

Evangelism 1-2-1

How To Do It Biblically, Boldly, And Compassionately

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All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible.

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Preface

By all reports, Christianity is growing exponentially across the world. Evangelical Christians number over 50 million in America. It sounds like we might actually succeed in “taking America back for Christ.” Megachurches have sprung up all over the country in just the last twenty years. TV and radio ministries reach out to millions who never before had such access. Christian authors, musicians, and speakers produce gigabytes of teaching and spiritual entertainment. A Christian willing to travel a bit can enjoy a conference for intellectual stimulation and warm fellowship every week of the year.

Revivals are said to be breaking out in Africa and Latin America. Evangelical pastors will even proclaim that there are two billion Christians out of a world population of seven billion, and that Christianity is the fastest growing religion on the planet. As the ecumenical movement expands worldwide, many envision a time when “the church” will establish God’s kingdom on Earth, “allowing” the Lord Jesus Christ to return and establish His throne. Churches are urged to accelerate this process by developing programs to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, build schools and hospitals, but by all means avoid “in-your-face” proselytizing. The emergent church movement is at the center of these efforts, while the majority of evangelicals rush to join in. Optimism abounds.

Alternatively, there are pessimists who point out that “Christians” are unifying by denying Biblical doctrine, fueling such unity by insisting that doctrine is unimportant as long as everyone involved professes to love and follow Jesus. These grumpy naysayers cite prophetic passages that warn of apostasy in the last days and a worldwide political and religious movement that will culminate in the reign of the antichrist, himself. Rather than focus on the genuine physical needs of the poor, these “Hell-fire preachers” seem willing to offend everyone by claiming that there is only one way to Heaven and, unless you believe it “their way,” you’re going to Hell. Many of the “fundamentalists” are in this division, although more and more, they are following in the footsteps of the evangelicals. (Few evangelicals belong in this paragraph anymore.) At least, the optimists point out, these old-fashioned types are a fast-dwindling minority, soon to disappear entirely.

Clearly, these two factions represent different, antagonistic worldviews. They both claim to be Bible-based and both claim to have the interests of the Lord in mind and the best intentions to be a real help to men, women, and children all over planet Earth. But they both can’t be right. Christendom today has more diversity in doctrine and practice than at any time in history, but the two positions above produce, perhaps, the greatest amount of tension between professing Christians that we see in our time.

What does all this have to do with the subject of this book? As we explore the Biblical teaching of evangelism, we’ll discover that the doctrine of salvation, and how it is taught, is central to every aspect of the Christian faith. How the Gospel is preached will determine whether those that respond are truly born again or merely practicing a superficial religion. Churches will live or die spiritually, regardless of their apparent outward prosperity, based on whether they follow the Jesus of the Bible, and preach the message that He preached. Christians will team up with each other and interact with the world in ways that depend entirely on their view of what it takes for *individuals* to be saved.

Among the “pessimists” above, there are also two camps. Both preach sin and judgment that leads to Hell, and a salvation that depends only on Jesus Christ. The larger of the two camps preaches that Heaven is gained by admitting that one is a sinner, believing that Jesus is the Savior, and trusting Jesus to save him. This group is represented by fundamentalists such as Jack Schaap, Paul Chappell, and Shelton Smith. It is ironic that fundamentalists and evangelicals tend to separate vigorously from each other over matters such as inerrancy, music, and dress, yet they may have the same approach to preaching the Gospel. Evangelical / emergent church leaders such as Rick Warren, Franklin Graham, and Joel Osteen preach exactly the same requirements for salvation as the fundamentalists above. Somebody should be ashamed.

The smaller camp insists that repentance from the specific sins in one’s life must be coupled to a saving faith in Jesus Christ, and that being born again necessarily produces dramatic changes in life – toward practical righteousness. Many preachers try to imagine that there is no real distinction between the two camps. Others point out that the difference is enough to condemn multitudes of professing Christians to Hell. Some, amazingly, profess to hold to the doctrine of the smaller camp, but practice the Gospel preaching methodology of the larger camp.

The smaller camp includes evangelicals like Ray Comfort and fundamentalists like David Cloud, who resoundingly decry the damage to the cause of Christ from heretical Gospel preaching. They tend to be ignored and despised by the larger camp. The doctrinal elements in this book will explore the Biblical position, which should settle the matter for any believer. Your doctrinal position will determine the way you present the Gospel and, therefore, the way it is understood by the lost people who hear it. *“For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound . . . ”*

My desire with this book is to be a help to somebody out there. This is not a “mass market” book intended for the shelves of bookstores. There is no Christian bookstore in the country that would touch it, not to mention any secular chain. As I write this, I pray that the Lord helps me to understand His word with perfect balance and precision, noting the warning to teachers in James 3:1 . . . *“My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.”* Nevertheless, the subject of personal evangelism is core to the practice of Christianity in the individual life, the local church, and the relationship between Christians and their community. And so it must be studied and taught.

Life is short and days are precious. Even if the Lord’s return does not occur imminently, He warns repeatedly in His word that we are to be ready as if He may appear at any moment. The most aged of men and women find their accumulated useful days to be few. Only a tiny fraction of Christians seem to care about their upcoming “performance evaluation” at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Only a small percentage of those appreciate the singular responsibility they have to make personal evangelism the priority of their lives. And, so sadly, only a fraction of those understand how to share the Gospel Scripturally. The zealous ones that preach unscripturally are only doing harm by producing multitudes of

false converts – professing, but unregenerate “Christians” – that become part of the problem and, eventually, part of the antichrist’s congregation.

My hope is to change your mind in such a way that your actions follow. If you presently neglect evangelism, my goal is to get you started. If you are zealous but unskilled, I hope to give you a serious toolbox to take to the “job site” – the mission field outside your door. If you are zealous but employ “traditional,” but unscriptural methods, my prayer is that you repent and start preaching a true Gospel. If you are already on board with Scriptural evangelism and make it a way of life, then I hope to strengthen your foundations and provide additional insights and encouragement to build you up.

I encourage you, O reader, to absorb this book thoughtfully. The “dialogues” I have included in several chapters represent real conversations I have had with Americans – just like the ones who live near you, work with you, and walk by you on the sidewalk. I have reprinted extensive sections of Scripture within the text so you won’t be tempted to ignore the “source document” and wonder whether you can trust “my interpretation.” Please look up any Scripture references that I do not embed within the text. Re-read portions of this book that you “don’t get” at first or that you disagree with. Examine your own heart and evaluate your own efforts in this Great Commission from our Lord. Study the subject with the same diligence that you would apply to a Ph.D. comprehensive examination. Consider how your comprehension of this subject, and execution of the relevant skills, will help determine the eternal destiny of your family members, your relatives, your co-workers, and your neighbors.

I invite you to contact me at any time. I’d love to hear from you.

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Chapter 1

So what do your neighbors think?

I'm standing on a street corner in downtown Chicago. As a nicely dressed middle-aged woman approaches me on the sidewalk I offer her a Gospel tract and say . . .

DD (Dr. Dave): "Good morning, ma'am. Here's a free gift."

GG (Good Girl): "What is it?"

DD: "A Gospel tract – it's about the big issues: life, death, Heaven, Hell. Do you ever think about these things?"

GG: "Sure, all the time."

DD: "So here's the big question: If you died today, where would you be?"

GG: "Oh, I'd be in Heaven."

DD: "Why is that? What's going to get you into Heaven and keep you out of Hell?"

GG: "Well, I'm good. I go to church every week. I try to do good things for others."

The conversation above is representative of thousands I've had with Americans of this generation. What is the best way to deal with this lady? I have some Bad News to share with her before she is able to appreciate the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. How can I communicate the Bad News that she has already admitted to me – that she is lost and headed for Hell – without offending her so badly that she won't hang around to listen?

Not long afterwards, I meet a young man dressed in gang clothes, sporting several tattoos, and smoking a cigarette. He responds to the "big question" . . .

TG (Tough Guy): "I'm going to Heaven for sure."

DD: "Why is that? What's going to get you there and keep you out of Hell?"

TG: "I asked Jesus into my heart and got saved ten years ago."

DD: "How did that happen?"

TG: "A friend invited me to church with him and I went down after the preaching and prayed the sinner's prayer. Don't worry, I really meant it. Jesus and me are like that!" (He holds two fingers together to emphasize the point.)

Now where should I go with him? I don't have magic glasses so I can't see his "heart," to verify the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Should I doubt his salvation because of his appearance? Should I probe to see whether there is evidence of the new birth in his life? Wouldn't that be judgmental? The answers to the last three questions are Yes, Yes, and Yes. The third "Yes" simply reflects my responsibility to "judge," based on Scriptures that include 1 Corinthians 2:15 and Matthew 7:15-23.

If you join me on a college campus, it won't be long before we meet a student who responds like this:

EE (Extremely Evolved): "I'd be in the ground, six feet under."

DD: "I'm talking about the real you, the soul and spirit, what makes you tick. Sure, your body is going to die and decay, but where will you be?"

EE: "I don't believe in life after death."

DD: "So you're an atheist?"

EE: "Yeah. I was raised in church and I've heard it all before. I don't believe in any god and there's nothing you can tell me that I haven't heard before."

Now what? Would these responses from EE get you excited about this opportunity to share the Gospel with the young man? I'll admit that I love this type of encounter. The polite, young atheist is my "favorite" one-to-one (henceforth, "121"). It will take me less than two minutes to help him doubt his evolutionary "faith," and provoke him to listen attentively to a Gospel presentation – that he actually has never heard before, if he grew up in a church that was so pitiful that he fell into atheism. Atheism is defined by the Bible as foolishness – in modern terms, insanity. The young atheist just needs a little help in discovering the basic techniques of rational *thinking!*

What about "cold-turkey" encounters with Muslims, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Roman Catholics, or New Agers? Do you have to know everything about the Koran, the Book of Mormon, the JW doctrines on soul sleep and the 144,000? Can you witness to a Roman Catholic without an intellectual duel over who is part of the original church and whether the Mass is symbolic or a substantial sacrifice of Christ? How about New Agers? There are so many variations that it's impossible to keep up to date.

I heartily endorse learning all you can so you can contend with unbelievers and heretics. But recognize that the Gospel that brings salvation is foundational to Biblical doctrine. Every unbeliever must come to Christ the same way, regardless of his starting point. The mass of errors he has built up in order to avoid the truth are not as important as it is for you to present the truth clearly. God has made truth *recognizable* to the soul and spirit of man.

Consider the poignant meeting between the Lord Jesus and Thomas, after the resurrection:

And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My LORD and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. John 20:26-31

Thomas wanted more than an apologetic argument . . . he wanted to see and touch the resurrected Christ. How graciously the Lord accommodated him. Note the rebuke, though. Jesus expected Thomas to believe, based on the eyewitness accounts of the other disciples, the promises that the Lord had spoken of during the previous 3 ½ years, and the prophetic testimony of the Old Testament Scriptures. The apostle John concludes the passage with a Holy Spirit-inspired assertion that the written record – of the Gospel of John – is sufficient to produce saving faith. This evangelist’s account was clearly not designed as a brilliant apologetic argument, but rather as a symphony of light to overwhelm the darkness of man’s sinful existence and his insane philosophies.

I am grateful for the “clue” given to us in John 20:31. After a serious 121 with an atheist or some other brand of skeptic, I take the Holy Spirit at His word by encouraging the lost one to read John’s Gospel with an open heart, ready to recognize the truth revealed about God, sin, judgment, salvation, and his desperate need to humble himself, repent, trust Christ, and be born again. If a lost sinner begins to seek God, and doesn’t quit, he won’t fail to find Him.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Matthew 7:7-8

I underline the word “After” above, because there is much ground to tread in a 121 before sending the skeptic off to do a Bible study. In fact, that’s a somewhat rare circumstance. In the chapters to follow, we’ll explore the Biblical motivations and methods of Gospel preaching. The most important preaching that ever occurs is in the 121 context, not from pulpits or platforms. A preacher who dedicated his life accordingly over a century ago, J. Stuart Holden, put it this way:

“More and more I am convinced that the solution of the problem of the world’s evangelization lies, to a very large degree, along the lines of the one-by-one method. Missions, conventions, special efforts, do something, but the work will never be overtaken until every redeemed man and woman becomes a personal channel of blessing, and hence a soul-winner.”

Chapter 2

Is the Great Commission an option?

"'Go ye' is as much a part of Christ's Gospel as 'Come unto Me.' You are not even a Christian until you have honestly faced your responsibility in regard to the carrying of the Gospel to the ends of the Earth."
— J. Stuart Holden

DD: "Perhaps I misunderstood you. You say that you are a Christian, and yet you do not make a practice of telling lost people how to be saved?"

PC (Professing Christian): "Sure. That's just not my gift. I believe in building relationships with people . . . you know, making friends, so I can show Jesus in my life and attract them to the Gospel."

DD: "Are you trying to attract them to you or lead them to Jesus?"

PC: "Well, I've got to win them to myself before I can win them to Jesus."

DD: "Where do you find that in the Bible?"

PC: "Umm . . ."

DD: "Let's get back to what you said about showing them Jesus in your life. If you can do that, that's terrific. So just how much like Jesus are you every day of your life?"

PC: "(chuckling) Well, I try. Nobody's perfect, of course. Are you perfect?"

DD: "Absolutely not, but that gives me no excuse whatsoever for any sin I commit in thought, word, or deed. But you said that you're doing evangelism by showing people Christ in your life. Now you just admitted that you don't really act like Jesus. Remember – He was perfect. Besides, what He did many, many times, was to share the Gospel with people everywhere He went."

PC: "Well, mostly He was healing people and telling people how to live."

DD: "Read the Gospels. Jesus began by preaching repentance. He preached to multitudes, laying out a standard of perfection in the law within the Sermon on the Mount, a standard higher than that of the Old Testament. He preached to multitudes that He was the bread of life, the only way of salvation. He reached out to individuals continually with a plea for them to repent and follow Him. Examples include a religious leader, Nicodemus, in a private night meeting; the promiscuous woman at the well in Samaria, followed by all the townspeople; there was Mary Magdalene and other demon-possessed women, and Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee just to reach out to two demon-possessed men in Gadara. He healed a blind man, who was then excommunicated from the synagogue. Jesus then sought him out to show him how to be saved. I could go on."

PC: "Well, you are talking about the Lord. He was perfect. We can't measure up to that."

DD: "You're missing the point. Jesus called believers – those who repent, trust Him, and are born again – to demonstrate their faith by *following* Him. Follow Him how? Jesus said that the purpose of His coming was to seek and to save the lost. Five times during the forty days between the resurrection and the ascension, the four Gospel accounts and the book of Acts record the Great Commission – the principal work of Christians on this Earth. 'Go ye into all the world' is a command. You say that you don't have 'the gift.' A command is not a gift. If the command does not apply to you, then you don't belong to Jesus."

PC: "Hey, that's a little harsh. I told you I try to do 'relationship evangelism.' That's a really popular method!"

DD: "So how many relationships are you working on right now?"

PC: "Let's see, I try to get along with several neighbors. I've got a handful of co-workers I know pretty well. My wife and I have a few relatives who don't go to church, so we worry about whether they are Christians. Maybe about 20 altogether."

DD: "In the last month, how many of those heard a serious Gospel presentation from you? I'm not talking about a word here or there, like, 'God really blessed me today.' I'm talking about you telling them with clarity and compassion, that if they die in their sins they will go to Hell. That they are lost and need to be born again. That they must repent from all their favorite sins and trust Christ and begin a totally new life of service for the Lord Jesus Christ. So how many in the last month?"

PC: "Well . . . I guess . . . well, none."

DD: "How about in the last year?"

PC: "OK, still none."

DD: "You're really not doing 'relationship evangelism' at all are you? Look, I understand the temptation. The problem is that once you invest weeks or months or years in a relationship, it actually gets harder and harder to get 'serious.' You risk the relationship when you do. You wind up caring more for the relationship than you do for whether your friend is going to Hell. That's pretty tragic."

PC: "I never thought of it that way before."

DD: "Whether you get under conviction on your responsibility to preach the Gospel is a good test of whether you are born again or still lost, yourself."

PC: "What do you mean?"

DD: "You claim to be born again, to have all of your sins forgiven, to be spared Hell and the Lake of Fire for eternity and to look forward to an inheritance with the saints of God. You claim to follow Jesus and love Him with all your heart. You claim to have Christian love for people around you. And yet you don't care whether people go to Hell without a warning? If your neighbor's house was on fire at 2 am, and you knew that everyone inside was sleeping, would you wake them up? Or would you hesitate because they might be offended at having their sleep interrupted?"

PC: "OK, so I should get busy with the people I know."

DD: "You said you know about 20 people well enough to have personal conversations. If you really cared about them, how long would it take for you to get the message to them personally? For example, if you knew you had a great investment opportunity, and wanted to share it with these 20 people, how long would it take for you to make the contacts?"

PC: "Practically speaking, maybe two weeks."

DD: "Right. So then what are you going to do for the Lord with the rest of your life after those two weeks? You see, we should be doing 'relationship evangelism' all of the time. But really *do it*, of course. The Great Commission requires us to reach out to strangers all over the community and all over the world. It's time to get busy. Want to give it a shot? It's not easy, but it's not complicated, either."

PC: "What do I do next?"

I love getting to hear that last question, rare though the experience is. The above represents a composite of many conversations I've had with professing Christians who do not follow the Lord in the most basic work of the Christian life. Usually, their coldness is not *just* their own fault. Rare are the pastors who practice personal evangelism. What they don't practice they certainly won't preach. The entire church suffers and the community around it goes to Hell without a warning.

Is the practice of personal evangelism – witnessing – Gospel preaching – sharing your faith – soul-winning, etc. – just an "add-on" to the Christian life? Based on typical American church practice, you would think so. Most American churches advertise scores of activities, events, ministries, meetings, and clubs for their members without any evidence of reaching out to the lost with the only Good News that can save from Hell and grant everlasting life. Even the most "fundamental" of American churches pressure their members to faithfully attend all of the "worship services," typically Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night. Then they schedule a weekly "visitation" time on Thursday night and are content with a handful of people.

Before my wife and I moved to the city where we now live, we came to visit relatives and check out the area. On Wednesday night we visited the mid-week service of perhaps the most conservative and “evangelistically minded” church in the city. I was excited to see about 500 people in attendance that evening, and there seemed to be a good bit of enthusiasm in the congregation. The pastor appealed to the crowd to remember to participate in the next night’s visitation program. (Typically, from 7 – 9 pm on Thursday night, members go out to see people that have been visitors to the church recently. Some effort may also be expended knocking on new doors to share the Gospel and invite people to a church service.)

Even though I wasn’t a part of the church, I decided to show up Thursday night and help out. On Thursday night, to my surprise, there were only three of us: myself and two of the assistant pastors. Where were the other 497? I came to learn later that there were often 6-8 people who came on Thursday. The church also ran a “door-knocking” program on Saturday morning that might include a few folks.

By experience I now know that this was one of the most “fervent” churches in the area. Obviously, evangelism is not important to most churches and most professing Christians. This is true across America. Should it be?

The Biblical norm for the newly born again Christian is to share the Good News. That makes sense, doesn’t it? It is only in modern times, within our fundie (fundamental) and gelly (evangelical) entertainment centers that the Christian life has been defined more by passive experience than by passionate service.

What does the record show regarding the very first disciples of Jesus during His ministry? As John the Baptist preached to prepare the way for the Master, some responded well. Consider the following passage:

One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone. The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. John 1:40-45

Once Andrew knew that he had found the Messiah, what did he do? He practiced “relationship evangelism” immediately by telling his brother, Peter. He didn’t trick Peter, or try to find a clever way to broach the subject, and he didn’t beat around the bush. He got right to the point. That’s the Biblical pattern. Do you really want to argue with the record given by the Holy Spirit? Observe that Scripture teaches much about Peter’s life and ministry. Who shares the credit before the Lord? Andrew’s simple witness, “Hey, we’ve found the Messiah! Over here! Let me introduce you,” produced an eternity of good results.

Philip, also, does not hesitate to share the Good News. He uses a Scriptural argument to draw Nathanael. Note that it’s the same Scriptural argument used by the Lord Jesus at the *end* of His Earthly ministry:

Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. Luke 24:25-27

I don't get the impression that Jesus is too soft-spoken here, as his disciples wallow in confusion and sorrow. He hammers the point home, using Scriptural arguments. Jesus pointed to Himself as the Messiah. His disciples did the same throughout their lifetimes. Christians for the last two millennia have followed in the Master's footsteps, or else there would be no Christians on the face of the Earth today. Christianity is ever only one generation deep. If any generation fails in the task of the Great Commission, it's over. That has never happened, but it's up to you to decide whether to be part of the solution or part of the problem.

Shortly after Pentecost, as the disciples and new believers threatened "to turn the world upside down," the religious establishment tried to shut them down. So they grabbed Peter and John . . .

And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. Acts 4:18-20

Get that: they can't do anything *but* be a witness for Christ. That's the pattern for believers!

The apostle Paul opened his heart to the Corinthian church about his zeal to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! 1 Corinthians 9:16

Paul glories in the Lord. Interestingly, he writes as if he will suffer withdrawal symptoms or, worse, chastisement from the Lord if he quits preaching. We should strive for the same "addiction" to the ministry. In 1 Corinthians 16:15, Paul brags on the house of Stephanas, "*that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.*" This speaks of the ministry of discipleship, the other side of the coin of evangelism. In either case, evangelism or discipleship, "addiction to ministry" is so rare, yet so desirable.

The prophet Jeremiah's ministry had little joy. His nation was deep in rebellion and apostasy, and he saw his countrymen taken into national captivity. He was obedient to his commission, preaching repentance and trust in God, but he got discouraged. At one point he wanted to quit:

O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived; thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me. For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the LORD was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay. Jeremiah 20:7-9

Quitting was more painful than going on, despite the apparent fruitlessness of his ministry. He got weary of forbearing, namely, he got exhausted in his refusal to preach. He couldn't stop even when he tried. He, too, was addicted to ministry, despite the discouragements.

For years after I began to engage in personal evangelism I would experience dread, trepidation, and even some measure of fear before I would hit the street. Yet without exception I would enjoy satisfaction and a dose of joy both during and after my work. What's going on? Is there any other experience in life that you find joyful and satisfying, but you consistently dread ahead of time? Do you dread going out to have a steak dinner with your sweetheart? If you plan a vacation to Disneyworld, would you fear it up until the moment you got there? Of course not.

Consider this: Preaching the Gospel initiates a spiritual battle. Whatever Devils – fallen angels – live in your neighborhood, do you think they notice that you are in the incredibly tiny minority that practices personal evangelism? They will come at you with temptations and fearful thoughts and even provoke those around you – your wife, perhaps – to get out of sorts and ruin your good intentions. I learned long ago that some of the best times to do street evangelism occur when temptations and circumstances work hardest to discourage me. Not all crazy thoughts originate in our own minds. Some are injected directly by demonic spirits. Paul writes to Timothy that God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love and of a sound mind. Regarding your intentions to do evangelism, who is giving you the spirit of fear? Indeed, they will fight you. But once you're on the battlefield, you are walking with the Lord Jesus.

Ah, I sense your skepticism. Why should Devils pay attention to little old you or me? Let's do a little math. Rev 5:11 indicates that the total number of angels is at least somewhat over one hundred million. Since a third of the angels rebelled and were cast into our Earthly realm, we can estimate that there are at least fifty million Devils scattered about the Earth. Given a human population of almost seven billion, I conclude that there are roughly 140 humans per Devil. They are not omnipresent, and so must allocate their time and energy in ways they deem effective. In the Rockford area where I live, there are about 250,000 people. (This doesn't count the Chicago metropolitan area of about nine million.)

If Devils are allocated in proportion to population, I figure there are between 1,000 and 2,000 Devils in my area. Even though there are about 300 churches of all flavors in this town, and plenty of churchgoers, I know of only about 20 people who are sharing the Gospel Scripturally and consistently. Now who do you think is going to get the most demonic attention? I've got to assume that out of 1,000+ demons around here, at least one of them pays close attention to me. So I'm not surprised to get hassled. I'd rather be invisible, but the main thing is that we walk with the Lord Jesus. Note that there are two angels for every Devil, so I'm confident that I get some protection. Frankly, I'm glad that much of this is invisible to me.

I mentioned before that I had to fight through temptations for many years concerning *whether* I was going to hit the street or knock doors or visit the campus circle on a given day. What I eventually discovered was that as I continually determined to go . . . whether I felt like it or not and whether I considered myself spiritually ready or not . . . my "pre-game jitters" grew smaller and smaller. The greatest victories I have experienced in meeting people who really wanted to hear the Gospel – people I believe that God was preparing and leading to a "coincidental" meeting on the street with little old me – came after the greatest temptations and aggravations. I got to the point that I looked at "pre-game" trouble as a reason to rejoice that a good day was at hand. Based on experience, I think that some of the Devils may have decided to leave me alone because when they pricked me the hardest, I responded with the highest work ethic. I highly recommend the practice.

Early in Isaiah's long ministry, the Lord showed the young prophet a glimpse of God's glory and holiness. Isaiah responded appropriately with utter humility. He saw himself as undone and unworthy, along with his entire nation. He was made painfully aware of the unholiness of his people and his own life. Isaiah's repentant heart was rewarded with a declaration of God's forgiveness to him. Then the Lord made an offer:

Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, And the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. Isaiah 6:8-11

I imagine (no vision claimed – just my imagination) the Lord's offer as if to a teeming multitude, His eyes looking to and fro, hoping to find a volunteer. A man jumps up, his hand raised, pumping several times toward the sky while he says, "Me! Me! Pick me!"

In 1980 the U.S. Air Force assigned me to its research laboratory in Albuquerque. Just after we had joined a church, at the beginning of a Sunday evening service, the pastor made an announcement. "One of our bus captains, Rudy, has a need for a driver on Sunday mornings. It's the route on the Air Force base. If anyone wants to volunteer, Rudy will be standing up here at the front as soon as the service is over."

Instantly, I knew that the job was for me. I had been a "bus captain" for our church in Michigan before we moved. This ministry involved knocking doors, canvassing neighborhoods, preaching the Gospel 121, and inviting families to church where they can learn more of God's word. We rarely got entire families. We often got their kids and filled up a bus with those kids. By the way, children will get genuinely saved, if you are careful to teach them what salvation is – Biblically.

Back to the story: I had to wait miserably through the entire evening service to get the chance to meet Rudy and volunteer. I determined to be the first one to get in his face. As soon as the closing "Amen" was uttered, I rushed to the front, hoping to beat out any competition. Silly me. There was no competition. The job was mine. (Rudy and I became lifelong friends.)

My experience was just a shadow of Isaiah's. As soon as he responded, God laid the bad news on him. God told Isaiah that he would preach, but his message would be rejected. In fact, his preaching would grate on the nerves of the hearers, making them harder and harder. Isaiah begged God to tell him how long he must preach with such discouraging results. God told him to preach until the land was utterly desolate and every man scattered.

If my pastor in 1980 had laid out such prospects for my participation in the bus ministry, I wonder how eager I would have been to volunteer. Isaiah had character. God was able to entrust him with the burden of preaching in a wicked time and place.

Our mission, the Great Commission, comes with a promise that Jesus is with us always in this particular work, "even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20).

The new king, David, upon bringing the ark of God before the people, was inspired to sing a song – a portion excerpted below:

Sing unto the LORD, all the Earth; show forth from day to day his salvation. Declare his glory among the heathen; his marvellous works among all nations. For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised: he also is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the people are idols: but the LORD made the Heavens. 1 Chronicles 16:23-26

David, the king, was a witness for the salvation of God. He exhorted his people on many occasions that they should also be witnesses to the heathen – to all the nations. He preached the fear of the Lord and repentance from idolatry. In Exodus 19, God told Moses that the people of Israel were to be a kingdom of priests to represent God to the entire world. The prophet Isaiah proclaimed in Isaiah chapters 42 and 49 that the Jews, through the coming of the Messiah, were to shine a light of salvation to the Gentiles – to all the inhabitants of the Earth. The Jewish people ultimately rejected this message. Paul's preaching to the Gentiles was especially offensive to the unregenerate Jewish leadership. But prophecy is clear that God is not done with the sons of Jacob. (That's another book, though.)

An unnamed and aged psalmist proclaimed his desire to make his days count, especially since he didn't know (nor do any of us) how many days he had left:

My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof. I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have showed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come. Psalm 71:15-18

This man, whom we will meet in Heaven, preached righteousness and salvation throughout his life. He begs God to use him in his old age, until he has preached thoroughly to his present generation, and even to the ones to follow.

Do you see a pattern yet? Consider the broken heart of the apostle Paul, whose God-given ministry was to the Gentiles, yet he was so burdened for his brethren in Israel that he would have gone to Hell in their place. He laments their knowledge, their zeal, and their history. It is unconscionable that with all the knowledge that God has given to them, and all the works that God has done for them, that the Jews were still mostly an unsaved people.

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Romans 10:1-4

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. Romans 9:1-5

Evangelist Ray Comfort (wayofthemaster.com) has compiled a wonderful book of quotations by the 19th century British preacher / pastor / author Charles Haddon Spurgeon, entitled Spurgeon Gold. Here's a golden-tipped arrow aimed at the heart of the pew-warming Christian (page 51):

"They wander in on a Sunday morning, sit down, get their hymn books, listen to the prayer without joining in it, hear the sermon, but might almost as well not have heard it, go home, get through the Sunday, go into business. With them there is never any secret prayer for the conversion of men, no trying to talk to children or servants or friends about Christ, no zeal, no holy jealousy, no flaming love, no generosity, no consecrating of the substance to God's cause! This is too faithful a picture of a vast number of professing Christians. Would it were not so."

Feel the warmth? Here's a little more (page 52-3):

"How we fall short of having the passion we should. How would we react if we saw a huge line of blind men walking towards a thousand foot cliff, and one by one falling headlong onto jagged rocks below? Wouldn't we put our arms around them to hold them back? Wouldn't we implore them and scream at them to turn around? Yet we don't warn or plead with those whose fate is infinitely worse than that of those who would fall onto jagged rocks. Our passive preaching, and careful not to offend vocabulary betray our apathy and our unbelief. If we don't implore the world to turn from sin it's because we don't truly believe God's word. We mustn't. We cannot be so deathly cold, so evil-hearted as to not care."

Can't we?

What kind of qualifications do you need to share the Gospel with lost sinners. Let's evaluate the apostle Paul's assessment of his own strengths:

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Paul's qualifications include: *not* excellent speech, *not* excellent wisdom, determined to know simply the basics of the doctrine of Christ, weakness, fear, *much* trembling, and *not* enticing words. But he did walk in reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit. After all, spiritual victories, especially in regard to the salvation of souls, depend on the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, not on our cleverness.

So do you have weakness, fear, and much trembling? If so, you too have qualifications like the apostle Paul! Here's a gem from Ray Comfort (Spurgeon Gold, p. 61):

Rarely do I approach a stranger to witness to him without a feeling of weakness. Fear sits on my shoulder like a sinister bird, and whispers words of inadequacy. But I have learned to thank God for fear, because without it, I wouldn't pray. I wouldn't bother. It is my own weakness that makes me pray. My weakness makes me whisper, 'Help me, Lord,' and thus becomes my strength.

God grants spiritual gifts to His children for ministry within the church and the community. Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 speak to these gifts. They include prophecy and exhortation which, in the most

general sense, would certainly include the practice of personal evangelism. In fact, in Ephesians 4 we find that God sanctions the office of “evangelist” to minister to the churches. Apollos would serve as a good New Testament example. Paul also encouraged Timothy to do the work of an evangelist. This office certainly goes beyond the personal responsibility to preach the Gospel that is laid upon every believer.

There are clearly some Christians who are more gifted at personal evangelism than others. They are more eloquent, think faster on their feet, have more winsome personalities, and express compassion in the most appropriate and timely ways. I, unfortunately, do not have “the gift” in this area. From what Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he didn’t either. I believe it is no coincidence that the most powerful preacher of the New Testament is Paul, who experienced fear, weakness, and much trembling. Who was the most powerfully used servant of God in the Old Testament? I would submit the name of Moses for that honor. He was willing to argue with God because of his fear of leadership and public speaking.

Why did God use such weak and humble men as Paul and Moses so powerfully? Clearly, because He wants to demonstrate that we must rely on God for strength, guidance, leading, “coincidental” meetings, and conviction unto salvation in the hearts of sinners. I have known a few Christians who have “the gift” in the area of evangelism. I’ve marveled at their natural ability to strike up conversations without fear and get perfect strangers to open up on this most intimate of all topics – eternal destiny. Usually, however, the “gifted ones” don’t have the tenacity to stick with it, week after week, year after year. I’d rather be the plodder I am, continuing to learn, hopefully improving in conveying the Gospel clearly and graciously, but most of all – never quitting. Souls are not won by flowery speeches. Consider:

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. Romans 1:16

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 Corinthians 1:21

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. 1 Peter 1:23

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

These Scriptures speak to the power of the Gospel message, the power of the word of God, and the “foolishness” – in the eyes of men – of Gospel preaching. There is nothing of human talent in these passages.

If you’re in a church that is cold to evangelism, and you have (foolishly) decided after much prayer and consideration to remain there, then you can still get busy with the Lord’s work. It’s best to have a partner (more on this later), but you’ll always have the Lord Jesus with you. If you are looking to break out and start a house church on the NT pattern, my web site, truthreallymatters.com, has articles on this subject.

Beware of following pastors / preachers who disobey the Lord’s Great Commission. Isaiah nailed them with this analysis:

All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, yea, all ye beasts in the forest. His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter. Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and tomorrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant. Isaiah 56:9-12

If they are not about the Lord's work, just what are they doing? They must be looking out for themselves. When the "beasts" – enemies of God -- come after the flock, these self-anointed and self-centered watchmen would rather sleep than bark out the warning. They believe that tomorrow will be much like today. Life is good so enjoy it, they reassure you. You're in danger as long as you have that kind of a shepherd.

Isn't it wonderful that Jesus promised to be with us always, until the end of the world, *in the execution of the Great Commission*? Don't you want to walk with Jesus in this life? If you are obedient to Him in this great work you will. If you aren't, don't expect His active presence in your life. You can fool yourself with emotional experiences and hyped-up "worship" meetings, but if you're not obedient in the principal work of the Christian, you won't walk with the Lord.

I'll end this chapter with the *most important point*. You must bathe every aspect of your Gospel witness with prayer. I can't reach into someone's heart and bring conviction. Only the Holy Spirit can. My job is to preach the truth. The Lord brings conviction and understanding. The sinner must willfully repent. It is only the Holy Spirit who regenerates. Our part is absolutely essential, but God does the big work. Pray for wisdom. Pray for power. Pray for the lost. Pray to keep the Devils away so they don't snatch the seed away as soon as you sow it. Pray that the Lord Jesus walks with you, ahead of you, and after you in all your evangelistic efforts. Pray that the Lord chases after the people who get your Gospel tract. Be a man or woman of prayer. The Lord Jesus prayed much while He walked the Earth, and He was already in perfect communion with His Heavenly Father. Can we afford to pray less? Pray, pray, pray.

Chapter 3

How to Share the Gospel Scripturally

CC (Cold Christian): “Yeah, I know I should try to share the Gospel more.”

DD: “Do you mean, ‘More’ or ‘At all?’ Are you actually sharing the Gospel occasionally with strangers . . . at all?”

CC: “OK, I mean I ought to get started somehow. But there is so much to learn. There are books on apologetics to study and there are so many different kinds of people. My church doesn’t even have a course to get my feet wet.”

DD: “The first thing is . . . Don’t worry about apologetics. Nowhere in Scripture do we see anyone taking a course. Now, I love apologetics, but there are only special opportunities for that type of interaction.”

CC: “What about atheists who believe in evolution? And what about Catholics who believe in the sacraments and apostolic succession? And what about Jehovah’s Witnesses and their arguments about the deity of Christ?”

DD: “I absolutely support – and practice myself – the learning of everything you can about how to respond Scripturally to the heresies of our age. And I can help you get started on those topics so you can help lost sinners who have real stumbling blocks or false beliefs that hinder them from coming to Christ. But that’s not the first thing!”

CC: “Well, what is?”

DD: “The first thing is to recognize that there are only two camps / two teams that encompass the entire human race: lost and saved. The lost are under the condemnation and bondage of sins that addict them daily. The saved are part of the family of God and are following the Lord Jesus Christ, having left their wicked lives behind.”

