptism, is the bestowal of 'holy spirit,' the seed and the principle of a holy spiritual life. (5) These two elements were conjoined in the Christian baptism instituted afterwards: the cleansing of forgiveness through Christ's death and the holiness of the new life in Christ are alike symbolized in it. Here, therefore, our Lord says that no man can enter into the kingdom of God unless he have been born anew, the elements of the new birth being the removal by cleansing of the old sinful life, and the impartation by the Holy Spirit of a new holy principle of life. —If this view of the words is correct, there is error in both extremes of which mention has been made. There is no *direct* reference here to Christian baptism; but the reference to the truths which that baptism expresses is distinct and clear.

Early Christian Writers

McGarvey testifies that "The fathers, both Greek and Latin...interpret the passage with singular unanimity." (See his comments under Commentaries).

Justin Martyr

"As many as are persuaded and believe that what we teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly, and instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting, for the remission of their sins that are past, we pray and fast with them. Then they are brought by us where there is water and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated. For, in the name of God, the Father . . . and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water. For Christ also said, 'Unless you are born again, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven'" (*First Apology* 61).

Irenaeus

"'And dipped himself . . . seven times in the Jordan'. It was not for nothing that Naaman of old, when suffering from leprosy, was purified upon his being baptized, but as an indication to us. For as we are lepers in sin, we are made

clean, by means of the sacred water and the invocation of the Lord, from our old transgressions, being spiritually regenerated as newborn babes, even as the Lord has declared: ‘Except a man be born again through water and the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven’” (*Fragment 34*).

Hippolytus

“The Father of immortality sent the immortal Son and Word into the world, who came to man in order to wash him with water and the Spirit; and he, begetting us again to incorruption of soul and body, breathed into us the Spirit of life, and endued us with an incorruptible panoply. If, therefore, man has become immortal, he will also be God. And if he is made God by water and the Holy Spirit after the regeneration of the laver he is found to be also joint-heir with Christ after the resurrection from the dead. Wherefore I preach to this effect: Come, all ye kindreds of the nations, to the immortality of the baptism” (*Discourse on the Holy Theophany 8*).

The Recognitions of Clement

“But you will perhaps say, ‘What does the baptism of water contribute toward the worship of God?’ In the first place, because that which has pleased God is fulfilled. In the second place, because when you are regenerated and born again of water and of God, the frailty of your former birth, which you have through men, is cut off, and so . . . you shall be able to attain salvation; but otherwise it is impossible. For thus has the true prophet testified to us with an oath: ‘Verily, I say to you, that unless a man is born again of water . . . he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven’” (*The Recognitions of Clement 6:9*).

Testimonies Concerning the Jews

“That unless a man have been baptized and born again, he cannot attain unto the kingdom of God. In the Gospel according to John: ‘Except a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God’ Also in the same place: ‘Unless ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye shall not have life in you’ . That it is of small account to be baptized and to receive the Eucharist, unless one profit by it both in deeds and works” (*Testimonies Concerning the Jews 3:2:25–26*).

Cyprian of Carthage

“They receive also the baptism of the Church . . . then finally can they be fully sanctified and be the sons of God . . . since it is written, ‘Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God’” (*Letters 71:1*).

Council of Carthage VII

“And in the gospel our Lord Jesus Christ spoke with his divine voice, saying, ‘Except a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.’ . . . Unless therefore they receive saving baptism in the Catholic Church, which is one, they cannot be saved, but will be condemned with the carnal in the judgment of the Lord Christ” (*Seventh Carthage*).

Cyril of Jerusalem

“Since man is of a twofold nature, composed of body and soul, the purification also is twofold: the corporeal for the corporeal and the incorporeal for the incorporeal. The water cleanses the body, and the Spirit seals the soul. . . . When you go down into the water, then, regard not simply the water, but look for salvation through the power of the Spirit. For without both you cannot attain to perfection. It is not I who says this, but the Lord Jesus Christ, who has the power in this matter. And he says, ‘Unless a man be born again,’ and he adds the words ‘of water and of the Spirit,’ ‘he cannot enter the kingdom of God.’ He that is baptized with water, but is not found worthy of the Spirit, does not receive the grace in perfection. Nor, if a man be virtuous in his deeds, but does not receive the seal by means of the water, shall he enter the kingdom of heaven. A bold saying, but not mine; for it is Jesus who has declared it” (*Catechetical Lectures 3:4*).

Athanasius

“...we are all from earth and die in Adam, so being regenerated from above of water and Spirit, in the Christ we are all quickened” (*Four Discourses Against the Arians 3:26*).

Basil the Great

“This then is what it means to be ‘born again of water and Spirit’: Just as our dying is effected in the water, our living is wrought through the Spirit. In three immersions and an equal number of invocations the great mystery of

baptism is completed in such a way that the type of death may be shown figuratively, and that by the handing on of divine knowledge the souls of the baptized may be illuminated. If, therefore, there is any grace in the water, it is not from the nature of water, but from the Spirit's presence there" (*The Holy Spirit* 15:35).

Ambrose of Milan

"Although we are baptized with water and the Spirit, the latter is much superior to the former, and is not therefore to be separated from the Father and the Son. There are, however, many who, because we are baptized with water and the Spirit, think that there is no difference in the offices of water and the Spirit, and therefore think that they do not differ in nature. Nor do they observe that we are buried in the element of water that we may rise again renewed by the Spirit. For in the water is the representation of death, in the Spirit is the pledge of life, that the body of sin may die through the water, which encloses the body as it were in a kind of tomb, that we, by the power of the Spirit, may be renewed from the death of sin, being born again in God" (*The Holy Spirit* 1:6).

"You have read, therefore, that the three witnesses in baptism are one: water, blood, and the Spirit (1 John 5:8): And if you withdraw any one of these, the sacrament of baptism is not valid. For what is the water without the cross of Christ? A common element with no sacramental effect. Nor on the other hand is there any mystery of regeneration without water, for 'unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God'" (*The Mysteries* 4:20).

"The Church was redeemed at the price of Christ's blood. Jew or Greek, it makes no difference; but if he has believed, he must circumcise himself from his sins so that he can be saved . . . for no one ascends into the kingdom of heaven except through the sacrament of baptism. . . . 'Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God'" (*Abraham* 2:11:79–84).

Gregory of Nyssa

"The birth by water and the Spirit, himself led the way in this birth, drawing down upon the water, by his own baptism, the Holy Spirit; so that in all things he became the firstborn of those who are spiritually born again, and gave the

name of brethren to those who partook in a birth like to his own by water and the Spirit” (*Against Eunomius* 2:8).

John Chrysostom

“No one can enter into the kingdom of heaven except he be regenerated through water and the Spirit, and he who does not eat the flesh of the Lord and drink his blood is excluded from eternal life, and if all these things are accomplished only by means of those holy hands, I mean the hands of the priest, how will any one, without these, be able to escape the fire of hell, or to win those crowns which are reserved for the victorious? These truly are they who are entrusted with the pangs of spiritual travail and the birth which comes through baptism: by their means we put on Christ, and are buried with the Son of God, and become members of that blessed head ” (*The Priesthood* 3:5–6).

Gregory of Nazianz

“Such is the grace and power of baptism; not an overwhelming of the world as of old, but a purification of the sins of each individual, and a complete cleansing from all the bruises and stains of sin. And since we are double-made, I mean of body and soul, and the one part is visible, the other invisible, so the cleansing also is twofold, by water and the Spirit; the one received visibly in the body, the other concurring with it invisibly and apart from the body; the one typical, the other real and cleansing the depths” (*Oration on Holy Baptism* 7–8).

The Apostolic Constitutions

“Be ye likewise contented with one baptism alone, that which is into the death of the Lord . . . that out of contempt will not be baptized shall be condemned as an unbeliever and shall be reproached as ungrateful and foolish. For the Lord says, ‘Except a man be baptized of water and of the Spirit, he shall by no means enter into the kingdom of heaven.’ And again, ‘He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned’” (*Apostolic Constitutions* 6:3:15).

Augustine

“It is this one Spirit who makes it possible for an infant to be regenerated . . . when that infant is brought to baptism; and it is through this one Spirit that the infant so presented is reborn. For it is not written, ‘Unless a man be born again by the will of his parents’ or ‘by the faith of those presenting him or ministering to him,’ but, ‘Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit.’ The water, therefore, manifesting exteriorly the sacrament of grace, and the Spirit effecting interiorly the benefit of grace, both regenerate in one Christ that man who was generated in Adam” (*Letters* 98:2).

“Those who, though they have not received the washing of regeneration, die for the confession of Christ—it avails them just as much for the forgiveness of their sins as if they had been washed in the sacred font of baptism. For he that said, ‘If anyone is not reborn of water and the Spirit, he will not enter the kingdom of heaven,’ made an exception for them in that other statement in which he says no less generally, ‘Whoever confesses me before men, I too will confess him before my Father, who is in heaven’” (*The City of God* 13:7).

Recommended Reading:

What Does It Mean to Be a Born Again Christian?

Wayne Jackson

<https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/115-what-does-it-mean-to-be-a-born-again-christian>

The ONE Baptism – What Is It?

Robert Waters

www.totalhealth.bz/spiritual-health-one-baptism.htm

Baptism Saves, but Not Water (1 Peter 3:21)

www.totalhealth.bz/spiritual-health-baptism-saves.htm

[Robert Waters](#)

The New Birth (John 3:1-21)

Mark Copeland

www.executableoutlines.com/jn/jn3_1.htm

“Redemption,” “Salvation,” “Justification,” and “Sanctification” – Word Study (Is James 2:24, “by works a man is justified, and not by faith only,” not applicable to getting saved?)

Four words come to mind when we think of receiving the greatest benefit man can obtain from God: Redemption, Salvation, Justification, and Sanctification. These words are synonymous, i.e., they mean the same or nearly the same. Yet some have labored to make a huge distinction when considering the word “justified,” as used in James 2:24. They assert that James’ statement is not applicable to what is involved in becoming a Christian, but that James’ unequivocal statement is applicable only to those who were saved at the point of faith, i.e., by “faith only.” Let us test this assertion as we look at each of the terms noted above.