CC: “You make it sound so simple.”

DD: “It is. Whether atheist or Roman Catholic or JW or pagan, every lost sinner has a God-given conscience that will recognize the difference between good and evil, righteousness and sin. They will understand justice and the idea that a just God must do something about it. The key to Scriptural evangelism is to use God’s method from Scripture to confront the lost sinner with his condition and point him to Christ. God has made us each to recognize truth when we hear it. Let’s take advantage of what God had taught us in His word!”

CC: “I’ve heard about some Christians who claim to ‘win souls’ every week. I don’t know if I can be so zealous or skilled as that.”

DD: “I pray that you don’t copy self-professed ‘soul winners’ who manipulate the lost into empty professions, inoculating them against a Biblical understanding of salvation. Scriptural evangelism prevents false professions and insures that sinners who repent truly change the road they travel through life. Your goal should be zeal with knowledge, always speaking the truth with grace.”

.....

I will give you a very practical method for sharing the Gospel in this chapter, using Biblical principles that will help you avoid making false converts. Many modern preachers who have zeal for the lost have no

fear of making false converts. They figure that some fraction of the folks they manipulate into professing Christ will stick, and so the rest are equivalent to collateral damage. You will find no Biblical support for this approach. If you use the principles and patterns revealed in Scripture, you will communicate the Gospel clearly to everyone who listens, you will be responsible for adding zero tares to professing Christendom, and the individuals who truly repent and believe will begin their Christian walk on a sure foundation.

One principle found throughout Scripture is that there are only two kinds of people, or “teams,” in this world: saved and lost. Zealous “soul winners” who produce many false converts seem to think that there are three teams: lost and living wickedly, saved and living righteously, and saved and living wickedly. The Bible is filled with examples and teaching that prove “two teams”: lost and living wickedly, saved and living righteously. The third team doesn’t exist.

The motivation for believing in a third team is to explain why so many of their converts never stick. For example: They don’t come faithfully to church or never show up at all. Many never submit themselves for baptism. They typically remain in their old sins, including drinking, fornicating, using pornography, or simply focusing on self. They may remain in their old apostate church, as Roman Catholics often do after they have made a profession for Christ. Catholics are often eager to say a prayer to ask Jesus to save them. They simply add that prayer to their sacraments, church attendance, etc.

Some years ago I read an account of a small group from an American church who took a short two-week “missions trip” to India. They reported that 250 Hindus professed Christ and were baptized as a result of their efforts. If that were true, we should rejoice and praise God. Unfortunately, I know too well the type of message that was preached. Missionaries to Hindus who are careful with the truth report that Hindus are often glad to add Jesus to the millions of gods in their religion. They especially appreciate that Jesus is “a god” who loves them. So they will happily call on the name of Jesus and ask Him for salvation. But they don’t have any intention to repent from their idolatry and weird religious practices. In short, they don’t get saved. The Lord Jesus Christ will not share godhood with demonic spirits. Recall how angry God was in Mark 9 when Peter over-zealously thought to honor Jesus, Moses, and Elijah together.

More recently, I listened in amazement to an associate pastor of a large fundie church who addressed the issue of the “missing converts.” Several people in the church had expressed dismay about the souls they had “won,” but couldn’t be dragged to church. The AP reassured those in the meeting that we might never see these converts in church, but we should praise God that they will be in Heaven someday. How dangerously wicked is such a position!

My wife and I didn’t stay in that church for very long. It was infested with the heresy of manipulative, repentance-less Gospel preaching. Or rather, I should say that they preached a false gospel. A false gospel is that which produces false converts.

A young man we'll name "Rick" was a relatively new convert who attended this church. (He had been saved in unusual circumstances before finding this congregation.) Rick took the soul-winning training course offered to all members. He had great zeal to reach out to his friends and his relatives. He came to me one day in great distress. He had kept a notebook and recorded the "conversions" of fifty people whom he had "led to the Lord." But he couldn't get any one of them to follow through, to come to church, to live the Christian life. He told me of one buddy that he was "following up" who wouldn't even answer his door when my friend dropped by. Worse, this buddy was still drinking and chasing women.

After Rick gave me the background we had a conversation that went something like this:

Rick: "How can I do a better job in 'follow up'? I'm really upset about all this. What's going on? I can't get my converts to come to church!"

DD: "I know exactly what's going on, but you won't like it."

Rick: "That's OK. Tell me."

DD: "No, you don't understand. What I would tell you goes against everything you have been taught about soul winning."

Rick: "Look. I'm desperate. If you have some experience with this, lay it on me."

DD: "And what I've got to say is totally contrary to what this church is teaching. Are you really sure you want to hear it?"

Rick: "Yes, really. Come on, what's going on?"

I explained to him that he actually had zero converts or rather, perhaps Rick had some converts, but none of them belonged to the Lord Jesus Christ. I went on to explain to him some of the principles we'll cover in the rest of this chapter. To his credit, Rick recognized my straightforward explanations as simple Biblical truth. He wanted to act on it immediately. He was especially concerned about his sons, his brother, his sisters, and his parents. He asked me if I could join him in visiting with them. He was horrified at the fact that he had shared a false gospel with family members and then assured them that they were saved. We spent the rest of the day visiting Rick's relatives all over the city. We discovered, to no surprise of mine, that they all wanted a ticket to Heaven, but also wanted to hang onto the sins they were addicted to. Namely, they refused to repent from the known sins in their lives.

Not long after that, during a Sunday morning service, the pastor of that church had his associate pastor stand up for recognition. The pastor called the AP his "soul-winning bulldog," and bragged that his bulldog had won 17 souls to Christ that week. I waited pensively for the end of the service, which included time for baptisms. There were zero baptisms that week. Like I said, we weren't in that church very long.

Perhaps a year later, I was passing out tracts and sharing the Gospel with people passing by the county courthouse, one of my favorite hot spots. I recognized the pastor of a different fundie church in the city, who had founded that church fifty years before. I asked him to stop and talk for a bit, explaining that I had run into a number of people in town who had been "saved" through the ministry of his church, but

were living ungodly lives. I reported that when I challenged the authenticity of their conversion, they typically got angry and insisted that they were going to Heaven because they had prayed the “sinner’s prayer” and henceforth were assured of their salvation, regardless of actions to follow. They loved to point out that “nobody’s perfect” as the universal excuse for engaging in whatever vile sins they enjoyed most.

This aged and experienced pastor was taken aback at my challenge, of course. I also challenged him directly that the problems derived from their evangelistic methods. He asked me what method I used in sharing the Gospel. After I explained it in some detail, he exclaimed, “You won’t win many souls that way!” He didn’t respond with any Scriptural arguments. The irony is that he is not actually winning many souls his way, either. Tragically, those who have embraced a false gospel have been “inoculated” against the Gospel that saves. They are much harder to talk with and highly resistant to a message that emphasizes repentance.

Is there actually a “third team”? If so, there must be many members in America today. Let’s sample just a few Scriptures to show the Biblical pattern of “two teams.”

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:8-10

Salvation is a gift! Our part is faith apart from works. God’s part is grace – unmerited favor bestowed on those who come to Him on His terms. Note verse 10. When born again, we are created “unto,” namely, to produce good works. That is the mark of a Christian. Good works follow salvation. There is no mention here of team 3.

For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 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; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men. Titus 3:3-8

Note that unbelievers *were* – past tense – foolish, disobedient, serving lusts, etc. Once again, we see salvation NOT through any works of righteousness, but according to God’s mercy – we don’t get what we deserve. We meet God’s condition and the Holy Spirit regenerates us. We are justified and made heirs with Christ. Note the same pattern now . . . good works follow salvation. That’s the pattern. “Believers” think differently. Their actions – their works – demonstrate their beliefs. We see no option for team 3.

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For

every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. John 3:18-21

Jesus explains to Nicodemus that there are two teams: believers and unbelievers. Believers love the light, coming to the light that his deeds may be seen openly, knowing that they are in God's will. Unbelievers love darkness and avoid light and the associated condemnation. No team 3: no examples of believers who love darkness.

That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. John 5:22-29

Believers are those that honor the Son, which is the only way to honor the Father. Unbelievers are those that do not honor the Son. Salvation is a passing from death to life – everlasting life. Everlasting life is a present possession, which thereby must last forever. This is the doctrine of eternal security for the *true believer*. See John 3:16 and 1 John 5:10-13 also. Judgment is coming and we see that all of humanity fits into two categories – two teams – those that have done good and those that have done evil. Isn't it obvious that believers are those that are empowered to do good, to do God's will, and unbelievers walk in darkness, doing evil, and are headed toward damnation? No team 3 discussed here: no believers who dishonor God and live a life of evil works.

He that committeth sin is of the Devil; for the Devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. 1 John 3:8-10

This passage is simply not complicated. Those that commit – this verb is in the present and continuing tense, showing a life pattern – sin are clearly following Satan. Jesus came to destroy the works of the Devil, not to create churches of false converts who work for the Devil. Whosoever is born again doesn't show this life pattern. He cannot persist in a life of sin. God won't let him. We see two teams here: the children of God and the children of the Devil. In several chapters to follow, we will expand on the points above by surveying the entire Bible for representative passages on this point. When God repeats themes in Scripture, it is obvious that we should pay attention. It is also obvious that such repetition indicates that heresies will abound and so must be combatted by much clarity.

Am I suggesting that a born again Christian doesn't sin at all? He certainly has no excuse. Every sin is a willful transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). I have been a Christian for over 40 years and I confess that I have willfully sinned countless times. I have also experienced the chastisement of the Lord on my head, as He promises to His true children. See Hebrews 12:5-11 and Proverbs 3:11-12, for example. Before I

was a Christian I leaped into sin eagerly. Since I became a Christian I have sinned and felt the dirt and the sludge of it in my heart.

As a child of God I have (right now!) everlasting life, having been born again into His family. I can't get kicked out of the family. (See also John 3:36, John 10:27-30, Ephesians 1:12-14, and Ephesians 4:30, and 1 Peter 1:5, for example.) If I persist in disobeying my Heavenly Father, He will get my attention. This comes often first by conviction. If I don't pay attention, the Lord can touch my health or my resources. If I embarrass Him enough, He may just take me home early.

The experience of every true believer is that he has changed roads, from the broad road to destruction to the narrow road that leads to life (Matthew 7:13-14). By the grace of God I have put things out of my life and have grown in grace. I still have much growing to do. But my attitude toward sin, toward that which nailed my Lord to the cross, is entirely different from before. The more I grow, the more I agree with God that sin is stupid, wicked, and harmful. The more I grow, the more I long for righteousness and holiness (Matthew 5:6, Hebrews 12:14).

Does the believer still sin? Here's the way Billy Sunday, an evangelist of the early 20th century, put it (my paraphrase):

"A sheep and a hog can both fall into a mud puddle. The sheep immediately knows he doesn't like it and works to get out. The hog loves it and wallows around."

As I write this chapter, I've recently observed an open-air preacher on State Street in downtown Chicago. He uses a speaker with an amplifier, so that he can be heard within perhaps 200 feet, despite the considerable street noise. He continually yells out admonitions against sin, but does so in such an odd way that I decided to talk with him 121 on several occasions. Our last two conversations went something like this (I'll combine the main points of these short conversations):

DD: "What must I do to be saved?"

OAP: "You must be born again."

DD: "Of course. What must I do to be born again?"

OAP: "You have to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit."

DD: "Surely you're not a universalist. You're talking about what God does in salvation. But what must I do? What's my responsibility? Can't you tell me exactly what it takes to get saved? That's why you're out here, isn't it?"

OAP: "You have to repent, trust in Jesus, and never sin anymore."

DD: "Never sin at all?"

OAP: "Never. You can't sin and go to Heaven."

DD: "So you never sin?"

OAP: "Never."

DD: "But you break the two greatest commandments every day. You fail to love God with all your heart and you fail to love your neighbor as yourself. You get selfish occasionally, at least."

OAP: "No, I don't. I don't sin. You can't sin and go to Heaven."

DD: "Now you've convinced me that you're a lost man. You fail to trust in Christ and what He did on the cross when you depend on your own righteousness. Your pride won't even let you admit sin in your daily walk. YOU need to get saved."

There aren't many such characters out there. But there are a few. And they do great harm to the Gospel. Salvation requires repentance from specific sins. Regeneration produces a new heart and a new spirit to commune with the Holy Spirit. But the new birth does not make us perfect in this flesh. We still battle temptation. We must ask our Heavenly Father for forgiveness when we fail – when we sin. Yet we have crossed over from one road to another. The way is narrow, but the child of God is focused on following it, poor though his performance may be at times.

In fact, a Christian and a lost sinner can fall into the same sin. But their responses will be day to night.

More Scriptural examples:

Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: Romans 2:4-10

God's goodness draws us to repentance. He is longsuffering as He waits for our response. Those that rebel simply treasure up more and more wrath. Note how many teams are cited. Judgment falls on the disobedient and unrighteous. Eternal life is granted to those who seek for glory, honor, and immortality. The big distinction in the mind of the Jews of Paul's time was that between Jews and Gentiles. Paul makes a different distinction: between the righteous and the unrighteous.

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Galatians 5:19-25

How clear can it get? Believers and unbelievers behave differently!

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17

The believer is an entirely new kind of creature. He simply doesn't act like the old lost critter he was! We have sampled just a few Scriptures on this topic. Future chapters will include more of God's mind on this subject, through His word.

One of the consequences of having a false gospel is the tendency to misinterpret many passages of Scripture. As an "exercise for the student," I encourage you to study two passages: John 8 where Jesus deals with "disciples" who are actually false converts; and Romans 8:1-10 describing the difference between those who walk in the flesh (lost) and those who walk in the Spirit (saved). In John 8 you will

see that the proof of “false discipleship” is whether these followers continue in obedience to the Lord and whether they respond favorably to His rebuke. (They don’t.) In Romans 8 you will see the stark contrast between two teams. No third team is in evidence. But many preachers who preach a heretical plan of salvation feel constrained to interpret the Jews in John 8 as real Christians who have a choice between being “good disciples” and “bad disciples.” Such preachers characterize those who walk in the flesh in Romans 8 as “backslidden Christians.” With a simple reading, you should be able to figure out which interpretation makes sense.

Preaching the Gospel Scripturally in this “*adulterous and wicked generation*” can get discouraging because so few are willing to respond in repentance and faith. Yet our job is to be faithful and trust the Lord to do the “follow up.” Nowhere in Scripture do we see preachers running after sinners who have rejected a clear message of repentance. Yet the Lord does chase after, working on hearts, working in circumstances, and bringing conviction, even when we don’t see it. How many saved souls would it take for you to find it worthwhile to preach the Gospel? See Mark 8:36-38 for some perspective.

In the late 1970s I attended graduate school at Michigan State University. One of my fellow grad students – we’ll call him “William” – was a committed atheist / evolutionist. But he was quite polite and willing to discuss the big issues of life. Over the course of our friendship I worked hard to try to reach him for Christ. After about two years he confessed that I had convinced him that evolution was unsupported and unscientific. But he wasn’t willing to become a Christian. His worldview had shifted by only a bit: on the subject of origins he figured that someone would come up with a better naturalistic idea than evolution. He professed that the only thing that would likely provoke him to become a Christian would be some traumatic experience. In short, *he didn’t want to give up his favorite sins and he didn’t want any God telling him what to do.* We lost contact upon graduation. I simply don’t know how his life has turned out.

“Warren” was another grad student who worked in the same research team as I did. We weren’t close, although we had a good professional relationship. Warren was also an atheist, but didn’t want to engage in discussion. I know that I shared the Gospel with him in those days – I was in the habit of sharing the Good News with everyone I knew – but I can’t remember doing so. After graduation we lost touch for 20 years. That’s when Warren tracked me down and called me. He was a researcher in a West Coast lab and I was teaching at Michigan Tech in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. Warren told me that he had become a Christian five years before. He said that he could never get out of his mind the truths that I had told him. Over the course of 15 years, God had brought circumstances into his life that got his attention. He repented and trusted Christ and was serving the Lord in a local church. Warren was also raising his daughter so that she would know the Lord. He wanted to call me to thank and encourage me.

That encouragement was timely. I had been praying for encouragement at the time that he called, because I had seen so little response to my efforts in personal evangelism for several years. The Lord used that experience to show me that He is always working. God cares more than I do about the salvation of souls. He expects me to be faithful, whether I see any results or not. I’ll spend time with my “brother-in-Christ” Warren in the New Heaven and the New Earth. We’ll rejoice together over the love and grace of God, Who sent someone to me with the Gospel when I was a young man – someone who cared enough about me to warn me about sin, judgment, and Hell. When I got saved I got “soul-conscious.” I want to invite more people into God’s family and out of the Devil’s. That’s what motivated me to “preach” to Warren, even though he didn’t like it at the time. But now he’s glad that I did.

As a way to start thinking about Biblical evangelism, consider the quotes below, defining repentance as it applies to salvation. If your Gospel preaching is not aimed in this direction, then your church is likely filled with false converts – the religious lost – the hardest to reach demographic in America. Don't be afraid to examine yourself as Paul challenged the problematic members of the church at Corinth (2 Corinthians 13:5). If you haven't deliberately and willfully experienced Biblical repentance, then do so immediately!

Recognizing his guilt, there is a turning from sin. There is a turning to God. The actual word 'repentance' means a turning completely around: a change of course; a change of mind . . . To think of repentance that does not cause the sinner to turn gladly from his sins is impossible. . . . I know that we have a shallow religious movement in our times that will allow men to profess faith in Christ and at the same time continue to live in the world. Such a shallow religious faith is not real. These are mere professors and have no part with God in salvation. – Harold Sightler, pastor

Repentance is a forsaking of sin. Real repentance is putting your trust in Jesus Christ so you will not live like that anymore. Repentance is permanent. It is a lifelong and an eternity-long experience. You will never love the Devil again once you repent. You will never flirt with the Devil as the habit of your life again once you get saved . . . Repentance is something a lot bigger than a lot of people think. It is absolutely essential if you (want to) go to Heaven. – Lester Roloff, evangelist

Neglect of the doctrine of Biblical repentance is the reason there are so few converts within America. Few converts? Isn't this a "Christian nation"? Even if you properly discount the Roman Catholics and the liberal mainline Protestants, aren't there at least 50 million evangelicals and fundamentalists in America?

Yes, but out of these there are perhaps only about 6 million real Christians – about 2% of the population. This is my personal estimate, extrapolating from two sources: (1) comprehensive national polling about what professing Christians actually believe about the Bible, their own salvation, the person of Jesus Christ, etc., and (2) personal conversations with many thousands of individuals in street ministry over many years. Only about 2% of us show real evidence of being born again. And I'm afraid that I may be too optimistic.

Why so few converts? Consider that most of those 2% have been raised in Christian families, at some point trusted Christ, and have continued to live their lives as disciples into adulthood. It is therefore clear that the number of Americans getting saved from evangelistic efforts, especially as teens or adults, is woefully small. Adults that have grown up without a Biblically-based faith have been exposed to a wide variety of confusing pseudo-Christian heresies. They have immersed themselves gleefully in the sewer of American culture (pop / rock / rap music, pornography, Hollywood, pro-sports team worship, etc.), and have a tenacious resistance to the message of repentance, faith, and the new birth.

America's prosperity and religious freedom have produced an insipidly watered-down imitation of Christianity, with a false gospel propagated by many (Thank God, not all!) of its most conservative churches . . . yes, specifically what we would call the fundamentalist and the evangelical churches. Let me give you a recent and startling example of the energy expended in producing false converts.

A leading fundamentalist organization sponsored a Memorial Day weekend event in Washington, D.C. last year. About 250 "soul-winners" from perhaps a dozen churches spent two days passing out tracts and "sharing the Gospel." They reported that they "saw 685 people bow their heads and trust Christ as

Savior.” One man “set a goal to lead 10 people to the Lord by the end of the day . . .”, but “at the end of the day . . . had led 24 souls to the Lord!”

Somehow he *knew* that. He professed no supernatural ability, however, to inspect the souls and spirits of those individuals, to determine whether the Holy Spirit had taken up residence. Perhaps his *methodology* was fool-proof. The leader of the expedition (a nationally recognized figure) testified that the workers explain the Gospel “in detail” using the so-called Romans Road, talking through the following Scripture verses: Romans 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 10:9, 10, and 13.

If you’re not familiar with this approach, that’s good! In brief, these verses are used to explain that everyone is a sinner, that the wages for sin is death, that Christ died for us, and that if we confess with our mouth and believe in our heart that all this is true, then we can be saved eternally. The last verse, Romans 10:13 is used to provoke a “sinner’s prayer,” affirming the points above. (Look carefully! 10:13, in context, is not about “how” to be saved – a method – but rather “who” can be saved – whosoever! More about this point later.) If all this is done with apparent sincerity, the sinner is pronounced “saved.”

The leader above talks of “drawing the net.” By this he means that you can “close the deal” by leading someone in a sinner’s prayer. No you can’t! It is the Holy Spirit Who “closes the deal” when a truly repentant heart trusts Christ as Savior. The “soul-winner” is the one who wants “closure” so that he can report that 24 people got saved that day! By the way, the term “soul-winner” derives somewhat from Proverbs 11:30. I find the term dangerous because it leads to the mentality of “closing the deal.” It’s better to use “evangelist” or “Gospel preacher” or “witness.”

Let’s back up a bit. This false-gospel encounter with a stranger is often initiated by the question, “Do you know for sure if you are going to Heaven when you die?” If the response indicates uncertainty, the follow-up may be, “Wouldn’t you like to make sure?” Now, who wouldn’t want to “make sure”? Do you see the fallacy? The typical American, raised up with some church background (even if not active in a church presently), has some belief in the God of the Bible, sees himself as a Christian of some kind, and is “pretty sure” of going to Heaven. Perhaps 98% sure, because he thinks of himself as such a good guy. He is self-righteous and, therefore, in deep trouble, but doesn’t know it. At any rate, he hasn’t been worried about it up to this point in his life, even though the stakes are infinite. So the “soul-winner” offers him a method to get the other 2% of assurance. Why not take it?

What’s the problem? To be saved you have to know that you are 100% lost, headed for Hell because you deserve it, with no hope at all unless God offers you a way out . . . namely, salvation through Jesus Christ. If you don’t know you’re *lost*, then you can’t get *saved*. Jesus came not to call the self-righteous, but sinners to repentance!!! (Luke 5:32)

It’s amazing that anyone turns down the opportunity to “pray to receive Christ.” That phrase sounds rather “Roman Catholic,” doesn’t it? In the RC Mass, a priest yanks Jesus out of Heaven via an incantation, to inhabit a wafer. Similarly, the “soul-winner” entices the sinner to yank the Holy Spirit out of Heaven to inhabit his heart via a magic “sinner’s prayer.” Yet many people who have some “Christian beliefs” refuse the sinner’s prayer. When this occurs I believe it’s because the non-believer instinctively knows that he is not willing to give up his sins, namely, he is not willing to repent – even though the “soul-winner” hasn’t said a word about repentance. In fact, such “soul-winners” explicitly do not believe that repentance from specific sins is required for salvation.

So the eager Christian walks the sinner through the Romans Road, who then nods his *intellectual assent* to each point. At the end he is quite willing to pray a simple prayer if the result is a mansion in Heaven. Then back he goes to his wicked party life on Earth and nothing changes. He is told that *to be saved he must trust only in Jesus for salvation and not in his works, church, etc., and that believing that Jesus died for him will save him*. The fallacy is that mental assent to *the fact* that Jesus died for his sins and *the fact* that only Jesus can save, says *nothing* about repentance from sins – a true change of mind that produces a lifelong change of actions. If you want forgiveness, you must agree with God that your sins are wicked . . . not just that sins in general are wicked, but that *your sins* are wicked. When you *believe that*, you'll turn around, change roads, repent — follow Jesus and not Satan anymore. How can you ask for forgiveness while still determined to act wickedly? What you believe is shown by how you act. If you believe you are in a burning building, you will act to leave.

My sad experience, along with many others who preach the Gospel Scripturally, has been to run into the train wrecks of false converts every week. They are the most hardened lost people of all. They were never born again, have never passed from death to life, and have shown no evidence of being a new creature in Christ – old things have not passed away (2 Corinthians 5:17). Still lost, but now they are *assured* of their salvation. Children, of course, are the easiest to fool with such simplistically false methods. A child will agree with an authority figure in his family or church, make a profession, get baptized, attend church until 18 years old, and then race into the world to make up for lost party time.

Recent statistics in fundamentalist and evangelical churches indicate that 80-90% of the kids raised in those churches depart from “the faith” shortly after they leave the nest. Parents are consoled by their foolish pastors that the kids are “still saved,” just “backslidden” – just “carnal Christians.”

How tragic. If you think you are dealing with a “carnal Christian,” you won't be preaching judgment, damnation, and the need for repentance unto salvation, will you? You'll be preaching such gentle, esoteric concepts as loss of reward, not loving Jesus enough, etc. The false convert, addicted to the sins of the flesh, is not motivated by “loss of reward.” He is called a “backslider,” but he never slid forward in the first place. He is still on the road to Hell.

Let me try to motivate you in the area of personal evangelism – and for you to do it Scripturally so that you don't create false converts. It's probably easy for you to find motivation for a loving marriage, educated children, and a successful career. But those things are really about you, aren't they? Your wife and your children are part of you. Your career is about you. Even pagans desire happy families and worldly success. So what are you doing for others?

Evangelism is the subject of propagating the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That's what the Bible is all about, isn't it? After a perfect creation, man rebelled against God. The entire Old Testament is centered on the promise of the Messiah through a people (the Jews) who were entrusted as the oracles of God's word. The New Testament is the fulfillment of God's promises. Each of us is a sinner in need of a Savior – not complicated, is it? Once you become a follower of Jesus Christ, then what? The principal “work” of the Christian is the Great Commission. The Bible indeed gives much instruction on marriage, the raising of children, stewardship, business, and the general conduct of life. But the purpose of a Christian's life is to sow seed which bears fruit. (Read John 15 thoughtfully.)

The Lord Jesus began His ministry by preaching repentance (Matt 4:17). Similarly, John the Baptist (Matt 3:2) plowed up the spiritual ground before the Lord's ministry, as Peter did after the Lord delegated the Great Commission to His followers (Acts 2:38). Paul's summary of his own ministry cited “*repentance*

toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:20-21, Acts 26:18, 20). Jesus commanded His disciples and others to follow Him (Mark 1:17-18, Luke 9:59). What was the purpose of the Son of God in coming to Earth? Scripture is clear: It was to call sinners to repentance, provide forgiveness of sins through His shed blood on the cross, and provide for life everlasting through the resurrection – defeating death (Matt 1:21, Luke 5:32, Luke 19:10, John 12:32, 1 Corinthians 15).

So how can you claim to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ and NOT be about what He was doing on this Earth? In the forty days between His resurrection and ascension, it is recorded that He spoke to His disciples at least five times to provoke them to preach the Gospel. The rest of the New Testament reports that they obeyed enthusiastically. To love the Lord is to obey His commandments (John 14:15). To love your neighbor and not warn him of the judgment to come is no love at all. Jesus taught that the whole of God’s law is contained in two commandments: loving God and loving your neighbor (Matt 22:34-40). If you don’t share the Gospel with the lost, you break the two greatest commandments continually.

Many claim to preach the Gospel, but do so unscripturally. American churches are filled with false converts due to the preaching of false gospels. Many would like to “accept Jesus” or “ask Jesus into their heart” or other such unscriptural nonsense. The Bible’s message to a lost sinner is to repent from the sins in his life and believe and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. The transition from lost to saved changes everything in the conduct of your life!

I’m going to camp for a few pages on the subject of repentance. Why? Most Christians in America – even pastors – don’t preach it and most of the people that believe they are born again have fooled themselves because they refuse to practice repentance. Our ultimate authority on any matter of doctrine is the Bible. First, to warm up, let’s add two more quotes from notable American preachers who got this right:

The proper evidence (of the new birth) appears in the holy fruits of repentance and faith and newness of life . . . being deeply convicted of our guilt, danger, and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ and openly confessing Him as our only and all-sufficient Savior. – J. Frank Norris

To repent literally means to have a change of mind or spirit toward God and toward sin. It means to turn from your sins, earnestly, with all your heart, and trust in Jesus Christ to save you . . . The jailer repented when he turned from sin to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. – John R. Rice

How about The Most Notable Preacher? Jesus defined repentance in Matthew 12:41 when He stated that the men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah. Review Jonah chapter 3 to find out what Jesus meant by “repented.” In verses 8-10 we see the king pleading with his people to cry out to God, for everyone to turn from his evil way and his violence, and to hope that God would repent from His coming judgment. Nineveh made no simple profession, followed by a return to rape and murder. That wicked nation turned completely around. If their profession had been empty, would God have repented from His judgment? Consider Titus 1:15-16 and James 2:14 in this context.

John the Baptist proclaimed the necessity of repentance and defined it in Luke 3. He refused to baptize the religious hypocrites, commanding them to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. (How many pastors refuse to baptize applicants today?) He promised that those who refused to repent would be

cut off and be cast into the fire – Hell. He defined repentance when asked by the people, “*What shall we do then?*” Verses 11-14 covered specific sins and specific remedies that the sincere repent-er would demonstrate.

Acts 2:38 and 3:19 are explicit about repentance being tied to the forgiveness of sins that is necessary for salvation. Acts 20:20-21 summarizes Paul’s view of his own ministry – preaching “*repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*” In that context John R. Rice once pointed out the distinction between repentance and faith – that they are like two sides of the same coin. When you repent from sin, you turn to Christ in faith. Alternatively, when you turn to Christ as Savior and Lord, you turn away from Satan and his works. In preaching to pantheists on Mars Hill, Paul says that God commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). By the way, the first recorded message that Jesus preached was “Repent” (Matthew 4:17).

The Gospel of John, which nowhere explicitly uses the word repentance, nevertheless does teach the concept clearly. John 3:14-21 emphasizes believing as the key to salvation. This “believing” must be more than simple intellectual assent. Note that in verses 19-21, we see that the lost love darkness and hate light. The saved come to the light that their deeds may be made manifest. So faith produces a changed life, as also proclaimed in Ephesians 2:8-10, Titus 2:11-14, and Titus 3:5-8, plus 2 Corinthians 5:17 and many other passages. Note that John 12:42-43 shows a degree of “believing” that falls short of salvation. Compare this passage with Matt 10:32-33. The true Christian proclaims his faith before men. This concept of true life-changing belief is dramatically emphasized in John 8:31-47. There were “believers” in that crowd in the manner of intellectual assent, who nevertheless remained children of wrath. Matthew 13 is filled with this teaching in parable after parable.

In Mark 10:17-22 we see a young man seeking salvation. Consider how Jesus, the Master Preacher, handles him. Jesus uses the law, but the man proclaims his own righteousness (see also Proverbs 20:6). So Jesus goes for the jugular, knowing the man’s god is his money. Jesus does not try to “get him saved” before dealing with his sin. The young man walks away unrepentant and lost. The modern “soul-winner” would try to lead this man through a “sinner’s prayer” and hope that he might deal with his greed and disobedience some other time.

Practically speaking . . . In my experience, almost every lost person you meet will understand the necessity of repentance for salvation. Among the literally thousands of individuals I have shared the Gospel with, I cannot remember one (not counting atheists) who did not grasp the necessity of heart-felt repentance when reviewing his sins before a holy God. When you explain that one can’t expect a ticket to Heaven unless he has a repentant heart, it makes sense. Apparently, it takes a Bible-college education to convince preachers that you can somehow believe in Jesus Christ and still live like the Devil.

Now, there is a lot of foolish phraseology used by Christians with the lost. In Scripture the lost are always commanded to repent and believe. If anyone really understands one side of the coin, the other side is obvious. If you know the ice is thin on the lake, you won’t walk across it – your will changes and your actions follow. So don’t talk about “receiving Christ” or “making a decision for Christ” or “accepting Jesus into your heart.” There is Scriptural relevance in these phrases, but that’s not how we see lost people taught in Scripture. If someone truly repents from sin / sins / self-rule, and truly believes / trusts in Jesus, God will save him. Also, don’t emphasize Heaven – Bible prophets didn’t. If someone wants eternal life, it starts now – and the changes in life start now, too!

Words count. Why do some preachers beg the lost to “receive Christ”? What they mean is that when someone is saved, the Spirit of Christ, namely the Holy Spirit, comes and indwells the believer. There are two relevant passages often cited:

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: John 1:10-12

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. Galatians 4:6-7

The first passage speaks of the entrance of Jesus Christ into this world. Verse 10 identifies Him as the Creator, but unrecognized by the inhabitants of the world. Verse 11 reports that He came to His own people – the Jews – and they did not receive Him. What does that mean? They rejected His message and His person. They rejected Him as Messiah and Savior. They rejected the entire package. Verse 12 contrasts those individuals, which include both Jew and Gentile, who received Him in the sense of embracing the entire package. This passage therefore does not teach that an individual can get saved “right now” by expressing a desire to “receive Christ” as if He were a gift that could be taken in hand. Yet verse 12 is often ripped out of context and used in personal evangelism. If you want to teach the lost to “receive Christ,” then explain that what you mean is to repent from your sins, trust Him and nothing else as Savior, and recognize that life changes henceforth as you follow Him.

The passage in Galatians teaches that the Spirit of Christ does indeed dwell in the believer. Our spirit is made alive by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Note that neither passage, John 1 nor Galatians 4, was written to record the presentation of the Gospel to the lost. Both passages were written especially to teach believers. In stark contrast, when we see the Lord or the apostles or the Old Testament prophets dealing with the lost, we see the commands to repent and believe. That’s the message that produces the broken and humble heart in the lost that God is looking for. God wants to regenerate, to make a new heart, to produce a born again child of God. The message that provokes repentance and belief unto salvation includes preaching repentance from sin and belief in Christ, resulting in a transformed life.

How much repentance and faith? That’s a fair question. Answer: Enough so that one is born again of the Holy Spirit (John 3). In addition to all the New Testament passages, consider this blunt passage from God through the prophet Ezekiel:

Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye. Ezekiel 18:30-32

Focus on the personal responsibility of the sinner in this passage: “his ways”, “turn yourselves”, “your transgressions”, “your ruin”, “(you) cast away from you”, “ye have transgressed”, “make you a new heart and a new spirit”, “why will ye die”, “turn yourselves”, “live ye”.

This passage is one of hundreds that directly refute Calvinism, by the way. Yes, Scripture teaches that God does the saving, the “regenerating.” Such Scripture regarding God’s part includes Ephesians 2:8-9, Galatians 4:6-7, 1 Peter 1:23, 1 Peter 3:18, and Romans 8:9-11. But God also gives us responsibility to repent, turn from iniquity, make a new heart, believe in Christ, etc. The evangelist must press that responsibility on the lost sinner.

What if someone doesn’t think they are repentant enough or believe enough? Tell him to seek God, asking Him for help in repentance and increased faith for salvation. Such prayers will be effectual! Anyone that asks and seeks God will find God. The evangelist (that’s you, O Christian man) can’t see into the heart, so don’t get in the way! It may take minutes or hours or days. You don’t know what battles may have to take place in the heart to forsake cherished sins.

If you are sharing the Gospel with someone, what if he responds favorably? If he wants you to, hang around. Answer questions. Teach him all you can about salvation (Matt 28:18-20) and the difference between the lost and the saved – both in destination and in day to day life. When someone is born again, let him profess it (Rom 10:9-10, Matt 10:32-33), and come for baptism (Acts 8:36-37). You will search through the Scriptures in vain to find a preacher manipulating someone to and through a so-called “sinner’s prayer.” If you are foolish enough to teach someone that at the end of some simple prayer that he is saved – guaranteed – you may prematurely terminate the confession and pleading that person needs to find repentance and faith unto salvation.

Yes, he can know that he is saved (Romans 8:16, for example). But teach him to start living the Christian life so that he can “work out his salvation” (Phil 2:12), that others may see it and God may be glorified. God knows precisely when someone passes from death to life in salvation (John 5:24, Luke 15:7). But you don’t, do you? Don’t deliver a still-born child into “professing Christianity” – someone who has fooled himself, but is still lost.