Redemption

Col 1:14 **“In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:”**
ap-ol-oo'-tro-sis

From a compound of G575 and G3083; (the act) *ransom* in full, that is, (figuratively) *riddance*, or (specifically) Christian *salvation*: - deliverance, redemption.

Redeemed, Redeemed

loo-tro'-o

From G3083; to *ransom* (literally or figuratively): - redeem.

Revelation 5:9 **“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;”**

Titus 2:14 **“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”**

Strong: to *ransom* (literally or figuratively).

Comments: All Bible believers admit that Christ’s blood is involved in being saved. Thus, when one is saved, he is at that moment redeemed. Strong states that “salvation” is the point at which one is “delivered,” i.e., from sin.

Salvation

sōtēria

so-tay-ree'-ah

Feminine of a derivative of G4990 as (properly abstract) noun; *rescue* or *safety* (physically or morally): - deliver, health, salvation, save, saving.

Hebrews 5:9 **And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;**

Romans 1:16 **For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God.” unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.**

2 Timothy 2:10 **Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.**

2 Corinthians 7:10 **For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.**

Romans 10:10 **For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.**

Acts 4:12 **Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.**

Comments: From the above passages it is evident that salvation is in Christ, that there is salvation in no other name, and that obedience follows “godly sorrow,” repentance and confession, which is merely “to,” or in the direction of, salvation. If these passages are to be believed, the Bible does not teach salvation at the point of faith.

Justification, Justified

dik-ah'-yo-sis

From G1344; *acquittal* (for Christ's sake): - justification.

Romans 4:25 **Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.**

Thayer: “the act of God declaring men free from guilt and acceptable to him”

Justified

dik-ah-yo'-o

From G1342; to *render* (that is, *show* or *regard* as) *just* or *innocent*: - free, justify (-ier), be righteous.

Acts 13:39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

Romans 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

Romans 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

Galatians 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Galatians 3:11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is evident*: for, The just shall live by faith.

Galatians 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

Galatians 5:4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Comments: In the above passages, Paul is addressing a problem the Galatians had with the Law of Moses. He was not addressing works, as related to God's conditions for salvation. Rather, he was concerned about Christians seeking to be justified by the Law of Moses, which was replaced by the "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25), or the Law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). Furthermore, Paul said "the things I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37). Believers in Christ, as opposed to believers in the Law, are "justified." The justification is through faith rather than deeds of the Law. When one is initially saved, as described by Paul (Rom. 6:3-4, 17-18), he is then justified by God whose grace is bestowed upon him. It is because of faith that God justifies an individual, but it is not at the point of faith. This is evident because of the two examples we are given on this point: John 12:42; James 2:19.

Romans 2:13 For not the hearers of the law *are* just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

Comments: In the above passage Paul cannot be referring to the Law of Moses, for such would be a contradiction of what he taught elsewhere. He and James are in agreement about the need to be a doer, and not just a hearer, to be justified.

Romans 5:1 *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*

Romans 5:9 *Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

Romans 8:30 *Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

1 Corinthians 6:11 *And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

Romans 4:4 *Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. 6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, 7 Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. 8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*

Barnes Commentary:

“But to him that worketh not” - Who does not rely on his conformity to the Law for his justification; who does not depend on his works; who seeks to be justified in some other way. The reference here is to the Christian plan of justification.

Comments: Indeed, for such would result in falling from grace (Gal. 5:4). The latter part of the above passages is referring to imperfect Christians who are continually cleansed by the blood as they *“walk in the light”* (1 John 1:7).

A man is justified by faith as opposed to works of the Law of Moses, which was never possible. When one is saved by Christ’s blood, which happens when one becomes a Christian, he is then *“justified by his blood”* (Rom. 5:9 above). Therefore, the word

“justification” is applicable to being saved and cannot be limited to works after being saved. This means the following passage, which speaks against the doctrine of “faith only,” cannot be dismissed using the argument that justification has nothing to do with becoming a Christian.

James 2:24 **Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.**

Sanctified

hag-ee-ad'-zo

From G40; to *make holy*, that is, (ceremonially) *purify* or *consecrate*; (mentally) to *venerate*: - hallow, be holy, sanctify.

John 17:17 **Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.**

Ephesians 5:25 **Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,**

Clark Commentary:

“With the washing of water” - Baptism, accompanied by the purifying influences of the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 10:10 **By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.**

Conclusion:

When a proper candidate for baptism is immersed in water he then rises to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4), and he is justified, redeemed, saved, and sanctified. Thus, the argument that James 2:24, which unequivocally states that “a man is justified by works, and not faith only,” is not talking about initial salvation but only the man's life thereafter, is erroneous. These “works” are not works of the Law but action on the part of the believer in meeting God’s conditions or requirements.

Things Involved in Salvation

Many seem to be having a problem with determining the steps involved in salvation. Look at it this way: Only Jesus saves, but this just means no one else can. It does not mean Jesus will save you based upon only one thing, such as acknowledgment that Jesus is your personal savior. **“The devils also believe, and tremble”** (Jas. 2:19).

27 Things Involved in Salvation:

1. God. **“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth”** (Rom 8:33, ALSO John 3:16).
2. Jesus. **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”** (John 3:16).
3. Holy Spirit. **“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God”** (1 Cor 6:11).
4. Faith. **“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”** (Heb 11:6).
5. The Word. **“Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls”** (James 1:21).
6. Preaching. **“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe”** (1 Cor 1:21).
7. Hearing. **“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”** (Rom 10:17).
8. Repentance. **“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death”** (2 Cor 7:10).
9. Confession. **“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”** (Rom 10:10).

10. Baptism. “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: 19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; 20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. 21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:” (1 Peter 3:18-21).

Acts 2:38 “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

Mark 16:15 “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;”

11. Grace. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:” (Eph 2:8).

12. Mercy. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;” (Titus 3:5).

13. Love. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

14. Jesus' Blood. “Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself” (Heb 7:27).

Rom 5:9 “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”

15. Jesus' Life. “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Rom 5:10).

16. Jesus' Death. “And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.16

For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator” (Heb 9:15-16).

Col 1:21- “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled 22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:”

1 Peter 3:18 “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:”

17. Gospel. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16).

Rom 6:17 “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. 18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.”

18. Doing the will of the Lord. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt 7:21-23).

19. Being Righteous. “For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:20).

20. Enduring to the end. “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Matt 10:22).

21. Calling on the name of the Lord. “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21).

22. Doctrine. “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Tim 4:16).

23. Turning a sinner from the error of his way. “Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (James 5:20).

24. The name of Jesus. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

25. Childbearing. “Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety” (1 Tim 2:15).

26. Obedience. “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. 18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness” (Rom 6:17).

Col 1:23 “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;”

27. Truth. “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; 32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32).

"Born-Again Christian"

There are many in this world who claim to be a "born-again Christian." They hold to the concept that any who believe in Jesus are "born again" and a part of the body of Christ. Let us notice some troubles this presents to the typical member of a denomination.

First, the term "born-again Christian" is redundant. [When someone on the late-night *Johnny Carson Show* said he was a "born-again Christian," Carson said, "I did not know there was any other kind." r.w.] There is no such thing as a "not born-again Christian." Anyone who is a Christian has been born again, and anyone who has been born again is a Christian. Peter addressed his audience as those who had "been born again" (1 Pet. 1:23).

Second, the term "born-again Christian" is chiefly based upon John 3:3-5: "Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus said to Him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.'" Please read that again.

Jesus said that to "enter the kingdom of God" one must be born again. The denominationalist says that the kingdom was postponed until a future time. He says that Christ established His church, not the kingdom. Yet, the denominationalist will claim to be born again—born of the water and Spirit. How can one be born again, according to Jesus' declaration, and NOT be a member of the kingdom? Something is amiss here.

If the kingdom has not been established, then no one can be a member of it now; and thus no one has been born again, for the new birth puts one in the kingdom. Peter declared that some were born again (1 Pet. 1:23). Also, if people have been born again, then the kingdom does exist, and the premillennial doctrine of a postponed kingdom is false. Paul affirmed the establishment of the kingdom when he wrote, "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Col. 1:13).

How is one "born again"? Jesus said one must be "born of water and the Spirit" (Jn. 3:5). A study of God's word will reveal that this new birth comes by heeding the Spirit's word to be "baptized into Christ" and arise to "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4). Without

being baptized for the remission of sins, it is impossible to be born again (cf. Acts 2:38).
Have you truly been born again?

- Steven F. Deaton

Fifty-Four Translations of Acts 2:38

Below are fifty-four translations that do not render (in any way, form, shape, or fashion) Acts 2:38 in a way that resembles the assertion that it means "because your sins have already been forgiven." On Pentecost, AD 33, many Jews were gathered, and the apostles of Christ had the opportunity to speak to them. The message was JESUS (the Lord and Savior), who was mercilessly slain upon the cross by the Jews at the hands of the Romans. The text tells us that many of the hearers were "pricked in the heart" and asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" The answer? "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." It is sad that many preachers are not preaching this truth. They have, one way or another, come to believe and teach that God has not given any conditions to be saved, other than faith, and that baptism is just an "outward sign of an inward grace" or that it is merely a "symbol of salvation."

1. **American Bible Union Version** - unto the remission of your sins
2. **Amplified NT** - for the forgiveness of your sins
3. **Anderson** - in order to the remission of your sins
4. **Authentic (Schomfield)** - for the forgiveness of your sins
5. **Authorized Version (KJV)** - for the remission of sins
6. **Berry's Interlinear** - for remission of sins
7. **Centenary Translation** - for the remission of sins
8. **Challomer Rheims** - for the forgiveness of sins
9. **Douay** - for the remission of sins
10. **Emphasized Version** - into the remission of sins
11. **Emphatic Diaglot** - for the remission of sins
12. **English Revised** - unto the remission of sins
13. **Englishman's Greek NT** - for the remission of sins
14. **Ferrar Fenton** - for the remission of sins
15. **First German Bible** - for (in order to, unto) the forgiveness
16. **French Translation** - in order to obtain the remission of sins
17. **Geneva Bible** - for the remission of sins
18. **German Translation** - (for, unto) in order to forgiveness of sins
19. **Good News for Modern Man** - in order to have your sins forgiven
20. **Goodspeed** - in order to have your sins forgiven
21. **Hackett (commentary)** - in order to the forgiveness of sins
22. **Haweis (1795 AD)** - for the remission of your sins

23. **Indian Translation** - in order to the forgiveness of sins
24. **Italian Translation** - into the remission of sins
25. **Jerusalem Bible** - for the forgiveness of your sins
26. **Knox** - to have your sins forgiven
27. **Literal Translation (Young)** - to the remission of sins
28. **Living Bible** - for the forgiveness of sins
29. **Living Oracles** - in order to the remission of sins
30. **Macknight's Translation** - in order to the remission of sins
31. **Modern English** - for a release of your sins
32. **Modern Speech** - with a view to the remission of sins
33. **Moffatt** - for the remission of sins
34. **H.B. Montgomery (1924)** - for the remission of your sins
35. **Moulton's Modern Reader's** - unto remission of sins
36. **New American Standard** - for the remission of your sins
37. **New Catholic Version** - for the forgiveness of sins
38. **New English Bible** - for the forgiveness of your sins
39. **New International Version** - for the forgiveness of your sins
40. **New King James Version** - for the remission of sins
41. **New World Translation** - for the forgiveness of sins
42. **NT in the Basic English** - for the forgiveness of sins
43. **Phillips Modern English** - so that you may have your sins forgiven
44. **Revised Standard Version** - for the forgiveness of your sins
45. **Rothermham** - unto the remission of your sins
46. **Spanish Translation** - for the purpose of remission of your sins
47. **Syriac Version** - for the remission of sins
48. **Twentieth Century Translation** - for the forgiveness of your sins
49. **Verkuyl (Burkeley Version)** - for the remission of sins
50. **Warrell's Translation** - unto remission of your sins
51. **Wesley's Translation** - for the remission of sins
52. **Weymouth** - for the remission of your sins
53. **Williams** - that your sins may be forgiven
54. **Wycliffe (1308)** - into the remission of youre synnes

Does the Thief on the Cross Prove One Does Not Have to Be Baptized?

Rather than accept and obey a condition that God has made for being added to the number of the saved (Acts 2:38, 47; Gal. 3:27; 1 Cor. 12:13), some first ask about the thief on the cross. Often this is presented as an argument for the idea that a person is saved at the point of faith and that baptism is not necessary. Let's look at the Scriptures to see if this is a valid argument.

First, the thief may have been baptized—the Scriptures do not say. However, we are told **“And all the people that heard *him*, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John”** (Luke 7:29). But it not necessary to prove whether the thief was baptized to explain the situation to be in harmony with the Bible's teaching regarding conditions to be saved.

Second, Jesus could forgive sins, which He did on occasion. **“The Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins”** (Luke 5:24). The Bible presents four examples of Jesus's forgiving sins without baptism's being mentioned: 1) The Palsied Man (Luke 5:18-26); 2) The Penitent Woman (Luke 7:36-50); 3) The Publican Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10); and 4) **“The Thief on the Cross”** (Luke 23:39-43). Regarding each of these, it is important to note that the Old Testament was in force at the time; therefore, examples of conversion that would be applicable to us today would need to be found AFTER the cross.

Third, Jesus gave the great commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:45-47), which commanded disciples to go **“into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”** (Mark 16:15, 16). This preaching began after the cross in the new dispensation—the Christian Age. It was a new testament (will) that would become effective after the death of Jesus (**“For a testament is of force after men are dead,”** Heb. 9:17). Conditions were set forth: believe, repent and be baptized. An applicable example of conversion would therefore be that of Saul (the apostle Paul).

Saul was known and feared as one who persecuted Christians. Yet God chose him because of his learning and status to be the person to have the biggest impact on reaching Jews with the teaching of Jesus. When on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians, Saul met Jesus and the light blinded him. It is related that **“He trembling and astonished said, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do”** (Acts 9:1-12; 22:12-16). We must observe that in this instance Jesus did not forgive sins the same way He had done before the cross.

Saul believed in Jesus after he met Him, but Saul was not yet saved. Saul repented after speaking with Jesus; yet he remained unsaved. The Scriptures tell us that he went three days without food, praying during those three days; yet he was not saved. He saw a vision, and he still was not saved.

As promised by the Lord, someone would tell Saul what he must do. Ananias was that man who told him, **“And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”** This “calling” was/is evidently not a prayer, for, as we know, Saul had already prayed. The “calling” is simply an appeal to God for forgiveness and a clear conscience to follow. This harmonizes with 1 Peter 3:21 (GW) **“Baptism, which is like that water, now saves you. Baptism doesn't save by removing dirt from the body. Rather, baptism is a request to God for a clear conscience. It saves you through Jesus Christ, who came back from death to life.”**

When discussing the gospel plan of salvation, some are heard to say, “I’m satisfied with being saved like the thief on the cross.” That would be nice, I suppose, if it could be done. Unfortunately, things have changed. Jesus is not present now, as He was for the thief, and the New Testament, which requires baptism, is now in force. But one can be saved like Saul or like the Jews on Pentecost (Acts 2:38). He can then go on his way rejoicing like the Ethiopian Eunuch, who obeyed the gospel, which is God’s plan of salvation. **“And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing”** (Act 8:39).

How Can a Christian Know That He Is Saved?

This is a great question, but before seeking the answer one needs to first determine what the Bible says regarding whether it is even possible to know that we are saved.

2 Timothy 4:6-8 “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished [my] course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

1 John 5:13 “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

From the above we learn that Paul was certain that he was saved, and from John’s words we see that it is possible, by reading the word of God, to know if we have eternal life.

Everyone who believes that it is possible to stand justified before God—confident that heaven awaits after death—should be very much interested in learning how he can obtain that confidence. In his first epistle, John tells us, “**And by this we know him, if we keep his commandments**” (1 Jn. 2:3). To what does this passage refer? To obedience to the Ten Commandments, or to a life of sinless perfection? I was once asked, “If I keep the Ten Commandments will I make it to Heaven?” Only nine of the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament are taught in the New Testament; but even if all ten were taught, we would still have to say that there is much more to living the Christian life than keeping those commandments.

The New Testament is better than the Old Testament because under it there was a remembrance of sin every year (Heb. 10:3). The New Testament is not a book of “Thou shalt not’s”; it is called “*The law of the Spirit of life,*” whereas the Old Testament is called “*the law of sin and death*” (Rom. 8:2; 2 Cor. 3:6). Paul wrote, “**If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord**” (1 Cor. 14:37). He also penned, “**And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully**” (2 Tim 2:5). The commandments of Christ include everything that the New Testament teaches relative to

personal responsibility. We must endeavor to follow Christ's law ("strive lawfully") before we can reasonably expect to receive the "crown."

The above is more than sufficient to refute the idea held by some professed Christians that since we are "under grace" there is no law for us to follow. Such a declaration exhibits one's ignorance of the Scriptures, for which he should be firmly rebuked and branded as a heretic if he continues to promote this false notion. The kingdom of Christ is not a lawless community, and obedience is integral and fundamental to staying in God's graces.

From reading the Scriptures it is evident that one can know if he is in a saved condition. But before discussing how we can know we are saved, let's look at some false ideas upon which many base their spiritual security.

Some look to their own feelings (emotions) for evidence that they are in God's graces. Sadly, they make no appeal to the Bible—their feelings are, to them, enough. But what the Bible says about "feelings" is contrary to this popular belief. The wise man said, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered" (Prov. 28:26). Again, he said, "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise" (Prov. 12:15). Since feelings can be deceptive it is essential that we look to the scriptures to determine whether we are saved or not.

God made an example of a young prophet who disobeyed Him because he believed a man who said he was a prophet and that God had told him that he (the young prophet) could do a certain thing that God had previously forbidden (1 Kings 5:13). The young man felt that he was right, but his *feelings* proved to be deceptive. If a prophet could be deceived, anyone can. Everyone has feelings and it is good to have a good feeling of confidence or to have spiritual security, but feelings alone are no proof of being in God's graces.

Some base their spiritual security on their good church attendance record. While it is essential that we do not forsake the assemblies (Heb. 10:25), a perfect record of attendance over the last ten years or even fifty years is no proof of salvation. Irregular attendance may well be evidence of unfaithfulness, but attendance is no proof of faithfulness.

One cannot be assured that he is *in a saved condition* simply because he has rendered much service in the past. We are taught to continue to be *faithful unto death* (Rev. 2:10) and that we are to bear fruit, not just when young but in our old age as well. The writer of Psalms, when speaking of the righteous, said, "They shall still bring forth fruit in old

age; they shall be fat and flourishing” (Psa. 92:14). Thus, if a man convinces himself that past deeds will save him, he is deceiving himself.

The only criteria that we have for judging one’s spiritual condition is by the fruit that is brought forth. Jesus said:

Matt. 7:15-20 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Jesus knew that false teachers would arise, so he warned the disciples about them and then told them how to recognize false teachers—how to tell them from the true ones. But His message did not stop there. Note that He said “*every good tree bringeth forth good fruit.*” This tells us that a Christian is not on safe ground unless he/she is active in good fruits.

The reader may be thinking about “judging,” having heard it said that judging is a bad thing. Some judging is bad, but the only kind of judging that is condemned is when we go beyond that which we are allowed. We can tell by one's fruit (including our own fruits, if honest) whether one is living as a Christian should. But we are not the Judge; we merely use this criterion to help in carrying out our responsibilities—this judgment is not final (1 Cor. 5:12).