A final note on the necessity of preaching repentance: Some misapply Rom 10:13 to motivate a “sinner’s prayer.” The emphasis in verse 13 is not *how* to be saved (“call”), but rather *who* can be saved (“whosoever”). Proof: the context is given by verses 11-12. The “call” for salvation, in the context of the rest of Scripture, must include repentance and faith to be effectual. Otherwise, how do you explain Matt 7:21-27? In that passage, Jesus teaches that many that call to Him will be lost – He never knew them. How tragic. Don’t be part of the American disaster in evangelism. Preach Scripturally. Salvation is between the sinner and the Savior. You can’t close the deal. You are entrusted with a great task: preach truth and introduce the lost to the Lord.

Now let’s get very practical. How do you share the Gospel with someone, from start to finish? What if the soul you are burdened about is a relative? A co-worker? A neighbor? A stranger? How about an atheist, or a Roman Catholic, or a Mormon, or a Muslim? I have good news for you. Lost people come in a variety of flavors, but the Gospel doesn’t change. Everyone comes to Christ the same way. He is the way, the truth, and the life. (He said that in John 14:6.)

Here’s what I call “A Very Short Gospel Presentation – Cold Turkey – 121.” The scenario is that you approach a total stranger – Oh my! How scary! You have in your hand a Gospel tract to offer to him.

INTRODUCTION: *Hi! How are you doing? Did you get one of these? It’s a comic book with a good story and a Gospel message . . . you know, life / death / Heaven / Hell? Do you ever think about the big issues?*

JUDGMENT: *Here's the biggest question of all: If you died today, where would you be? Heaven or Hell? Innocent or guilty?*

LAW / SIN: *The Bible says an amazing thing: God knows everything about you. He knows our secret sins, even when we think we're getting away with it. You've heard of the 10 commandments, like "Thou shalt not kill." Ever murder anyone? Jesus Christ says you have. Jesus said if you call someone a fool, or if you're angry without cause, you've committed murder in your heart — in God's eyes. Murderers will not inherit the kingdom of God. And we're all guilty.*

You've probably noticed that the world is messed up — it's in deep trouble. You know whose fault that is? Yours and mine. Times 7 billion people. We're all rebels.

Jesus said that if you look at a woman with lust, you've committed adultery already in your heart. Innocent or guilty? Hundreds of times? Thousands? Pornography is a sin of lust, too. Adulterers are condemned to Hell, along with murderers.

The Bible says that God's standard of justice is so high that liars will be condemned to Hell. Ever tell a lie? We're all liars at times. The first step to salvation is to admit you're guilty!

HELL: *Do you know how many sins it takes to go to Hell? That's right — just one. Why? Because God is holy and just and won't let sin into Heaven. But you and I have sinned against God thousands of times. Here's the problem: If we say, "God, give me what I deserve," God could say, "I know everything you've ever done, said, and thought. You've broken my laws thousands of times — willfully — and you deserve Hell." God didn't create Hell for people. He created it as a prison for Satan and the angels that rebelled against God. But when we sin, we rebel just like Satan. Whenever we sin, we're telling God we don't want Him telling us what to do. If we die in our sins, we share the Devil's fate — Hell. I don't want you to go to Hell and from what you've told me, that's where you're going!*

GOSPEL: *God did something to keep you out of Hell because He loves you. He must judge sin because He is just. Somebody is going to pay. Do you know what He did? 2000 years ago the Creator of the universe became a man — Jesus Christ. He lived a perfect life, and made people mad by preaching that we must repent. When He went to the cross, He was innocent. He shed His blood for your sins and mine. He suffered Hell on the cross — it was more than physical torture, it was the supernatural wrath of almighty God. He took Hell in our place on that cross so you and I could go free. He died and was buried. Three days later He rose from the dead. Nobody else ever did that. Only Jesus Christ has the power to overcome death. Want to live forever?*

REPENT & BELIEVE: *So here is salvation: Admit to God that you've sinned against Him and deserve Hell. Turn from your sins and your selfishness to God (that's repentance — turning around), and trust Jesus Christ for salvation. Jesus wants to save you for eternity, and that includes changing the rest of your life. Eternal life isn't just for after death. It's for right now — today! Get free from the addictive power of sin. All sin is stupid — alcohol, drugs, lust, greed, anger, selfishness — sin just hurts you and others. Get smart! God will make you a new creature and give you the gift of everlasting life. God loves you and wants you to live with Him forever. If you reject God's love gift through the cross — if you don't repent — you get God's judgment and wrath, not His love.*

When you repent and follow Jesus your music will change from worldly (rap / rock) to godly. Your attitude toward sex (outside of marriage) changes. Your mouth changes — you speak kindly to people.

You start reading the Bible and obeying it. You find Christians to befriend and encourage. You start sharing the Gospel with the lost people around you. You'll lose some friends because they despise Jesus Christ. But you'll gain new friends. Life changes!

A lot of people would like Jesus to give them a ticket to Heaven and then get back to their wicked party. No, it's a package deal. Jesus is both Savior and Lord. That means He gets to call the shots in your life. Get alone with God today – now – confess your sins, repent, and trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior. God will respond by giving you a new heart and a new spirit. That's called being "born again." And call me! We'll get together and talk about what to do next.

In the passage above I have explained much Bible truth, although I haven't explicitly quoted Scripture. If you want to or need to quote Scripture, that's great. I have memorized over 8% of the Bible and I use Bible verses whenever appropriate. The key point is that the sinner *understands* the message. Be clear. Watch his body language for whether he is getting it or whether he is even interested. Note the key elements as emboldened in the paragraph headings:

INTRODUCTION: You don't have to be clever in breaking the ice. Get right to the point. Most people are polite and will at least take the tract. Some will linger and talk. In America it's only the rare individual who is rude enough to speak unkindly. As blunt as I tend to be in discussing with people such personal issues as sin and judgment, I haven't been hit yet. Not yet.

JUDGMENT: He needs to think about consequences beyond the stupid little cares of this life. His eternity is at stake!

LAW / SIN: This is the core of the presentation. Lawbreakers are in trouble with God. He has to get lost in his own mind before he can get saved.

HELL: The most important gift you can give a lost person is the honesty to tell him that he is going to Hell. That's where a lot of well-meaning Christians chicken out. If you are warning blind people that they are walking toward a cliff, you won't just stick to a positive message about some better route to take their stroll. You will warn them of the destruction ahead of them. When you tell the lost man that you care and don't want to see him in Hell, my experience is that he will believe you and won't get mad, even if you have never met before. Your presentation isn't about a theological or philosophical disagreement. It's life or death, Heaven or Hell. Make that clear.

GOSPEL: The Good News will make sense once he understands the trouble he's in. Most pastors and, especially, TV preachers, like to skip right to the Gospel. Hey, it's nice to deliver good news! But before you plant the seed of the Gospel, you had better plow the ground up with law, sin, and judgment.

REPENT & BELIEVE: Make sure you're clear. Camp on repentance as long as you need to. Describe how life changes after being born again. No changes – no salvation. He should be able to decide whether he wants to live Jesus' way or Satan's way.

Once again, note that there is no "closing the deal." Once he understands the issues, it's between him and God. You should volunteer to be there for him as soon as he wants your help, especially if he decides to trust Christ and start the Christian life. Then you've got a friend for life and for eternity.

I admit that my “very short” presentation still has some length. The key point is to make the essentials clear. The order isn’t important, just make sure that you explain the issues. You definitely want to leave him a good Gospel tract with your contact info on it. In a later chapter I discuss how to find and use good tracts.

What if you get stuck or confused? A super-short Gospel summary you can use anytime with someone, including as a “bottom-line” summary at the end of a longer conversation, might go as follows:

“Just remember this: You’re a sinner and you need a Savior. Do something about it!”

If you need to expand on the concept of *sinner* or the concept of who the *Savior* is, then you can go back and do so. The concept of *sinner* gets you back into the law, judgment, and Hell, and the concept of *Savior* gets you back into the Gospel, who Jesus is, and repentance / faith. Surely, any Christian can witness using a 2-point outline . . . *You’re a sinner and you need a Savior!*

You may still feel that this is complicated or a lot of work. Get over it! How many years did you go to school, take exams, write papers, and give presentations? How much effort did you put into learning the rules of baseball or in doing your income taxes? Gospel preaching is soooooo much more important than anything else you will learn in your lifetime. Work at it. If you can only do it poorly, then do it poorly for a thousand times. Eventually you will become mediocre!

I call it “traction” when I have a 121 with someone who shows understanding and some degree of conviction. If I were so foolish as to try to practice leading people in the “sinner’s prayer,” I would be able to report a dozen converts every week. Of course, these would invariably be “train wrecks,” still headed for Hell, but now inoculated against the next Gospel preacher they hear. I certainly don’t want the condemnation from our Lord that he laid on zealous Pharisees, when he got in their face and said:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of Hell than yourselves. Matthew 23:15

That’s what these false converts are: twofold more the child of Hell than the false gospel preacher who fooled them. A lost sinner is better off worrying about going to Hell than he is thinking that he has been saved, and can still live like the Devil.

We see an example of some “traction” with the Roman governor who had the charge of the prisoner, Paul:

And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. Acts 24:24-26

We note Felix trembling from Paul’s preaching of righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come. What we do not see is Paul trying to manipulate a profession out of Felix. We also see no evidence of Paul chasing after him in the future. Felix did keep dragging Paul out of his cell, but the governor’s motives were entirely carnal, after the initial moments of conviction.

When I engage with an individual who shows no conviction, I'll often point that out: "Hey, it looks like you're not very worried about facing God. I beg you to GET WORRIED about it!" If the absence of traction is coupled to an argumentative attitude, I have learned to cut off the conversation myself, usually with a final plea: "Look, I'm not going to argue and I'm not going to debate. If you're willing to listen, I'd like to help you understand how to repent and trust Christ. If you're determined to reject the Gospel, then I can't help you, and I've got other people to talk to." At this point, with some particularly obnoxious people who start filibustering, so I can't get out two sentences in a row, I have to turn and simply walk away. I recall one fellow who so hated the Gospel that he followed after me, still yammering. He clearly hated what I was communicating to people on the street and wanted to waste as much of my time as he could. I had to ask him to leave me alone, lest I seek help from a police officer. That did the trick.

The other side of that coin is people you approach who tell you to leave them alone. I've learned to turn immediately, without a word, and go. They have made their choice and I'm not volunteering for harassment accusations on their part. In all of these matters, pray much and use your judgment. I'm not proposing a firm set of rules for 121 interactions, but merely sharing my experience and offering suggestions. (Regarding the presentation of the Gospel message, however, what I have discussed in this chapter represents a rock solid set of rules, laid down by the Master Himself.)

I'll give you an example of a recent contentious interaction that I pursued up to a point, despite the lack of traction. A young lady rejected a tract I offered her as she walked by me in downtown Chicago, and made some wisecrack about it, laughing. Then she had to wait for the light to change. Against my usual pattern, I decided to engage in this case. I walked up to her and the conversation went something like this (although I'm sure the Heavenly record will find a number of discrepancies – the actual conversation was a little messier, but I've written in the main points):

DD: "You're not a Christian, are you?"

GRA: "Why do you say that?"

DD: "No Christian would ever respond like you did, scoffing. You must hate the Gospel."

GRA: "I believe in Jesus. I just don't believe in God."

DD: "You wouldn't know anything about Jesus at all except for the Biblical record. Why don't you believe *all* of His words – He said that if you reject His words, you reject Him. If you reject Him, you are lost in your sins."

GRA: "Jesus was about helping people. That's what I do. I work in a center that offers help to the gay community. So, do you think gays are going to Hell?" . . . (This is why I've labeled her a Gay Rights Activist.)

DD: "All sex outside of marriage is sin, whether hetero- or not. God invented sex for marriage, between a man and a woman. But any sin gets you in trouble with God. That's why you need a Savior, Jesus Christ. Have you ever lied, ever stolen anything? You know lying is wrong. You don't like getting lied to."

GRA: "I'm a good person."

DD: "No, you're not – you're just like me and everyone else. You're a sinner who needs to humble herself and repent."

GRA: "What about people born gay?"

DD: "Nobody is born gay. Every sin is a willful choice. Some people are more tempted in some areas than in others, but every sin is a choice. But you don't believe in choice, do you? You're an atheist. You said you don't believe in God, so in your worldview, everything is just molecules in motion. The next thing you say is just brain chemistry. You don't choose anything – you have no more choice than that of

a rock if God doesn't exist. So there is no purpose in your life. Life is meaningless and then you die. How sad is that? Look, I've got an interesting thought piece here."

I offered her the Living Waters tract, "The Atheist Test," in which I've inserted some of my own notes which tear apart the fantasy of evolution – the pseudo-scientific excuse of every atheist for his beliefs. Unfortunately, in this case, she was so angry that she refused this tract, too. I decided to turn away and get back to work.

Was it profitable for me to engage with someone so contentious? I don't know. I felt the urge to in that case, which hopefully was the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Biblical pattern is "law to the proud, grace to the humble." Matthew 23 is an example of the former and John 8:1-11 is an example of the latter. It's important to avoid getting the principle backwards. In this situation, the counsel of the second verse below seemed to be the proper choice.

Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit. Proverbs 26:4-5

What about preaching to grandma or Aunt Jane or your co-worker? If you care about them, you will certainly try. Preaching to people you know well is often very difficult for some Christians. You have invested much in your relationship and don't want to risk a falling out. You know you need to "find an opportunity," but the opportunity never seems to come up. But you certainly don't want to see grandma at the Great White Throne judgment, lost and about to be cast into the Lake of Fire. She would properly accuse you of selfishness and hatred for not sharing the Good News with her when you could.

Here is some practical advice for reaching out to grandma. You may get only one shot if, for example, she is an old-fashioned Roman Catholic, and you don't want to blow it. She may tell you she doesn't want to talk about it again, so the pressure is on. (I've been there and done that.) What you want to do is to get lots of practice on strangers. It's usually much easier to preach to strangers than to someone close to you. If you blow it, it's easier to put it behind you. Of course, you want to do a good job with everyone, but I'm being "real" here. Some people are more precious to you than others.

The more you preach to strangers, the more natural you will find it to share the Gospel with people close to you. You will also discover that the reactions you get from relatives to the Gospel message correlate with the responses you get from strangers. So you will not have any undue difficulty sharing the Gospel with those close to you, once you decide to actually care about their souls and do it!

Your main effort in personal evangelism must be with strangers – on the street corners, knocking door to door, and in the stores and restaurants as you go about your business. Some Christians think that they are satisfying the Great Commission by merely reaching out to those around them. Face it: there aren't that many people close to you. The Gospel is not going to be spread if Christians have no care for people outside their own circle. The only reason that you are a Christian now is that the Gospel was spread by faithful believers in centuries past to lands beyond their own.

So get out on the street. Find a sidewalk with some foot traffic. Offer tracts to people as they walk by, and try to get some individuals to stop and talk. Get some practice and learn what types of objections people come up with. You'll find out that there aren't many questions or objections that will stump you. If you get one, admit you're stumped and go home and study it out.

Based on experience, I expect that you will discover that lost folks have only a few basic objections, whether they are blue collar workers or university students. I've taken new evangelism partners to a university campus, despite their concern that they will get stumped by brilliant academic arguments. They quickly find that university students – and even Ph.D. professors – who aren't believers are all equally ignorant and illogical concerning the great issues of eternity. Mostly, they avoid thinking about the reality and imminence of their own deaths. That's unpleasant, after all.

Now that you have some practice, it's time to tackle grandma. Here's how you do it: First find some quality time for the two of you to spend together. Three is a crowd. Then you "create the opportunity" by being loving and direct:

"Grandma, I'm so glad to have some time to chat with you. There's something I really want to talk with you about, because I care so much about you. So please, hear me out and be honest with me. I want to talk with you about the big stuff: you know, life / death / Heaven / Hell? Do you ever think about the big issues?"

And off you go. You're now on the same track as with strangers. You'll note that in my "very short presentation" I don't include sample verbiage from the person I'm talking with. It's desirable to get some short answers from the lost sinner, but this is not about dialogue! I meet people on the street who want to "dialogue" with me. I have no interest in learning all about whatever worldly philosophy he is trapped in. The "dialoguer" is invariably interested in preaching to me. I already know where he is coming from. I've been there and have been saved from that junk! My intent is to help by sharing the Gospel. If the stranger on the street is an argumentative "dialoguer," I'd rather move on and find someone who is more open.

I do love to get serious questions from the sinner. That shows interest and reveals what stumbling blocks are in his mind. With grandma, it's certainly appropriate to engage in a more leisurely 2-way conversation, if that's what she wants. The main thing is to preach the truth of the Gospel to her. The Biblical Great Commission says nothing about dialogue, but much about preaching.

What about co-workers? OK, this is important, so listen up! You don't use work time to preach. You don't rob from your employer by stealing his time. Furthermore, in the present culture, you will likely risk your job by appearing to "proselytize" on the job. Almost anyone else can get away with talking politics or sports or religion, but the true Christian will get singled out for "harassing" his co-workers.

Yet, it's easy to get opportunities to reach out to the guys in the workplace. First, work creatively and industriously so that you earn their respect. Get to know them as much as work allows, especially if you have scheduled breaks. After you've built some rapport, invite a co-worker over to dinner. Or out to dinner. If he's married and you are, too, make it a family get-together. Once he's on your turf, then you are free from accusations of harassing him on the job. So here's how to create the opportunity, after the small talk and after the dishes are cleared away.

"So, Joe, I'm so glad to have you over for dinner. I've enjoyed chatting about . . . (sports, weather, kids, business, etc.). There's something I really want to talk with you about, though. So please, hear me out and be honest with me. I want to talk with you about the big stuff: you know, life / death / Heaven / Hell? Do you ever think about the big issues?"

You see how simple it is to “create opportunities.” The best encounters are with people who have expressed an interest in the Gospel. They see their need and have lots of questions. Several years ago a Christian friend of mine brought over a co-worker and his wife to visit on a Saturday night. They were in their late twenties and quite open about the problems they had with Biblical Christianity. We spent five hours that night answering questions and talking through issues. The next Saturday night we spent another four hours. And again the next Saturday and again the week after that. Once they got through their issues and saw that the Bible had answers for every vital issue of life (2 Peter 1:3, 2 Timothy 3:16-17), their objections evaporated and they trusted Christ. Their lives have shown much evidence as they have grown spiritually in the years following.

I’ll conclude this chapter with a quote from James Stewart’s book, Evangelism (emphasis in the original):

*If your missionary returned to report of his labors in a pagan land and told of souls being won to the Lord, you might ask, “Brother, did these converts leave their idols?” If his answer were in the negative you would not want to support this missionary any longer, for we naturally expect that every heathen will leave his false gods when he accepts the living and true God. Yet, on the home front, in many instances, no such New Testament evidence of salvation is demanded. In the mass production of converts and church members only a small proportion gives real evidence of true spiritual life. **We are only deluding souls into a false profession if we do not demand a supernatural experience upon the reception of the supernatural Gospel.** It is an utter impossibility for a person to be born of the Spirit and continue with his idols of sin and worldly pleasures. Oh the tragedy of the great delusion of giving comfort and hope to lost souls who give no evidence of this mighty work of God in their lives! “Ye shall know them by their fruits.” “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven.” Yes, we must demand a supernatural experience as the result of the supernatural Gospel. We may not count the converts in such large numbers by this reckoning, but the work will stand the test of the Divine scrutiny at the Bema (the Judgment Seat of Christ).*

Chapter 4

What Matthew, Mark, and Luke Teach about Man's Part in Salvation

Mod (Modernist): "Your message is offensive. Jesus preached love and tolerance. He was all about us loving each other. Don't you even know he said, 'Judge not'?"

DD: "How do you know anything at all about Jesus Christ? What are your sources? Or do you just make it up?"

Mod: "I've got the same Bible you have. I'm talking about the Sermon on the Mount, for example."

DD: "Great. So you and I can agree that the Bible is our authority on the life and teaching of Jesus Christ."

Mod: "Hmmm . . . well . . . yeah, sure!"

DD: "Let's look at the Sermon on the Mount, chapter 7, where Jesus preached that we should judge."

Mod: "No, no, he said Judge not."

DD: "See the context here? He's teaching that we should avoid judging hypocritically, but that we should indeed help our brother in error, judging him, as long as we're not hypocritically guilty of the same or worse. His main point is that we should judge to help correct someone in error."

Mod: "I never noticed the context before, but that must be an isolated instance."

DD: "On the contrary, in the same chapter we see Jesus teaching us to identify unholy rebels against God's word, whom He calls 'dogs' and 'swine.' Then He goes on to warn us to identify and call out false teachers, and even to recognize that many who profess Christ don't actually know Him. In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells us to judge not according to appearance, but to judge righteously. And the apostle Paul writes that if we are spiritual we are qualified to judge all things."

Mod: "Well, of course there are mistakes in the Bible and different interpretations."

DD: "So you don't trust the Bible as God's word! But Jesus says that His words will judge you and that if you reject His words in Scripture you have proven to be part of the Devil's family. Most importantly for you, Jesus warned repeatedly of Hell for those who reject Him. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. Like you. The primary expression of God's love to us is through the cross. If you fail to humble yourself, repent, and follow Christ – and that's what Jesus taught – then you have missed everything and will land in Hell. I'm really worried about you."

Mod: "You see, that's what I'm talking about. That's really offensive!"

.....

In the next few chapters we will do a Scriptural survey on the doctrine of salvation. In particular, we want to take note of man's responsibility in his salvation. If you are a Calvinist, you will undoubtedly take offense at this. By the time we're through, however, you will see that your offense is taken against Scripture. That's a dangerous place to stand. I won't often make a specific point of it, but please observe how often Calvinism is refuted in these passages, which emphasize man's choice in salvation and the universality of the offer from God.

Scripture teaches much about God's part in salvation: justification, forgiveness, regeneration, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, for example. The Bible is also filled with teaching about the consequences of salvation in the life of the believer. Scripture is explicit about the types of changes that occur after the new birth. Our subject is evangelism, so it is especially vital to see what man must do in response to the truth of the Gospel. Given what one must do to be saved, Gospel preachers – that should include every born again believer – must be obedient to the Lord in preaching His word faithfully, to produce the understanding and conviction that provokes the lost to repentance.

In this chapter we'll survey and comment on Scriptural passages in the first three Gospel accounts (the Synoptics). We'll put more effort into Matthew than Mark or Luke, simply because many passages in Mark or Luke are parallel to those in Matthew. In later chapters we'll cover other portions of the Bible. PLEASE don't skip these chapters. I am not writing this book to teach you a formula or a clever method. The personal evangelist must be filled with Biblical principles so that the sinner who hears the message understands his position before a holy God, what is demanded of him, and what he must do to be saved.

The lost man must understand how life is going to change if he becomes a Christian and what his responsibilities will be in his new life. When Jesus included within the Great Commission the words *“teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you,”* He was teaching the opposite of a formulaic, rote method for preaching the Gospel. This is not to say that an entire Bible course must be laid out in a 121 encounter. The point is to make sure the lost sinner is confronted with the knowledge he is lacking to enable him to decide for or against Christ.

This study is necessarily a sampling, rather than an exhaustive treatment. By the time we're done, though, we will have sampled the essentials relevant to evangelism. Let's start with the very beginning of Christ's ministry, when John the Baptist begins to preach.

In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Matthew 3:1-3

The first message of the New Testament to sinners is to repent. Jesus is here! Make your decision. The entire Old Testament record has been pointing to this day. What is John the Baptist's mission? To preach repentance, thereby preparing hearts to turn to Christ. We already see the order: repentance and a turn to Christ. Let's look at the parallel passage in Luke for the rest of this opening scene.

As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have

Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages. Luke 3:4-13

Christ came to straighten the crooked and smooth out the rough edges. That's a good description of the salvation of both individuals and, eventually, of all of creation. "All flesh" speaks to the universal offer – unlimited atonement – only through Christ. There is no other hope of salvation than through the Lord Jesus Christ. Note how John refuses to baptize those who show no evidence of salvation. How many preachers would be so bold today? John speaks of two outcomes – becoming children of Abraham and heirs of the promises of God; alternatively, judgment and the fire of Hell. Certainly some responded to John's preaching out of fear of Hell. You can't get saved merely by wanting to avoid Hell. John demands repentance! See how John gets specific with the sins of the people. He describes repentance by instructing how behavior must change. If your mind changes, then your actions will follow.

In Matthew's record of the beginning of Christ's ministry (with a note from Mark) . . .

Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee; And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand. And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him. And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. Matthew 1:12-23

Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. Mark 1:14-15

The prophesy of light coming, not just to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles, is contrasted strikingly with the shadow of death. We'll see this contrast again and again. Getting saved is coming out of darkness

into light. There is no intermediate state and no example of a mixture of light and darkness, which would represent those who claim Christ but follow Satan.

Jesus preaches repentance in his first messages, like John. When he calls Peter and Andrew, he calls them to follow Him, specifically in reaching out to others. That is what new Christians should naturally do. Jesus then travels all over the countryside, preaching the Gospel to everyone. Briefly, let me point out that the Gospel of the kingdom should not be distinguished from the Gospel to which Paul refers in his epistles. Whether it's to the Jew looking for their Messianic kingdom, or the Gentiles simply looking for salvation, all must come to Christ. All must repent and receive forgiveness. All members of God's family will become heirs of the future kingdom of God on the New Earth.

The Gospel of Luke amplifies John's charter, delivered to him prophetically by his father, Zacharias, as he held his infant son in his hands:

And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. Luke 1:76-79

The "way of peace" with God comes by knowledge of salvation, so sinners can have their sins remitted. Salvation is by God's mercy – we can't earn it. To come to Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, is to come to the light.

The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5 to 7 has a wealth of instruction on salvation. We'll have to be content with a few samples, starting with the "beatitudes."

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the Earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. Matthew 5:3-10

This passage is commonly taught as goals for Christians to aspire to. We should take them more literally. Who will inherit the kingdom of Heaven and the New Earth? The poor in spirit and the meek are those who eschew spiritual arrogance and humble themselves before God. We see that the Lord is describing the characteristics of believers. To be saved requires godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:10), such that we mourn for our sins as we repent unto salvation.

Consider verse 6. Believers are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. When we were lost we hungered after sinful pleasures and having our own way. *Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes – Psalm 119:165.* Salvation is not available for those who fear Hell, want a ticket to Heaven, but are determined to despise God's laws. In verse 7 we see that Christians are merciful,

forgiving others. Next, they are pure in heart – that’s the plan. We certainly fall short in this flesh, but to “see God” we must be born again with a new heart from God. Christians are peacemakers, not contentious. And the natural state of the believer in this world is to suffer persecution because of his very active public testimony. Paul affirms this in 2 Timothy 3:12.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven. Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. 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. 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. 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. Matthew 5:16-20

Once you get the light, you can’t help but shine it before men. The lost person has no interest in proclaiming Christ to others, doing good works, or glorifying God. Then the Lord moves on to the law. In this sermon He sets an explicitly higher standard than most Jews would have drawn from their study of the Old Testament. *They should have known the elevated standard.* See Hosea 6:6, for example. Christ came to fulfill the law. No one has any excuse in breaking even the least commandment. He shocks the attentive listener by teaching that you can’t get into Heaven unless your practical righteousness *exceeds* that of the Pharisees – the ultimate local standard of the period.

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of Hell fire. Matthew 5:21-22

How tough is God’s standard? God judges anger and insults as murder. If salvation comes by keeping the law, we’re all going to Hell. Salvation must be by grace or there is no hope. In Psalm 5:4-5, God warns that He will not dwell with evil. Who hasn’t been angry or unkind in words to another?

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into Hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into Hell. Matthew 5:27-30

Adultery of the heart condemns one to Hell. I often tell young men on the street, “Pornography counts, too!” Jesus says it’s better to make yourself blind if that is the only way you are able to repent. I meet many young men who know they are headed for Hell, but won’t consider giving up sins of fornication, adultery, and minds given over to lust. We live in a tragic age. Even young people have covert access to all of the pornography on the internet. Sexual addiction sets in at a young age. By the time most young

men are in college and may hear the Gospel for the first time, they have years of sins – both of mind and body – to repent from. There aren't many clean-living (even approximately) young people anymore.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect. Matthew 5:43-48

Are you really seeking God and His righteousness? Do you want to follow Christ? Then you will work to love your enemy, not just those who love you. It's amazing that you can avoid the pain and even bodily sickness of bitterness by simply obeying the command to pray for those who persecute or abuse you. You can't stay bitter at someone you are praying for. And here Jesus is not merely recommending. He is laying out the standard of the law for a truly repentant sinner. The final verse in the chapter is among the toughest in the Bible. Just be perfect! Salvation had better be by grace! Yet the genuine believer, when he repents and is filled with the Holy Spirit, sets out in that direction and produces observable results.

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Matthew 6:14-15

This certainly applies to unbelievers and believers alike. You cannot be forgiven and saved if you hold onto a grudge. Occasionally, when I share the Gospel on the street, the first thing that comes out of someone's mouth is how someone else has offended them. I'm confident that in most cases they are right – someone has indeed done them wrong. What I try to explain is that the sins of another against you pale in comparison with your sins against God. There is a bigger issue than the unfairness you have experienced. You have unfairly treated almighty God! Get right with the Lord and then you can deal -- gracefully – with your offender. Similarly, in the believer's walk through life, he must have a forgiving spirit or he will get out of the will of God. Believers need forgiveness every day. I know I do.

Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. Matthew 6:16-18

Hypocrites will not be in Heaven. Religious works done to impress men earn only the pitiful reward of respect or envy from others. When you serve the Lord, His reward will be public, but not until He has called us all home.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon Earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Matthew 6:19-21

This example speaks to the heart of the whole matter. Is your heart tied to the dirt of this planet or is it aimed at pleasing your Creator? The Christian's investment pays off in the ages to come. The Devils are always tempting the lost to live in the moment and invest in work that pays off soon in cash or worldly acclaim. It takes *thought* to realize that eternity is bigger than this life and God's promises are guaranteed. Salvation includes repentance from Satan's way of thinking.

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Matthew 6:22-24

Once again we see Scripture declare the stark contrast between light and darkness, good and evil. It's not just difficult to serve two masters . . . *It is impossible to serve two masters!* Don't imagine that you can become a child of God and still embrace the world's system.

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Matthew 7:13-14

The entrance to the road to life is tight and the road itself is narrow. There are a multitude of ways to go to Hell – just one to Heaven. Come to Christ and follow Him the way He said to do so! Most people I meet on the street believe they are headed for Heaven. When I quote these two verses to them, I point out that the Lord Jesus Christ – much against His desires – states that the vast majority of people are headed for Hell. So I ask, "What's going to make the difference for you?" This question stumps most, particularly those that do not understand salvation Scripturally.

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

False teachers are not merely producing false converts. The Lord says that such trees that bring forth bad fruit will be cast into the fire. If you have been preaching a false gospel, you must not understand salvation yourself. Does your life show repentance? On the other hand, some Christians, corrupted by the apostasy of our time, seem to forget how they came to know the Lord. I talked several times with an evangelical pastor about the lost people in his congregation that I had met in town. I believe that this pastor was a saved man. He said that he desperately wanted to introduce his people to a relationship with Jesus Christ. He continually told them the "Good News" about the cross, the resurrection, and the forgiveness available to all. But he didn't want to camp on the "bad news" that everyone must recognize that he is a wicked sinner deserving of Hell. And that repentance from specific sins is demanded. Even though this pastor had doubtless repented from his sins and worldly living as a young man, somehow he thought that his people could have a "relationship with Jesus Christ" without coming the same way.

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. 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? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

This is one of the most frightening passages in Scripture. What does Jesus say? It is not enough to profess Him by name. Believers are those who believe the Lord enough to do the will of God. Action follows belief. The frightening aspect is that there are many who visibly work hard in the apparent service of God, and yet the Lord does not know them. Some of these have preached, have cast out Devils, and done many wonderful works! Yet most of the religious lost people I meet don't preach or work for the Lord in any noticeable way, but still are sure that they have a mansion awaiting them.

I heard a local pastor speak of his middle-aged brother who had been living a sinful life and had no interest in the Bible, or church, or spiritual matters. Yet this brother had apparently made a profession for Christ as a youth. His adult life, though, could not be distinguished from that of an infidel. This pastor obviously grieved for his brother because of the consequences he would face at the Judgment Seat of Christ. He would miss out on many rewards! This pastor had completely misdiagnosed the problem.

What a tragedy! This preacher's brother was a lost man who will not be motivated by "loss of rewards." He still thinks he is going to Heaven because he "prayed a prayer" and was assured of his salvation many years before. Yet he cares nothing for God's word, cares nothing for the fellowship of God's people, and despises anything he can't acquire physically. That is a description of someone headed for Hell. The proper message to him is to repent and trust Christ, be born again, and then live the rest of his life demonstrating that he has changed roads! In this particular tragedy I suspect that this pastor, himself, is not a saved man, because he continually works at preaching a message that bears bad fruit. He doesn't understand the Biblical doctrine of salvation. And he contributes to the lost condition of his brother, by consoling him that although he is out of God's will, at least he is saved.

When someone acts like a lost man, preach repentance unto salvation. If you have misdiagnosed, and he is merely a saved backslider, then he still needs to repent or God will bring chastisement in his life. But if you assume backsliding and he is actually lost – which corresponds with his behavior – then you have done him great harm, by not warning him of the wrath that abides on him. By the way, the term "backsliding" is an Old Testament term, as in Jeremiah 8:7-8, applied to the Jews collectively when they were in gross apostasy . . . namely, when multitudes of them were lost. Nevertheless, the term is used commonly in modern times to describe a genuine Christian who has fallen into sin. In most cases, such patterns of sin reflect a genuinely *lost* condition.

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. Matthew 7:21-27

As we'll see again later when we survey the Gospel of John, we see a test for true believers here: they build their lives on the teachings of Christ. The lost do not and pay the price of judgment. We see no third option to cover the fictitious class of "believers" who despise the word of God.

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven. Matthew 10:32-33

If you have been rescued from a life sentence in prison and then been adopted by the King, would you be ashamed to proclaim it? This is a simple test for true conversion. The child of God tells men about their opportunity to be adopted into the family. The criminal who denies his inheritance before men will be denied by the King.

Think not that I am come to send peace on Earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. Matthew 10:34-39

Even in a "free" country like America, the new Christian pays a price. If his family members reject Christ there will be conflict. The believer who gets along sweetly with his relatives while they are one heartbeat away from Hell is being grossly disobedient to his Lord. When you try to reach those dearest to you, you risk those relationships. But you have the perspective to desire a relationship with dad, mom, brother, and sister that will last for eternity . . . Don't you?!? You can't bear the thought of your loved ones being cast into the Lake of Fire. You will do everything you can to communicate your passion for them to repent. They will usually resist. If they resist until death, you will be in agreement with God when they are judged for their sins – your "loved ones" won't be part of your eternal family. Don't give up while there is yet hope. The true convert experiences the sorrow of what Jesus teaches in this passage.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Matthew 11:28-30

The lost sinner gives up the addictive, destructive burden of his sins. He finds rest in God's forgiveness. He casts off Satan's heavy yoke and puts on the light yoke of service for Christ. The real Christian does take the Lord's yoke upon him. False converts seem to miss that you have a choice of two yokes. You don't just come to Christ and then go on vacation. The burden we take up for our Lord is light and he provides daily strength. We are happy to carry it because we agree with Jesus on how to live.

Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of

judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. Matthew 12:33-37

The good tree / good fruit, corrupt tree / corrupt fruit teaching of Matthew 5 applies explicitly to false teachers. Here we see the test applied to every man. The quickest way to spot a saved or lost man is by how he speaks. Is he grateful to God for the blessings in his life? Does he speak respectfully about women? What does he speak more of – sports or God’s work? Is his language clean or filthy? It’s not complicated. The professing Christian who has a filthy mouth is a lost man.

Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the Earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. Matthew 12:38-41

Watch out, Pentecostals! If your Christianity is centered on signs and wonders, the Lord classifies you as part of an evil and adulterous generation. What was the sign of the prophet Jonah? Jonah’s experience was a type of the resurrection of Christ, Who was “*raised again for our justification.*” (Romans 4:25) What is the Lord teaching? Focus on the essentials! The two essentials cited in this passage are the resurrection (what God did) and repentance (what man must do). In the previous chapter we pointed out that Nineveh truly repented – their behavior showed it and God withdrew judgment. Please recognize that in this passage the Lord Jesus Christ defines repentance by the historical case of Nineveh. We see that the souls of Nineveh will join with God – on His side – in judgment and condemn the religious lost, namely those who merely profess salvation and don’t live it!

Matthew 13 is filled with parables that offer insight from the Lord Jesus about the nature of salvation from man’s point of view. The first one we might call the “prototypical parable.”

And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much Earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of Earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Matthew 13:3-8

In the parallel passage in Mark 4, after His disciples show confusion, the Lord challenges them:

And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables? Mark 4:13

He’s telling them to pay attention, because He is about to give them a pattern to assist in the elucidation of “all parables.” Indeed, we’ll see in Matthew 13 that the theme is repeated from different points of view.

Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Matthew 13:18-23

This is important. Don't miss it! We see four types of people here. The question is, "How many are saved and how many are lost?" Preachers and theologians who get this wrong will go on to misinterpret many other passages of Scripture and, generally, be in the business of producing false converts themselves. It's clear, of course, that the first character is lost and the last one is saved. The last one hears and understands! Among "conservative" Christians, we have a consensus on this. I run into the first character regularly. Sometimes I am the one who helped sow the seed in his heart some weeks or months before in a 121 street encounter. In our second meeting, I am amazed at how everything we discussed before has been forgotten. He still has the same crazy errors and misunderstandings as at the beginning of our first meeting.

When I had left him the first time, this individual may have typically expressed a new understanding, some conviction, and professed that he now understood the issue of salvation. But by the time of our second meeting, the seed had been snatched out of his heart, and he had returned to the old errors that justified his old way of life. You might challenge me, "Why didn't you follow up and keep teaching him in the interim?" Simply because he didn't want more instruction. I pleaded with him to call me and meet again, but left that decision in his hands. I'm sure that he quickly responded to the "reasoning" of whatever local Devils were on his trail.

The answer to the question above is that three are lost and only one is saved. We see two camps – only one is fruitful. What about the second character in the parable? He represents multitudes of American church-goers. He responds to the hope of happiness / comfort / Heaven / etc., but has no root in himself. He does not get born again. He is not indwelt by the Holy Spirit. How do we know? As soon as any testing comes, he bails. We've already seen that a test for salvation is whether we profess Christ before men, even in tough times. The tragedy is that multitudes in this category can remain in church and give the appearance of professing Christians because, in America, you can go a lifetime without persecution – especially if you're just a "nominal" Christian, living comfortably with the world and avoiding conflict over Scriptural truth.

The third character hears the word and quickly recognizes that it goes against all of his desires for the lusts of this worldly life. He loves his rock / hip hop / country music, he loves sharing his bed with his girlfriend, he has no interest in the eternal destiny of those around him. He agrees with the message up to a point, but not so much as to let it interfere with his life. "Maybe later," he might think. If the evangelist is so foolish as to offer him a quick, magic prayer to be saved, he may well take it and then pick up a six-pack on his way home to sleep with his girlfriend. I have met a lot of guys like this. The proof of his continued lost condition is the lack of fruit. We'll also see in the Gospel of John how such lack of fruit indicates condemnation.

Let's move on to the perspective of the next parable.

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. Matthew 13:24-30

How many camps? Again, two, yet joined together in fellowship. What percentage of a conservative American church consists of tares and what of wheat? Based on my own experience, observing in one case fruit and in the other the lack thereof, I don't believe there are many churches with more than 10% wheat. I admit that I don't have "magic glasses," but I can see the evidence that the Lord identifies as marks of true children of God.

Is the Lord teaching that we should not discipline the false believers out of a local church? No, there are other passages of Scripture that teach appropriate church discipline and the necessity of examining our own salvation, judging the fruits of others, and separating when appropriate. The Lord is teaching that He will do the ultimate separation at the final judgment. We can't always tell who is in the family and who isn't. Do note that the tares are ultimately burned. The fate of false converts is the Lake of Fire. The stakes are significant, aren't they? Don't neglect the memberships of local churches in your search for lost souls. In the Lord's explanation below, He makes it clear that one of Satan's explicit strategies is to sow tares into the apparent kingdom of Heaven – which on Earth in this age, is represented by individual churches. We are not to sit passively and be content with lost souls in our midst.

Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the Devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. Matthew 13:36-43

The next two short parables extend the theme even more:

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. Matthew 13:31-33

The mustard plant is a large ungainly herb. Its appearance of disorganization makes it an appropriate metaphor for Christendom throughout the world, and especially, in America. The plant grows and grows, ungainly and unkempt, much like "Christianity." It is big enough so that the birds of the air,

representing the Satanic powers of the air, nest happily within. The leaven hidden in the meal is symbolic of impurity in the Bible, so once again we see the lost amidst the saved.

Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. Matthew 13:44-46

Here is a startling perspective on repentance. Whatever it takes, whatever sins have you in their clutches, don't let anything keep you out of Heaven. We've already discussed the rich young ruler of Mark 10, whose test was to give away all of the riches he idolized. Jesus had already taught that it is better to pluck out your eye or cut off your hand if those bodily parts are keeping you from repentance.

Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Matthew 13:47-50

Christendom is filled with all kinds of "fish," only some of which are deemed "good." Note the distinction between two camps, termed "good" and "bad," not "professing" and "unprofessing." Here we see again that believers can be identified by "good" and unbelievers can be identified by "bad." True repentance changes a life. False professors will wail and gnash their teeth in agony and frustration for rejecting the truth that salvation requires more than good citizenship, church attendance, and agreement with selected orthodox doctrines. They will also likely curse the preachers that sold them a watered-down, phony gospel.

At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of Heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Matthew 18:1-6

Humility is essential to repentance. Perhaps the hardest aspect of the repentance that leads to salvation is admitting that you are wrong – not just wrong in a little way, but wrong about everything that is important. Those pleasurable activities are not choices, but sins that are evil. When you're wrong and you admit that God is right about everything, then you change behavior across the board. It is much easier for a child to repent who hasn't added sinful layer upon layer, addiction upon addiction. By the time someone is in his mid-twenties, he has eaten himself up with so much sin that repentance is unlikely. Yet God will certainly save anyone, even the centenarian, who seeks Him and begs His help for repenting and trusting in the "rightness" of God and His word.

Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in Heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. Matthew 18:10-11

How old were the children at this encounter? We don't know, but obviously old enough (perhaps teenagers), to understand their sins and their need for God's redemption. We see here the purpose of Christ coming to Earth: to save lost sinners. Note that the context shows that even children need saving, once they understand their lost condition. (There are plenty of Scriptures that teach God's grace with respect to the souls of infants who do not have the understanding to repent and believe, but that's a different subject.)

Observe that Matthew 18:11 is almost identical to Luke 19:10 . . .

For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. Luke 19:10

The scenarios are entirely different, however. The passage in Luke concerns a dishonestly wicked tax collector. We'll deal later with other aspects, but it is interesting that the Lord cites His own commission on this Earth in these two very different cases: young children on the one hand, and a much-despised agent of Rome on the other. Indeed, everyone needs the Savior.

But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him. Matthew 21:28-32

The subject is discernment regarding who enters into the kingdom of God. The first son makes no profession . . . in fact, he professes rebellion, but then he repents and obeys. The second son makes an empty profession and then rebels in his actions. This one parable should settle the issue about whether an evangelist should seek professions or rather seek to change minds which lead to changed actions. Repentance is truly a change of mind that leads to a changed life. Those in churches today who depend on their profession, while living a worldly life, match the Lord's characterization of the unregenerate religious leaders of His day. Note also that repentance and belief are coupled in the last verse. You cannot truly believe Jesus and His words, trusting that He is right in His commands and then following Him, unless you first repent from the wrong behavior and the wrong thinking of the lost.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Matthew 23:37

As the Lord approaches the end of His public ministry and draws near to the cross, He laments the rebellion of His people, their murderous history with respect to God's prophets, and their rejection of His own personal pleas. Their rejection is willful – "ye would not!" Yet another refutation of Calvinism!

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from

another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal. Matthew 25:31-46

The context is the Second Coming, following the seven years of tribulation. Review Matthew chapters 24 and 25 to see this. Those that physically survive the tribulation will be gathered for judgment. The saved will enter into God's kingdom on Earth. The lost will be cast into the Lake of Fire. The saved are characterized by the fruits that manifest their faith, especially the way they treat persecuted believers. The lost are characterized by their utter disregard for God's people. Applying this principle to today, one test of the validity of a profession for Christ is the individual's attitude toward other believers. Does he desire to be with other Christians? Does he treat believers well?

I once lived in a community where a sizable fraction of the population belongs to a cult that claims to be the only true branch of Christendom (Apostolic Lutherans). I saw evidence of little love within their association and also mistreatment of professing Christians who were outside of their cult. In their culture, it was acceptable to cheat outsiders in business dealings. Did they really believe that theirs was the only way? If so, how could they justify despising outsiders who were lost in their eyes? The bottom line is that saving faith manifests itself in the treatment of others.

Let's now survey several passages in Mark's Gospel . . .

Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him. Mark 1:16-18

Some would like to distinguish very strongly between a call to salvation and a call to service. Indeed, Simon and Andrew, along with the rest of the eleven (excluding Judas), had already repented under the ministry of John the Baptist. The evidence of their repentance was their immediate affirmative response. Do you really think that they had the option to say (and believe), "No thanks, 'Lord,' we don't really want to follow you. We are glad we have that ticket to Heaven, but we've got lives to live down

here!” Note that “follow” is defined here Scripturally as participating in the Great Commission. Of course real Christians will become fishers of men!!

And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits; . . . And they went out, and preached that men should repent. Mark 6:7, 12

The core of their preaching is the message of repentance. You can't claim Christ while still holding onto your sins.

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. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Mark 7:6-7

What was true in Isaiah's time was true when the Lord walked the Earth and continues today. Empty professions don't impress God. Such worship is vanity. The heart must change.

There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. . . . For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man. Mark 7:15, 21-23

Does this characterize the saved man, indwelt by the Holy Spirit? No. Evil thoughts and behaviors defile the lost man. There is only one camp represented here.

For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. Mark 8:36-38

The salvation of one soul is of infinite consequence. The evidence of one's salvation comes pouring out of his lips through his testimony of Jesus Christ, regardless of pressures and persecution. Those who say and believe, "I'm OK," but whose lips and lives identify with the Devil's crowd, are simply lost.

And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into Hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into Hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into Hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. Mark 9:43-48

The Lord exaggerates here to make a crucial point: Don't let anything hinder your repentance and trust in the Savior. If mere profession without repentance could save, the Lord's teaching here would be ridiculous. We also see that the consequence of no repentance is Hell fire forever.

And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou

me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible. Mark 10:17-27

This running man came to the right Person and asked the right question. Knowing the heart, the Lord probes the man's goodness. Does he keep God's laws? There are many commandments this fellow is happy to follow. He also is doubtless willing to repent from smoking, drinking, and cussing, because he doesn't do those things anyway. If the Biblical method of "winning souls" was to lead the sinner in a prayer, the Lord Jesus could have won this soul easily! The Lord knows the man's cherished sin, however. He is idolatrous. He loves the creation, especially those clumps of dirt in his own possession, more than the Creator of all the dirt in the universe.

The rich man fails the test. Ironically, he could have avoided the test altogether, remained wealthy, and still become a born again disciple of the Lord . . . if he had considered himself merely the steward of his riches. But his heart is corrupt. The Lord camps on his big sin and he walks away lost. When you share the Gospel, if you know the "big sin" in the life of your hearer, camp there! If he repents from his most cherished sins, other sins will be cast aside more easily.

We also see that riches produce the most deadly temptations. The disciples were astonished, likely because they knew of this rich young man and considered him to be a sterling example of God-fearing citizenship. What a great Christian he would make! (Many famous athletes make professions for Christ, but nothing changes in their lives.) Yet the rich man departs lost and the Lord pronounces him an exceptionally hard case. It is easy to see this effect today. It is much easier to get a hearing with the poor than with the rich. Many "rich" won't even take a Gospel tract from you. They have it made! What do they need with God? Such arrogance does not survive death, which comes for everyone.

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. Mark 16:15-16

The emphasis in the Great Commission here is on faith. You're either in or out, saved or lost. "Believing" changes everything . . . for eternity.

We now turn to selected passages in Luke . . .

And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are

whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Luke 5:29-32

Jesus was criticized for eating with the ungodly friends of Levi (Matthew) – such a one as a tax collector would have no “righteous” friends. But Levi turned to Christ and now reaches out to bring his friends to the Savior. Jesus affirms that He is calling those that admit their sinful condition and are willing to repent. Especially significant is that the Lord thus defines His mission to Earth as coming to call sinners to repentance. Dare we do less in our evangelism?

Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets. Luke 6:26

A simple test of a Biblical Gospel preacher is whether everyone is happy with the message. If you really are a Christian, you will be going against the world’s flow, another indicator of true repentance.

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh. And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Luke 6:45-46

Saved and lost are represented by those that do good and those that do evil. The heart is seen by the works of one’s life. The last comment is a clear rebuke to professing Christians who continue to rebel: namely, they haven’t really changed their minds yet, have they?

Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace. Luke 7:47-50

This is the end of the passage concerning the wicked sinner who anoints Jesus’ feet with her tears and with precious ointment. Salvation generates love for the Savior and intense gratitude for God’s forgiveness. Can you obtain forgiveness while determined to follow the same old wicked path?

And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it. Luke 8:20-21

Yet another passage that emphasizes that true children of God manifest their faith with a life in sync with God’s word!

And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. Luke 9:57-62

The Lord tests three professions by demanding instant action. Jesus does not hesitate to mention the difficulties ahead for the true disciple. And He is blunt in excluding those from the kingdom of God who merely want to “try it out.”

He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth. Luke 11:23

Two camps: you’re either helping the Lord in His work or Satan in his.

And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. Luke 12:19-21

This passage describes a lost, rich man who puts dirt before God. He is called a “fool.” Idolatry condemns.

Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on Earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. Luke 12:51-53

Repentance requires transferring from one team to the other. If your relatives are on the Devil’s team, they will harass you for deserting their cause. You have to choose to put Christ above all.

There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Luke 13:1-5

Destruction and death fall on everyone without distinction. God is no respecter of persons. The essential issue, according to the Lord, is whether you repent, lest your very soul perish.

So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:33

The choice is quite simple: Everything you have, even if you could add yet everything under the sun . . . or . . . Jesus. You can’t “have” – embrace / love / cherish – this world and its goodies and claim to love Christ with all your heart.

And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her

neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. Luke 15:6-10

In the parables of Luke 15 we see a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son. Do you suppose the sheep knew that it was lost out there in the wilderness? Of course. So must a sinner know that he is lost and headed for Hell. The prodigal son confessed his sins against God and against his own Earthly father. The prodigal was first humbled by sin, but then humbled himself in seeking the forgiveness of his dad. In all cases we see rejoicing in Heaven over the repentance of every sinner.

And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. Luke 16:15

Be careful that you don't use manipulation to evoke a profession from a sinner. He might testify, or pray, or even come to church just to please you. Multitudes of sinners at large evangelistic crusades walk the aisles because others lead the way. Savvy, but foolish preachers realize this and have been known to have "ringers" prepared to respond by walking the aisles from different parts of the stadium. Once they get moving, it's easier for others to go with the flow. It is well documented that the presence of a crowd can coerce behavior out of someone who isn't really willing. But salvation is between you and God. God knoweth the hearts. Your humility and faith will be examined by Him, not by men.

And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. Luke 19:8-10

Zacchaeus, the despised Jew who collected taxes for the Romans, showed his repentance by restoring fourfold what he had taken dishonestly, and above that, gave away half of his estate to the poor. I'd say he got it!

And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. Luke 22:19-20

Jesus gave His life . . . gave His all. We tend to take that for granted, but He was just as human as we are. He took unjustly what judgment we justly deserve. How thoroughly should the lost sinner respond to the Lord's call to trust and follow Him?

And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise. Luke 23:39-43

One got it. One didn't. The converted thief learned to fear God. He admitted that he deserved his judgment. He professed the perfection of Christ. He knew enough to confess Jesus as Lord. He literally couldn't do anything, nailed to his cross. But he could humble himself, repent, and trust the Lord.

And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. Luke 24:44-48

The entire Old Testament points to the Messiah. Therefore, it is fair to say that the central message of the entire Bible is that of salvation. Salvation was purchased at the cross and guaranteed by the resurrection. What then should be preached? Repentance for the remission of sins through His name – among all nations! Let's be witnesses.

Chapter 5

Repentance in the Gospel of John

HSW (Heretical 'Soul Winner'): "Hey, Dr. Dave . . . Great news! I just led Big Karl to the Lord last Saturday!"

DD: "Do you mean 'Big Karl', the drug dealer in your neighborhood?"

HSW: "Yep. Isn't it wonderful that he got saved?"

DD: "How do you know he got saved?"

HSW: "Are you trying to give me a hard time? I walked through the 'plan' with him and he prayed to received Christ."

DD: "I didn't notice him in church on Sunday and I know that our pastor didn't baptize anybody."

HSW: "Come on. You know it takes time to follow up and work on new converts. I invited Big Karl to church. I even went by to pick him up Sunday morning, but I woke him up. He wasn't too happy about that and I admit he looked hung over, but after all, he's still just a babe in Christ."

DD: "It's obvious you just made another false convert. If Big Karl had any repentance in him at all he wouldn't have gotten drunk the night he 'got saved.' Isn't he still living with a prostitute? Was she there Saturday? Did you talk to her?"

HSW: "She was there, but she was hostile. But I'm telling you, Big Karl said he didn't want to go to Hell and he believes that Jesus is the Savior and the only way to Heaven. So he prayed the prayer. He's a believer now."

DD: "He is no believer at all! Fear of Hell doesn't save. How can you say you believe in Christ and refuse to follow Him? Without repentance . . ."

HSW: "Hey, don't you know John 3:16? The only repentance required is to repent from unbelief. If you believe you are saved, and if you don't believe you are lost. The word 'repentance' isn't even used in the Gospel of John."

DD: "Great. Let's agree to use the Gospel of John as our authority and see whether it teaches repentance clearly, even if not using the word per se. And let's examine just how powerful the word 'believe' really is. Is it just an intellectual assent or agreement with a set of facts? Or does 'belief' change the way you live? I'll remind you that James wrote that the devils 'believe' . . . which makes them tremble. Is Satan's 'belief' in Jesus sufficient to save him?"

.....

Everyone knows that the words "repent" and "repentance" are not to be found in John's Gospel. Similarly, the words "rapture" and "trinity" are not found throughout the entire Bible. In the case of "rapture" and "trinity," it is clear that Scripture teaches these doctrines in many places, while the words, per se, are simply our present constructs to summarize these doctrines. The doctrine of repentance and the words "repent" and "repentance" are explicit throughout Scripture, as we have seen previously and will continue to show in the chapters to follow. Without using the words explicitly, nevertheless the Gospel of John teaches the doctrine of repentance unto salvation quite dramatically, as we will show in this chapter's survey. We'll start near the beginning and occasionally cite Scriptures that give us

additional insight on man's part in salvation. The evangelist should be quick to use any Biblical instruction that opens up the lost sinner's heart to truth.

That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. John 1:9-14

The capitalized word "Light" is yet another title for the Lord Jesus Christ. In lighting up every man in the world, we see that God draws all and that no one has an excuse. When He came by incarnation into the world, the world did not recognize who He was, for the most part. He came unto his own – namely, the Jews – who received Him not. Apart from selected individuals, the Jewish nation did not "receive" Him. They did not believe His message. They did not embrace Him as the Messiah. They did not follow Him. But as many – the individuals – who received Him . . . believed Him, trusted Him, followed Him, embraced Him as Savior . . . to them did the Lord give regenerating power unto salvation.

John 1:12 (*But as many . . .*) is often misused by evangelists to exhort sinners to "receive Christ" by acknowledging certain truths and then praying a prayer. But in context with verse 11 and the historical record of the Gospels, it is clear that "receiving Christ" entails the entire package of believing / trusting / following, etc. That is an entire change of perspective, belief, and life behavior. That is repentance. Simply consider the differences among Peter, James, and John on the one hand, and Ananias, Caiaphas, and Pilate on the other. Which group "received Christ" and conducted their lives accordingly?

In the last three verses above, we see God's part in salvation: the new birth. The born again believer recognizes His Lord, sees Him as full of grace and truth, and aspires to be like Him.

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. John 1:29

Eternal life in the presence of a perfectly holy God is possible only if our sins are forgotten and gone. Only the Lamb of God, sacrificed on the cross, can justly remove those sins. The lost sinner had better repent from any other hope of salvation. Sacraments, priests, and charitable deeds are worthless. Promising to keep God's laws is foolish – no one succeeds perfectly, which is God's standard.

When my wife and I explained Biblical salvation to my aged maternal grandmother, she was shocked that all of her Roman Catholic devotion, almsdeeds, prayers, and Masses would be of no account. My grandmother was no nominal Catholic. She was a devoted daughter of Rome. She would have to count her "works" as refuse and trust humbly and simply in Christ. She thought it over carefully and explained that she could not give up her reliance on a lifetime of Catholic deed-doing.

She would have been perfectly content to repent from drinking, fornication, thievery, and many other worldly sins. Like the rich young ruler of Mark 10, my grandmother had no sin problems in such areas. But she was not willing to repent from false doctrine and her self-righteous reliance on "good deeds." To the end of her life, she never changed her mind and died lost. How about your grandmother, grandfather, aged mother, etc.? Are you passionately trying to reach them?

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. John 3:3-7

I marvel at the occasional church-goer I meet, often a Lutheran, who insists that he doesn't need to be born again. When I point out that his disagreement is with the Lord Jesus, that doesn't seem to faze him. He embraces a "Christianity" that denies the teachings of Christ. He hopes for Heaven, yet despises the need to be saved. This passage clearly teaches the new birth, which is a work of God in the individual. Born twice (of the flesh and of the spirit) you die only once. Born just once, you'll die twice (See Revelation 20:14-15).

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. John 3:14-21

See Numbers 21 for the compelling type of Christ on the cross referenced here. The rebellious Jews had only one hope when bitten by the fiery serpents. Their physical salvation was restricted to God's ONE WAY – look and live. So is our salvation prescribed narrowly. Only through the Son of God can a perishing world find eternal life. Jesus came to save, not to condemn. Note the binary character of our fate: believe and be saved or believe not and be condemned. Those who believe have – present possession – everlasting life. How long does "everlasting" life last? Until one sins again? Oops – gone instantly. Everlasting means that my life with Christ starts now. Life changes now. When I die my relationship with the Lord will enter a new phase. I'll be done with this nasty flesh. But I don't get saved "for later." I'm saved now, so now I begin to act like I belong to the Lord!

Repentance is taught dramatically in the contrast between the two teams. The lost love darkness and the saved love light. Followers of Jesus want their deeds to be shown, to please their Savior and to be recognized for serving Him. Rebels do evil in the darkness, avoiding light. We do not see a third team, namely those that are saved, but love darkness. Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of action – for life.

There are modern zealous "soul-winning" heretics who use John 3 to claim that since unbelief condemns (see also Revelation 21:8), all that is necessary for salvation is to repent from unbelief to belief. The issue then is the Biblical meaning of the term "believe." It is abundantly clear from this passage that belief is a life transforming – darkness to light – change in desires and behavior. God responds to such belief with regeneration and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, so that we can walk with God – not Satan – for the rest of our lives.

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. John 3:36

We see again the startling binary character of human existence and fate: in or out, life or death, Heaven or Hell. The difference is whether we BELIEVE on the Son of God, Jesus Christ. One way leads to life, the other to eternal death.

Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. John 4:13-14

Water is life giving, life sustaining, and a wonderful metaphor for the eternal life that Christ gives His follower. When you come to Christ you KNOW that you have found the point of life, its meaning, and your destiny. We see the eternal security of the true believer here, who is never separated from the Source of life. Furthermore, you become a well of water to reach out to others.

Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. John 4:48

Beware, Pentecostals, for always seeking signs and wonders. You will be deceived easily by charlatans and even by Satanic deceptions. The miracles that Jesus performed certainly established His credibility as one sent from God. He was more than a prophet, of course. Signs and wonders may create awe, but they do not save. Jesus never pleads with someone to be saved because the Lord just “proved” to them that He was the Messiah by some miracle. Marveling at even a genuine miracle produces a different type of thinking and emotion than that required for salvation. Salvation requires humility and guilt for sin, leading to repentance and faith. Awe is very different from humility. Seeking signs is very different from repentance. Much of modern Christendom is infected with the same affliction of the Jews of Christ’s time: seeking signs rather than repentance.

For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. John 5:22-24

Many claim to “believe in God,” but reject the doctrines of Christ. The Lord Jesus, as the God-man, has been delegated the responsibility and authority to judge every man. You cannot claim to honor God without honoring the Son – in God’s opinion! Note that salvation comes from hearing the words that the Lord Jesus spoke and, of course, believing / embracing / obeying them. Salvation is passing from eternal death to everlasting life, once and for all. What a marvelous promise!

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. John 5:28-29

At first glance this sounds like a works-based salvation. Those that do good are saved and those that do evil are damned. In the context of the rest of John’s Gospel (noting even the verse above, John 5:24), it is clear that the Lord is emphasizing the difference between those who believe in Jesus and those who

don't. Those who believe set out on a life of works that are pleasing in God's sight. Those who don't believe act accordingly, following their "father," the Devil.

And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. John 5:38-40

The critical importance of the word of God is declared. The "scriptures" here are those of the Old Testament, which point to the Messiah, the Source of salvation. The phrase "come to me" shows that when you turn from sin, you can't just turn in any random direction. You must willfully turn to Christ. The phrase "will not" refutes Calvinist heresy. No one is lost because he was not "elected" from before the foundation of the world. Anyone can come to Christ.

How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words? John 5:44-47

We all tend to crave honor. When young we crave recognition from our parents and teachers. When old we crave praise from bosses and colleagues, and some strive for public adulation. Such pride works in a direction away from salvation, which is a transaction between the individual and God only. Parents and Sunday School teachers: Woe unto you if you manipulate children into professions of faith, who will often respond simply to get your approval. Teach the child truth. Point him to Christ. Encourage him to make his own transaction with the Savior. Don't make a false convert of a young child.

Many teens and young adults respond to invitations for salvation without Biblical understanding. Some go on to "surrender to preach" and go off to Bible college. They get much attention from their parents, pastor, and church. "Oh what a fine young man he is, surrendering his life for the ministry." Some become pastors and missionaries and have never even been saved. They have been following men and seeking the approval of men their entire lives. How foolish! How tragic!

Christ's admonition is to understand and believe the Scriptures. They point to Christ. To Him one must go for salvation. The problem with many of the Jews is also the problem with many in American Christendom.

Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed. Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. John 6:26-29

Miracles are not even as compelling as free food! Jesus gets to the main point: how to acquire everlasting life. It is interesting that Calvinist heretics claim that for one to be able to choose willingly to repent or not – for man to have any part in his salvation – makes salvation a matter of works and not grace. Yet Jesus very explicitly teaches to labor for everlasting life. These Jews ask what work they can do to please God. Jesus tells them that the work of God is to believe on Jesus. Should we take the Lord at His word? Is repentance and faith a matter of labor? Indeed. Do you think it is easy for the lost

sinner to admit that he has been wrong about everything, that his favorite sins are wicked, and that he is deserving of Hell? There is nothing easy about it. It is the most difficult work of mind and heart in the experience of man – especially as one gets older and older without experiencing yet the grace of salvation.

Why do “white collar” workers generally get paid more than “blue collar” workers? Theoretical physics, tax law, software design . . . and many other highly paid disciplines . . . are largely matters of the mind. Everyone agrees that they constitute hard work. So Jesus is not exaggerating when he says to labor to find Christ. It may take hours or days to search out one’s sins, to consciously forsake them, to honestly seek God’s forgiveness, and to willfully determine to follow the Son of God. Don’t make salvation sound trivial to the lost, lest you have another stillborn false convert on your hands!

They said therefore unto him, What sign showest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from Heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from Heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from Heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from Heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. John 6:30-36

One characteristic of rebels is that they are always seeking proof, but never willing to admit that they have found it. Jesus’ last statement above is that they have seen enough and choose to believe not. Jesus likens salvation to the simplicity of eating bread. Earlier (chapter 4) he likened it to drinking water. Salvation is simple! As a child can eat bread and drink water, so a child can understand that salvation is as simple as turning to Jesus with a proper (repentant) heart. Indeed, an adult must come as a little child in order to know the Lord. For life-sustaining nourishment, the water must be consumed and the bread must be eaten – not just tasted. It is not enough to “try out” Christianity. The Lord Jesus, His words, His way, and His life must be “consumed” – completely embraced. It is simple, but must be done thoroughly. A sinner can be converted quickly, if he is thoroughly convinced. But he also may engage in an internal battle for some time, laboring to forsake specific sins and yield to Christ.

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from Heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. John 6:37-40

Here we have another passage warped by Calvinists. There are two types of believers cited in this passage. The group that the Father gave to His son is not the “elect,” but clearly the eleven (Jesus later excludes Judas, of course). The proof is by noting the parallel language in John 17:6,12,20. Look these verses up and review the context. The other type consists of “him that cometh to me” and “every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him.” Anyone can repent and believe. We also see eternal security in the promise that the Lord will lose none of those who belong to Christ.

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. John 6:44

Does man come to repentance and faith entirely on his own? No. This verse teaches a bit of what God's part is in salvation: drawing men to Christ. Drawing, encouraging, convicting, pleading, persuading – but never compelling irresistibly. We see in John 16 the commission of the Holy Spirit to bring conviction in men. Man must come of his own free will. The Lord works to persuade the hearts. The more we pray, the more the Lord will work on the objects of our prayers. Yet man may still refuse to respond, both to our preaching and to the convicting of the Holy Spirit.

When man fell, he broke his fellowship with God. The choices of a man in this life are myriad, mostly outside of the will of God. For every bulls-eye on a target range, there are thousands of other destinations that the projectile could find. We see Jeremiah's recognition of the hopelessness of man's walk through life, if he has only himself to depend on.

O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. Jeremiah 10:23

So if man needs God to draw him to salvation, how many does God choose to draw? The answer is simple and explicit in Scripture:

And I, if I be lifted up from the Earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die. John 12:32-33

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. 1 Timothy 2:4-6

God “will have all men to be saved.” This is a spectacular promise to all of us rebellious humans. Jesus “gave Himself a ransom for all.” Jesus promised to “draw all men” to Himself.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Since God desires salvation for all, you may with enthusiasm approach any individual and tell him that God wants him to repent, has sent Jesus to die for him specifically, and that he may have eternal life by choosing to repent and believe. An honest Calvinist could not do that, since he believes that Jesus died only for the “elect,” will give repentance to only the “elect,” and will only irresistibly convert the “elect.”

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. John 6:63-69

God's part is to quicken – to make man's spirit come to life. Man's part is to hear God's words and believe. Once again we see that God must give man the opportunity by drawing him. Many responded with unbelief to Jesus' startling sermon recorded in John 6. Jesus preached away a great crowd, by

explaining, by teaching, and by making clear the essence of salvation. The Lord is not looking to build a crowd, but rather to find true volunteers for discipleship. He was even willing to challenge the twelve whether they would also walk away. Peter answered wisely that the Lord Jesus was preaching the words that bring eternal life. Our responsibility as evangelists is to preach the same words, the same truths.

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) John 7:37-39

This was the last of the eight days of celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. The Jews memorialized God's preservation of His people in the wilderness by providing them each day with food and, especially, water. The priests would bring water from the pool of Siloam with great pageantry. Jesus chooses this climactic moment to cry out that the life-giving water from God is found in Him!

This message of exclusivity – Jesus is the only way to life eternal – is offensive to lost sinners. The message of repentance is offensive. The warning of Hell is offensive. But to claim that Jesus is the only way to avoid judgment and live forever is also offensive. Man wants to invent religions that please the flesh. Jesus leaves him no option but to “*come unto me.*”

And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins. John 8:23-24

This is part of the offense of the Gospel which must be preached. We are of the Earth, filthy in our sins. If we die in our sins, the Lake of Fire awaits. The only way out is Jesus.

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. John 8:31-36

Jesus teaches the doctrine of repentance unto salvation clearly. Here are Jews which “believed on him,” but clearly to a limited degree . . . to some degree of intellectual assent, perhaps. Jesus challenges them that the test as to whether they are really disciples – really following Him because they believe Him and agree with Him – is that they continue in His word, demonstrating their change of hearts and minds.

The heretics that preach a salvation without repentance insist that this passage is about whether a born again Christian will go on to be a good disciple or a poor one. There is no room for that interpretation. You can see in the rest of this chapter that these Jews who “believed” were set on killing Jesus and were rebels at heart. True disciples, true believers will be set free from both the damnation and the bondage of sin. Sin is addictive. Repentance is getting wise to the stupidity and destructiveness of addictive sin. Jesus distinguishes between the two camps. “*Whosoever committeth sin*” as a pattern of life is lost, a servant of sin. Those whom the Son sets free are free from such bondage.

Let's move on to the conclusion of this passage. Note that Jesus is talking to the same "nominal believers."

Ye are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. John 8:41-47

Does this crowd sound like born again Christians who are simply not very good disciples? I suppose you would have to suffer seminary training to be able to warp this passage that much. You are either a child of God or a child of the Devil. The difference is proclaimed in verse 47: true believers hear (and obey) God's words. If someone claims to be a Christian but argues with the Bible, you should love him enough to challenge his salvation. Jesus says that he is headed for Hell, along with his father, the Devil.

And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. John 9:39

Judgment must be emphasized in evangelism. People generally don't like to think about the future. The evangelist's job is to provoke heavy-duty thinking. Satan has this generation literally plugged-in. Especially among teens and the college age, it's hard to find someone walking along who is not texting, talking, twittering, listening to music, etc. If the Devil can keep them from thinking at all, then they are less likely to ever think about their certain death and judgment. Without thought, the soul cannot "see" what is necessary for salvation.

The last part of the Lord's thought above is puzzling, isn't it? Read the context. Those that have the knowledge, the background, the instruction . . . such as the Pharisees of Jesus' day . . . see enough to be perfectly accountable. But they rebel willfully. Persistence in rebellion produces blindness, so that what they think they understand becomes more and more warped and perverted. I have met a number of college students majoring in philosophy or psychology who are clearly more confused than they were when they entered college. They have learned so much falsehood that they have forgotten much common sense from their childhood.

I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. John 10:9-11

Like the simplicity of eating bread or drinking water, the Lord likens salvation to walking through a door. Who is the door? Should not the metaphor be a "door way"? A traveler from the West once visited a Middle Eastern shepherd and noted that the sheepfold was completely walled about except for a small opening, an apparent door way. The guest asked the shepherd where the door was to close the gap. The shepherd (who at night slept in that gap) replied, "I am the door." The Lord brings us to Him for safety and then keeps us within the fold, safe from danger. The Good Shepherd is not only willing to give His life for the lowly sheep, He has dramatically done so.

The thief is the Adversary of God and men. Satan hates God's image-bearers and seeks to destroy both body and soul. Jesus offers life. A lost sinner must be CRAZY to reject the offer of abundant life. But

wait . . . How can you call the experience of a persecuted Christian an “abundant life”? Forgiveness, peace, joy from the Holy Spirit – these are available now to every believer, whether in physical prosperity or affliction. In the New Heaven and New Earth the physical experience will be abundant, too, but the spiritual takes precedence now and forever.

I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. John 10:14

A test for genuine conversion is that the believer knows the Lord. Outward evidence includes behavior likened to that of a compliant sheep to the leading of his beloved Shepherd. Rebels neither know nor want to know such a Shepherd.

Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. John 10:24-25

In addition to the primary message here, we can take the Lord’s testimony as an example for His disciples. The born again child of God proclaims his testimony and shows works in his life consistent with that testimony.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one. John 10:27-30

And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. John 17:22-23

Could eternal security be any plainer? The gift is *eternal life*, not something contingent on future behavior. The Son of God has us safely in His hand. The Father is infinitely powerful in protecting us in His grasp. In Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30 we see the completion of the “triple seal” through the action of the Holy Spirit. We also see the unity of the Father and the Son, with the implication that the true believer shares in that unity. John 17:22-23 makes that unity between God and His children explicit. The repentant, converted disciple lines up with the Lord in everything, aiming toward the perfection of unity in the Trinity.

Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? John 11:23-26

The ultimate enemy we face is death. The solution is resurrection. Resurrection is not just something we hope “happens” to us. The Lord Jesus Christ will resurrect his forgiven followers. We don’t achieve resurrection by some complicated religious scheme, but rather by coming to Him. Believe it or not. Eternity is at stake.