“*Reproving*” is akin to “*judging*,” and it is something that we are taught to do. Before we can reprove anyone, we must first judge that what the person is doing, or failing to do, is wrong (sin). If one is overtaken in a fault, those who are spiritual have the responsibility to try to restore him (Gal. 6:1). It would be useless to try to restore someone without getting the message to him that he is in error. When we do, he may accuse us of “*judging*” and not receive it in the spirit given; but we still have that responsibility, and he is wrong if he goes on the defensive. When we judge ourselves or another, the judgment is to be based solely upon the *fruit* that is brought forth.

It should be understood by all that 1 John 1:7 is a key to not only whether one can know he is saved, but also the question of whether one can cease to be in a saved condition. First, we have the word “if” to consider. This little word makes it plain that one must

“walk in the light” to be cleansed of all sin by the blood of Christ. (Note that it says “all sin.” This would include various categories of sins, like sins of ignorance and sins committed inadvertently, etc.).

We are assured that if we **"walk in the light,"** we are **"cleansed of all sin by the blood"** (1 John 1:6-7). Unfortunately, some have failed to see and understand that the cleansing promised is continuous. They get hung up on verse 9 of the chapter and insist that every sin must be confessed, which means it must be recognized and turned from. But that is not the intended message. Yes, verse 9 teaches us to confess our sins, but this we do as opposed to denying them. The idea that the blood does not cover sins that we do not learn about and confess is not taught here, for it would contradict what was taught a couple of verses previous as well as other passages on the issue. Furthermore, because all commit sin (Rom. 3:23; 1 John 1:8-10), the idea prevents any honest Christian from having assurance that he is in God’s graces.

Let us now discuss what it means to “walk in the light.” To **"walk in the light"** is to **"practice the truth"**. Compare this to the situation of a physician who “practices medicine.” He makes mistakes, but each mistake does not automatically remove him from his practice. Yet if he boldly ignores the protocol and arrogantly and presumptuously commits flagrant violations, his license will likely be revoked.

Jesus said, **"For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit."** He wasn't saying, for example, that a bad orange tree can never have a good orange, nor was He saying that there can never be a bad orange on a good orange tree. He was simply saying that the way we tell whether a tree is a good tree or not is by the fruit (used in the plural sense), or the general character of the tree. No one is going to cut down an apple tree just because it has a few blemishes on an apple now and then. But if the fruit is no good, and there is no hope of a change after taking corrective measures, like “dunging” (Luke 13:8), the tree should be chopped down. Understand that a tree doesn't have to bear bad fruit to be a bad tree; if it simply doesn't bear fruit, it is still cut down. Please don’t miss the point. What is said above about fruit trees is applicable to the Christian and his fruits.

When the apostle Paul made the statement that he had **"fought a good fight"** and that he had **"kept the faith,"** he spoke of his *fruits*. He said, **"I have fought a good fight."** That is, he didn't serve Christ halfheartedly but was a true fighter. He **"kept the faith,"** i.e., he never turned from it but kept his faith the whole time.

When we talk about how much effort we must put forth in our service to God, we often hear it said that "God expects us to do our best." But then we are faced with the

question, "What IS our best?" We don't know what our best is! And I really doubt that there are any who always do their best. Sometime or another we all fall short of the best that we could do. What does the Bible say regarding this point? It teaches that we are to be DILIGENT. Webster defines "diligent" as, "*characterized by steady, earnest, and energetic application and effort: Painstaking; syn. Busy.*"

Passages that teach diligence:

Hebrews 11:6 **But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.**

2 Peter 3:14 **Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.**

2 Peter 1:5 **And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;....**

Proverbs 4:23 **Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.**

Philippians 3:13-14 **Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.**

Paul used the phrase "*I press toward the mark*" (Phi. 3:13). One who wins in a race is one who presses toward the mark—he is diligent in his effort to fight to win. One who runs in a race must abide by the rules (*strive lawfully*, 2 Tim. 2:5) if he is to win; otherwise he is disqualified. This sometimes happens, but not every encroachment upon the rules is judged to be worthy of disqualification.

Paul was clear about what is necessary to continue in God's graces, but Peters' words (2 Peter 1:2-11) are very comforting and simply cannot easily be misunderstood.

2 Peter 1:2 **Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, 3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: 4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world**

through lust. 5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; 7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. 8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither *be* barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. 10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: 11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

In the above text Peter lists behaviors Christians need to be diligent in developing. He concludes with the promise that if we follow his instructions we will never fall and an entrance into the everlasting kingdom is assured. When we consider this text, along with previous teachings from God's word above, it should be apparent to all that spiritual security can be had by imperfect humans. Of course, this is limited to those who have obeyed the gospel (Rom. 10:16) to become a child of God, and who then are diligent in service as they "*walk in the light*" with full assurance of being continuously cleansed of all sin by the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7; Rom. 6:3-4, 17-18).

Conclusion

We can understand that it is possible to know we are saved and, thus, whether we are saved. But this involves self-examination, which is a command of God. "*Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith, prove yourselves*" (2 Cor. 13:5). It takes an honest heart for one to see himself as he really is. The devil wants us not to admit to ourselves that anything we do is sin. If we are not honest with ourselves then we deceive ourselves. Jesus spoke of some who did this very thing.

Revelation 3:17 *Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:*

If we rightly divide and study the word, are honest with ourselves, worship in spirit and truth, and bear *the fruit of the Spirit*, we can be confident that we are walking in the light, which results in continuous removal of sins, and that we will receive the eternal reward as we continue to "*press toward the mark.*"

THE BIBLICAL T.U.L.I.P.
BY RYAN HICKS

T.U.L.I.P. is the acronym used by Calvinists (followers of the teachings of John Calvin) to teach the five main points of Calvinism. It was not made by John Calvin as it is commonly assumed, but by his followers. The following chart shows what the T.U.L.I.P. stands for and gives a brief explanation of each doctrine.

T	Total Hereditary Depravity	Babies inherit the sin of Adam. They inherit both his guilt and pollution from sin; thus they are totally depraved. Being totally depraved makes one wholly unable to respond to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.
U	Unconditional Election	(Also called "Predestination") God chose in the beginning who would be saved and who would be damned. Personal responses to God and His grace have nothing to do with God's choice. It was solely a choice of His Divine Will.
L	Limited Atonement	Christ did not die for all men, rather only for those that were "elected" or "predestined" in the beginning. Thus His atonement is limited only to those chosen by God, and all others God has predestined for hell, regardless of their desire for salvation.
I	Irresistible Grace	God, by the Holy Spirit, recreates those He elected and gives them the ability to believe. Thus God saves them before they believe or even desire the gospel and salvation. God's grace is irresistible and sinners are saved without any action or belief on their part solely because God elected them. Those elected may be no different from others He damns, but His

		Will alone determines their fate.
P	Perseverance of the Saints	Once one is saved he is always saved. This is also called "Unconditional Eternal Security." The child of God will persevere unto full redemption, and no amount of sin, rebellion, or hatred of God and His ways can stop it because it is God's Will.

Biblically, each and every one of these doctrines is false. There is no reconciling these teachings with the Bible, but the acronym and the titles are biblical as long as the right teaching is behind them. A biblical T.U.L.I.P:

T	Total Hereditary Depravity	No one inherits the sin of Adam or anyone else's guilt and/or pollution for sin (See Original Sin). We could call some men's depravity "hereditary" in the sense that they become spiritual children of the devil after they commit sin and they inherit the sin nature from the devil's family upon their first choice to sin. They inherit both guilt and pollution from their <u>own</u> sin; thus they are totally depraved. This must be limited to their inherited sin natures (not at birth, but at their first choice to sin) and not expanded to their ability to make wise decisions (such as the decision to be saved from their sin).
U	Unconditional Election	(Also called " Predestination ") God chose in the beginning who would be saved and who would be damned. By His choice, anyone who chooses to obey the gospel and repent will be saved. All who refuse the gospel and salvation will be damned. Thus God predestined that all can be saved if they will simply believe. His election is unconditionally offered to all men (John 3:16; Romans 10:13; Titus 2:11; 2 Peter 3:9).
L	Limited Atonement	Christ died for all men. His atonement is unlimited in relation to its availability to all men, but is limited in that only a few will choose it (Matthew 7:13-14; 20:16; 22:14).

I	Irresistible Grace	God's grace is irresistible to those who are seeking the Lord and His ways. It is not irresistible to hardhearted sinners (Acts 7:51).
P	Perseverance of the Saints	As long as one perseveres and remains in Christ and His love by keeping His commandments, he will stay saved (Matthew 10:22; John 14:15; 1 John 2:3-6).

As you can see, the Bible's teaching is a stark contradiction of the false teaching of Calvinism's T.U.L.I.P. A few clear points are:

1. Calvinism makes God into a respecter of persons, while the Bible says He is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11; Ephesians 6:9; 1 Peter 1:17).
2. Calvinism teaches that God's grace is available only to a chosen few, while the Bible plainly teaches it is available to all men (John 3:16, 6:37; Romans 10:13; 1 Timothy 2:4; Titus 2:11; 2 Peter 3:9; Rev. 22:17).
3. Calvinism teaches that God's grace is 100% irresistible, while the Holy Spirit, through His word, teaches that not only can His grace be resisted, but even the Giver of the grace can be resisted (Acts 7:51).
4. Calvinism teaches that Christ died for a few called the elect, while the Bible teaches that Christ died for all.
5. Calvinism teaches that man is totally depraved and cannot even choose to be saved, while the Bible teaches that men must choose of their own will to be saved (Matthew 16:24; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 13:3, 5; John 3:15-16, 6:37; Revelation 22:17).
6. Calvinism teaches that one can never forfeit his salvation, but will remain saved no matter what wickedness and hate for God he has in his heart, while the Bible teaches that men can, and have, forfeited their eternal salvation by committing sin (Deuteronomy 32:15-25; Psalm 51; Ezekiel 18; John 15:6, 10; Galatians 5:4; Hebrews 6:4-6, 10:26-31, 12:14; 2 Peter 2; 2 John 1:9; Jude 12-13; Revelation 3:5).