He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. John 12:25-26

This is maximally counter-cultural. The world teaches you to say, "It's all about me! I'm going to get everything I can in this life!" The Lord teaches investment. Love the Lord so much that you count the world as dung in comparison. (See also Philippians 3:7-8) Note that Jesus equates loving vs. hating life as the difference between Hell and Heaven. Thus we see another explicit teaching on repentance as necessary for salvation. You don't love Satan's world system and the Lord at the same time. It is impossible. Despising the world, serving Christ, following Him . . . this is the package that produces eternal life and honor from God.

Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. John 12:42-43

As in John 8, we see another example of people who knew who Jesus was and agreed with Him at some level we might term "intellectual assent." But their will was not converted. Unwilling to profess Christ openly, they remained lost and Hell-bound. Compare Matthew 10:32-33. The praise of men is a large part of the "world system" that keeps men from God. How much attention is paid to the Academy Awards, each year's Nobel Prizes, the Heisman Trophy, the MVP for basketball / baseball / football? Is God impressed when men praise each other for play-acting or winning games?

I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. John 12:46-48

Yet again, we see the stark contrast between light and darkness, saved and lost. Reject Christ's words and His words condemn on the day of judgment. Warn those who argue with the Bible: "You just admitted that you are lost! You can't deny the words of Christ and claim to believe Him at the same time!"

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. John 13:35

Another test of true conversion is love for God's children – the brothers and sisters of true believers. I've heard some say, "Oh, I'm a Christian, but I don't believe I have to go to church." He goes on to admit that he has no interest in fellowship with other Christians. He doesn't care for their encouragement and has no desire to offer encouragement to them. Ergo, he admits that he is not part of the family of God.

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. John 14:6

Jesus is not just the Source of life. He is the “way” for us to follow through this life and for all eternity. All truth derives from the mind of Christ. How dare a professing believer argue against Biblical – Christ-inspired – truth. How does the soul find God? You simply have to come to Christ. He does the rest.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. John 14:12

Faith is followed by works. We come to Christ to follow Him. Preach that to the lost. The ticket to Heaven is incidental. Eternal life produces good works now. And what a promise! Through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit we can accomplish greater works than the Lord did when He walked the Earth. How is that possible? The ultimate work is evangelism. The Lord’s personal ministry was limited in time and space. Through the power of the Holy Spirit working in us, we can reach many more if we work at it and stay in God’s will.

If ye love me, keep my commandments. John 14:15

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. John 14:21

Love and obedience are intertwined. The believer keeps the commandments of God out of love and out of agreement. Yes, out of fear of chastisement, if necessary. But fear is the lowest level. A child obeys his parents out of fear at times, but it is far sweeter to see obedience out of love. Yet higher is obedience out of agreement, showing that the child is learning and growing in maturity. What is joy for parents is also joy for the Lord with His children.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. 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. 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. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. John 15:4-8

Believers abide in Christ and bear fruit. Unbelievers avoid a lifestyle of following Christ, wither (die), and are cast into the fire. Heretics who preach a repentance-less gospel claim that this passage shows the difference between good and poor disciples, even though both are saved. But the language used by the Lord is the same as that used by John the Baptist in Matthew 3 and Luke 3 to describe the lost being cast into the fires of Hell. There are only two camps here: saved bearing fruit and the fruitless lost. The last thought above is significant. God is glorified through disciples, those who bear fruit. How could God be glorified by a professing Christian who supports the Devil’s program on this Earth?

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. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. John 15:10-15

Ah, to abide in the love of Jesus! The condition is that we follow Him by obeying Him. Love and joy accompany the true convert. This love and joy we are to spread among the other members of the family. Many martyrs have left this Earth out of loyalty to the believers around them, protecting them under the severest of persecutions. Yet this is just the example that Jesus set for us. Without His sacrifice, we would be at the mercy of Satan and suffer his fate for eternity. And what a glorious promise above: the believer is not just a servant, but the *friend* of our Lord Jesus. I confess that is somewhat beyond my comprehension, yet I look forward with great anticipation to experiencing that fully. Yet I understand it a bit now, in the fellowship I have with the Lord when I am about His work.

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. John 15:18-20

When you believe in Jesus, you agree with Him, you act like Him, and that goes against the world's flow. Trouble follows. This is as inevitable as the consequences of physical laws, such as gravitational force dictating the orbits of planets around the sun. Does the professing believer consistently get praise from the world? I pity popular false preachers, like Billy Graham, who are friends of degenerate Presidents and invited to speak on the platforms of heretics around the world. Compare Luke 6:26.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. John 17:3

Salvation produces a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. The Christian life is far more than knowing a set of orthodox doctrines. Fundamental and evangelical churches are filled with people who know much sound doctrine. It's one thing to know about a famous statesman, or athlete, or scientist. It is quite another to call that personage a friend. You can know sound doctrine without your life changing very much. Knowing Christ personally changes everything!

I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. John 17:14-17

Two teams: Team Christ and Team Satan. The Lord's team is hated by the other. When he takes the field, the loyal pitcher throws strikes and does everything he can to prevent the other team from scoring. He absolutely, positively doesn't help the other team to win. Implore the lost sinner to join the team destined for ultimate victory.

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. John 20:31

This promise from the Holy Spirit can be passed along to the lost sinner who claims to be open to truth. If he ends his rebellion, he will find God speaking truth to him through the pages of this glorious Gospel record. Hearing truth, he can believe on Jesus and find life.

Chapter 6

Acts through Revelation: Our Template for Biblical Evangelism

DD: “Hi, pastor. I just dropped by to let you know that I’ve recently met quite a number of your church members through knocking doors in this neighborhood.”

BLB (Blind Leading Blind): “Are you a door-to-door salesman?”

DD: “No, I’m just a Christian trying to be obedient. My wife and I have been sharing the Gospel with people in the neighborhood. We don’t want to miss anyone who hasn’t heard the Good News.”

BLB: “I didn’t know anyone did that kind of thing anymore. Do you ever have any success at that?”

DD: “Oh, it’s wonderful in America to use the freedom we have. We have great success. We’re able to share the Gospel with thousands of people this way without fear of imprisonment . . . so far. Most people are gracious, some slam the door before we can really get the conversation going, but some even show real conviction about their need for Christ.”

BLB: “I mean, do you see any people convert to Christianity with such a confrontational approach?”

DD: “That’s in the Lord’s hands. He tells us to go and He will take care of the harvest. We have seen a very few that we believe have really trusted Christ and who show evidence in their lives. But the reason I stopped by is that I have met only one young man from your church who seems to understand the Gospel. In fact he is the only person outside of our own church that I know who shares the Gospel, pleading with strangers to repent and trust Christ. I’ve seen him do so. I’m sure you know who I mean. His name is Jerry and he’s mentally disabled.”

BLB: (chuckling) “Oh yes, Jerry certainly has a zeal about him, but unfortunately doesn’t seem to have the capacity for much wisdom. But what do you mean about the other members? Our church is filled every Sunday with people who love Jesus. It’s my mission in life to introduce people to a relationship with Jesus Christ.”

DD: “You see, we’ve talked with many of them. Their hope of salvation is based on attending worship services, saying they love Jesus, but they admit to much worldliness in their lives. They have no burden for lost souls and don’t see any need to repent from the sins in their lives. In short, they haven’t been born again.”

BLB: “Oh, so you’re one of those ‘born again’ Christians. I think you’re out of line here. My people are good people.”

DD: “That’s just it. That’s exactly what they think. Salvation requires humility, not self-righteousness. Pastor, I’m worried about you now. Have you been born again? Is there evidence in your life that you have?”

BLB: “OK, that’s about enough time with you on this. I have things to do today . . .”

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Every Christian – whose job description includes that of an *evangelist* – must pay careful attention to the manner in which the Lord’s apostles carried out His Great Commission. He must also be a student of the changes manifested in the lives of the converts of the apostles. The book of Acts, penned by Luke, is certainly given by the Holy Spirit to be a pattern for us. The rest of the New Testament, including the

letters of Paul, Peter, James, John, and Jude . . . plus the revelatory letter of the Lord Jesus Christ, the book of Revelation . . . amplify and explain what we see in outline within the book of Acts.

This chapter will sweep more quickly through the Biblical text than the previous two chapters, to sample Scriptures that teach man's part in salvation, especially repentance, and the necessary changes wrought in men who are truly born again. Thorough diligence would require a separate book. For our purposes, we want to insure that the evangelist, the bearer of THE GOOD NEWS – that's YOU, O Christian – is firmly grounded on the message to be delivered to the lost sinner. Our prayerful intent in preaching the Gospel must be to make perfectly clear God's requirements to man for salvation, avoiding any heresy, manipulation, or deceit that would tend to produce false converts.

It is far better to teach "too much" than too little. More information will not hinder the sinner from finding Christ, as long as only truth is taught. You can't fool someone into getting saved. When Jesus insisted "*teaching them all things whatsoever I have commanded you,*" He certainly was not advising a quick & dirty, canned technique. Wisdom includes understanding what particular barriers in understanding and sinful addiction torment a lost sinner. As we go through the book of Acts, we'll see the apostles display such wisdom. Let's start with Peter's famous sermon at Pentecost.

Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. 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? 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. Acts 2:36-38

Read the entire chapter for context. Peter is preaching to orthodox Jews. He does not have to convince them that there is one Creator God. He does not have to impress them with the importance of the law given to Moses. Their problem – that which keeps them on the road to Hell – is their rejection of Jesus as their Messiah. Peter constructs a message using the Old Testament Scriptures to convince them that Jesus is indeed the Messiah, the Christ. They must repent – change their minds. "*Pricked in their heart*" speaks to their conviction and "*what shall we do*" indicates repentant hearts. Peter calls them to set out on an entirely new life, trusting Christ. They will suffer shame and persecution when they submit to baptism, which separates them from their lives in the Jewish community. Their lives and eternal destinies have been irrevocably changed.

And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. Acts 2:40-42

The new believer is called out from his present ungodly generation. So it is today. When saved, you will change your thinking, your language, your music, your friends, your viewing habits, and your purpose in life. Those that "*gladly received his word*" didn't fight going to church or getting baptized. They were excited to do so. I recall the testimony of C.S. Lewis who reported that he came "kicking and screaming" from unbelief to Christianity. That is good evidence against a true conversion. (His life and written works provide additional evidence.) Note another mark of true believers: they continue stedfastly in

doctrine and fellowship (including the Lord's supper) and prayers. Those are great evidences of the new birth!

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. Acts 3:19

Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the Earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities. Acts 3:25-26

Many Scriptures about conversion emphasize belief. Many emphasize repentance. These are clearly two different concepts, but both are required. Here we see repentance as prerequisite to the blotting out of sins, which is essential for us to qualify to be refreshed in the presence of the Lord. The second passage above indicates that the entire Bible points to Christ, the hope of salvation for the whole world. The last verse defines repentance well: *"turning away every one of you from his iniquities."* Don't demand anything less of the lost sinner.

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

The emphasis here is on the necessity and sufficiency of Jesus Christ for salvation. Salvation is in a person, not a method or practice or procedure. Find Him! Hold on and don't let go!

And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. Acts 4:18-20

These were the same disciples who fled the night before the cross. But now they have been indwelt and filled with the Holy Spirit. Ever since, every believer possesses the same Holy Spirit. Peter and John are compelled to speak God's truth, even when their lives and liberty are at stake.

And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. Acts 4:31-32

The Holy Spirit produces boldness. The new convert has these wonderful examples in the book of Acts for the beginning of his new life in Christ. Speak up, speak out, speak boldly. We also see that the new believers were all aimed in the same direction – aligned with God's will. Thus they were lined up with each other, *"of one heart and of one soul."* We see the phrase *"one accord"* several times in Acts. That's the way Christians are to be! Not competing and fighting with one another, but loving each other and working together for God's glory. Do you see pettiness and contention in a church? Such a church is likely populated with false converts.

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

The Christian is a witness to what God has done for him; namely, he is an evangelist. Those that refuse to obey God in the Great Commission or in any other area give evidence that they do not know the Holy Spirit. Challenge the disobedient, professing Christian. Even if saved, he must repent and get right with God. If lost, he must repent to know the Lord. If he is born again, his conscience will be stirred by your challenge.

And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ. Acts 5:40-42

Talk about counter-cultural! Have you ever suffered shame for your testimony? If you have, did you rejoice? This is a liberating truth. We can rest assured that the Lord knows every tear, every bruise, and every hurt inflicted by the Devil and his crowd.

And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep. Acts 7:59-60

How much did Stephen love his Jewish brethren? He preached openly, knowing the murderous intent of the religious leaders. He prayed for God to forgive his persecutors, just as the Lord did from His cross. Saul (who became the apostle Paul) was in attendance. There is no doubt that the Lord used the short service of Stephen to prepare the heart of Saul for repentance and a life of service. Stephen was “so saved” that he counted his earthly life of no value other than to be an instrument in God’s toolbox.

Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. Acts 8:35-39

Somehow this Ethiopian ruler, a Jewish proselyte, got to Jerusalem, spent quality time there, and started back to Africa without encountering a Christian who volunteered to witness to him. The Holy Spirit noticed this and sent Philip to the desert to preach to him. The Ethiopian wanted to find God, and just as in the case with Cornelius in Chapter 10, God sent an evangelist to the genuine seeker. He believed all of the Old Testament Scriptures. He simply needed to find Jesus. Philip obliged him and history records this as the likely start of the Christian churches that arose and flourished in Africa for centuries to come.

Note that the “belief” required was not partial or merely some form of intellectual assent, but rather a belief consuming the whole “heart” – the center of man’s will and emotions. We observe that Philip did nothing to manipulate the man, but preached Jesus to him. Understanding the significance of baptism as a public testimony to faith in Christ, it was the sinner who requested it. Philip set a test condition. He had no interest in phony professions. Finally, we see the new convert rejoicing. That is the pattern.

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 9:6

The Lord Jesus supernaturally confronted and humbled Saul on the road to Damascus. The trembling response: “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” That’s the beginning of repentance. After his instruction by Ananias and the restoration of his sight, look at the change from chief murderer of Christians to passionate evangelist:

And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: Acts 9:20-23

In many countries today, conversion to faith in Christ will endanger life. Muslims zealously murder any of their “brothers” or “sisters” who turn to Christ. In America we still have much freedom, but opposition always arises to faithful Gospel preaching. If your evangelistic message is thought “sweet” to everyone you share it with, you are not following in the footsteps of Paul.

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days. Acts 10:44-48

The Holy Spirit works to convict of sin, righteousness, and judgment. When sinners respond, the Spirit “falls” on the repentant to regenerate, indwell, and empower. These Gentiles experienced the same salvation as did the Jewish disciples. Aside: the “tongues” – real languages – show up miraculously in Acts chapters 2, 10, and 19, and always as a miraculous sign for the benefit of Jews in proximity (see 1 Corinthians 1:22). The key point here is that new Christians manifest evidence that is clearly observed. The “tongues,” or languages, they spoke doubtless included Hebrew as a sign to the Jews in their presence. Especially, though, they were not ashamed to testify to the grace of God.

And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house. Acts 16:30-34

This warden of the prison at Philippi had been part of the beating of Paul and Silas, certainly enjoying his role in their persecution. How gentle a fellow is usually cut out to be a jailor? Something changed, didn’t it? Their testimony, their preaching, and their singing, coupled with God’s little earthquake, changed his mind. How much repentance did he show? What jailor in today’s world would bring such prisoners home, washing them, feeding them, and start a little revival in his own family? When Paul preached, “Believe,” certainly the jailor understood that repentance was part of the package.

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. Acts 17:1-3

Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. Acts 17:16-17

Reasoning, opening the Scriptures, alleging, disputing . . . Paul worked to change the mindset, the first step in repentance. O evangelist, strive to provoke understanding. Loose minds from errors and fill them with truth. With the Jews, Paul used the Scriptures, which formed a common basis of understanding. With the Gentiles he had to back up a good bit . . .

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. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: 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. And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. So Paul departed from among them. Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them. Acts 17:29-34

Paul's sermon on Mars Hill started with arguments for a single Creator God and against the idolatrous beliefs of the Gentiles in Athens. In the concluding portion above, Paul relates God's command to repent and then points them to Christ. He had to begin his argument at the beginning of Genesis, with creation. With the Jews he had a shorter path to the climax. Know your audience. My favorite encounter in America in this time is with the polite atheist, whose god is evolution. I fell into that category at the time that I first heard the Gospel. If an atheist loses his faith in his god, he may likely sprint to seek the true God, suddenly realizing his accountability and the awesome consequences of judgment.

And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 20:20-21

Evangelist Paul spent three years in Ephesus, teaching everyone and everything that he knew. He preached to the crowd when he could find one, and he went house to house. What was his message? Repent and believe. Paul summarizes his entire missionary life in this passage. We would do well to emulate him.

To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the Heavenly vision: But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. Acts 26:18-21

Near the end of the book of Acts we hear Paul summarizing his message again. Paul sees only two camps: darkness and light. To be saved is to turn, repent from darkness and the power of Satan, to God for forgiveness and an everlasting inheritance. How are God's children sanctified – set apart? By faith. Thus we see repentance and faith again. Paul goes on to say that repentance is proven and displayed by our works for God's glory, especially the preaching of the Gospel, which is the subject of the entire passage. Yet another evidence, once again, is the murderous opposition raised up against the Biblical evangelist.

Let's move on to an all-too-rapid survey of Romans through Revelation. I quaver at the prospect of leaving out so many hyper-relevant passages, but I also fear that too much length may produce too little reading. In Romans, for example, Paul teaches much about salvation by faith, through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, especially in chapters 3, 4, and 5. I expect that the reader of this book is intimately familiar with these passages. My intent will be to illuminate passages not so often associated with evangelism, but crucial to its proper execution. To begin with, in Romans we'll camp on selected passages in chapters 6, 7, and 8 and deal with some misinterpretations of these teachings. Chapter 6 is so crucial that we will reprint the entire chapter below.

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Romans 6:1-2

Continuing the exposition of the first five chapters, Paul proclaims the horror of the idea that the new, born again Christian could continue in the sins that marked his unredeemed life. Significantly, the Christian is "dead to sin." What does that mean? If you're dead nothing can touch you. Sin has no power over the day-to-day life of the Christian. When you preach to the lost, make sure that he sees the difference between his present addicted life and the promise of freedom that Jesus offers to him.

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 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. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Romans 6:3-7

The picture of baptism illustrates the difference between death and burial on the one hand, and a newly resurrected life on the other. Our old sinful life has been crucified . . . dead. The dead man cannot serve sin. He is free, free indeed! Do you see the two camps? Lost and bound by sin vs. saved and free to live righteously. The lost cannot hope for Heaven and determine to live in bondage at the same time.

Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. 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 6:8-16

Paul is getting repetitious, isn't he? It's as if the Holy Spirit could see the coming heresies (He did!) of a Gospel without repentance, "Christians" who don't follow Christ, and multitudes of "worshippers" who live like the Devil. The believer is dead to sin, refusing to yield his body to the old temptations. Sin has no more dominion (power) in his life. Grace is not the license to live wickedly, but rather the freedom to live right / smart / free / joyously as the Lord did when He walked the Earth. The last thought above declares the existence of two and only two teams: one characterized by sin and death, and the other by obedience unto righteousness.

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. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 6:17-23

How clear can it be? Is there even a hint that the lost sinner can be saved from the consequences of his sins and yet continue to wallow in them, serving them, content to die in such a life? No, no, no, no!!! The wages of a life of sin is death – everlasting death in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:14-15) – but God's gift is eternal life. Come to Christ the Lord and live / walk / abide with Him.

If you think that the above discussion is controversial, buckle up. Let's move on to chapter 7 and address the gross misunderstanding here that plagues modern evangelism. First let's focus on verses often ripped out of context.

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. Romans 7:18-20

The heretic proclaims, "See? Paul, perhaps the best Christian who ever lived, says that he is always fighting evil. He can't seem to do any real good. He has a 'sin nature' dwelling in him. So we expect Christians to keep sinning. Sure, we'd like to see our new converts come to church and stop their drunkenness and fornication. But Paul admits that the Christian life is just a big battle. He even wrote about how the church at Corinth had a bunch of carnal Christians."

Wow, what damnable doctrine! Before we refute this teaching in its Scriptural context, let me point out that the thinking above keeps multitudes of modern churchgoers complacent in the sins that damn them to Hell. Why repent if even Paul seems to think that repenting is a hopeless enterprise? If Paul lived a sinful Christian life, why shouldn't I? And why not just work to get people saved by making a profession and not worry about whether they dishonor God with the conduct of their "Christian" lives?

By the way, the "carnal" Christians at Corinth were appropriately rebuked by Paul for their divisions, but we observe that this was a vibrant, growing church in the midst of a particularly wicked city. The Christians at Corinth were preaching the Gospel and exercising their spiritual gifts in discipleship. They

were faithful to their fellowship and responsive to Paul's admonitions, repenting in sorrow. Also, Paul challenged the worst among them to examine themselves whether they were truly born again or had fooled themselves. Namely, whether any particular member was saved OR lost – not saved AND wicked.

Regarding "sin nature": the Bible simply does not teach that we have inherited a tendency / propensity / compulsion to sin from Adam. This doctrine of Roman Catholicism, which has produced such damnable practices as infant baptism, has also infected fundamentalist and evangelical churches. This is a big subject, but I will give you just a few key points to help you study your way out of the doctrinal trap you may have fallen into. Adam's "original sin" broke fellowship between God and man. The Bible makes it clear that man has willfully sinned ever since. Sin is defined Biblically (1 John 3:4) as the transgression of the law. Thus a sinner is one who has transgressed the law. Heretics will thunder from their pulpits that man sins because he has been born a sinner, somehow inheriting a compulsion from Adam.

If so, how can you repent from an inherited compulsion? God commands men everywhere to repent from idolatry, drunkenness, thievery, adultery . . . all willful transgressions of the law. Men and women commit thousands upon thousands of willful sins. Our worldly culture is so wicked that the psalmist David declared:

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Psalm 51:5

From birth to death we are immersed in our own sins and the sins of those around us. Amazingly, Psalm 51:5 is used by the "sin nature" heretics to justify their doctrine. But this psalm explicitly refutes such an interpretation. Psalm 51 is David's confession to God regarding his willful adultery with Bathsheba and the arranged murder of her husband. Consider the two verses preceding verse 5:

For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Psalm 51:3-4

Does David blame an inherited compulsion from Adam?!? If he had, God would not have forgiven him. The entire psalm regards willful sin and the resulting guilt, humility, and repentance that ultimately restored David to the will of God.

Another point regarding "sin nature": Hebrews 4:15 teaches that the Lord Jesus in His Earthly life "was tempted in all things like as we are, yet without sin." Did Jesus inherit Adam's "sin nature"? No one would claim that the Lord was born a sinner. So how could He be our perfect example if He was tempted like we are? If we have an inborn compulsion to sin, that makes temptation a very different matter compared with Jesus, who had no such compulsion. The only view that makes sense is that neither the Lord Jesus nor we have a compulsion to sin. We have a choice. We exercise such choice minute by minute, day by day.

Besides warping Psalm 51, Romans 7 is used to justify "sin nature" and the carnality of professing Christians. Let's examine the entire chapter, during which we'll pick up the proper interpretation of verses 18 to 20.

Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so

long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. 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 7:1-6

Paul sets up an analogy describing two states for a woman: married and bound to her husband vs. widowed and loosed from the bonds of marriage. He likens this case to the binary situation of the two states of man: lost and bound to the law vs. saved and free to serve Christ. Thus we see exactly the same perspective we saw in chapter 6. The Christian is free to bring forth godly fruit and has become dead to the law.

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Romans 7:7-12

Recall Paul's early life up until he encountered the resurrected Lord on the road to Damascus. No one was more zealous for the law of God. Paul tried to live righteously, he believed the Old Testament Scriptures, and he was determined to convert others to his religious views. In this passage he recounts his painful awareness of his sins, which were enumerated by the law. He felt he was "alive" until he came to know the law and it slew him. This certainly occurs in the life of a child who comes under conviction as he matures and understands in detail the differences between right and wrong. Paul admits that he found the law to be lethal, damning him. Thus we see in chapter 7 a review of Paul's dead spiritual life before he knew the Lord!

Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. Romans 7:13-20

Paul reports that sin got more and more sinful to him. Did he blame the law? God forbid. He calls his lost condition "carnal, sold under sin." Now we get to the passage in question. The whole point of the last few verses above is Paul's powerless, hopeless condition as long as he was lost, under the bondage of sin. This chapter is not about saved, fruitful, victorious, missionary Paul. It's about lost, angry, persecuting, evil Saul. If chapter 7 is about saved Paul, then its teaching clearly and emphatically contradicts the proclamations of chapters 6 and 8. Some are fooled by the use of the present tense in

this passage. That is simply a literary device, often used by authors as they write from the viewpoint of their past.

I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. Romans 7:21-25

As a religious zealot, Paul wanted to do right, but failed. He knew he was captive to sin. “O wretched man that I am!” How can he escape? “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” There are two choices in life: change your mind and serve God or stay in the flesh and die in sin. We see a transition here at the end of chapter 7. Paul has found Christ and goes on to joyfully declare the differences in chapter 8. So let’s look at just the beginning of chapter 8.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Romans 8:1-4

The “therefore” connects to all of chapters 6 and 7 before. Note carefully in this passage that Paul is making a stark contrast between two camps: lost and saved. There is no condemnation to those in Christ . . . who walk not after the flesh. Ah! Walking after the flesh is therefore characteristic of the lost, not the saved. Chapter 8 is consistent with chapter 6. These two chapters form a spiritual sandwich around the sad description of the lost life in chapter 7. Here again we see that life in Christ makes us free from sin and death. Sin & death are coupled for the lost. Use this passage to teach the lost that life will change if he repents! He won’t walk after the flesh anymore, but after the Holy Spirit.

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Romans 8:5-8

Two teams are in view, again and again. The lost carnal mind is the enemy of God. (See James 4:4.) Regarding “sin nature” again: The Holy Spirit states that the carnal, lost mind is not subject to the law of God. He does not say that the carnal mind is compelled to sin by inheritance from Adam. It is his willful sinful life, in the flesh . . . void of the Holy Spirit . . . that cannot please God.

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Romans 8:9-14

The Christian is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit – if he is truly saved, namely “*that the Spirit of God dwell in you.*” Amazingly, heretics distort the first ten verses of Romans as if they refer to the differences between godly and backslidden Christians, and not between lost and saved. Could Paul be any clearer? The Holy Spirit indwells only believers. The born again Christian doesn’t “die” spiritually. He “lives.” Finally, we can identify the true sons of God. They are the ones led by the Spirit of God. There are remarkable differences that can be seen!

Let’s move on to 1 Corinthians. We could study happily in Romans for an entire book unto itself. But we must return to our survey. And once again, I confess to much trepidation at how brief this discussion is. Nevertheless, if you meditate through these passages, you will see the clear teaching of Scripture on the nature of salvation, in contrast to the picture often presented in modern evangelism.

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 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 Corinthians 6:9-11

Paul is clear: the unrighteous – those that live a life characterized by such sins – will not be in God’s kingdom. Note that Christians are described by: “*And such were some of you.*” They were – past tense – unrighteous, but now are washed, sanctified, and justified. Life changed upon salvation. Evangelist: preach the truth of the saved, sanctified, justified life as you plead with the lost.

For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter. 2 Corinthians 7:10-11

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17

The consequences of sin often produce sorrow. I see much of that as I talk with people entering the courthouses in northern Illinois. Sin can wreck a life in the present, producing sorrow for the sinner and those around him. Often, such sorrow just produces depression and hopelessness, begetting even more sin. The end, as shown above, is death. But godly sorrow is different. Godly sorrow changes one’s heart toward God and works a multitude of changes in thought and behavior.

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Galatians 5:19-25

We see the stark contrast between saved and lost. Those that do the works of the flesh “shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” In contrast the fruit of the indwelling Holy Spirit is wonderfully nine-fold.

Believers “are Christ’s” – they belong to Him. They have crucified – killed – the fleshly works. This passage, all by itself, should be enough to end the heresy of a repentance-less Gospel.

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. Ephesians 2:1-3

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:8-10

Study the progression: The lost are dead in their sins. They used to walk that way, in time past, following Satan. We were headed for wrath. But by God’s grace (unmerited favor), he offers salvation contingent on our faith – our choice to believe. We can’t work for it, but once saved, our works show it dramatically. Preach these truths!

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Philippians 2:12-13

The true believer doesn’t take for granted his “ticket for Heaven.” He is struck by the gravity, in “*fear and trembling*,” of his responsibility to serve the Lord with the rest of his life. He is anxious to allow God to work His will in Him for God’s glory . . . His good pleasure. The real Christian has this mindset. Life is about serving God, not about grasping for bits of carnal pleasure.

To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily. Colossians 1:27-29

Paul labored mightily, preaching the New Testament revelation of the new birth and the indwelling Holy Spirit. As an evangelist, Paul warned men, teaching them to come to Christ and then grow in grace and wisdom, so that they would be more and more like the Lord Jesus. Paul hoped to present his converts perfect to the Lord. That’s the standard. Let’s not rebel against God’s desires for us. When we fall short, let that provoke humility and renewed determination, not rebellion and excuses.

For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost. So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from Heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10

Biblical Gospel preaching is accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit. The new converts in Thessalonica, despite persecution, became followers of Paul and Christ. They proceeded to “sound out” the word of the Lord to the surrounding regions. They were so zealous and faithful that Paul couldn’t have added more to their efforts. Note the explicit report of repentance from idolatry to God, henceforth serving Him. They lived a fruitful life in expectation of the Second Coming of Christ. Let our converts be like those of Thessalonica!

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; 2 Thessalonians 1:3

Christians are characterized by a growing faith and demonstrations of love to one another.

But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; . . . This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. 1 Timothy 1:8-10 . . . 15

As also taught in Galatians 3:24, the law is meant to provoke us to guilt and repentance. Evangelist: preach the law to convict of sin. Then proclaim that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Note Paul’s humility. He was the worst sinner he knew. That’s the kind of humility the repentant sinner needs for salvation. Indeed, our lives after salvation must be characterized by the same humility. The more I learn, the more I realize I fall short of living up to the example set by my Lord Jesus. Yet I am a child of God, aiming toward maturity. Before I knew the Lord, my goals were entirely different.

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. 2 Timothy 3:12-13

A good test of the reality of any profession of faith in any society is whether persecution follows. Stand for Jesus, proclaim the truth, and trouble will follow. In America, with such glorious freedom, there is trouble, but usually non-lethal. Are we not in an age where evil men and seducers are on the increase? This truth should simply motivate us to greater service.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee. Titus 2:11-15

Grace is not offered to award a license to sin. The grace of salvation teaches us to forsake ungodliness and live righteously. How clear can Scripture be? This passage is like so many others, in that the offer of salvation is not primarily coupled to a mansion in Heaven, but rather to a transformed life. You can’t fool a lost sinner into salvation. He must see the choice clearly and desire to turn from bondage to freedom. Living a transformed life, the true convert will look forward to Christ’s return, in which the

Earth will be filled with righteousness. False converts, still in their sins, have no such desire. They want to live in Satan's world, not one filled with the light and purity of Christ.

I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me: Philemon 10,11

Paul is sending Onesimus, the runaway bond-servant, back to Philemon, his master. The difference between Onesimus then and now is the difference between a lost man and a saved man. The new man is profitable, whereas the old man was not.

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Hebrews 12:14

Born again Christians seek peace with men and work for holiness in their lives. Those that don't have these "beliefs" will not join the Lord in His kingdom.

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? James 2:14-20

James and Paul are in perfect accord. Saving faith produces godly works. One who professes faith, but has nothing in his life to demonstrate its reality, has no faith at all. He is spiritually dead. The devils "believe" in Jesus. Satan has talked to Jesus face to face. I haven't had that privilege yet. Satan's belief in the existence of God is merely pragmatic and observational. If our belief is so shallow, and coupled with rebellion, we are dead and doomed, like the devils.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. 1 Peter 1:3-9

The Christian has been given hope, one of the "big three" mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13. We look forward to our inheritance and know that God's power will keep us saved and our inheritance secure, despite trials and temptations. The believer loves the Lord even though he has never seen Him. We rejoice NOW because of God's promises, looking forward to the goal, the "end" of our faith, "even the salvation of our souls."

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. 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. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, 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 Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:5-11

The new convert wants to grow and works diligently at it. Faith and virtue and knowledge . . . he adds these qualities to make himself more and more like his Lord. Otherwise, if he isn't going forward, he is losing ground and may fall into uselessness, out of God's will. Worse, the "backslidden" Christian may simply be a false convert. The true convert, growing in godly virtues, stays on track, and will be rewarded abundantly.

If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 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. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 1 John 1:6-8

The little book of 1 John has a number of "tests" to determine true conversion. We'll review just a few. Above we see the same test as in John chapter 3. The Christian walks in light. The lost man walks in darkness. The believer is honest and humble about sins in his life and his need for the forgiveness that allows salvation.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. 1 John 2:15-17

The choice is binary: love the world or love God. Those that love this world system and its lusts do not know God. John is pleading with his readers to "Wise up!" This world will pass away. The follower of Christ, "that doeth the will of God," will live forever.

He that committeth sin is of the Devil; for the Devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. 1 John 3:8-10

The same crowd that preaches a repentance-less Gospel, and warps such passages as John 8 and Romans 8, also works hard to pervert this passage. The meaning is simple, however. There are two camps: God's and Satan's. Jesus came to "destroy the works of the Devil." He did not come to save individuals who would continue in their earthly lives to build the Devil's kingdom. Anyone truly born again does not live a life committed to sin. God won't let him! John preaches that you can tell the difference between people in the two camps clearly! One does righteousness and the other doesn't.

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. 2 John 9

The doctrines – teachings – of Christ throughout Scripture are embraced by His followers. Members of cults and other unbelievers show that they do not know God by their rejection of Biblical doctrine.

For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; 3 John 3-5

God's family members love truth and walk accordingly. They also treat their Christian brethren and those outside the church honestly, faithfully, and graciously.

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. Jude 3,4

Jude's short letter is a blunt exhortation to stand faithfully on the word of God and separate from false teachers. He warns believers of preachers who proclaim a watered-down, lascivious message, who will not preach sin, judgment, and repentance. Such preachers fill our air waves today and build the biggest megachurches. Their condemnation will be more severe than those who follow them.

And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. Revelation 12:17

There are many verses throughout Scripture, such as this, that identify true believers with characteristics like those described here: They keep the commandments of God and testify of Jesus Christ. What a wonderful summary of the transformation from unbelief to belief . . . the born again Christian works to live a life in obedience to God and actively professes his faith in Christ so that others may be converted. Do you know of professing Christians who live worldly lives and have no interest in the salvation of others? They are assuredly not at war with the dragon, Satan, but rather in league with him. They are on the wrong team!

Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. Revelation 3:4-5

And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. Revelation 21:8

Study through the book of Revelation and note the use of the word "overcometh." It describes Christians who work out the reality of their salvation, through trials and persecution, always putting God's will and glory first in their lives. It is only overcomers who will be clothed in white raiment. Those that persist in their sins "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."

I conclude this chapter with an observation by the evangelist James Stewart, from his book Evangelism:

“If you ask the average Christian worker what is God’s design in the salvation of a soul, he will quickly reply, ‘The deliverance of that soul from Hell.’ Surely this is a very shallow conception of the message of redemption. There are vast numbers of sinners who are willing to be saved from Hell who do not want to be saved from their sins and to acknowledge the lordship of Christ in their lives. That is why they are not saved.”

Chapter 7

Was Salvation Different for Old Testament Saints?

The following is a dramatization that summarizes a watershed moment in a church we attended about thirty years ago . . .

DD: "I haven't heard anything about the soul-winner's club you ladies formed a year ago. How is it going?"

CSW (Champion Soul Winner): "Oh, just wonderful! As a matter of fact, we'll be giving a presentation at this Sunday night's service."

DD: "Can you give me a preview? I'd love to hear some good news."

CSW: "Sure. We ladies are so excited to bring our report. We have won over 900 souls for Christ this last year!"

DD: "Did I hear you right? 900?"

CSW: "Absolutely. We keep careful records and the count keeps adding up."

DD: "I'm confused. Our church only has about 200 in the evening service, and that represents the most serious of the church members, namely, real born again Christians – not just visitors. We're a little bigger than we were a year ago, but not by much. How many of those 900 have been baptized and joined the church?"