Let us always put the Bible first and be quick to reject any of man's traditions and theology that is not backed up by plain scriptures (Matthew 18:16; 2 Corinthians 13:1). You will find that most of men's theories cannot even be backed up by one scripture taken out of context, much less two plain scriptures. You will always be on safe ground in your spiritual knowledge if you prove and test everything by the Bible.

Living Life Without Fear and Worry

Are you concerned, maybe even WORRIED, about health, finances, your freedom or even your life? Many are concerned about such things, but it is not good and can be controlled, no matter the situation. Defeating worry may be impossible for some, but not for those who put their trust in God. He does not want his children to worry. God commands us not to fear, or to worry. The phrase “fear not” is used sixty-three times in the KJV, most likely because God knows the devil uses fear to decrease our hope and limit our victories. In Matthew 6:25-34, the command “do not worry” is found three times (NIV). The antithesis is to become content. The Hebrew writer commands: “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake you” (Heb. 13:5). Paul wrote, “Never worry about anything, but in every situation let your petitions be made known to God in prayers and requests, with thanksgiving. Then God's peace, which goes far beyond anything we can imagine, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (Phi. 4:6-9 ISV). And he stated to the Philippians, “Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (4:11). Finally, to Timothy he wrote, “And having food and raiment let us be therewith content” (1 Tim. 6:8).

Ancient Israel enjoyed God’s guidance and protection if they put their confidence in Him. No enemy could prevail—not even mighty Egypt when Israel was militarily defenseless. But when they turned away and put their trust in false gods, their enemies inflicted great punishment.

There is no promise in the Bible that Christians will not receive hard times and persecution, or even be killed by evil people. We have examples in the New Testament showing that calamities and tribulations sometimes befall Christians. And we know that those who “live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12 WRKJV). But Christians have something unbelievers do not have. We have HOPE of eternal life with God in heaven (Col. 1:5). Some who claim to believe in God, but not Jesus, THINK they have hope, but only Jesus proved Himself to be God’s divine Son, and only the Bible has passed the test for inspiration (John 20:30-31). Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). Indeed, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12 NIV).

Are you looking for what you can do for God? He has a use for you in His kingdom and He rewards those who “diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6). But it is up to you to find your place in God’s kingdom and to develop your skills and abilities that you might reach worthy goals. If you have obeyed the gospel and are bearing fruit ([John 15:5-8](#); [Romans 12:1-2](#)) then you are in His graces and can enjoy His protection. If you are not looking to Him for protection and guidance then He probably has no need for you, which means your worries are warranted. But if you remain faithful in Him you should have no worries, and as you journey through this short life you can enjoy contentment, joy and hope.

Instead of worrying about your health, finances, or your life you should be looking for salvation in Christ (found in the New Testament) and for what you can do in God’s kingdom. When you learn to “trust and obey” and to be content with the things you have, then you will have conquered worry.

“Trust and Obey”

- 1 When we walk with the Lord
In the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way;
While we do His good will,
He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.

Refrain:

Trust and obey,
For there’s no other way
To be happy in Jesus,
But to trust and obey.

- 2 Not a shadow can rise,
Not a cloud in the skies,
But His smile quickly drives it away;
Not a doubt or a fear,
Not a sigh or a tear,
Can abide while we trust and obey. [Refrain]
- 3 Not a burden we bear,
Not a sorrow we share,
But our toil He doth richly repay;
Not a grief or a loss,
Not a frown or a cross,
But is blest if we trust and obey. [Refrain]
- 4 But we never can prove
The delights of His love,

Until all on the altar we lay;
For the favor He shows,
And the joy He bestows,
Are for them who will trust and obey. [Refrain]

- 5 Then in fellowship sweet
We will sit at His feet,
Or we'll walk by His side in the way;
What He says we will do;
Where He sends, we will go,
Never fear, only trust and obey. [Refrain]

"O, the Things We May Do"

1. Have you lifted a stone from your brother's way,
As he struggled along life's road?
Have you lovingly touched some frail, toil worn hand,
Shared with someone his heavy load?

Refrain:

O, the things we may do, you and I, you and I;
O, the love we can give if we try;
Just a word or a song as we're passing along,
They will count in the great by and by.

2. Have you spoken a word full of hope and cheer?
Have you walked with a slower pace,
Till the weary of heart who were stumbling on,
Took new courage to run the race? [Refrain]

3. Have you held up your light thro' the shadows dark,
So that somebody else might see?
Have you lived with the Christ thro' the long, long day,
Gaining many a victory? [Refrain]

Related passages for further study:

Deut. 4:9, 11:22-28, 28:1-7; 2 Pet. 3:14

You Might Need to Heed This Warning

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness (James 3:1, ESV).

Barnes Commentary:

My brethren, be not many masters - "Be not many of you teachers." The evil referred to is that where many desired to be teachers, though but few could be qualified for the office, and though, in fact, comparatively few were required. A small number, well qualified, would better discharge the duties of the office, and do more good, than many would; and there would be great evil in having many crowding themselves unqualified into the office.

Much of the religious error among "Christian churches" is due to people's becoming teachers contrary to the above command. They wanted to be teachers but did not want to first qualify themselves for the task.

But knowledge of truth is not the only concern of James. In the same chapter we see that he addresses the tongue. Many should not become teachers until they are able to control their tongue, or pin in the Internet world. There are too many teachers on the Web that seem to think that being rude and even offensive are acceptable tactics to use in teaching, which is often nothing more than evil tactics to defend tradition. Whether such actions are designed to teach or just to defend a particular doctrine, they do more harm than good. Proverbs 15:1 (CEV): states: "A kind answer soothes angry feelings, but harsh words stir them up."

The Internet is a great place to study, teach and defend the truth. However, more good is accomplished when group owners and moderators set proper examples and discipline those who do not behave themselves properly.

WORSHIP—VAIN, IGNORANT, OR TRUE?

At least three different kinds of worship are mentioned in the New Testament, and God disapproves of two of them. Many believe that God accepts all praise and worship. The idea is that if it pleases us then it must please God. However, God will accept only worship that He has determined.

Let's look to the Scriptures as we examine these three types of worship to see if we can gain a clear understanding of what God will accept.

I. Vain Worship

Matthew 15:1-9

Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, 2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. 3 But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? 4 For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. 5 But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; 6 And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. 7 Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, 8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. 9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

The scribes and Pharisees' traditions had supplanted the commandment of God (v. 6). These hypocrites were nullifying God's law by observing their man-made laws instead. By substituting their selfish desire for God's moral right to legislate, they became hypocrites in their worship and God would not accept it! Jesus' reply showed where man's commitment must be—to God.

II. Ignorant Worship

Acts 17:22-31

Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. 23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye **ignorantly worship**, him declare I unto you. 24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; 25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; 26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; 27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: 28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. 29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. 30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: 31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Although these people were religious, their service was not pleasing to the true God of heaven. They had neither knowledge of what God wanted nor who God was! Their worship centered on the physical and was not according to what God had revealed to man. Well-intentioned people go in wrong directions because they are ignorant of the truth.

III. True Worship

John 4:23-24

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Jesus had just taught the Samaritan woman about worship that is pleasing to God. Through example, God teaches us how to worship Him— in the proper spirit and in truth. This means with sincerity, from the heart, and according to God's will in the New Testament. True worship consists of two elements, spirit and truth, and they are of equal importance.

True worship cannot be found by looking in the Old Testament where burning incense, instrumental music, and animal sacrifices were practiced. Jesus abolished “The law of commandments contained in ordinances” (Eph. 2:14-15). So where must we look to learn how to worship in truth?

From studying the New Testament, we find that five acts of worship are authorized for Christians to engage in when they “come together into one place” (1 Cor. 14:23): 1) singing; 2) praying; 3) teaching; and 4) the Lord’s Supper and giving.

Singing

Singing has a dual purpose. We praise God and at the same time teach and admonish one another.

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, **teaching** and **admonishing** one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Ephesians 5:19 Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,

Prayer

Paul encouraged all to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thes 5:17). This obviously does not mean to go on and on in a public prayer. It means we should not give up the habit.

There are two types of prayers: public and private. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for praying, what would rightly have been a private prayer, in public. They were doing it to be seen of men. Certainly, public prayers are appropriate when the audience is expecting it. But Jesus was talking to the disciples when he said:

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are*: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly (Matt. 6:5-6).

For this reason, I question the practice of praying aloud at the table in public restaurants.

A man who leads a prayer in public should choose his words carefully. His prayer needs to be his heartfelt thanks and petitions. This is not the time to preach to those listening. Others should open their hearts to the words of the prayer, and if in agreement say “amen” at the conclusion. The prayer should be scriptural, i.e., it should not ask for things that are contrary to God’s will. One should address God respectfully and pray in Jesus’ name.

Teaching/Preaching

The apostle Paul preached for the assembly in Troas (**Acts 20:7**). Generally, the message of a preacher is for the purpose of evangelizing and/or edifying. Preachers are expected to carefully prepare organized scriptural lessons and provide scripture to support their teaching. Audiences are expected to pay attention and be respectful, and are encouraged to say “amen” occasionally. Preachers like to hear "amen." It is like saying “sick 'em” to a dog.

The Lord's Supper

On the night Jesus was betrayed He instituted the communion, or Lord's Supper. Paul recounts that night:

1 Corinthians 11:23-32

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: 24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. 25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. 26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. 27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. 29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

The purpose of taking the Lord's Supper is to remember Jesus and what He did for us. Bread represents Jesus' body while the cup represents His shed blood.

When a congregation should take the Lord's Supper has been a subject of contention. Many think it is a matter of opinion so they decide for themselves when they offer it. But God already determined for us. He teaches by approved apostolic example. Acts 20:7 states: **"Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread..."** This text tells us the day—the **"first day of the week,"** which is Sunday. Commentaries generally agree that this text refers to the Lord's Supper rather than a common meal. It seems prudent that churches should follow the example in Scripture rather than be part of the contention as to whether to take the Supper monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly, etc. The idea that God would leave something this important for man to decide, which would only result in disunity, is not reasonable.

Paul warned of the possibility of partaking **"unworthily"** by **"not discerning the Lord's body."** This should prompt all who take the Lord's Supper to clear all thought and cares from the mind and think only about the sacrifice the Lord made—what the Lord did for us at the cross—and about His resurrection.

Giving

While many preachers find it convenient to insist that church members pay tithes, this is an Old Testament practice. Furthermore, it never applied to money but to fruits of the field. The apostle Paul established some rules relative to giving.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. 2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

Paul's command, **"Upon the first day of the week,"** settles the matter of when a church is to take collections for the needs of the church. This means when the church comes together on other occasions it should not take up a collection. As to HOW MUCH, God leaves it up to the giver. **"As God has prospered,"** which simply means the more one has the more he should give. On another occasion Paul provided more input when he said, **"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver"** (2 Cor. 9:7).

So, we see that God wants us to give on the first day of the week to support the work of the church. This is how He wants it done. Raising funds with raffles, Bingo, rummage sales, entertainment events, etc., would all be excluded.

Keys to Giving:

- 1) Consider how God has blessed you and give back accordingly.
- 2) Decide (purpose) how much you will give beforehand.
- 3) Be happy to return a portion back to God who gave it.

Conclusion:

Let us not be guilty of vain or ignorant worship. The true and living God demands that we worship Him in the proper spirit and in truth. Let's make sure our assembling with the saints is to worship and please God, not man.

Is the Church of Christ a Denomination?

Perhaps a Church of Christ denomination exists; certainly, many people think so. Yet virtually all who are affiliated with the Church of Christ deny that they are a member of any human religious organization. Upon what do they base this denial? Or is there basis for the claim that the Church of Christ is a denomination?

The matter of denominationalism is confusing to many. The Bible speaks of one body or one church, but there are hundreds—all teaching different doctrines. Skeptics would attribute the problem to God, but God tells us He is “not the author of confusion” (1 Cor. 14:33). And Jesus prayed for His followers to be one “so that the world might believe” (John 17:20-21). Thus, if we believe God, we must accept that if a given number of “local” churches practice the truth that is taught in the New Testament, then they should be virtually identical in teaching on foundation principles, organization, and practice.

Before we can determine whether the Church of Christ is a denomination, we first need to define a couple of terms:

- 1) “A religious denomination is a subgroup within a religion that operates under a common name, tradition, and identity.” **Wikipedia**
- 2) **Church**: ἐκκλησία *ekklēsia*, ek-klay-see'-ah; from a compound of G1537 and a derivative of G2564; a calling out, i.e. (concretely) a popular meeting, especially a religious congregation (Jewish synagogue, or Christian community of members on earth or saints in heaven or both): —assembly, church. **Thayer**

In view of the evidence on the surface, it is completely understandable that many have concluded that the Church of Christ is a denomination. Furthermore, how can those who say “I’m Church of Christ” deny that they are members of a denomination? First, they “speak the language of Ashdod” (Neh. 13:23-24). To say “I’m Church of Christ” is not biblical in any shape, form, or fashion. Another nonsensical statement is “Church of Christ Church.” There is indeed a great contrast: some have concluded that the “Church of Christ church” is one of the worst among the denominations, while some who are affiliated with this group think only people in their church are going to heaven. The false notions and unscriptural practices of men result in confusion, but at the end of the day the only thing that matters is what the Bible teaches.

Again, Jesus prayed that His disciples might be unified so that the world might believe (John 17:20-21). Also, the apostle Paul condemned division and party names (1 Cor. 1:11-12). While numerous descriptive names for the church are found in the Bible, no proper name is provided. However, it is an indisputable fact that Jesus built only ONE church (Matt. 16:18; Rom. 12:4-13; Eph. 2:16, 4:4; Col. 3:15). Yet members of hundreds of denominations seek to justify this apparent lack of unity. The most common argument is that denominations are “branches” of the Lord’s church. But the Scriptures indicate that these “branches” are individual members of the body—not a denominational group as defined above (John 15; 1 Cor. 12).

Identifying the True Church

The church we read about in the New Testament is composed of people who have obeyed the gospel to be saved and are thus added by the Lord (Rom. 6:3, 4, 17, 18; Acts 2:36-47). We cannot join this church, as used in the universal sense to include all the saved, but we can join ourselves to a local group or congregation. Knowing our responsibility not to forsake the assemblies (Heb. 10:25), we must choose a group with which to worship. But we are faced with the dilemma of determining whether a church is a “faithful” or “sound” church (2 Tim. 1:13, 4:3; Tit. 2:1-2). In the book of Revelation, we read of seven churches—some of whom had “fallen” (Rev. 2:5). Lack of love was one of the problems among the seven churches, but so was doctrine (Rev. 2:13-16). Jesus said, “**God is a spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth**” (John 4:24). Thus, one’s search for a place to worship is an important matter. Because to worship in “truth” involves following the teaching of the New Testament, it is imperative that it be used as the guide to determine whether a particular local group is following God’s blueprint. The Psalmist said, “**Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it**” (Psalm 127:1). Jesus said, “**Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up**” (Matt. 15:13).

Guidelines for Selecting a Church or Local Congregation

1. Look for a church that respects the authority of the scriptures. Jesus has all authority (Matt. 28:18). He delegated authority to the apostles who by inspiration wrote the New Testament, which is the only creed of the church.
2. Look for a church whose members wear the name "Christian." There is something in a name. God said he would give His people a new name.

Isaiah 56:5 - Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and daughters: I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.

Isaiah 62:2 - And thou shalt be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord shall name.

Acts 11:26 - The disciples were called Christians, first at Antioch.
This is that new name!

Acts 26:28 - Agrippa said, "Almost thou persuadest me to become a Christian." This was the only name known at the time by those claiming to be followers of Christ, and it should be so today.

Acts 4:12 - Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

3. Look for a church that worships like the New Testament teaches. The early church, under the guidance of the apostles, engaged in: 1) preaching/teaching (Acts 20:7; Gal. 1:6-8; 1 Cor. 1:21); 2) the Lord's Supper every week (Acts 20:7; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:24-25); 3) praying (Acts 2:42, 12:5; 1 Tim. 2:1); 4) singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 2:16; 1 Cor. 1:21); and 5) giving (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7).

4. Look for a church that is organized after the New Testament order. The church should contain elders and deacons along with saints, who make up the rest of the membership. The church must recognize Christ as head. It should also have a plurality of qualified elders or pastors, not a lone pastor. "Elders" (plural) were "ordained...in every church" (Acts 14:23), and they have the responsibility to feed the flock among them. They exercise no authority over other churches, as each church is independent and autonomous (1 Pet 5:2).

5. Look for a church that is satisfied simply to be the church and do the work God assigned it. The primary work of the church is of a spiritual nature; that is, preaching the gospel to the lost (evangelism) and saints (edification). Secondarily, the church is to care for its own needy (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 5:16). Recreation and entertainment (such as the use of instrumental music) are not the work of the church.

6. Look for a church that teaches the Bible plan of salvation. Most churches teach some of the plan, but few teach it in its entirety. "The sum of thy word is truth" (Psalm 119:160, ASV). Saving faith involves obedience—not mere awareness or

acknowledgment of facts regarding Jesus (John 12:42; James 2:19). That obedience is essential is clear from the following passages: **“And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him”** (Acts 5:32). **“And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him”** (Heb. 5:9).

The day the Lord’s church was established, men who heard the gospel believed and were sorrowful for their sins. They asked, **“Men and brethren, what shall we do?”** They were told to **“Repent and be baptized”** (Acts 2:36-38). All agree that repentance is essential, but many reject the second command (baptism), even though it is given equal importance with repentance since it relates to the conjunction “and.” The words **“faith only”** are found in the Bible only ONE time, but the text teaches that works are involved in justification (James 2:24). Jesus was clear when He said, **“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”** (Mark 16:16). An interesting story in 2 Kings 5 illustrates the problem of men’s following what might be considered a foolish act to receive a blessing from God (see also Joshua 6:5; 1 Cor. 1:23-27).

The Problem of the Building and the Sign

Unless we are talking about a local group that meets in someone’s home, a name for the group is expedient for the purpose of doing business. For example, utilities must be paid, supplies are ordered that require an address to be received, visitors must be able to locate the meeting place, etc. While the sign over the door, or out in front of the building (meeting place), is not necessarily indicative of what is taught inside and practiced, it is nonetheless important. Paul condemned the party spirit and use of human names (1 Cor. 1:11-12; 3:4). Assuredly, **“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”** (Acts 4:12). Therefore, it seems imperative that a local group should identify itself as belonging only to Christ.

Perhaps many members of the body of Christ, who proclaim to be a member of the “Church of Christ,” are not aware of how their thinking and speech contribute to the confusion prevalent in Christianity today. Those not yet skillful in the meat of the word (Heb. 5:12-14) might even be heard to say that only those in the “Church of Christ will be saved.” Such serves only to cause the church to be seen as a denomination and to alienate others.

The church we read about in the Bible is often said to be “non-denominational.” More accurately, it is pre-denominational, for Christ built only one church, as previously established, and denominations did not appear until hundreds of years later.

Contrastingly, denominationalism condones, and even celebrates, division. Some have been heard to pray, **“God, we thank you for all the denominations from which we have to choose.”** That is NOT Christ’s goal for His church. Christ has but ONE body (and it is to be unified [Eph. 4:3-4]). Christians who seek truth and want to please God and bring honor and glory through His church, must determine to reject man-made traditions, titles, and creeds, and follow the Bible only and be Christians only.

Is the “Church of Christ” a denomination? The answer depends on your perspective—where you are looking, what you are seeing, and what you know about the Lord’s church. I can affirm that I’m a member of Christ’s church that we read about in the New Testament and provide evidence that local churches were referred to as **“churches of Christ”** (Rom. 16:16). But I emphatically deny being a member of any human religious organization. The Lord adds the saved to His church (Acts 2:47). Certainly, there are many saved people who have had no affiliation with any denomination or who have never entertained a thought about being a member of the “Church of Christ church.”