CSW: "Well . . . none, actually. But you know how that is. A lot of people can get saved and not grow very much."

DD: "How do you know they got saved?"

CSW: "We lead them through the Romans Road, of course, and then lead them in the "sinner's prayer."

DD: "Don't you preach repentance from sins, turning to God, and that the new birth means a life of holiness, love of God, and love for fellow believers?"

CSW: "I can see where you've gone wrong. Repentance is the message of the Old Testament. Since Jesus came, you get saved by believing in Jesus. Repentance just means to change from unbelief to belief. Only the sin of unbelief keeps people out of Heaven. Anyone that prays to receive Christ is born again. We recorded that over 900 people did so last year."

DD: "Something has certainly gone wrong. For 6,000 years God's message of salvation hasn't changed. And the fruits of a person's salvation are the same in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Those that have a new heart and a new spirit turn from wickedness, casting away their transgressions."

.....

Despite much harm done in the propagation of a watered-down, false gospel, much good came out of those events. Serious Bible study and discussion resulted in the church disbanding that club, and a consensus grew on the principles of Biblical evangelism. What Satan had meant for harm, the Lord used to bring clarity and determination among the leaders of that church. I was grieved, though, to hear many years later that Satan infiltrated again and this church, at last report, is infested with modern evangelistic methods.

The answer to the question of this chapter's title is an emphatic "No!" The Old Testament points ahead to the Messiah. The New Testament records the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. The record goes on to fully explain God's plan of redemption. The book of Revelation looks ahead to final judgment. The historical event of Christ on the cross occupied mere moments of time. Whether a man is looking forward to that event, or looking back in history, or perhaps was one of the few who lived through those days, salvation is centered on the cross and acquired through Biblically defined repentance and faith.

The issue should be settled by just a couple of Scripture references. Consider the following:

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of Heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the Earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Revelation 14:6

But though we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. Galatians 1:8

The message preached by an angel in the midst of the Great Tribulation is called "everlasting." Paul writes that if an angel preaches some other Gospel than what he preached, the angel will be accursed. Obviously, the Gospel is consistent throughout history. We see different elements emphasized at various times by various preachers. It is also likely that many Biblical accounts, such as that of Revelation 14:6, are partial records of a larger discourse. Nevertheless, it is clear throughout the Bible that the Gospel includes the availability of salvation by the promised blood of the Lamb, in payment for the wicked sins of mankind, and acquired through faith and repentance.

In this chapter we will survey various Old Testament Scriptures that relate to man's responsibility and the transformation he experiences as he passes from spiritual death to everlasting life. Our survey will be the merest sampling of the overwhelmingly consistent teachings of the prophets regarding the doctrine of man's ultimate destiny. The Lord has made it clear to every generation what His requirements are for restoration, fellowship, and life. He has also made clear the lethal consequences of rebellion. Indeed, with each prophet and, especially, with the New Testament record, God's revelation adds layer upon layer to man's understanding. We who live in this age have the full record of revelation and a view over the entire historical record. We of the 21st century are therefore more accountable than any previous generation. Paul, in Romans 1, declared that man has no excuse. Knowledge is not the issue. Man's "will" is the issue. So it was in the beginning, where we launch our survey.

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring

forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them. Genesis 3:15-21

Man's fall brought immediate and everlasting judgment. The only way out would be the promise of the seed of a woman, the Messiah. The curse continually reminds man that something is wrong in this world and the Genesis record reports that it is our fault! Don't pass lightly over the reference to God making coats of skins. This required the shed blood and death of animals, the beginning of the many Old Testament types of the cross.

For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the Earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the Earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Genesis 13:15-16

And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward Heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness. Genesis 15:5-6

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. Genesis 17:7-7

And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the Heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the Earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice. Genesis 22:16-18

Abraham believed God and God counted that to Abraham for righteousness. The promises to Abraham are amplified in the New Testament. Romans 4 explains that God imputed righteousness to Abraham because of faith and not works. Hebrews 11 records that this began when Abraham believed and obeyed God by moving to a strange country and dwelling in tents. His faith included hope for a "better country" promised by God, where he would dwell with his descendants forever. Galatians 3 proclaims that everyone who comes to Christ shares in the inheritance promised to Abraham and becomes part of his descendants, part of his spiritual family, the family of God. James writes that Abraham's faith was shown by his works – his actions – when he offered Isaac, his only son. Hebrews 11 adds that Abraham, not understanding God's command, trusted that the Lord could raise up his son from the dead. It is clear that Abraham was saved, forgiven, justified, and born into the family of God by faith that was demonstrated clearly in a life pattern of obedience to God and trust in His promises. The New Testament cites Abraham as a prime example for instruction on the salvation of an individual man.

And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the Earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Job 1:8

For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the Earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me. Job 19:25-27

For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him? Job 27:8-9

Job was likely a contemporary of Abraham. Was Job sinlessly perfect? No, as demonstrated by his humility and his obedience in making sacrifices according to God's laws. Yet the Lord calls him perfect and upright, fearing God and despising evil. Job believed in the same powerful sense as did Abraham, and his life showed the genuine character of his faith. Job knew that he needed a redeemer and had prophetic knowledge of God's promise to send the Savior, even though it would be long after his death. Job's trust was in God's messianic promise, just like ours is. He looked forward in time while we look back. Also above, Job decries the false hope of the hypocrite, one who makes a profession and shows no evidence. The Old Testament teaching in these matters matches the New Testament perfectly.

Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD's passover.

For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever. Exodus 12: 3-14

The Passover commemorated a specific historical event. God commanded an annual memorial, which is still celebrated 3,500 years later. Why was the memorial so important? It pointed to the Lamb of God, the perfect Lamb without blemish, sacrificed on the cross for the sins of the whole world – not just Jews, but Gentiles also, and for every generation. The lamb had to be without blemish, a type of the sinlessness of our Savior. We see the individual character of salvation. Each house must have the protecting blood. We can also infer that the head of the household must take responsibility for the protection of his family. The binary nature of salvation is evident. You meet the requirements and you are saved. You invent a different approach and you die. Evangelist: Don't get doctrinally creative in reaching out to lost sinners! Use God's methods only!

We see additional types above. Eating the flesh of the sacrifice reminds us today of Jesus' discourse in John 6. Jesus alone is the Savior and must be "ingested" fully . . . in the willful, spiritual sense taught in John 6:63. The fire speaks of the judgment that we are spared, but suffered by the Lamb in our place. The Lamb must be consumed entirely. Justice must be fully satisfied. All of the above must be done in haste! *"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."*

Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD. 1 Samuel 2:12

The high priest's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, served as priests, conducting the religious duties of their positions. Yet they *knew not the Lord*, but *were sons of Belial* – the Devil. Clear isn't it? You are either a child of God or a child of Satan, as Jesus made clear in John 8:42-47.

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish. Psalm 1:1-6

The flagship of the psalms makes a clear distinction between godly and ungodly in both their life patterns and their fates. The godly man loves God's law because he agrees with it. He doesn't run with the wicked and his life shows good fruit. *"The ungodly are not so."* Their fate is the second death, separated from God's family.

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. Psalm 32:1-2

The sins of Old Testament saints were "covered," pending the final payment of the blood of Jesus on that fateful Day of Atonement nearly 2,000 years ago. *"Imputeth"* – the Lord will not retain the records of iniquity in His accounts of the lives of the forgiven. Rather, He imputes the righteousness of Christ. We see a quality in the lives of the saints here: no guile – openness, honesty, humility.

Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Psalm 51:9-17

We have discussed part of Psalm 51 previously. Here we see the attitude of the believer who has fallen into sin. This confession of King David after adultery and murder includes a plea for restoration. He already knows the Lord, but his fellowship has been broken. He already knows salvation, but his joy of salvation is in tatters. David begs God to restore him and uphold him. He has repented from his sins. We do not see them repeated in his subsequent life. David goes on to promise the Lord that he will

preach God's word in order to bring sinners to conversion. Was David disqualified from preaching such truth? Obviously not. This psalm is inspired by the Spirit of God to encourage the greatest failures among us that we can seek forgiveness and go on to serve the Lord. Note how the Holy Spirit exalts a broken spirit and a contrite heart above the rituals of Old Testament sacrifices. Indeed, the OT believer would perform such sacrifices to demonstrate his love for God, but such sacrifices were utterly without value unless the heart was right.

Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways. Psalm 119:1-3

Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes. Psalm 119:155

Psalm 119 is not only a wonderful exposition of the beauty, wisdom, and perfection of God's word, it also is a crystal clear revelation of the attitude of the believer in contrast to that of the scoffer. The first three verses above are simply representative of those who walk with God. They seek God with their whole heart and live a life that despises iniquity. The last verse cited above parallels Matthew 5:6:

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

This beatitude characterizes the life of the believer, who desires righteousness in his life. Psalm 119:155 contrasts the lost man, who despises God's laws and thus is very far from salvation. Repentance includes a whole-hearted change of mind about God and His laws. You can't have salvation and still be a servant of Satan.

My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. Proverbs 2:1-6

It is not difficult to find God, His will, and His salvation, if one desires to. If the sinner seeks God's will as much as he loves silver and treasure, he will find it. Compare Matthew 7:7 and Matthew 13:44-46. The thoughts are consistent.

For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. But the wicked shall be cut off from the Earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it. Proverbs 2:21-22

The upright team shall inherit the blessings promised to Abraham, dwelling in a New Earth during the ages to come. The wicked shall be banished to the Lake of Fire. Choose your team carefully.

Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence. But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble. Proverbs 4:14-19

Day vs. night, white vs. black, the Bible repeatedly contrasts the just and the wicked, not merely in their professions, but in their behavior. Note the poetic description of the believer's growth in grace: *"that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."*

Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find? . . . Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin? Proverbs 20:6,9

For there is not a just man upon Earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not. Ecclesiastes 7:20

"I'm good," declares the religious lost, who rejects the Gospel tract I offer him. "Oh, I'm sure I'm going to Heaven!" proclaims another who does not even understand the Gospel. Both Old and New Testaments declare there is none righteous – no, not one!

He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. Happy is the man that feareth always: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief. Proverbs 28:12-14

Every thought, word, and action of a lost sinner will be held against him, unless he confesses his sins and forsakes them. You won't shock God with your confession. God already knows your sins. He simply wants you to agree with Him. What a counter-intuitive thought in the second verse: *"Happy is the man that feareth always."* The lost sinner must come to an attitude of humility and fear of God's judgment in order to be saved. He must repent and forsake his sins. Once saved, the Christian continues in an attitude of humility, thankfulness, and even fear. I have been a Christian for 42 years at this writing. Yet I still fear God's chastisement. Worse, I fear that I may do something that disqualifies me from the service on this Earth that He would have me do. Yes, I love God. But lack of fear leads to self-righteousness, arrogance, and a hard heart that is insensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

Solomon ends his treatise with the bottom line from man's point of view: *Fear God, and keep His commandments.* Implicit is the truth that the heart must be right. If the heart is right, the actions will demonstrate it.

Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. Isaiah 12:2-3

Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the Earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Isaiah 45:22-23

Salvation is not in a set of intellectual beliefs or a system of religious duties. Salvation is in knowing the Lord. Isaiah 12:2 is parallel to John 17:3. Eternal life is to know the Lord. Trusting Him follows from knowing Him. Verse 3 reminds us of Jesus' explanation in John 4 that He is the source of life, pictured by a well of water. The second passage makes clear that there is only one God and He is one and the same

with the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 23 is perfectly matched by Paul's proclamation in Philippians 2:5-11. Look it up and memorize it!

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:6

O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. Jeremiah 10:23

These two Scriptures describe the state of man apart from the presence of the Lord. Ever since Adam's fall, we have all done our own thing, gone our own way, and have no clue how to walk to direct our own steps for our own benefit. These willful acts of rebellion – this iniquity (lawlessness) – was laid on the Savior. Isaiah 53 (and the last 3 verses of chapter 52) constitute the famous prophecy of the cross and its meaning, given 700 years before the event. The rest of this passage in Isaiah is doubtless familiar to you in its explanation of redemption, so we will move on.

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness . . . Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Isaiah 55:1-2, 6-7

Jesus is the source of the life-giving "waters" that cannot be bought. He cried out in John 7:37, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Don't look elsewhere. Look to Him for the spiritual life and blessings that come from knowing Him . . . now and for all eternity. Seek Him, forsake your sins, and clean up your thoughts. Return to the Lord who made you to be one of His own. That's how to find mercy and forgiveness. Isaiah 55:7 is not aimed at the believer who is backsliding. The terms *wicked* and *unrighteous* indicate lost people. The lost must return / turn /repent toward God for mercy.

Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Isaiah 58:1

Evangelist: Don't shy away from naming sins! The lost man must repent from known sins. It is your job to point out his transgressions.

Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. Isaiah 59:1-4

God can and will save anyone who repents. Sins separate us from God. The unbeliever will not get his prayers answered. We see a stark description of sins that characterize the wicked. The guilty do not want justice. They desire to hide the truth. They walk through life desiring the vain things offered by this present world. Lying and mischief are natural.

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; Isaiah 61:1-2

This is the passage quoted by our Lord Jesus the first time he taught in a synagogue after his 40 day fast in the wilderness. Here we see in Old Testament language, reiterated by the Lord Jesus in the New Testament, that Jesus was anointed by God from eternity to open the prison doors to those bound by sin. *“Brokenhearted”* does not refer to simple worldly sadness. It speaks to the destruction in lives caused by the foolishness of sin. The Lord came to proclaim Good Tidings. Jesus is come to save that which was lost!

But ye are they that forsake the LORD, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop, and that furnish the drink offering unto that number. Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit. Isaiah 65:11-14

Rebellion brings judgment. God warns and calls out, offering pardon and blessing, but man rejects the call. The context of this passage is that of the final judgment. The end is separation between lost and saved. In the ages to come, God’s children will rejoice and enjoy both physical and spiritual blessings. Rebels will have only sorrow, shame, hunger, thirst, and vexation of spirit.

They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD. Jeremiah 3:1

Much Scripture teaches that God suffers our sins in a way similar to that of a husband whose wife is repeatedly unfaithful. Yet God continually offers forgiveness and a new relationship. God is immensely more forgiving than the best of humankind.

For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. Jeremiah 4:22

Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the Earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD. Jeremiah 9:23-24

The rebellious sinner is stupid and ignorant regarding good, yet wise to do evil. That describes every one of us before salvation. Evangelist: Don’t let the scoffer puff with pride about his rebellion. This is not an intellectual argument, but rather a matter of life and death. Drunkenness, fornication, adultery, murder, theft, selfishness . . . the life of the lost is not intellectually justifiable in any way. It is foolish. Say so. The only way to properly “glory” (take joyful satisfaction) is the declaration that you know the God of the Bible, Who exercises lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the Earth. That’s what pleases God Almighty!

Thou hast forsaken me, saith the LORD, thou art gone backward: therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee; I am weary with repenting. Jeremiah 15:6

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. Jeremiah 17:9-10

Some tell me, “I repent every day.” That is not repenting at all. Obviously, the mind hasn’t changed. The same stupid sins appeal every day. Confessing sins without forsaking them is epitomized in the Roman Catholic confessional. Do your penance, say some prayers, and you are good to go! Except in God’s eyes. God knows the heart. He tests the “reins” – the controlling will of a man, akin to the reins of a horse – and will bring judgment based on performance. Performance derives from what a man really is. Compare Mark 7:15-23.

Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good. And they said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart. Jeremiah 18:11-12

God warns of judgment and prescribes the cure of repentance. The wicked reply that they “will walk” determinedly their own way, whatever they imagine will please their flesh.

The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. Jeremiah 31:3

The God of the Old Testament is ever loving and draws men patiently and kindly to the narrow road that leads to life, and away from the broad road to destruction.

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. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. Jeremiah 31:33-34

This passage is prophetic, pointing to the ultimate salvation of the Jewish people in the last days. We see that God teaches that salvation is a matter of the heart and that the essence is to know the Lord. That produces forgiveness. God remembers the sins of His children no more. How much more gracious is that than found in human experience?

Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, And hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbour's wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman, And hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; He that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and

man, Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord GOD. Ezekiel 18:4-9

The difference between saved and lost is manifested in man's eyes (and in God's) by specific behavior. Good works are the proof of a regenerated spirit.

The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live? Ezekiel 18:20-24

Every man stands alone in his accountability to God. If a man repents, he shall live. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked and therefore pleads again and again for the lost to turn from his evil ways and live.

Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye. Ezekiel 18:30-32

This is a crystal clear description of repentance. "Cast away from you all your transgressions." Does this sound like a simple mental agreement with one's fingers crossed behind the back? Startlingly, we also see here man's responsibility to make himself a new heart and a new spirit. Yes, the New Testament teaches that we are born from above, and that God's Spirit gives us life. Yet God also teaches that man has responsibility to change his heart and spirit so that God can do His work. Evangelist: Plead with the lost to repent and make in himself a new heart and spirit, yielded to God.

For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. Ezekiel 36:24-27

The Lord speaks prophetically of the end-time gathering of the redeemed Jewish people. The clean water is the same metaphor used by Jesus in John 4 and 7, and Paul in Ephesians 5:26. Here we see God's part in the new birth, giving believers a new heart and a new spirit. Note the result of the new birth is a life walking in God's statutes. I suspect also that this passage was the basis of the Lord's rebuke of Nicodemus in John 3. A teacher of his standing, experienced in the Old Testament Scriptures, should have understood when Jesus said that he must be born again.

For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. Hosea 6:6

Conversion of the heart and mind come first.

But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me. Hosea 6:7

My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations. Hosea 9:17

Transgression makes one the enemy of God. Judgment follows. The prophetic reference here is the great dispersion of the Jews to come centuries later.

Can two walk together, except they be agreed? Amos 3:3

Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you. Hosea 10:12

Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Micah 6:7-8

Do you desire salvation, which includes walking with God for all eternity? Then agree with Him. Go on to prove it by sowing righteousness and mercy. Don't quit until God blesses you, whether in this life or eternity. Is God primarily looking for outward acts apart from a humble heart? Is there any physical sacrifice sufficient to pay for your sins? Get right and do right.

Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. Malachi 3:16-18

The books are being written, moment by moment. God remembers everything, but will spare His own children and forget their transgressions. In fact, the believers will be partners with God in distinguishing between saved and lost at the Second Coming of Christ. Compare Psalm 149.

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This ends our several-chapters-long Bible study of salvation from man's perspective. Please keep in mind that this has been a survey. Feel free to do an exhaustive study yourself. In fact, as you continue to read the Bible, simply be alert to discover how incredibly rich and full the Bible is on this subject. Alternatively, if you still embrace modern methods that decry repentance and if you assume the existence of a multitude of worldly, carnal, supposedly "born again" Christians, then I confess I cannot help you from this point. Your fight is with God's word, not this little book.

Chapter 8

Basic Skill Set for 121 Street Evangelism

To start with, let me assure you that the truly basic skill set necessary for street evangelism is that you are born again and willing to share the Gospel with the lost. If you know on what basis you are saved, then you are qualified to explain it to someone else. After all, what everyone really needs to know is that he is a sinner and that Jesus is the Savior. Repent, believe, and follow the Lord for the rest of your life. This is not complicated!

Nevertheless, every Christian is appointed to be an evangelist, and charged with growing in wisdom and grace; studying to learn God's word, His will, and what it takes to be a better servant. We should preach the Gospel with the prayerful expectation that the Holy Spirit will work in the hearts of those we preach to, recognizing that the ultimate transaction is entirely between the sinner and the Savior. Yet we should study and pray and preach with all the skill and compassion we can muster, as if the sinner's decision rests entirely on the quality of our witness. When you read the accounts of the Biblical prophets and disciples, and when you study the history of the missionaries and evangelists that have been recorded over the centuries since, you will see both of these truths in evidence.

What can we do to sharpen our swords and make our efforts more effectual? We'll use this short chapter to list and discuss some of the basic tools every personal evangelist should acquire and then work to handle with skill and enthusiasm. The next chapter will expand on the subject of Gospel tracts. The chapter following that will discuss a variety of ways to approach lost people so that you can get the Gospel to them. So let's get started with the foundation stones . . .

Know the Biblical doctrine of salvation: Study and understand the Biblical teachings on the message that you must convey to the lost sinner. In particular, understand the doctrines of law / sin / judgment / Gospel / repentance / faith. Be able to explain these subjects clearly. There is nothing complicated about the essentials of salvation. You should be able to discuss them equally well with a six-year-old child or a retired university professor. It's OK to practice by yourself. Go for a walk and pretend you are engaged in a 121. If someone sees you talking to yourself and comments about it, ask if you can practice on him!

The point is to study and practice. If you can only preach awkwardly and clumsily, then do so for the first 1,000 times. Eventually, you may achieve mediocrity! After a few thousand more attempts, you may develop some proficiency! Don't quit.

Understand the Bible's "big picture: The historical sweep of Biblical history includes the following events: creation, the fall of man, the worldwide flood, the dispersion from Babel, the history of Israel, the life / death / resurrection of Christ, the rise of the early churches, and future history described in prophecies yet to be fulfilled. The doctrinal themes include the nature of God and man, sin and its consequences, the redemption of man via Christ's death and resurrection, God-ordained relationships in the family and the local churches, the Spirit-filled life, the preaching of the Gospel, the discipleship of believers, the final judgment of the lost, the promised inheritance for God's children, and the assured hope of the Lord's return to establish His kingdom.

What I have just described represents a lifetime of study. So get started. The riches of God's word and the applications for this life are inexhaustible. The more you know and the longer you walk with the

Lord, the better equipped you will be as His witness. You will be able to answer more questions from those who genuinely seek knowledge. You will increase in faith and zeal yourself, and strengthen those around you.

Memorize key Scriptures: Many “soul-winning” courses teach that you should use your New Testament to show the lost individual relevant Scriptures as you share the Gospel. In my experience, it is far better to maintain eye contact, quote Scriptures when appropriate, but primarily focus on explaining the truths that make the case for repentance and faith in Christ. I often have a New Testament with me, and I talk to thousands of individuals, but years can go by between occasions where it is really useful to open up a New Testament during a street encounter. It is also true (but I won’t belabor the point) that Biblical examples of Gospel preaching were essentially extemporaneous – there wasn’t time to open the scrolls.

Memorized Scripture is an essential tool of the evangelist. It’s what you know at the moment that matters, not what you can look up later. Quoting God’s word also lends authority to your message, especially since it is *God’s message* that you are conveying. Within a couple of months anyone can easily memorize fifty verses. Pick the ones that you are most likely to use, based on the presentation we discussed in Chapter 3. Don’t stop at fifty. Keep memorizing. The more Scripture you have in your head, the more God can speak through you.

Pray for liberty / safety / boldness / compassion / wisdom / timing. Pray that the Lord walk ahead of you to set up divine encounters with people who need a tract from you or a discussion with you. Pray for freedom from harassment by Gospel haters or law enforcement. In America we still have constitutionally based freedoms to engage in free discussion on public sidewalks, parks, and other locations. I recommend the Christian Law Association for materials that define the legal rights of the street evangelist. I also recommend that you consider giving them some financial support. Their lawyers are continually engaged in protecting the rights of Christians in this country – rights that are continually under attack.

Pray for safety from bodily harm, for God to protect your vehicle as you travel, and for protection from viruses and other bugs you will likely be exposed to. It occurred to me many years ago that talking with thousands of individuals each year is actually dangerous from a health perspective. I simply put myself in the Lord’s hands. It’s His work and I am His instrument.

Pray for boldness and compassion to speak the truth that needs to be heard, and yet to be gracious and caring with each one you share with. Pray for wisdom to understand what sin problems beset a particular individual. Pray for timing so that you don’t miss the one who needs the tract. Satan’s forces would certainly distract you from finding the one they know might be approachable. The Lord can foil their designs. Pray for God to keep the demon-possessed or demon-influenced from hindering you. Pray that the Lord keeps the cults away from your favorite locations.

Establish a goal for the day you are out on the street – so you don’t quit early. When you plan a day out on the street or knocking on doors, fix a length of time or a certain number of tracts to pass out or a given number of doors to knock. I know by experience that if you just work until you “feel” like you have done enough, you will likely quit early. When I spend a day in Chicago, my goal is easily fixed by the train schedule. If you set a certain number of tracts to give out, don’t stop short. That very last tract might be the most important.

Use only the best tracts. The next chapter will explore this in some detail. In short, it is far better to spend more money on a tract that will get read than to save money on tracts that won't. Put your (first) name and phone number on the back. Sometimes the tract will preach better than you will. In many cases, the tract will get read, whereas your verbal approach will get shut down immediately.

Approach people gracefully. Develop a consistently good approach. Establish eye contact. Be friendly and act friendly. Be direct, not deceitful. Use interesting, thought-provoking opening lines. Be fresh EVERY time: This contact may be the only time he hears the Gospel clearly. Compassion produces passion: Don't leave any in reserve -- It's OK if they think you're a zealot. Aren't you?

Every 10 seconds counts. The first 10 seconds earns you the next 10 . . . and so on. Be able to communicate sufficient truth in the first minute. But be ready to spend an hour or however long it takes, if that is warranted.

Go 2 by 2, of course, whenever possible. Don't approach children (pre-teens). The time has passed in this world where adults can interact with children without suspicion. You can do street evangelism by yourself, but only knock doors with a partner. Avoid any situations where your integrity might be compromised, or even appear to be compromised. For example, when knocking doors, don't enter a house at the invitation of a woman, unless you or your partner is a woman.

Study / Study / Study . . . Learn / Learn / Learn: Learn to love books. Read good authors. Learn about false religions and weak churches. Understand the cults. Learn church history. Study creation vs. evolution. Be insatiable in learning.

This was a short chapter, but following the advice therein will give you a lifetime of work. It's not always easy, but at least it's not complicated.

Chapter 9

Tracts – Choosing & Using

The following account by W. Smith is typical of thousands throughout the history of evangelism. (It is quoted from Bill Brinkworth's newsletter, The Bible View, April 21, 2011.)

While Dr. Coke was journeying in America, he once attempted to ford a river. His horse lost its foothold, and he was carried down the stream. The doctor narrowly escaped drowning by clinging to a branch which overhung the river side. A neighboring lady gave him help when in his distress and even sent someone to retrieve his horse and other kindnesses. Just before he left her house, he gave her a tract about salvation.

For five years the doctor toiled on in the cause of Christ in England and in America. Whether his tract had been destroyed, or had pierced a human heart, he did not know. One day, at a mission's conference, a young man approached him and requested a couple minutes of the doctor's time.

"Do you remember, sir, being nearly drowned in the river some five years ago?"

"I remember it quite well," replied the doctor.

"Do you remember the widow lady at whose house you stayed at after escaping from the river?"

"I do; and shall never forget the kindness she showed me."

"And do you also remember giving her a tract when you bade her farewell?"

"I do not; but it is very possible I did so."

"Yes, sir, you did leave a tract. That lady read it, and was converted. She lent it to her neighbors, and many of them were saved also. Several of her children were also saved; a Bible society was formed, which flourishes to this day."

The statement moved the doctor to tears. The young man continued, "I have not quite told you all. I am her son. That tract led me to Christ. Now, sir, I am on my way to the mission field to reach others."

We never know what fruits we can produce, when we do the Master's work.

Did you ever hear the objection, "I don't believe you should be giving tracts out. You should be sharing the Gospel verbally." Most of the numbskulls that say this won't share the Gospel verbally with five people in a year. Others are even worse. They'll say, "I believe in building relationships and friendships in order to share the Gospel." Duh. OF COURSE WE SHOULD BE SHARING THE GOSPEL IN THE COURSE OF BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS. But what about the thousands and tens of thousands of lost sinners within your reach that you never befriend? Just how many real relationships do you have? By the way, the Master of this enterprise proclaimed, *"Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."* Apparently, this seems to be debatable among many.

So, the first principle is: Preach the Gospel verbally to as many lost people as will listen to you. The second principle is: Give tracts to everybody else! In a typical day doing personal evangelism in downtown Chicago, I'll get perhaps 10-20 people to stop and listen to a serious Gospel presentation. And I'll get about 1200 - 2000 people to take tracts so that they can READ a serious Gospel presentation. Furthermore, the offer of a tract is the most effective way I know to entice someone to stop and chat.

On a college campus . . . the BEST place in the world for 121 evangelism (!) . . . I'll get out between 200 and 500 tracts and get about ten 121s. How about knocking residential doors? In a couple of hours, I can typically hit 30-40 doors, engaging perhaps 10 homeowners in a serious 121. The "not homes" get a tract in the door, and I keep a record so that I might try them again. I'll also make notes on any serious 121s, so that if I get a call from them, I can (hopefully) remember something useful.

How should I prioritize during my day out? More 121s or more tracting? I find that by the time I've talked to 15 or more individuals, I'm getting really exhausted . . . talked out . . . and don't get as many tracts out. If I do about ten 121s, then I get out closer to 1800 or 2000 tracts (in Chicago). As the years go by, I find myself getting more efficient in identifying people who are willing to chat constructively, and cutting off conversations more quickly that are getting nowhere. You'll find your own balance in these things, with prayer and experience. But do make the day count!

If I'm in a pedestrian-intensive environment, like Chicago or a campus during a class change-over, I will (almost) NEVER engage with someone 121 for more than 5 to 7 minutes. I can share the Gospel three different ways in about 5 minutes and put the ball in the lost sinner's court. If I get traction, I give him homework to do (visit the web site), my contact info, and several tracts. It's up to him to respond and follow up. If he has genuine concern for his soul, he will, and I'm prepared to be a friend for life! But I'm not begging or chasing, which would be to go against the Biblical pattern. Preach the Gospel and disciple those who respond. Be fervent, be compassionate, care with all your heart . . . but don't chase. The Satanic trap that well-meaning evangelists fall into, is to let a contentious "distractor" eat up 30 minutes of their time, while 500 potentially hopeful prospects walk by.

What's a good way to offer a tract to someone on a sidewalk or in a parking lot? Feel free to experiment. I have tried a variety of different approaches, trying to enhance the likelihood of someone accepting a tract. Here's my usual approach:

1. Get eye contact at least 10 feet away. Once you get inside someone's personal space, they don't like to be surprised. They need just a second or two to size you up. Amazingly, that's all they need.
2. Smile and reach out with a tract in your hand. Hold the tract so it is right in the path of the free hand of the fellow, so he hardly has to make any effort at all to simply grab onto the tract. All these 'little things' can make the difference between a tract accepted or a tract rejected.
3. Say, "Good morning! Here's a free gift!" Or "G'day!" for you Aussies out there. Or "Good afternoon!" Why "free gift"? Isn't that redundant? Yes, the redundancy helps. "Free" and "gift" reduce tension.
4. If it looks like the fellow is not in a hurry, and you want to try to share the Gospel with him, then say, "It's something to stimulate your brain . . . about life, death, Heaven, Hell . . . you know, the BIG STUFF! Do you ever think about those things?"
5. If they simply take the tract and keep moving, I say, "God bless you." I do in fact want God to bless their understanding of the tract's message and for the Holy Spirit to bring conviction to the heart. If they linger, then go on to explain the Gospel.
6. If there are two or three or more in a group, try to get a different tract into each one's hand. Then there is the possibility that they will read and swap, getting the message multiple times. That's why I always carry several different types of tracts, shuffled together so that everyone in a small group gets a different title.

Besides those 'special days' devoted to evangelism, most of us run several errands around town every week. Make it your determined practice to get tracts out everywhere you go. I do about 150 per week this way. As you walk by someone in a parking lot, give her a tract. In restaurants, leave the waitress a

tract with a *good* tip. If you frequent the same diner regularly, bring a different tract each time. At fast food joints, slip a tract behind the next napkin in the dispenser, and leave some on seats for people to find. Every establishment that has a restroom, leave at least two there. If your spouse is with you, then two in each rest room! In grocery stores, hit the magazine rack and insert tracts into several magazines . . . surprise the reader with just one more insert! Soft drink cartons and other products often have slots to slip tracts into. Your objective is to put the tract where workers won't find it, but the customer will run into it after going home. When filling up, note that on top of each gas pump is an advertising plaque. Slip a card into the plastic frame that holds the ad. Stores that sell clothes . . . think of all those pockets! Don't forget to inspect the zippered pockets in luggage displays! Use your imagination!

Might stores get aggravated about these practices? Don't over-saturate any store. And don't worry — there aren't any other Christians in your area doing this. In all these years I've had only two phone calls with explicit complaints . . . both from the same restaurant, a year apart! The first was a mother who was offended that her teenage daughter (waitress) had been confronted with a Gospel tract — "There's no need to be pushing the Gospel down people's throats!" The second was from the Manager who received a complaint from an atheist who found a tract in the restroom. I had a fascinating conversation with the fellow, focusing on why he objected so strongly to the content — the Gospel. Which gave me an opportunity to press on him his lost condition. So, both complaints were, I conclude, successes!

10 reasons why you should give out tracts (adapted from onemilliontracts.com, although I'm not sure of the ultimate origin of this list):

1. *They are a very economical form of evangelism.*
2. *They work while we sleep.*
3. *They have the ability to get into a house and stay there.*
4. *They are never afraid or show cowardice.*
5. *They never compromise their message.*
6. *They never get tired, discouraged, or give up.*
7. *They stick to what they have to say and never argue.*
8. *They can present the message when you (or they) don't have time (or they won't give you the opportunity to talk to them).*
9. *They can go to places where we cannot.*
10. *They only speak when they are read.*

What tracts should you use?

This is easy: tracts that preach a Scriptural Gospel and that PEOPLE READ! So what kind of tracts get read? There are lots of decent tracts out there that are dirt cheap. Some of these are fairly long and have lots of Scripture quotations and lots of explanation — but don't get read. We live in a media-centered / short-attention-span generation. Tracts have to be colorful, well-designed, and have a good "hook."

Paper tri-fold tracts are boring. Regardless of how sound the content, they simply don't get read. Many such "church tracts" emphasize church programs and schedules, diluting any Gospel content. Some feature a photo of the pastor . . . wow, how arrogant. I know a fellow in Chicago who passes out booklets (3" x 4" and about 50 pages) containing only Scripture verses. He passes them out by the tens of thousands. How could I possibly object to content that is purely Scriptural? Isolated verses do not make a complete and coherent argument. You'll note that evangelistic preaching in the NT by Peter and

Paul did not consist merely of a listing of OT verses. They made reasoned arguments. (Acts 18:4) I regularly encouraged that fellow to use other tracts that would get read and that get to the point efficiently. He always replied that I should convert to using his tracts. Oh well. The Lord will likely straighten out both of us someday.

You say, "But I can get some tracts 'free' or less than a penny apiece and give them away by the thousands." This is usually the most "expensive" tract of all. You invest some money, much time and energy, much prayer, etc. – and then the tracts don't get read. How foolish.

Let's cut to the chase. My three favorite sources for tracts:

chick.com

livingwaters.com

onemilliontracts.com

The best resource for getting tracts and evangelistic books and training is livingwaters.com – Ray Comfort's ministry. If you aren't familiar with his ministry and resources, repent immediately! Onemilliontracts.com has emulated the Living Waters style and so offers tracts of the same philosophy and quality. The tracts at Chick Publications are small comics, more expensive than most other tracts, but they make very compelling reading. You can review all of their tracts online, so you can be sure of what you are buying.

The tradeoffs:

Chick offers quantity discounts. If you buy 10,000 of a single title, you can have them print whatever message or contact info you like on the back. At the bottom of this article, I have reprinted the message that I composed for the back of my Chick tracts. Kids especially like comics. Even adults (including me the PhD) love comics.

Many times I have had adults approach me on the street to see if I have a new title on hand. Recently, a mom asked me for several copies of one title that she wanted to give to her lost children. A dad once called me to thank me for the tract I gave him. When he got home he read it and realized it was the perfect message for his jailed son. Another time, when knocking doors, a lady responded to my tract offer by exclaiming, "Oh, I've got one like that on my dresser." I asked her how she got the tract. She said that two years before someone had dropped it through the open window and on her car seat while she was in a store. (That had been me.) A couple of years ago I shared the Gospel with an out-of-town man who told me that he had been saved a couple of years before that through a Chick tract given to him at the local courthouse. (That would have been either myself or one of my partners.) Jack Chick publishes hundreds of testimonies of people who have been saved through their comics.