Additional Information:

<http://www.totalhealth.bz/spiritual-health-lied.htm>

<http://www.totalhealth.bz/spiritual-health-sound-doctrine.htm>

<http://www.totalhealth.bz/spiritual-health-honest-faith.htm>

<http://www.totalhealth.bz/preacher.htm>

<http://www.totalhealth.bz/identify-true-church.htm>

<http://www.totalhealth.bz/church-christ-built.htm>

<http://www.totalhealth.bz/choosing-church.htm>

<http://www.totalhealth.bz/spiritual-health-lords-supper.htm>

<http://www.totalhealth.bz/converted-to-christ.htm>

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Who Wants to Be Used?

Introduction:

- A. Upon considering our topic for discussion, “Who Wants to Be Used?” your first thought might be **“Nobody wants to be used.”**
1. But you would be wrong.
 2. Who remembers the song from 1972, by Bill Withers, that was about being used?
 - a. Part of the lyrics went like this: **“I want to spread the news that if it feels this good getting used, Girl, you just keep on using me until you use me up.”**
 - b. This song was in the top 100 popular songs.
- B. You might say, **“Nobody in their right mind wants to be used.”**
1. But this is not correct either because being “used” can be either **good** or **bad**, depending on **WHO** is using you, **HOW** they are using you and **WHY**.
 - a. If you apply for a **job** and convince the **interviewer** that you have the skills, knowledge, ability, and determination to do the job, he might say, **“I can use you, you are hired.”**
 - b. On the other hand, one who already has a job might miss too many days of work, without good reason, or make too many **costly mistakes** that result in the boss's saying, **“I can’t use you.”**
 - 1) This is also expressed by saying **“You are fired”** — meaning “You are no longer employed here.”
 - 2) Another colloquial expression is **“He got sacked.”** This expression came about when an employee was given a **sack** in which to **put his belongings** and told to go home.
 2. We want to impress on your mind the fact that there is **no honor** in being someone whom **no one** has a **use for**; and that being **used (useful)** can be a **very good thing**.

C. In our effort to **encourage** and **motivate** to let God use us, I've selected six relevant songs to help in our "teaching and admonition," which we will sing together as we get to them.

- | | |
|---|--------|
| 1) "I want to be a worker for the Lord" | p. 114 |
| 2) "Soldiers of Christ Arise" | p. 225 |
| 3) "Have Thine Own Way, Lord" | p. 84 |
| 4) "There is Room in the Kingdom" | p. 80 |
| 5) "The World's Bible" | p. 512 |
| 6) "Lord, Send Me" (invitation) | p. 81 |

Body

I. **God deals with people in much the same way that employers deal with employees.**

- A. He (God) has a USE for some people and there are some He "**can't use.**"
- B. Throughout the Bible we see where God **used people** to carry out His will.
- C. Conversely, some, whom God **previously** used, conducted themselves in such a way that God no longer had a use for them.
 - 1. **Demas** is a good example.
 - 2. Demas took himself off the job in forsaking Paul to go back to worldly living (2 Tim. 4:10).

II. **Jesus presented a parable that was the inspiration for a popular song, "I Want to Be a Worker for the Lord." (Sacred Selections, p. 114. Text: Matt. 21:28 "go work today in my vineyard.")**

1. I want to be a worker for the Lord,
I want to love and trust His holy Word,
I want to sing and pray,
Be busy every day
In the vineyard of the Lord.

Refrain

I will work, I will pray,
In the vineyard, in the vineyard of the Lord.
I will work, I will pray.
I will labor every day, in the vineyard of the Lord.

2. I want to be a worker every day,
I want to lead the erring in the way
That leads to Heav'n above,
Where all is peace and love,
In the vineyard of the Lord. [Refrain]

3. I want to be a worker strong and brave,
I want to trust in Jesus' pow'r to save;
All who will truly come
Shall find a happy home
In the vineyard of the Lord. [Refrain]

4. I want to be a worker; help me, Lord,
To lead the lost and erring to Thy Word,
That points to joys on high
Where pleasures never die,
In the vineyard of the Lord. [Refrain]

A. You just participated in singing this song, hopefully, but DO you really WANT to be a **worker** for the Lord?

B. Are you **willing** to let God **use you**—to **WORK** in His vineyard?

C. Do you not see the **necessity** of so doing (work)?

1. **Not all do.**

2. Many have been deceived into thinking salvation is **ALL grace.**

a. They argue **against** the idea that **work** has anything to do with being saved or keeping saved.

b. I debated **Dr. Lloyd Olson** in 2018 on this issue.

It was supposed to have been printed in book form and used in some Bible college classrooms. Link:

<http://www.totalhealth.bz/EternalSecurity.pdf>

1) He contended that the Bible teaches that there is **nothing** at all for one to do to be saved, or to keep saved.

2) But he did not like the clear passages that had **“do”** and **“if”** in them, and he basically ignored them.

John 15:14 Ye are my friends, **if ye do whatsoever I command you.**

1 Cor. 15:2 By which also ye are saved, **if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.**

2 Pet. 1:8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Luke 13:9 And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

John 15:2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away:

- i. In these last two passages, Jesus teaches that if we do not **bear fruit**, like a **fruit tree that stops bearing fruit** and is thereafter worthless, **He no longer has a use for us**.
- ii. Indeed, many do not see the necessity of working.

3. But Jesus himself **defeated** that ideology when He said,

“Come unto me, all ye that **labour** and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. **29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls**” (Matt. 11:28-29).

- a. A **yoke** is a symbol of **work**.
- b. “A yoke is defined to be: Fitted on the neck of oxen for the purpose of binding to them the traces by which they might draw the plow, etc.” (Easton’s Bible Dictionary).
- c. To be yoked **with** or **to** Jesus is to **serve** and **obey** Him.
- d. Everyone is yoked to **someone** or **something**.
 - 1) One can be yoked to the power of sin and become controlled by it.
 - 2) Some are yoked in a relationship with **unbelievers**, which the Bible warns against (2 Cor. 6:14).
 - 3) We must be careful that we are not **USED** by the world or worldly people for worldly causes.
 - 4) Only Jesus promises “**rest for your soul,**” and that is only if you **take on His yoke**.

III. Whom Does God Use?

A. First, God uses **evil people** to carry out punishments of nations.

1. But those being used for this purpose have not considered Christ’s appeal (Matt. 11) and are not going to **find rest** for their souls.

2. **Hitler** could be an example of one God used to punish Israel for their **sins, rebellion, and impenitence**.
3. Perhaps you can think of some evil men in **our day** that God may have used (or is currently using) to punish our own nation, with the intent to open eyes to truth and turn people from worldliness to Him.

B. Second, God uses those who **genuinely seek rest** for their souls through the **grace** that He offers.

1 Pet. 4:10 (ISV) *As good managers of God's grace in its various forms, **serve one another with the gift each of you has received.***

1. Let us take a moment to look at what is involved in this word "**serve**."
2. First, Peter is commanding Christians to **DO** something—to **SERVE**.
 - a. Through Peter's words God is seeking to bring in soldiers—people who are willing to be **used**—to **work** in His kingdom.
 - b. **Synonyms for Serve:** *"work for, be in the service of, perform duties for, be employed by, have a job with, obey, be obedient to, carry out the wishes of, be of service to, be of use to, help, assist, aid, minister to."*

C. A popular song, written by Charles Wesley in 1749, is "**Soldiers of Christ, Arise.**" (*Sacred Selections*, p. 225. Text: **Eph. 6:10-11.**)

- # 1 Soldiers of Christ, arise,
 And put your armor on,
 Strong in the strength which God supplies
 Through His eternal Son.
- #2 Strong in the Lord of hosts,
 And in His mighty pow'r,
 Who in the strength of Jesus trusts
 Is more than conqueror.
- #3 Stand then in His great might,
 With all His strength endued,
 And take, to arm you for the fight,
 The panoply of God;
- #4 That, having all things done,
 And all your conflicts passed,

Ye may o'ercome through Christ alone,
And stand entire at last.

- #5. Leave no unguarded place,
No weakness of the soul,
Take every virtue, every grace,
And fortify the whole.
- #6. From strength to strength go on,
Wrestle and fight and pray,
Tread all the pow'rs of darkness down
And win the well-fought day.

1. The duties expressed by the poet require **faith**.
2. The Hebrew writer said, "**But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him**" (Heb. 11:6).

D. Calvinism teaches that **God chooses** who comes to Him—that God **draws certain people** in some **mysterious** or **miraculous** way, and if you are not one of them there is NOTHING you can do.

1. Where do they get the idea that God **draws** people?
 - a. Did they just make it up?
 - b. No.
 - c. But they took a biblical passage out of context to make it say something that was never intended.
 - d. Let's look at the text and the context:

John 6:44 **No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.** 45 **It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.**

2. Yes, God "draws" people, but it is **through the gospel**.
 - a. People come to God by faith.
 - b. He doesn't just **pick** people He wants to be saved and then there is nothing that person can do to **resist** (another component of Calvinism called "irresistible grace").
3. A passage that adds to verse 45 (above) is **Romans 10:17**: "**So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**"

4. If you are not **yet** convinced as to **how God draws people** to Him, look with me back to **verse 14**:

“How then shall they **call on him** in whom they have not **believed**? and how shall they **believe** in him of whom they have not **heard**? and how shall they **hear** without a **preacher**?”