You have to pick and choose among Chick's tracts. Some have solid Gospel presentations (sin / judgment / Hell / repentance / faith / the cross / resurrection / new birth / changed life) and some are weak. You can compensate with the message you print on the back page, but do be careful. My favorite titles are:

This was your life!

It's your life! (the African-American version of the one above)

It's the law

Busted!

Scream!

Bad Bob!
Four Angels?
Hi there!

Living Waters has a wonderful variety of tracts, at different prices. The last time I looked, I did not detect a quantity discount, but they do have special sales occasionally. The genius of Ray Comfort's tracts is that they don't look like tracts. There are many people who would reject your offer of a tract (not to mention rejecting any discussion of the Gospel). But they will take a colorful, creative, glossy card that has the "hook" of an intelligence test, or a celebrity bio, or a magic trick, or a card trick, etc.

One of my favorite opportunities occurs when leaving a fast food restaurant, when I see a group of 4-6 young people together. "Preaching" is certainly not available in such situations, so I go up and ask them if they are all above or below average in intelligence. That gets their attention. Then I'll ask who is the brightest and pick out one of my LW tracts for that self-selected genius. And different titles for the others. And then off I go without disturbing the restaurant staff and its customers. It's important to give everyone a unique title so that they can all share. I get a big kick out of watching them compare titles to see who got what.

Onemilliontracts is a small operation and very easy to work with. Marv does quantity discounts and will change the text (including your contact info) on purchases of 5,000 or more of a given title. I use more of these "card" tracts than anything else. For example, when I travel to Chicago, anything more than 300 Chick tracts in my carry bag really weighs me down. So I add 1700 cards to the 300 Chick tracts to enable me to get out up to 2000 when I make that trip.

One of my favorite experiences in using the OMT cards is when Christians come up and say, "I really like these. Can you give me a few to give to my friends?" Yes!! I give them 10-20 and thank God that someone is getting addicted to the ministry!

I regularly press Christians I meet to give out tracts if they have not made that part of their Christian walk – especially if they are too "shy" (cold) to normally do so. I recently experienced how precious this opportunity is. A young mother of 3 girls recently joined our church. She told us how that four months previously, she was walking downtown and an apparently nervous fellow gave her one of our tracts (the "icard" with my contact info printed at the end). The Gospel message gripped her soul, she got into her Bible, and was gloriously saved . . . and has shown much appropriate fruit in her life.

At first, she tried going back to a Roman Catholic church, but she realized that wasn't the place to be. She tried an evangelical church that wasn't helping either. So after four months she decided to call the number on the back of the tract. My wife and I met with her and she became part of our small fellowship. We determined that the "nervous fellow" was not one of our church members, but must have been a Christian whom I had encouraged to hand out some tracts. Praise God!

It's vital that you print, or have printed, or stamp your (first) name and phone number or email address on each tract – whatever kind of tract you use. I also list our web site. Give people a chance to call or write and hear more! I love to get such calls. Don't expect a large number. And do expect that some will be hostile. That gives you the opportunity to grow in grace! But don't give up and don't get lazy by not including your contact info.

I've had so many interesting experiences from tracting. I once got a call from a town 50 miles away (where I had never been) from a young man who found my tract on a gas pump and wanted to talk about spiritual things. That tract must have changed hands at least once. I recently got a call from two construction workers who found a tract during their work day and wanted to thank me for the message. They were calling from North Carolina (I haven't been there) and I live in Illinois.

One of my favorite experiences in using the OMT cards is when Christians come up and say, "I really like these. Can you give me a few to give to my friends?" Yes!! I give them 10-20 and thank God that someone is getting addicted to the ministry! One dear Christian lady accepted 20 cards from me eagerly near the Daley Center in Chicago. A few minutes later she came back and asked for more. I gave her 75. I saw her a half hour later and she asked for another 75. There was another Christian lady who works downtown . . . I ran into her about every other trip and she was glad to get another stack of tracts from me to use in her own neighborhood. I'm always hopeful to help addict Christians to the ministry that everyone should have! A middle-aged fellow received a tract from me, but didn't read it until he was headed home on the bus. But every six months he calls me and asks me to send him a stack of tracts to use in the city. Love it.

"Specialty" tracts. Whenever I go out of the house, for evangelism or just to go to the store, I always have tracts on me. At least 20, including the following:

Several general purpose Chick, LW, and OMT selections for anyone I meet.

Chick tracts in Spanish – not everyone in America speaks or reads English. (I like the Spanish version of "This was your life".)

Chick tracts for Roman Catholics – I like "Murph" and "Last Rites." Some Chick tracts for RCs are a little too much "in your face." Just choose carefully. For a Jewish person, I prefer "God Loves the Jewish People," and for Muslims, "Allah Has No Son."

Several LW tracts with good hooks, especially for the restaurant-like situation.

My own essay, "Tract for the Committed Calvinist" (see my web site), although I don't seem to get opportunities to use this. Which is odd, considering the thousands of people that I approach. I know there are gobs of Calvinists out there, so it has become clear to me (on probabilistic grounds) that they shun interaction with those of my ilk – namely, Christian evangelists. Which is not surprising, of course. (Read the tract.)

The Chick tract "The Letter" – a story focused on the necessity of sharing the Gospel with those around us, including friends and relatives. I reserve this for people that seem to be "real Christians," in order to encourage them to get busy on the Great Commission.

It is important to have a variety of "specialty" tracts on hand. We need to do the best we can to reach out with the Gospel while at the same time trusting the Lord to convict the hearts – which is the big job. Whenever I do get someone to talk with me, I always send additional tracts with him. With the variety I use, I try to pick the ones that may bring the most conviction, relevant to the sin problems that come out in our conversation.

I have recently created (in 2014) a variety of tracts for college students, some which go after the creation / evolution issue as a hook for a Gospel presentation. Additionally, I am developing tracts for “weak” Christians, hoping to stir up the complacent. As I develop these tracts I insert them as pdf links in the web site article in the Evangelism section . . . the essay with the same title as this chapter. So check out the web essay, which I hope to update with new content regularly.

Hey . . . get out there and get some tracts out. Every soul is of infinite worth, so be willing to cross the street to give one out. Even and especially if the person won’t talk to you. If she does, great. But if not, let the tract do its job.

Addendum – the plea I have printed on the back of each Chick tract I use:

Dear Friend, Your life is too short & fragile to neglect salvation. Humble yourself today. Confess your sins to God, TURN from them, and trust the Savior. Eternal life can start today. Are you willing to live in obedience to your Lord (Jesus Christ) or will you kneel at his Judgment Seat – lost and condemned?

Do you THINK you’re OK? Already saved? Think again. Most American churchgoers are lost. Do you hate sin and love righteousness? Do you preach the Gospel to the lost? Do you love the Bible as much as lunch? Is your music godly? Is your language clean? Are you free from sexual sin? Even in your mind? Are you addicted to lust, porn, cigarettes, alcohol, anger, greed, or just SELFISHNESS?

Check out 2 Corinthians 13:5 and 2 Corinthians 5:17. Don’t fool yourself – most people do and land in Hell – deservedly.

Chapter 10

How to Approach the Lost

Charles Spurgeon, 19th century evangelist / pastor / author, wrote . . .

“There are thousands in London who never will be converted by the preaching of the Gospel, for they never attend places of worship. Some of them do not know what sort of thing a religious service is. We may shudder when we say it: it is believed there are thousands in London who do not even know the name of Christ – living in what we call a Christian land, and yet they have not heard the name of Jesus. Thank God things are better than they were, but things are bad enough still. Brethren, you must go and see these things and mend them. To the lodging-houses, young men, you must carry the Gospel, and to those thickly-peopled habitations, where every room contains a family, and not one room a Christian. I believe there is very much good to be done by house-to-house visitation – not by City Missionaries and Bible-women only, may God speed that noble body of laborers – but by all of you, by you that have position in society among your neighbors. Make yourselves free, and go and talk to them of Christ in the little houses that are near to you. As far as your time allows be a visitor, and if there be one dark part of the town known to you as the haunt of sinners, make it a point to use this agency of visitation from house-to-house. Let the lost sheep of Israel’s house be sought out. Some will need special means before ever they can be found and brought in.”

There are many, many books that explain the Gospel, and a few that explain how to share it with someone once he agrees to hear you out. The real challenge is to get someone to hear you out. This chapter offers some ideas on getting that hearing. I believe that there are three principal avenues of approach: (1) Find a street corner and offer tracts and conversation with pedestrians; (2) Knock doors in residential neighborhoods; and (3) Take advantage of opportunities given by relationships among relatives, co-workers, friends, and neighbors. There are also a variety of other ways to get the Good News out, which we will discuss below, but these three are the core of personal evangelism.

Let’s start with street corner evangelism. It’s not hard to find a good street corner with substantial pedestrian traffic if you live near a modestly sized city. I live near Rockford, Illinois. My favorite local corner is the courthouse, downtown, across the street from the central city bus station. I have frequented this location for over five years at this writing (since we moved to this town) and cross paths with many new individuals every time I go. It is clear that a reasonable fraction of the local population, especially from the poorer sections of town, has occasion to eventually visit the courthouse. Visitors are usually not having a good day. In some cases they are quite willing to talk, because their lives have just taken a turn for the worse. Troubles in life often derive from sin, and the consequences may, hopefully, produce a measure of humility. That’s a good starting point to explain that whatever trouble someone is in right now, he faces much greater judgment and consequences from God Almighty.

On the other hand, I also cross paths with many well-dressed, economically prosperous attorneys. Very few will deign to even accept a Gospel tract, let alone talk. I’ll mention one notable exception below. Is the Gospel message for everyone, rich and poor, etc.? Of course, but the rich of this world look down on the rest and insanely conclude that they are entirely self-sufficient and have no need of salvation. Recall that Jesus taught how hard it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. Those in law enforcement and the justice system may be especially tempted to self-righteousness, when they measure themselves against those who break man’s laws.

A basic point first . . . How should a man dress for evangelism? The Biblical principle to follow is modesty. I believe in dressing casually, but not sloppily. Some would prescribe coat and tie, but my experience indicates that such a style tends to impose a barrier with some. On the other extreme, don't dress in shorts or T-shirts. A sloppy, child-like appearance will also erect a barrier. Those who dress professionally will ignore you completely. The Bible calls us "*ambassadors for Christ.*" We should take that responsibility seriously, even in the little things.

How about women? The principle of modesty is even more important. You don't want to draw attention to your body. Wear loose fitting, casual clothes. Wear a skirt that covers the knees completely. Never wear a short skirt or a skirt with a side slit. If you don't know why, ask a man. Your blouse or dress should cover you both low and high. Winter days can be quite severe up here, so make sure you dress warmly. If need be, wear sweat pants underneath a full-length skirt. For both men and women, in winter weather wear enough layers, warm enough gloves, and headgear to prevent hurting yourself when the wind chill plummets. "Suffering" in the cold is simply stupid if you can prepare – you won't get extra points in Heaven.

OK, you're on your corner and you see someone approaching. What do you do? Be friendly – don't just "act" friendly – and try to get eye contact while the fellow is still twenty feet away. If he can size you up even for a second, your chances are much better to get him to accept a tract. If he doesn't see you until you're in his "personal space," his first reaction is likely to be negative. It only takes a second or two for someone to decide that you're not dangerous and that your offer is harmless.

Say, "Good morning, sir! A free gift to take with you." Extend your arm, offering him a tract well before he is arm's length away. Smile! The more friendly you are, the higher will be your "accept rate." If he takes the tract and keeps moving, then say, "God bless you." My meaning in this is literally a prayer that the Lord will bless his understanding of the Gospel message in the tract and that he will respond to it. Most people appreciate your kindness and are quite polite.

If he ignores you or brushes you off with a gesture, or declines in any way . . . this will happen often! . . . don't "take a shot" with some clever or challenging verbal quip. You may get another opportunity to be a witness to him later that day or even months downstream. I recall one fellow who had rejected tracts from me over a period of a couple of years. Finally, though, he walked up to me and said, "OK, so just what is it you're pushing? Let's hear it." We proceeded to have a very productive conversation, in which I was able to share the Gospel fully. If I had been ungracious to him in the past, I don't believe he would have given me the chance.

I'll admit to rare occasions where I am provoked to "take a shot." An energetic young lawyer had ignored my offers on several occasions. Usually, when I recognize people that have rejected tracts in the past, I leave them alone. I have no interest in irritating them when they have already made clear their lack of interest. However, since I do street evangelism so often, faces blur together in my memory and some people get offers repeatedly. I find it amusing on the rare occasion when someone gets offended that I don't recognize her . . . because she is just so special, I suppose. One day, however, I made the offer to this lawyer who had rejected me before. The conversation went something like this:

AL (Arrogant Lawyer): (speaking with clear disdain in his voice) "I'm an atheist. I have no interest in stories like that." And he continued to walk briskly past me.

DD: (deciding to 'take a shot'): "That's because you simply have not thought through the issues. Your education is lacking. If you had studied the matter at all, you wouldn't be so ignorant." My comment froze him in his tracks.

AL: "Oh, and I suppose that you are educated?"

DD: "Actually, I have five academic degrees, including a Ph.D. in laser physics. And I can tell you that your atheistic, evolutionary worldview has absolutely no scientific foundation. I can prove to you in five minutes that evolution is impossible . . . if you have the interest, that is."

AL: "All right, you're on. Let's hear it."

From that point I shared with him some simple scientific reasoning (see the Appendix on "Atheists") to put a serious dent in his belief system. But my intent was to earn the opportunity to get to his conscience, explaining the law, sin, judgment, and the Gospel. There are atheists who will not let you share the Gospel with them, unless you can get their attention by demonstrating that they haven't thought through the issues. The polite, non-belligerent atheist is my favorite 121 encounter.

This particular lawyer heard me out and we had a serious, yet enjoyable discussion. I pray that the Lord stays on his trail. I have crossed his path several times since and, although he has not been interested in more discussion with me, he has been pleasant enough. The original obnoxious attitude has not reappeared. Where there is life, there is hope. Please note that "taking a shot" should be a rare occurrence. This one lawyer showed such arrogance, though, that I allowed myself to be provoked. It worked out well, but with the wrong person at the wrong time, it might go differently. Be prudent.

Make sure that the stack of tracts in your hand includes quite a variety. When a couple walks by me, I try to give each of them a different tract, hoping that they each will read both tracts and get the Gospel twice. My assortment of tracts, as explained in the previous chapter, uses different hooks and arguments to grab the attention of the reader, but the bottom line – the Gospel presentation – is always clear. Often a couple is moving too fast to hand each of them a tract, so I will offer two tracts to the nearest, and say, "One for each of you."

I have no doubt that many tracts do not get read. I always see some discarded on the sidewalks (Didn't their parents teach them not to litter?!), and I see some in trash cans. But I won't get cheap. I pray over the tracts that God uses them, and uses some of them multiple times. As discussed previously, I have evidence that my tracts have been read by people I have never met.

What is the best way to get someone to stop and hear a full Gospel presentation? I look for individuals who are apparently not in a hurry. I'll make the tract offer, and then say, "It's about the big issues . . . life, death, Heaven, Hell. Do you ever think about those things?" Everyone does, of course. If he stops, I'll go on to say, "So here's the big question. If you died today, where would you be?" If they don't respond, I'll prod, "So what do you think, Heaven or Hell?" Whatever they say will tell me where they stand with God. From that point I am right on track with the Gospel presentation I described in Chapter 3.

Don't force the conversation. As long as someone is interested, she will show it and you can keep teaching. If she loses interest, eyes wandering around, perhaps flipping open her phone, etc., then let her go. Point out that if she has any questions, your contact info is on the back of the tract. Don't waste time with the uninterested when you have opportunities to find someone who may respond more favorably. The Lord Jesus likens this work to fishing. We can't always get the fish we are focused on at

the moment, but any rational fisherman will be content to cast in different directions to find whatever fish may nibble.

On the other hand, if your street corner is quiet, with nobody else around, feel free to risk “wasting time” in longer conversations. I have no interest in engaging in arguments or in verbal fencing with someone who just likes to dialogue. The foolish evangelist will spend thirty minutes in a protracted debate with one determined skeptic while hundreds of lost souls walk on by. Alternatively, with someone who is listening, you can explain the truths of the Gospel several different ways within five minutes. That is often long enough to present the choice the sinner has between repentance and rebellion. I’ll always ask if they have any questions. I love it when they do! Genuine, heart-felt questions reveal the stumbling blocks or sin problems. If I feel he has understood the issues, and says that he has no questions, then I’ll remind him to read the tracts I’ve given him and how to contact me. (Whenever someone stops to talk 121, I always try to send them away with multiple tracts.) Then I move on.

In sidewalk evangelism, the easiest opportunities to engage in conversation are with those who are taking a break, sitting on a bench, or waiting for someone to pick them up. Many that will reject tracts from you while walking by, will accept a tract if they are standing and waiting. And a good fraction of them will engage in conversation.

University campuses are wonderful venues for sidewalk evangelism. Watch out, though. Some universities restrict free speech to a small area in a specified location. Some will look to kick you right off campus if you are not a student or a member of the faculty. Some are wide open and you can wander around, offering tracts and talking to students. A college student is typically in the dangerous stage of life in which she will deconstruct what she has learned growing up, and then lock in concrete the worldview that will dictate the rest of her life. It’s her last chance.

College students are easier to talk with than high school students. They are thinking more, and not as emotionally caught up with every little peer pressure and hormonal surge. They are transitioning to adult life, although likely experimenting with every wicked philosophy and sensual practice available in a campus community. You’ll therefore see significant differences in your engagements with freshmen as opposed to seniors. Nevertheless, it is usually easy to get college students to engage. They are usually very impressed with what they think they know! In spiritual matters, however, I find no real difference between the 20-year-old chemistry major and the 20-year-old gang member. The bottom line: Find yourself a campus and visit regularly!

Whether you are on the street or on the campus or knocking neighborhood doors, what if you run into someone who is really clever and comes up with arguments and questions you can’t answer?!?!? In short, that’s rare and there is nothing to worry about anyway. Based on experience, I expect that you will discover that lost folks have only a few basic objections, whether they are blue collar workers or university students. I’ve taken new evangelism partners to a university campus, despite their concern that they will get stumped by brilliant academic arguments. They quickly find that university students – and even Ph.D. professors – who aren’t believers are all equally ignorant and illogical concerning the great issues of eternity. Mostly, they avoid thinking about the reality and imminence of their own deaths. That’s unpleasant, after all.

Let’s discuss the old-fashioned practice of knocking doors. Surely, nobody does this anymore!!! Why not? That’s where the people are. Although the poorer sections of town are well-represented when I

hang out by the courthouse, the nicer sections of town are not. The middle and upper economic classes need the Gospel, too!

The practice of knocking doors to share the Gospel suffers a bad reputation for various reasons. One is that Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons still do this. Shame on Bible-believing Christians for leaving this field to them! We still have the freedom in America to walk on sidewalks, knock on our neighbors' doors, and engage in conversation on any topic whatsoever. This freedom may well disappear, and we will have wasted this gift from God. Many nations do not permit their citizens this freedom. Imagine yourself in Heaven, meeting a saint who faithfully preached the Gospel in communist-controlled Vietnam. He discovers that you were an American and exclaims, "Oh what wonderful freedom you had to preach the Gospel! What wonderful opportunities you enjoyed that we could only dream of! Please tell me how you served the Lord in such freedom!" What will you say?

The principal reason modern Christendom despises knocking on doors is simply because it fears and detests a clear, confrontational presentation of the Gospel. Seeker-sensitive churches want to entertain, cajole, manipulate, and sneak up on people, hoping that they will become church members and maybe, somehow, develop a "relationship with Christ" at some point. It seems too old-fashioned and boorish to come right out and preach the Gospel to folks. So the real issue is whether it is right to preach the Gospel directly to people. I would think that the Bible settles this matter for any genuine Christian.

Go 2-by-2 when you knock doors. A single man will produce more suspicion than a pair. A single woman should not make herself vulnerable to assault. A married couple, or two men, or two women are the proper combinations. Three is too many. Put yourself in the shoes of the home-owner. Three strangers make an unwelcome crowd on your front door.

Don't go at night, both for your own safety and to reduce the tension in the home when the doorbell rings. Evening hours in the summer time allow for extended daylight, and you will find more people home. Don't go early in the morning, especially on a Saturday. People sleep in and you will irritate them. Anytime from 11 am until dark gives you a reasonable window of time.

In my experience, regardless of time of day, your knock will likely elicit a response about half of the time. About half of those will be willing to hear you out. Almost everyone that is home will at least take a Gospel tract from you. You should leave a tract on the door of every "not home" you encounter. Most people are polite. Occasionally, you will get a grumpy response and someone will close the door in your face. Consider that to be "clarity" and move on. If that's the most "persecution" you feel in this life, then you won't get the martyr's crown in Heaven. Our job is to offer the Gospel. If someone rejects the offer quickly and emphatically, that's sad, but it does save time.

When you knock on the door and someone answers, you might try this approach . . . smiling pleasantly:

"Hi, neighbor. My name is Dave and this is my wife, Bonnie. We came by to give you this small gift – it's a good story with a Gospel message." I hand him the tract promptly. "It speaks to the ultimate issues of life, death, Heaven, Hell. Do you ever think about these things?"

And you're right onto the track you want to travel. I have tried many other introductions and approaches, which I won't tempt you with here. What I have discovered is that there is no advantage in beating around the bush or coming up with a "plausible story" as to why I am on their doorstep. You

may as well get promptly to the point. By the time you finish that first question, you have given them about ten seconds to size you up. That's enough.

Is use of the term "neighbor" fair? I consider people that live miles away from me to be my neighbors. I am a U.S. Air Force veteran, having served the entire nation for twenty years. I consider all Americans to be my neighbors. Biblically, the case was settled when the Lord Jesus declared the Samaritan to be the neighbor of the Jewish fellow who fell into trouble.

Keep a little notebook on you and make a note after each door you knock. Record the address and the response. If someone calls you, that record may provoke your memory of the encounter. Also, if you live in the same area for a few years, you may want to revisit some of the same streets. Furthermore, if a particular block has a large fraction of 'not home's, you can redo the block, just visiting those houses.

How can you best reach out to relatives and others in close relationships? We have already discussed this at the end of Chapter 3.

What about open air preaching! Let me start by saying that I am for it. I'll repeat that. I am for it. I want to emphasize that because by the time I am finished below you will be tempted to think that I am against it. In particular, I am for it if the circumstances are right. In the Bible we see many examples of open air preaching including the Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Peter at Pentecost, and Paul on Mars Hill. In each case the preacher had an attentive audience. The hearers need not agree with you, but they must at least be willing to listen.

I love and admire the efforts of Ray Comfort (wayofthemaster.com, livingwaters.com) in fostering Scriptural methods of evangelism, publishing many useful books and tracts, and training and encouraging individuals and churches to get the Gospel out. Ray particularly likes to promote open air preaching and has decades of experience in this practice. He is one of the best (and most blessed) in modern times. Yet in all the videos I have seen of him and his partners engaged in "open air" (I know I have missed some), the crowds he draws are very small, often from ten to fifty, and perhaps some as big as seventy. I'm not talking of the large crowds of professing Christians he draws to a church-sponsored event, but about public venues where he tries to draw a spontaneous crowd of lost sinners.

If you can get a crowd of ten or fifty to listen, then go for it. Unfortunately, many of those who try to follow in Ray's footsteps don't seem to draw a crowd of even ten. The worst of them stand in a public place and shout to those who are walking by, but nobody stops to listen. In the few seconds that a passerby might tune in, he simply cannot receive a fully-baked, reasonable argument from such a preacher. We see in the apostle Paul's ministry that he was continually reasoning with the lost, using the Scriptures.

Over the last few centuries there are many wonderful examples of open air crowds of thousands who heard the evangelistic preaching of John Wesley, George Whitfield, Charles Spurgeon, and others. Small crowds, once upon a time, were apparently easy to draw. A circuit-riding preacher such as Peter Cartwright would arrive and the entire village would come out to hear him. The great Baptist revival of the mid-18th century in Virginia and the Carolinas was due in part to the open air preaching of Shubal Stearns and the many converts who became evangelists and pastors under his ministry.

When evangelist James Stewart was a young man in Scotland in the early 1900s, he and his partners would attend horse races, with audiences numbering up to a quarter million at the biggest events. Stewart explains . . .

These stands were situated all around the race track. Some of them held ten and twenty thousand people. It was just a “natural” for Gospel preaching! We would go straight into the heart of our service. The direct approach is always best. The people were scared of us; we were not scared of them. We were prophets of God and they were sinners on the way to Hell, no matter how rich and prosperous they were. We would take them by surprise before they could attack us.

Naturally, we could not preach while a race was on for the crowd would have attacked us. If you ever want to see people who are slaves of Satan, then go to the race course and see these mad gamblers. They cannot control their gambling fever and are swept away in hysterics. The moment the roar went up, “They’re off!”, we took down our Gospel banners and knelt quietly in prayer until the race was over. . . . There was an interval of around twenty minutes between each race. This was the time when they collected their winnings or were placing new bets on the next race. Gambling fever ran high. Yet this was the only time we would preach. Being young, I would sometimes take many liberties and point scathingly to different men in the crowd who, by their faces, eloquently revealed that they had lost their money. “Look at that poor man there! Just a few minutes ago he was laughing and scoffing at us and now he’s a perfect fool because he has lost his money. If he does not watch out the Devil will get him and he will lose his soul. What shall it profit a man if shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul.”

Stewart had occasional evidence of saving fruit from such efforts. If you can find an open air situation like Stewart enjoyed, don’t hesitate! Do you think such opportunities exist anymore?

I fear that the culture in America has changed so dramatically, especially in the last few decades, that such opportunities are gone. If you find an exception to this “rule,” then by all means go for it! But 21st century Americans are completely plugged in by attention grabbing media, social networks, and every indulgence of mind and flesh that can be dreamed of. Imagine whether modern American households would unplug for an evening from their TV, internet, Facebook, cell phone lives to go hear a preacher down at the park.

When Ray Comfort tries to draw a spontaneous crowd in a public square, he cleverly uses a variety of hooks to get attention. (You can check him out on YouTube.) Like I said, he is one of the best, but the “crowds” are tiny. At the less experienced extreme, a friend of mine preached open air for twenty minutes in a public square on a beautiful Spring day at a major university campus. I watched as literally thousands of students streamed by at the lunch hour. I could not detect a single student who paused to listen. His preaching was in vain. Whatever ten-second snippets of his message might have penetrated the ears of some students, those fragments could not possibly constitute a reasonable argument.

In the cases where about ten people might stop and listen, my opinion is that you are a more effectual preacher if you and your partners would simply engage them individually or in small groups – conversationally. In some of the videos I have seen, the camera reveals the usual dynamics of a crowd in front of a public speaker. Some look attentive at times. Some are watching others in the crowd. Some are chatting with each other. Some eyeballs wander around, seeing what can be seen.

I recall a story told by evangelist John R. Rice, who once preached a series of evangelistic messages at a local church, which had promoted the event throughout the community. A Christian woman informed

him that she had convinced her lost husband to attend one evening. When Rice saw him in the crowd, he poured his heart out to make the message of salvation clear. At the public invitation that closed the evening, the man did not move from his pew. The next two nights produced the same result. The lost man was there, but unmoved. That third night, after the meeting closed, Rice rushed outside the church building to confront the man, pleading with him for his own sake, for the sake of his loving wife, and for God's sake to repent and be born again. This lost man showed great conviction and professed Christ. His life showed evidence of it from that point forward. Rice tells the story to emphasize that 121 encounters are always more useful and compelling than mass evangelistic meetings. Even if you get a large, pre-organized crowd together, there had better be some individual evangelists working on those who show up.

Charles Spurgeon affirmed this principle when he wrote:

Every open air preacher should not only address the hundreds, but he should be ready to pounce upon the ones, and he should have others with him who have the same happy art. How much more good would come of preaching in the streets if every open air preacher were accompanied by a batch of persons who would drive his nails home for him by personal conversation!

I am explicitly against the type of open air preaching that amounts to yelling at a group of people who are not listening. Many that practice this do not preach a Scriptural Gospel. Open air yelling seems to be favored by those who love to preach judgment, condemning sin, but failing to make Hell reasonable and miserably falling short of showing compassion. Note how the Lord Jesus showed compassion even while nailed to the cross.

It is obvious that in order to project your voice in the open air, you must raise it. Raising your voice makes it difficult to express compassion. You can do it if you have time to make a complete argument and people take the time to hear you out. But if they are walking by, catching only snippets, you are doing harm to the Great Commission. I have talked to people on college campuses and in the city who have listened a bit to such preachers. They were offended, but not at the Gospel – which they didn't hear! – rather they were offended at the personal style of the so-called evangelist. They were also wary from that point of any Christian who would approach them with any message that included judgment. And the Gospel must include a message of judgment.

Let me relate a couple of my favorite personal examples of "open air" preaching. One Saturday years ago I was knocking doors with a partner in the bus ministry and we saw a group of teenagers playing basketball in a nearby park. We walked over and I boldly suggested that I – a short, middle-aged adult – could pull off a trick shot that none of them could come close to. When they responded with heartfelt unbelief, I asked them, "If I can do it and none of you can, will you let me preach to you for five minutes?" They agreed. I prayed quickly for coordination and skill and proceeded to make a shot I had seen demonstrated by Pete Maravich years before. (I had practiced it much in my youth.) I made the shot. Several of the young men tried and failed miserably. I got to preach to them for five minutes and handed out Gospel tracts. I pray that the Lord stays on their trail.

On another occasion I saw 15 teen boys and girls hanging out in a park. I walked up to them, passing out tracts, and began to share the Gospel in a conversational tone. As I got going, one by one, the entire crowd dispersed. One remained who was very interested. I couldn't possibly have picked him out as the one with a tender heart when I approached, but preaching the truth separated him out from the others.

Recently in Chicago, ten college-age young people, eight young men and two young women, approached my street corner. I gave them each a tract – there were six different titles in my stack that day – and watched them as they waited for the light to change. They were already comparing titles and trying to figure out the significance of each one. One said to another, “Hey, I want one of those Man Cards.” So I walked over and started to talk to them. “So where do you stand with God? If you died today where would you be?”

I simply preached to this small crowd – in a conversational voice – the same way I deal with individuals. Two of the young men were skeptics and thought they had some clever questions for me. After all these years, I don’t hear a new question very often, so I was able to answer efficiently and make my points. The most attentive in the group was a young lady who never said a word, but her eyes were focused on me and the wheels were obviously turning. Whether you are talking to one or several, you never know who your real audience might be.

A tract here, a word of exhortation there . . . every 1 counts.

In addition to specific times and places to do evangelism, we should be taking every little opportunity presented to us. Certainly leave a tract along with your tip at a restaurant. You had better tip generously, though! Be kind and gracious to everyone. If you are impatient with a cashier, you cannot in good conscience be a witness for Christ. Keep your tract in your pocket. Better yet, apologize and then offer the tract.

One preacher once said that we should be nice to everyone each day, because everyone is having a hard time. There is wisdom in that. We encounter people every day who are under pressures and trials we cannot imagine. Offer encouragement and look for an opportunity to share the Gospel. We have heard from the staff that the tracts we leave at one restaurant are passed around for everyone to read. One novel Living Waters tract, in the form of a “One Million Dollar Bill,” was tacked by the manager of another restaurant to the employees’ bulletin board.

My Roman Catholic uncle apparently put me on the mailing list of a Catholic apologetics ministry which tries to “bring former Catholics home.” I get a mailing regularly from them with a stamped, ministry-addressed envelope. I always send the envelope back with a Chick tract enclosed – a specialty tract designed to reach Roman Catholics. At least someone in the mail room will get it.

Occasionally, former students of mine will contact me by email. I never fail to ask them where they stand with God. In the past I have attached a url for a Chick tract. More recently, I have been able to recommend an article or two on our own web site.

When we lived in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula years ago, before we got cell phones, we would often get phone calls from telemarketers, many based in India. It was a pleasure to be able to witness to them. I always insisted that I be allowed to ask them a couple of questions and make my points before I would let them pitch me. This usually worked out well, with some conversations lasting ten minutes or more. (We never bought anything, though.) We took the same approach with “wrong numbers.” Perhaps the Lord had provoked them to misdial so they could hear a Gospel witness. If you make this your policy, the Lord will send you some wrong numbers. I know that we seemed to get a lot.

Some years ago when I was teaching engineering in Michigan, I ate lunch regularly at the local Taco Bell. As I left, I always left a tract on the seat, hoping that another customer would find it before the restaurant staff “cleaned it up.” I did this for years. Eventually, I came to work professionally with a fellow in another department. We developed a friendship in addition to the professional relationship, especially because we discovered that we were each born again believers who loved the Lord. My new friend, Ed, had been raised in a Lutheran denominational branch, but had come to understand and experience the new birth, although (as he admitted) that is rare among Lutherans.

Soon after we got to know each other, Ed asked me if I had been in the habit of leaving tracts at Taco Bell. He explained that some months before, his wife (also raised Lutheran) had found one there, and was greatly convicted by its message. The tract helped her realize that although she had been a churchgoer her entire life, she had never been born again. She talked it over with her husband, tearfully, and professed her desire to be saved. This couple lived clean lives and were raising disciplined and obedient children. But Ed had failed to discern the absence of the Holy Spirit in the life of his wife, and she had assumed that she had always been leading a “good Christian life” – wasn’t that enough? So they studied Scripture diligently with much prayer. Ed had the joy of seeing his wife come to know the Lord and receive assurance of her salvation.

. . . I’m glad I left that one tract that particular day.

Every tract counts. Every verbal witness counts. Leave tracts in restrooms, in napkin dispensers, on gas pumps, on bulletin boards, and anywhere else you can think of. When a salesman knocks your door, offer a tract and ask him “the big question.” When a Jehovah’s Witness or Mormon comes by, that may be their only real opportunity in life to hear the Gospel presented Scripturally. Today (as I write this) I gave a Chick tract to a landscaper while I was out on a walk. My wife and I went shopping today, and (as usual) I was able to hide about ten tracts in various soft drink cartons and magazines at the local grocery store. (If you do that regularly, don’t use tracts with your contact info on them!) A salesman came to the door, so he got a tract from me. He turned out to be a local youth pastor, so I encouraged him to visit our web site to get pumped up, hopefully, on evangelism. If I didn’t believe that “every one counts,” I might have neglected these opportunities, tempted to “rest” on yesterday’s work – three of us traveled to Chicago, passing out over 3,000 tracts and doing 121s until we were exhausted. But today is a new day. Maybe just one of those tracts today . . .

Be instant – in season, out of season.

Chapter 11

The Necessity of a 3-Pillared Church

On the other side of the coin emblazoned with **Evangelism**, we see **Discipleship**. It is clear in Scripture that a new convert is just at the beginning of his walk with Christ on this Earth. If you have the great joy of bringing a new convert into God's family, it is your job to help him to grow in faith, hope, charity, knowledge, and zeal, helping him to conform ever closer to the person and example of our Lord Jesus Christ. Consider the characteristics of the true disciple in the following passages to appreciate the task you have in teaching the new Christian: 2 Peter 1:5-10, Romans 12:1-2, Romans 8:1-10, Galatians 5:22-23, Revelation 2:19, and Revelation 3:8. Given the two principal missions of the NT church, namely evangelism and discipleship (or perhaps more simply – preaching and teaching), discipleship is about growing the Christian in every aspect of life. We should daily work to please the Lord in our private study and prayer, in our marriages, in our business, in our neighborhoods, and in our churches.

The two missions are intertwined, of course. Of what possible use is a soldier of Jesus Christ, armed with the spiritual equipment of Ephesians 6, who never enters the fray – reaching out to the lost? Bible study and personal holiness are vanity if one is disobedient to the Lord's commands to preach. Similarly, of what use is the evangelist (a necessary role for every Christian) who knows little of the Bible, lives a worldly life, and cannot discern between truth and heresy?

The bottom line of this chapter is that you must bring your new convert to a Biblically sound church. It should be obvious that you and your family have as much need to be in a good church. The big problem is that American churches are designed to prevent their people from doing the two missions. You might have read that last sentence too quickly, so let me say it another way . . . The standard weekly program of American churches is designed to insure the failure of the Christians who attend. The word designed implies intent by an active party, doesn't it? If the designer of the standard weekly church program is not the Lord – you can't blame Him for this mess – then it must be another spirit, namely the Adversary, himself.