- a. Through these rhetorical questions we are clearly taught **three truths**:
- 1) there must be a preacher;
 - 2) one must hear the word; and
 - 3) one must believe.
- b. If you want God to **draw** you to Him then **build faith** by **hearing** the word of God, **learn**, and then go to Him in humble obedience, **not questioning** what conditions God has given or what He has said to **do**.
- 1) In **2 Kings 5**, we read about a man by the name of **Naaman**, a captain in the Syrian army, who had **leprosy**.
 - 2) To make a long story short, to be cured he was told, by the servant of a prophet of God, to **dip** in the **Jordan River 7 times**.
 - 3) But he was **angry** with what he considered **silly** or **foolish**, and was about to go on his way when his servant said to him, “**If he had bid you do some great thing would you not have done it?**”
 - 4) He then did as was required and was cleansed.
- c. Sadly, not all who have **heard** the gospel have **obeyed** it.
- 1) And not all who hear today obey.
Romans 10:16: “**But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?**” (BTW, this question was evidently asked to teach that faith does not save when no obedience follows.)
 - 2) Faith is essential, but we do not want to be among the number that **refuse** to “**obey the gospel**” for whatever reason—maybe thinking it is **foolish**, that it is a **work**, or that it **nullifies** God’s grace.
 - i. If you have been led to believe that obedience to the gospel is not important, there is a passage to which you need to pay close attention:

2 Thes. 1:7 **And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, & In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus**

Christ: 9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

- ii. If you can read this passage and not be convinced one must **obey the gospel**, then you might want to consider that you have been deceived by a teacher of false doctrine and are having trouble seeing.

IV. God wants to use you.

- A. Jesus presented a parable referred to as “The Parable of the Talents.”
 - 1. It shows that people have different talents and that to “**hide**” your talent (**ability**) is a bad idea, for which there are grave consequences (Matt. 25:14-30).
 - 2. The “**one talent**” man did not use his talent because he was “**afraid**.”
 - a. Others might **not** be willing to let God use them because they think they are too **sinful, weak, selfish, or inept**.
 - b. Still others might **reject His plea** because they see worldly pursuits as being more **pleasurable** and **fulfilling**.
 - 1) But the truth is, your life will never be **fulfilling** until you allow God to **use** you.
 - 2) The apostle Paul made it clear that you (if you are a Christian) were “**created in Christ Jesus for good works**” (Eph. 2:10).
 - 3) The **work of God** is the only place you will find real fulfillment because it is that for which you were made.
 - 4) Seeking material possessions or worldly achievements—spending your life **working** to become **successful, appreciated**, and loved in the world’s eyes—is more like a **treadmill** than a path to **abundant life**.
- B. If you want to live an abundant life you must allow God to use you.
 - 1. His motive in wanting to use you is **not selfish**.
 - 2. He wants your life to **matter**.
 - 3. He wants you to **have an eternal reward** for the behavior you exhibit here on earth because He is a good Father who longs to bless His children.

C. The apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 12, goes into detail in his efforts to explain how the church works through its members.

1. He assures us that **every person is useful**.
2. (ISV) Verse 22: “those parts of the body that seem to be **weaker** are in fact **indispensable**.”

C. Yes, God wants to use each and every ONE of us.

1. Look briefly with me at some passages that confirm this and shed light on **why** and **how** God wants to use us.

Philippians 2:13 ESV For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work **for his good pleasure**.

Matthew 5:16 ESV In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and **give glory** to your Father who is in heaven.

1 Peter 2:9 ESV But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, **that you may proclaim the excellencies of him** who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

2. This is not something “new” that was presented first in the New Testament.

Psa 35:27 Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the **LORD be magnified**, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.

3. God has made provisions to **direct us** in how He wants us **to live our lives**.
4. Are we willing to let Him have His way?

V. Have Thine Own Way, Lord

(*Sacred Selections*, p. 84. Text: Isa. 64:8.)

1. Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!

Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.
Mold me and make me after Thy will,
While I am waiting, yielded and still.

2. Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Search me and try me, Master, today!
Whiter than snow, Lord, wash me just now,
As in Thy presence humbly I bow.

3. Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Wounded and weary, help me, I pray!
Power, all power, surely is Thine!
Touch me and heal me, Savior divine.

4. Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Hold o'er my being absolute sway!
Fill with Thy Spirit till all shall see
Christ only, always, living in me.

A. God is our creator, and He knows what is best for us.

B. Once we decide to let Him [have His way with us](#) our life changes for the better.

VI. There is “Room in God’s Kingdom” for you and there is a “place in the service for those who are loyal to him and true.”

(Do you recognize the lyrics?)

A. Room In God’s Kingdom

(*Sacred Selections*, p 80. Text: Matt. 10:42.)

1. There is room in the kingdom of God, my brother,
For the small things that you can do;
Just a small, kindly deed that may cheer another
Is the work God has planned for you.

2. Just a cup of cold water in His name given
May the hope in some heart renew;
Do not wait to be told, nor by sorrow driven
To the work God has planned for you.

3. There’s a place in the service of God for workers
Who are loyal to Him and true;

Can't you say to Him now, "I will leave the shirkers,
And the work Thou hast planned I'll do."

Chorus:

There is room, there's a place
In the kingdom of God for you;
There is room, there's a place,
There is work that we all can do.

- B. Indeed, there is something you can do.
1. You might not be able to **preach** or **teach** a **class** or lead singing or a **prayer**, but there are many things you can do:
 2. You can be involved in **sending cards** to people in need of physical or spiritual help, or visit them personally.
 3. You can make a **phone call** to someone who is lonely, or who may be slipping away from the faith; or you can make a personal visit.
 4. You can take **food** to people in need or to those who have lost loved ones or are unable to work.
 5. You can hand out **tracts** with messages of Jesus and His love, but that also teach of His requirements.
 6. You can **say things** at appropriate times that will be a **seed** that just might grow into a faithful child of God, or that might bring someone back to the fold.

VII. We (Christians) are "The World's Bible"—perhaps the only one they will read, which means we are His hands, His feet, and His tongue.

A. The World's Bible

(*Sacred Selections*, p. 512. Text: Gal. 2:20.)

1. Christ has no hands but our hands to do His work today;
He has no feet but our feet to lead men in the way;
He has no tongue but our tongue to tell men how He died;
He has no help but our help to bring them to His side.
2. We are the only Bible the careless world will read,
We are the sinner's gospel; we are the scoffer's creed;
We are the Lord's last message, given in word and deed;
What if the type is crooked? What if the print is blurred?
3. What if our hands are busy with other work than His?
What if our feet are walking where sin's allurements are?

What if our tongue is speaking of things His lips would spurn?
How can we hope to help Him or welcome His return?
—Annie Johnston Flint

- B. What a great responsibility Christians have!
 - 1. And what an OPPORTUNITY!
 - 2. We have the opportunity to lead men in the WAY.
 - 3. But what if we are **too busy** with **other work** than **His**?

Conclusion:

- A. It's a great honor for an **athlete** to be put into the starting line-up of a big game.
 - 1. I've seen football and basketball players **on the bench** say,
"Coach, put ME in."
 - 2. But even greater than the honor of being **used** by the coach is to be used by God.
 - a. To be in His line-up (a player) you don't have to have a great talent.
 - b. But you must be a **cleansed person** who constantly **flees from sin** and pursues godliness.
 - c. When you hear Jesus say **"take my yoke upon you,"** why not respond with **"YES, God, put me in the game."**
 - 1) **"Here I am, send me"**; and
 - 2) "Thank you for **making a place** for me in your kingdom to **do things** that **will help others** and make my life complete."
- B. Before you can be used by God, which is a wise and honorable endeavor, you must respond to His conditions for family membership.

Eph. 3:14 **For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,**

The text below was preceded by a sermon about Jesus and what the Jews did, etc.

Acts 2:37-38 **Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? 38 Then Peter said unto them, [Come up here to the altar and pray. No, that is not what we read they were told to do, is it? Let us read the answer they were given.]**

Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Maybe you need to be baptized for the remission of sins.

- C. If you realize that you have been of **little or no use to God** and understand that this **can mean your eternal reward might not be forthcoming**, repent and pray to get back in the contest.

If we can assist you in any way, come while we stand and sing.

(Invitation Song: “**Lord, Send Me**”)

Lord, Send Me

(*Sacred Selections*, p. 81. Text: Isa. 6:8.)

1. There is much to do, there's work on ev'ry hand,
Hark! The cry for help comes ringing through the land;
Jesus calls for reapers, I must active be,
What wilt Thou, O Master?
Here am I, send me.

Refrain:

Here am I,
(Here am I, send me, Lord, send me)
Lord, Send me;
(Here am I, send me, Lord, send me)
Here am I,
(Here am I, send me, Lord, send me)
Ready at Thy bidding, Lord, send me.

2. There's a plaintive cry of mourning souls distressed,
And the cry of hearts who seek but find no rest;
These should have my love and tender sympathy,
Ready at Thy bidding, Here am I, send me. [Refrain]
3. There are hung'ring souls who cry aloud for bread,
With the bread of life they're longing to be fed;
Shall they starve and famish while a feast is free?
I must be more faithful, Here am I, send me. [Refrain]
4. There are souls who linger on the brink of woe,
Lord, I must not, cannot bear to let them go;
Let me go and tell them, "Brother, turn and flee,"
Master, I would save them, Here am I send me. [Refrain]

Conclusion:

Dr. Harold E. Kidd's remarks seem appropriate for a conclusion:

If one is lost in sin, if one should become blinded by the values of this world culture, or life circumstances, if one sees no light at the end of the tunnel, God in Jesus is still available and accessible to send forth His Guiding Light to shine in our confusion and darkness. Light that brings soul peace out of circumstantial chaos. Light that brings joy in the midst of sorrow. Light that births new hope in the midst of our doubts and despairs.

Jesus is our Guiding Light. His Light births resurrection in the darkness of death. His Light gives strength in the darkness of human weakness, His Light brings comfort and hope during dark seasons of sickness and failing health. How thankful we should be...that Jesus is our Guiding Light. He is the Light of the world. He will show us the way. He will reveal to us where the opportunities are.

He will shed light on the pitfalls waiting for us in our journey that we may avoid and not fall prey to the snares of the devil. The light of His presence will be as a lamp unto our feet so that we do not walk in darkness, unable to see where we are going. He will shed the Light of His revelation upon our places of confusion, indecision and doubt, so that we can say, *"I can see clearly now. I once was blind but now I see."*

One final thought... Notice John says in verse 5, *"The Light has come and the darkness could not overcome the light."* No matter how dismaying or challenging circumstances might appear in this world or in our lives at times, the darkness cannot overcome, overtake, or defeat the child of God who is walking in the light of Jesus Christ.