You are personally accountable to God for discipleship in your own life, for your wife, and for your children. If you are a woman reading this who has a lost husband, you need the strength of a godly church to help you raise your children to know the Lord, all the while you are praying for and seeking to reach your husband. Whatever your personal situation, as a Christian you are responsible before the Lord to encourage, exhort, and pray for your Christian brethren – those Christians that are pleased to be in fellowship with you in a local church. The family and the local church are the two institutions ordained by God for teaching and training. (There is no such thing as a "global" or "universal" church until the Lord returns and gathers us all to one big assembly. But that's another subject.)

What is the standard American church program? There are variations, but let's consider as a baseline the weekly schedule of a typical independent Baptist church.

Sunday, 10 – 11 am: Sunday school classes divided by age groups, from pre-school to senior adult.

Sunday, 11 am – 12:15 pm: "Worship Service," which includes carefully scheduled elements as, for example: Opening prayer, congregational song, announcements, congregational song, special music, offering, choir song, sermon (45 minutes), invitation plus congregational singing, closing prayer.

Sunday, 6 – 7:15 pm: “Worship Service,” with a format very similar to the morning session.

Wednesday, 7 – 8:30 pm: “Prayer Meeting,” which is actually organized as a “Worship Service,” but may include asking for some prayer requests and some time for corporate prayer. The time is usually dominated by the standard carefully scheduled elements above.

Thursday evening and / or Saturday morning: A tiny fraction of the membership participates in calling on church visitors or inviting new people out to church . . . And that’s it. The next week repeats the agenda above.

Evangelical (as opposed to “fundamental”) churches will have perhaps just one “worship service” per week, which will feature much more lively, entertaining, and worldly music than will be seen in the most conservative, fundamental churches. They may also feature small group Bible studies or discussion groups that members can opt into or out of or hop around from one to another. Large evangelical churches will feature a large list of activities to keep one as busy as one would like.

Let’s discuss the standard “fundie” program first. What’s wrong with it? It’s easier to ask, “What’s Biblical about it? How does it contribute to evangelism and discipleship? How does it help believers grow in love, wisdom, and zeal?” So here we go . . .

How can Christians love one another Biblically (John 13:35) when they are sitting next to strangers while watching a scripted show? Within the standard church program, how can you pray knowledgeably and effectually for one another? Face it: your “worship service” experience is passive. The majority of the members, who sit in the pews each Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night, do not prepare in any way for the meeting of the church. (Getting dressed up doesn’t count.) It’s easy to just show up and go through the motions. If you go through the motions for several decades, and you do so faithfully, you are deemed to be a mature saint.

During parts of my career I have taught science and engineering students to prepare for successful employment. I have taught at all collegiate levels, helping students to attain B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees. (I have also worked hard in the practice of science and engineering: I am by no means a mere academic! (See my bio at the end of the book.)) I assure you that you cannot prepare an electrical engineer for employment by sitting him passively in a chair for four to five years and lecturing at him. Furthermore, the lectures he does attend will not feature emotional appeals to “Get serious about your engineering! Get out there and do some great engineering!” I’ve never seen a lecture conclude with an invitation, accompanied by music, to draw students forward to induce them to repent from bad homework exercises or make a public commitment to study harder this week.

You may think that I am unfair. “That’s apples and oranges!” you cry. “Church isn’t like an engineering college!” You’re right. We actually train students to be engineers and do engineering. We put them in labs to get their hands dirty. They build and test circuits and systems, make mistakes, break things, and learn to make designs that work. They practice calculations until they can solve equations in their sleep. (I know by my own experience that physics problems can be constructed and solved during dreams.) By the time they hit the work force, they can actually do stuff. (By the way, since I made personal evangelism a matter of serious study and practice in my life many years ago, I have occasionally had dreams in which I am engaged in 121 encounters with all types of unbelievers.)

“Church” doesn’t have such goals. Looking at the modern American church system, it looks like success is determined by building buildings, filling pews with paying members, and keeping the bills paid. When in the church program are Christians trained to practice and do evangelism and discipleship? Your family may sit next to or behind another family week after week and never get to know them. How can you pray for them? How can you encourage them? The program does not schedule for such vital elements of Christian life.

Some years ago we moved into a new city and joined a fairly large fundie church. One Sunday morning after we had been there several months, I found myself looking around the congregation a few minutes before the opening bell. I counted about 15 people (men / women / children) we had made some effort to befriend. My wife and I were aware of the problems and heartaches and aggravations that troubled these lives. It struck me that the rest of the 900 people in church that morning certainly had comparable trials. Everyone looked so prim and proper at the start of that service. The pastor and his staff looked upbeat. The choir was primed. I wondered whether anything would be done that morning that might alleviate some of the pain in those lives or, even better, help solve problems. With that in mind, by the end of the service, I concluded that nothing that happened that morning in church could have helped in any specific way. Yet everyone left on schedule, still looking prim and proper. Offerings received. Mission accomplished. Cha-ching!

Surely members who attend faithfully must be increasing steadily in Bible knowledge and the applications thereof. Not really. It’s clear that most of the “Bible expertise” resides within the paid pastoral staff. If a really serious doctrinal issue grabs someone’s attention (this is rare), the first thought is to run to the pastor rather than search the Scriptures. Do you consider yourself to be Biblically knowledgeable? Check out my “basic Bible quiz” in Blog #4 of my web site’s 2013 blog archive.

Bible knowledge is disappearing fast. Why? Consider that most pastors preach topical sermons. They will use a verse or two or perhaps even a passage from the Bible and then go on to talk for 45 minutes on a subject that may relate loosely to the passage. During this speech, you will hear many opinions, assertions, personal anecdotes, and emotional appeals. Over the course of a year, favorite topics will be revisited. The pastor often insists that God has literally led him to preach on the topic of the week. Hmmm. Really?

There is much danger in this approach. In topical preaching Scripture is often divorced from context, despite the best intentions of the preacher. If he unfairly applies a Scripture away from its contextual roots, the hearers won’t have a clue. Worse, over the years, the topical selection will be grossly out of balance in comparison with the Bible’s coverage. What is God’s Biblical balance? You can tell by how often topics come up in Scripture. Prophecy comes up a lot. Preaching on repentance happens frequently throughout both Testaments. Church polity comes up a little. Tithing in New Testament churches doesn’t even exist, but the topic is frequently preached from pulpits.

What’s the solution? Find or start a church where the Bible is taught, verse by verse, chapter by chapter, and book by book. In your typical New Testament chapter, you’ll find multiple topics. In our small church on Sunday morning we typically cover a chapter per week. That’s a “bite size” that is conducive for capturing the flow of the passage, without skipping through too quickly or dwelling too long on favorite verses. Over the course of a year we cover a lot of topical ground, but everything is in context and God determines the balance of topics by the frequency at which they appear in His word.

I'm not decrying selectivity entirely. I wouldn't spend weeks going through the genealogies in 1 Chronicles. That passage was important to establish Jewish family lines in olden times, but less vital for Gentile believers today. Let me give you a specific example. In the first four years of the existence of our small start-up house church, on Sunday morning we taught through and discussed, chapter by chapter, the following books: John, Acts, Revelation, Genesis, Exodus (Chapters 1-20), Matthew, Daniel, and Isaiah. When we did Isaiah, we found that three chapters per week was a useful bite size.

Our Sunday morning study usually takes 60 – 75 minutes. One wonderful benefit we derived from the pattern above was a deep appreciation of the richness, the beauty, the connectivity, and the brilliance of Scripture. Studying Genesis after we studied Revelation made us appreciate to a deeper level how consistent is God's will and wisdom throughout history. The same themes interconnect throughout the Bible. I wasted so many years under topical preaching. I didn't need emotional appeals. I needed to know and love the word of God.

I have more information about designing a small church, a so-called "house church," on my website, <http://truthreallymatters.com>, in the Discipleship section. Check it out.

Assuming that you do have the benefit of some serious Bible study as part of your church, you had better be doing the lion's share on your own. Your spouse also needs to be immersed in the Bible each day. It's easy to get your children to read the Bible daily. They don't need to know that that's a struggle for so many. Yet most pastors merely pound the pulpit to exhort their people to study the Bible. Don't they care whether their students obey? Imagine the engineering professor merely exhorting his students to read the textbook and do the homework problems . . . without any follow-up via exams or graded assignments. I guess that secular universities care more about their mission than churches do about theirs.

Work to demonstrate proficiency in the ultimate textbook, the Bible. How you do accountability is up to you. Be creative. Be gracious. Be loving. Be diligent. Do it. Specific ideas? Have discussions and debates over dinner. Turn the TV off at night and play "Stump the kids" and "Stump mom" and "Stump dad" by mutually peppering each family member with questions about what they've been studying. Do role playing. Pretend you're an atheist and teach your child to contend (Jude 3, 1 Peter 3:15). Have everyone in the family write essays or articles for a family website. Knock doors and see what crazy things other people believe. Write letters to the editor of your local paper. Etc. Start living the Christian life and you'll find it exciting and satisfying!

If your church doesn't have a culture to build you up (and other believers, too), why are you there? If you can't stir the pastor up to lead in these matters, it's time to move on. Where is the practice of personal evangelism? Most of the pastors rarely sally forth from their pulpits and campuses to deign to preach to a lost person on the street or at their doorstep. What can such a man teach you? Nothing. Also, the most faithful and zealous members of a typical conservative church, by the time they have attended several meetings and activities each week, are exhausted. They don't have time or energy to teach their children, not to mention reach out to their neighbors for whom Christ died. Exhaustion also precludes fellowship and friendship. In most churches it is almost impossible to get families together often enough to build friendships. Annual or quarterly "fellowship dinners" don't count.

Although most of my Christian experience has been in fundie churches, let me speak briefly on the issues in the gelly churches. Many evangelical churches have gotten away from pure passivity by establishing small groups that meet weekly. This is a good idea if done well. The time must be spent

profitably. My impression is that most small groups squander time in vain chatter or in study of some insipid pseudo-Christian book. (I'm FOR studying serious books!) If time is spent to get to know each other for the purposes of encouragement, exhortation, teaching, and prayer, then believers can be strengthened and God can be glorified.

In any given case it's not hard to figure out whether the situation is good or bad. Many people drop out of small groups because there is no teaching, no serious fellowship, and no solid friendships developing. Some attend poorly run groups because they enjoy the social contact and don't even notice the absence of spiritual content. Keep your wits about you. Demand the same standard of excellence that you would in a professional work environment. Shouldn't we do at least as well for the Lord as we do for mammon?

If you're in a church that identifies itself as "evangelical," watch out. Most American gelly churches have been afflicted with several of the following problems: corrupt Bible versions, worldly "worship" music, and seeker-sensitive marketing practices to draw unregenerate members. Many have been corrupted by heresies which include Calvinism, Pentecostalism, ecumenism, evolution, and repentance-less salvation. Many are careful to avoid teaching the whole counsel of God and so never provide Biblical teaching on specific sins, discernment in music, the Second Coming of Christ, the influence of Satan in the culture, and modesty in clothing. The decline of American churches is a big subject. I encourage you to check out the articles and books by David Cloud, which can be found at <http://wayoflife.org>.

But you don't have to read a whole library to get on the right track and stay there. Let me describe a simple Biblical model to help you evaluate your church and to help you determine whether you are growing in the essential disciplines of the Christian life. As a physicist I recognize that all models are necessarily simple in order to be useful. The downside of modeling is in the neglect of critical details. Nevertheless, I offer a simple "3-pillar" model for a New Testament church. This can be used in the design and practice of a new church – even if it's just you and your spouse to start with – or in the analysis of an existing church that you might be part of . . . or are considering being a part of.

The three pillars are: **Truth** **Love** **Zeal**

Unfortunately, it is extremely rare for an American church to score decently in any two of these areas, not to mention all three. Most churches go "oh for three." If your church goes 3 for 3, please write to me. I may want to move there. The first pillar is . . .

TRUTH

The Bible is the inerrant word of God and . . . I can hold the inerrant word of God in my hands. Typical evangelical statements of faith cite inerrancy in the original autographs, but don't trust God to preserve His words through the ages. Note: the "original autographs" don't exist anymore. And they never did at any one time. By the time the Gospel of Matthew was written, there were no "original autographs" of the Old Testament books. So with the modern position, there never was an inerrant Bible.

What to do? Trust God's inspiration and preservation. Consider the truths about preservation and the importance God places on His word in the following Scriptures: Deuteronomy 4:2, Psalm 12:6-7, Psalm 19, Psalm 119 (including verses 89, 152, 160), Psalm 138:2, Matthew 4:4, Matthew 24:35, 2 Timothy 3:16, and Revelation 22:18-19.

Short version: If you take **TRUTH** seriously, take the following position . . . God's inerrant, inspired words have been preserved through the ages, especially in the Hebrew Masoretic text for the Old Testament and the Greek Received Text of the New Testament. In English the King James Bible is a wonderfully accurate translation of the preserved original texts, such that we can say that it is the word of God for the English speaking people. Modern English versions (NASV, NIV, NLT, ESV, etc.), are based on corrupt, recently discovered texts and use interpretive translation techniques. The "scholars" behind these versions deny preservation and are continually in search of the "lost text" of the original autographs. (Continually in search . . . keeps them employed.)

Now this is a big subject, so . . . for more discussion of these points, see my article, "The 10 Most Deadly Heresies . . ." (heresy #8) on truthreallymatters.com, including the references cited.

Once you know which Bible is trustworthy then you must take it seriously! Most churches pay lip service to their devotion and obedience to the Bible. To cite one example, I recall a gelly church in Michigan that claimed Biblical authority, but got itself embroiled in a debate about the validity of homosexuality and gay marriage for the ministry. So their claims of Biblical fidelity were baloney.

Believe the Bible. Stand on it. Study it. Memorize it. Quote it. Meditate on it. Make it the study of your life! Take God and His word seriously!

LOVE

Biblical love / charity is really the essence of discipleship. This pillar gets much lip service, too. In order for a church to practice love among the brethren, Christians need to know each other well enough to allow mutual encouragement, exhortation, prayer, and friendship that rises to the level of brotherhood within a family. The clear teaching of the Lord in John 13:35 and the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 must be taken seriously and actually practiced. Yet most churches are designed around a pulpit ministry, a show, and facilities to support them. Find support for that in the New Testament!

Recall my example of sitting in the church service, knowing the problems suffered by the few folks that we knew. In a church that large it's impossible for the pastor to know people well enough to really help, even if he wanted to. Besides, that pastor explicitly claimed that his main ministry was from the pulpit, thereby putting up a nice wall to shield him from messy problems. At any rate, it's not about the pastor and his staff. All Christians in a fellowship need to be equipped with love and knowledge to help each other through the calamities and trials of life. We are to exhort one another, encourage one another, and pray for one another, and do so Scripturally. One guy can't do it for everybody. Consider Hebrews 10:24-25. The whole purpose of "*assembling together*" is to provoke and exhort "*one another*" to love and good works. One another . . . not just the super-preacher to a crowd of scores, hundreds, or thousands.

Consider the passage below excerpted from Paul's letter to Titus, instructing him how to establish and develop leadership in local churches.

The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. Titus 2:3-5

In the middle verse, older women are to teach the younger women. How can this happen in the pulpit / pew system?

The evangelical churches often design “small group” experiences to enable the practice of Biblical love among the brethren. That’s good, if done well and with substance. Some would get a passing grade in this area. Unfortunately, the ones that do best here seem to be totally derelict in the other two pillars.

Examine your church. Is it designed so that people have the time and opportunity to talk of spiritual things (see Malachi 3:16), to discuss the Bible and ask questions, to encourage one another, to work together in the ministry, to share prayer requests, to lift up prayers in the hearing of those who need to know that you care? If not, why not?

ZEAL

To use another term . . . Evangelism. I like the word “zeal” in this 3-pillar model to emphasize the enthusiasm required. Preaching the Gospel to the lost is not merely a duty. It’s the life adventure and glorious opportunity of every Christian as long as he lives. Since I have devoted this entire book to this subject, I’ll be brief here.

The Great Commission is fundamental to the practice of New Testament Christianity. How can someone be a Christian in fellowship within a church and not be about the Lord’s work? If the people around you in church don’t care whether the lost around you are going to Hell, then they need to repent. If they won’t repent, then leave.

I live in a city of about 200,000 people, a few hours away from a city with millions of people. In our city we have about 300 “churches” of all varieties. Yet I see evidence of perhaps 20 people that consistently reach out to lost strangers with at least a somewhat Scriptural presentation of the Gospel. (Those few that are zealous, but with heretical presentations of the Gospel, are doing harm – they don’t count!)

In the “city of millions” nearby, there are some obviously terrific places in the downtown area to conduct 121 street evangelism. Since I travel there often I can stipulate with some authority that there is only one person outside my own tiny church that hits those hot spots. There are likely (hopefully?) other folks throughout the city working different neighborhoods, but it is remarkable that we have effectively no “friendly competition” for the premier corners in the city.

What’s going on!?!?! What are the churches doing? The Lord is coming back! The time is short! Souls are headed for Hell! Christians – Preach the Gospel!!

Bottom line: If you can’t find a church “scoring well” in all three pillars, then start one that does! New Testament Christianity – in Biblical practice – is consumed with love (as the core of discipleship) and zeal (evangelism). These two pillars cannot stand without the third pillar – the pillar of truth – an inerrant Bible that is studied and taken seriously. Absence of any one pillar leaves a church in terrible weakness.

But if you start with truth and work hard in love and zeal, you’ll be prepared for the Judgment Seat of Christ. Are you ready for that? Is your church ready for that?

Why is it so important to find a church that practices truth, love, and zeal? We see the phrase “one accord” popping up several times in the book of Acts. Unity in doctrine and practice characterized the churches formed in the first century and in every vibrant church since then. For example:

These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. Acts 1:14

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. Acts 2:1

And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Acts 2:46

And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. Acts 5:12-13

In that last passage we see that those that weren't in accord did not join the new believers. Yet we see in modern churches a mixture of saved and unsaved, godly and worldly. Churches knowingly tolerate conflicting doctrines. I met an assistant pastor at a local megachurch who admitted that some staff members were trying to sow Pentecostal doctrine throughout the congregation, even though the senior leadership and the majority of the membership held opposing views.

Many churches suffer much disagreement and conflict. In the worst cases, churches split over trivial issues. A split can be a good thing if one of the surviving groups is of one accord with Biblical principles, and that's the cause for the split. I have also found that many pastors work to script the weekly program to prevent discussions that could lead to conflict. Namely, there are underlying disagreements, but they are never put on the table. I once had a pastor who rejected my suggestion to have some meetings among the men because he feared that he couldn't control the discussion and someone might get offended. My intent was simply to try to enlist commitments from the men in the church to get the Gospel out consistently.

Is the Lord serious about the problem of churches slipping in truth, love, and zeal? Review the warnings delivered by Jesus Christ to the seven churches of Asia in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. John recorded these messages near the end of the first century, which means that those believers likely included the children of the founders of the churches. The warning to the church at Ephesus – a “good church” – includes:

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. Revelation 2:5

If this “good church” doesn't straighten up, the Lord promises to “remove thy candlestick,” a symbol for its responsibility to fulfill the Great Commission. Namely, the Lord would destroy the church's capacity to represent Him. I don't want to be part of a church that insists on following a path that leads to destruction. Do you?

If you cannot find a church that fulfills its Biblical responsibility, don't quit. Starting a house church can be lonely, but I'd rather have just a few people in one accord than be part of a multitude who care not for the work of the Lord. If you head down this path, feel free to contact me through

drdave@truthreallymatters.com. We'll try to encourage each other as we look forward to the Lord's return.

One last thought: Any Christian and any pastor would desire that those around him grow spiritually. Getting the people around you engaged in 121 evangelism tends to motivate Bible study, prayer, compassion, fellowship, and every other spiritual discipline that leads to one accord within a church. When you're trying to reach the lost, you develop a serious yearning to know more, seek God's face, encourage the believers around you, and foster "one accord" teamwork. Try it. It works.

Chapter 12

“Just Over the Hilltop”

Who is it that we claim to follow? We should look again and again at the personal evangelistic ministry of our Lord when He walked this Earth. In John 4 we read of His famous encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. We see the fruits of her conversion in her immediate actions. We also see revealed the zeal of Jesus for souls.

The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.

In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.

And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. And many more believed because of his own word; And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world. John 4:28-42

Like so many others, this new convert speaks up and points others to the Savior. She had the advantage over us in that she could bring her neighbors to meet the Lord physically and let Him do the preaching. We have the immense advantage over her in that we have the indwelling Holy Spirit so that we literally walk with the Lord when we preach. We also have the counsel of the entire New Testament so that we can answer all legitimate questions.

We then see the heart of our Lord. He and His disciples have worked up a big appetite in traveling. It is ironic that Jesus sent the twelve into town to buy food, where they doubtless crossed the paths of many people. He waited outside the town and shared Gospel truth with the one person He encountered. The disciples returned and, still focused on food, didn't understand why Jesus wasn't eating. Why wasn't He still hungry? He was completely consumed with a passion for winning souls – first the woman, and shortly the rest of the town.

Then we read that glorious metaphor: *Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.* Why the metaphor? We can imagine the townsfolk coming out to the well. As they approach in everyday garments which are essentially white, they appear as if they are a large field of

grain, ready for harvesting. You can sense our Lord's excitement! The twelve are clueless, but are about to be taught a marvelous lesson, meant also for us. That harvest of souls was available for the twelve, but they missed it in lieu of a bag of cheeseburgers.

The Lord goes on to give us great encouragement by teaching that conversion often occurs through different agents and times of sowing and reaping. Who had sown so that the Lord and His disciples might reap? Certainly John the Baptist, the prophets that preceded him, and any true believer that proclaimed God's message. Our evangelistic efforts today are built upon the shoulders of preachers and other Christians who have sown before us. Most American households contain one or more Bibles, even if some of the owners are functional atheists. We can thank God for John Wycliffe, Erasmus, William Tyndale, and many others who have helped to produce and publish the Bible over the last several centuries.

We can also take comfort that the Holy Spirit continues to *"reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.* The one who rejects our tract today may be led to cross the path of another believer downstream. I recently shared the Gospel on the street with a thirty-something atheist, and was able to give him some new things to think about. He was polite and talkative, although at present a determined skeptic. Interestingly, he told me that his dad was a Christian and praying hard for his conversion. I rejoice that the Lord used me to help out a bit in the more serious drama between father and son. I have had similar encounters many times before.

In this crazy age we live, where natural disasters are on the rise, ecumenical movements are apparently drawing together the world-wide religion of the antichrist, nations are rising against nation, and persecution of Christians is on the increase, I am motivated to preach more than ever before. I feel utter helplessness to do anything about the massive corruption in the U.S. government. I served this nation for twenty years as an officer in the United States Air Force during the Cold War. My efforts were focused to defend this nation against Marxism emanating from the Soviet Union and China, in particular. Imagine the disgusted irony I feel in seeing Americans vote for our present virulently Marxist government. Ultimately, such major political movements are part of Satan's efforts to set up his kingdom under his ruler, the antichrist. The one thing I can do in response that might mean something – both for now and eternity – is to hit the street with the Gospel. The Gospel lifeboat offers salvation to any individual who sees his need.

Since we may be in the final days or months (or still years?) before the rapture of the believers and the onset of the seven-year tribulation, it occurs to me that I may have the privilege to be part of the greatest harvest in all of history. You might say, "What are you talking about? You only see a real convert once in a blue moon! You sow thousands of Gospel tracts and witness to multitudes and see virtually no response!" I admit it. Yet I see in the book of Revelation that multitudes will be converted (and most of them martyred) during the tribulation. If the rapture is not far off, many of those who hear the Gospel now and reject it, may well be saved during the tribulation. God's wrath poured out on the Earth during those seven years is primarily for retribution on a world that has rejected His Messiah and His word through all the ages. Clearly, though, a secondary purpose is to get the attention of many who

have been complacent in these last days. The Bible makes clear that man will know from Whom the judgments come. Many will continue to scoff and rebel and “believe a lie,” but many will repent and be converted.

Let me point out that there is false teaching being propagated on this point. Some teach that those who have heard the Gospel before the rapture will necessarily “believe a lie” from the antichrist and so cannot be saved. Let me quote the relevant passage:

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

The last two verses, set apart in the last paragraph above, are cited as proof texts for this damnable doctrine. I’ll point out that if I believed that those who heard the Gospel from my lips or read a tract that I gave them would be certainly damned if the rapture were imminent, then I would quit my evangelistic efforts immediately and buy a set of golf clubs. Since well over 99% of those I reach out to reject the message, then the harder I work, the more I help to damn to Hell. Logically and Biblically, that is insane. Since the Gospel accounts and the epistles were written, believers have been instructed to eagerly anticipate the Lord’s return and to work ever harder to preach His word. Yet those in the “actual” final days before the tribulation should be motivated to stand down, so that more might hear the Gospel from the two witnesses or the 144,000 evangelists prophesied in the book of Revelation.

The resolution of the matter is simply to review the passage above in context. The last two verses are written in the context of the revealing of the Wicked one – the antichrist. When he comes he will propagate many lies, including his claim to be from God and worthy of worship. There will be lies associated with the rapture. Those who willfully believe such lies will be damned. Others will choose to repent. The passage simply does not say what some claim that it does. For example, it does NOT say, “Anyone who has heard a Gospel message or read a Gospel tract, but did not repent before the rapture, cannot be saved after the rapture, no matter what!” The passage is a clear warning, however, to reject the lies of the antichrist and to avoid willful rebellion against the Gospel. Clearly, many will succumb

and settle into a position where they reject truth and determine to have pleasure in unrighteousness. But many will be saved during the tribulation.

Given all the information in the culture about the rapture and the tribulation, how could the antichrist still fool most people? Let me speculate: In my lifetime the sci-fi concept of alien visitation and abduction has exploded in popularity. Alien abduction may well be the “official” explanation for the rapture. Certainly, there will be many megachurch preachers and their congregations who will be convinced that the event could not have been the rapture . . . after all, they are still here, aren’t they? There will be lies about the judgments of Revelation, perhaps claiming that the millions of demonic creatures let loose on the Earth represent an alien invasion. (Have you noticed any books or movies that popularize this idea?) Other judgments will produce lies about the need to centralize power and proclaim reassurances that one central government will serve to protect everyone. Indeed, we can see the foreshadowing of this future history in today’s politics.

Those that believe the lies of the antichrist will take his mark and thereby forfeit their opportunity for salvation. Believing lies in the presence of available truth is a willful act. The problem with the lost sinners I encounter is never a lack of knowledge on their part. It is always a will to hold tightly onto their sins. Some, though, compare truth with lies and respond wisely. Many will do so in the tribulation.

Since we are apparently so close to the final judgments on this Earth, I am consoled for the lack of visible fruit by the hope of the harvest to come. I do believe that there are many people coming to Christ in China, Vietnam, Pakistan, Sudan, and other places where Christians are under persecution and false professions are therefore not as prevalent as in America. But in our country there is a particularly cold and dedicated apostasy that epitomizes Paul’s assessment of Satan’s work:

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4

I can’t imagine getting discouraged and giving up, however. Jesus “wondered” whether He would find faith on Earth upon His return. Yes, there will be a remnant. I want to be counted among the faithful, though few. Do you?

Is there not a cause? Are not the stakes high enough? The Lake of Fire awaits the lost. The glories of Heaven on Earth, with New Jerusalem as an everlasting capital city, await the saved. Shall we not at least explain to everyone we can the difference between outer darkness on the one hand and an eternal life of joy, fellowship, learning, and adventure on the other? One commentator speculates that the Lake of Fire may be a dark star in the most distant corner of the universe. Such a prison would include the characteristics of outer darkness, everlasting fire, and inescapability. On the other hand, imagine the Lord opening up the rest of the universe of galaxies and untold wonders for the exploration and enjoyment of His children. We will have indestructible bodies, with energized taste buds, strength

beyond that of the greatest athletes, and brains that learn quickly and don't forget. We will enjoy the company of the Creator Himself, along with fellowship with multitudes of like-minded best friends.

If someone will reject salvation and continue headlong to everlasting destruction, should it not be over our best possible efforts, pleading, prayers, and reasoned arguments?

In the meantime, even in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation, some can be saved and enjoy the rapture along with us. Some years ago I was out walking, looking for opportunities to share the Gospel. Two hundred yards away, along a residential street, I saw a young man whose 4-wheeled ATV was stalled right in front of his house. He was working hard to kick start it, all to no avail. I started praying that the Lord would keep his engine off until I got there. He must have tried to start it a dozen times before I reached him. As I began to share the Gospel with him, I could see that he was under conviction. He responded with heartfelt concern for his lost condition and agreed that he needed the Savior. His sins were specific and he knew he needed to repent from them. He recognized that coming to Christ would change everything in his life. We spent about 15 minutes together and he gave me every hope that he would henceforth turn from his sins, trust Christ, and follow Him. I gave him several tracts and encouraged him to call.

The moment I left him, he kicked the starter again and the engine roared to life. Thank you, Lord! The next day I dropped off a letter at his house for his parents with some additional Gospel literature, explaining in my note about the conversation I had with their son. I hoped they might call and allow us to meet. I never heard another word from that family or that young man in the following years.

About a year after that, I was walking by one of the Lutheran churches and saw just one car in the parking lot. Guessing correctly that it belonged to the pastor, whom I had never met, I entered the building and found him in his office. I engaged him in conversation about his ministry and explained my heart for personal evangelism. I probed to see whether he was a born again believer. He was dismayed at my literal interpretation of Scripture, since he had been raised and trained in a liberal mainline denomination. His dismay answered my question about his spiritual condition. During the hour I spent with him, he realized at one point that we must have a mutual acquaintance, because my "style" fit a description he had heard. He told me how a year before one of his church families made an appointment with him, two parents and their teenage son.

The parents were extremely upset that their son was claiming that he had just been born again and that he understood the point of the Bible for the first time. Worse, he was trying to convert his mom and dad to his newfound beliefs. The parents wanted this pastor to assure them and their son that they had been "OK" all along, Christians "born" into the church, baptized as babies, and by no means needing to be "born again." This pastor explained to me that he did his best to reassure the family that "of course" they had always been Christians. After all, they believed in God and were faithful church members their whole lives, were honest people, blah, blah.

Little did that fellow know how he made my heart rejoice. This was clear evidence that the seed sown the previous year had taken root and borne fruit. Although he had sent the parents away with false assurance for themselves, he admitted to having no impact on their son's position. A few years later, I heard from someone else that the young man had enlisted in military service and deployed overseas. Although I don't expect to run into him again in this life, I'm sure we'll swap stories around a campfire in the New Earth someday, rejoicing in the grace of God on both of our lives.

Recently, I got a call from an old friend I worked with on a Sunday School bus route 30 years ago. Our church in Albuquerque had 10 bus routes that covered the entire city area. "Bus workers" would meet together on Saturday morning for mutual encouragement and whatever organizational business we had to transact, and then visit the routes. After the meeting, we called on the "regulars" – the families of the kids who normally rode the bus to church on Sunday – and often spent some time knocking on new doors, to preach the Gospel and invite families to attend.

I remember one visiting preacher who criticized us for bringing kids instead of whole families on the bus. The way I see it, we tried hard to reach out to and bring entire families to Christ (first) and to be part of the church (second). But when adults would often refuse, they would, nevertheless, be willing to send their kids. So my choice was to either let the whole family go to Hell or to try and reach the kids first. I chose the kids. And sometimes, over the course of months or years, parents would repent, too.

My old friend and partner called to tell me about a call he got from a 40-year-old man who had been a young child when he rode our bus. He had gotten saved as a youngster and wanted to let us know that he grew up to serve the Lord faithfully, was married to a fine Christian woman, and was raising his children to follow the Lord, too. What a joy to hear such a report! I remember working with hundreds of kids in those years who gave every evidence of responding to the Gospel by faith in Christ. But I have no idea what happened to them. God knows. There will be much rejoicing in Heaven.

Ezekiel was one of many prophets who lived in wicked and apostate times. It was such times that provoked God to raise up such men as this faithful preacher. Consider the commission given by God to him:

And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me. And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day. For they are impudent children and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.

And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious. Ezekiel 2:1-7

Put yourself in the young prophet's place. Does this sound like an appealing job description? (Also review Isaiah's commission in Isaiah 6 to see if he had it any better.) The impudent and stiffhearted are

not unique to Ezekiel's generation. The rebellious never want to hear the call to repentance. The religious lost of Jesus' time tried to kill Him ten times before He willingly went to the cross. Note the bottom line of the commission: Whether they hear or not, make sure they know that a prophet has been in town! Like Ezekiel, we need have no fear. God will protect us perfectly as long as He has need for our service. Let us be about that service and we can be moved only by graduation to a Heavenly realm.

Lest Ezekiel be discouraged and retire to the golf course, the Lord laid heavy responsibility on his shoulders:

Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Ezekiel 3:17-19

You may make the difference between an eternity in Heaven or in Hell for someone. Yes, every sinner is individually accountable and has no excuse whatsoever. Nevertheless, some get more opportunities to hear, to understand, and to repent, especially if they have a Gospel preacher on their trail. If you neglect your commission, you have bloody hands.

Immerse yourself in the short passage below, considering the parallel between the apostate Israel of that day and America in the 21st century.

The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully. And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord GOD. Ezekiel 22:29-31

What was the danger facing that nation? The danger was judgment from God for the willful evil and perversions that consumed the people. The Lord's lament is that He sought for a man to stand in the gap to stay the hand of God in judgment upon the land. Amazing, isn't, it? The Lord must bring judgment, yet He desperately wants a volunteer to stand up for the people, calling them to repentance, enticing God to delay His wrath, that some may respond. Do you care about your people? You might be the instrument that spares their lives and even the existence of the nation for a time, if you would be used of the Lord to preach repentance.

This is not a time for laziness or discouragement, but for renewed zeal. We have an assured hope, an inheritance from the Lord with saints of like mind. Many who have gone on before are witnesses of our present labors. Let us carry the sword of the word of God for our generation. The stars that shine across the night sky and throughout the trillion galaxies of creation dim in comparison with the glory that God attaches to His servants, those who proclaim the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Until that day . . .

And many of them that sleep in the dust of the Earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. Daniel 12:2-3

Appendix 1

How to Share the Gospel with an Atheist

The objective is to use the law to convict the conscience, as with any lost person. Nevertheless, most atheists are arrogant, with intellectual barriers that will keep them from hearing you out. Atheists tend to think that Christians are ignorant followers of superstition, unenlightened by the “facts” of evolution. By the way, there are no practical differences among atheists, agnostics, and deists. The atheist believes that there is no God. The agnostic doesn’t know for sure, but doesn’t care to overcome his ignorance. The deist believes that there was a creator God who set the universe into motion and then took a permanent vacation. In all 3 cases, these skeptics make themselves #1 in the universe, accountable to no personal God.

I have learned to enjoy talking to the polite atheist more than talking to the religious lost. If a thoughtful atheist comes to believe in God as revealed in the Bible, he is very likely to act on that knowledge and be born again – like I was. The religious lost tend to have scattered, but incoherent knowledge about Biblical Christianity, are difficult to communicate with, and are not so likely to act on truth, even when it kicks them in the nose.

Ideally, a polite atheist will simply allow you to engage him in conversation. Sometimes, however, you may need to “freeze” an atheist on the street before he brushes you off and gets away. When you offer him a tract and make your intro, he is typically not interested at all, because he can’t imagine you have anything of interest to tell him. In fact, if someone brushes you off with an attitude, you might just guess at his atheism and say . . .

Oh, an atheist, huh? Too bad. You know, if you’re an atheist, you have a big problem. You’re out of touch with reality.

If he is hanging around by this point, you may well be able to have a full-length conversation. I call the following approach the “You Are a Rock” argument.

Your real problem is whether YOU exist, not whether God exists. If there is no God, then everything is just physics and matter, molecules and forces. Then your brain is essentially no different from a rock on the ground, except for the particular arrangement of atoms. And the next thing that you say is just brain chemistry. There is no YOU that speaks, just brain chemistry producing sound out of your mouth. Is that right or not?

Whatever he says . . .

Now, was that YOU that chose to say that or just brain chemistry? Molecules can’t decide between good ideas and bad ideas, between logic and illogic, between right and wrong. Everything about YOU tells YOU that YOU exist! There is more to YOU than molecules. And once YOU admit that YOU exist, it’s easy to figure out that God exists.

See that building over there? Do you know who the architect was that designed and built it? . . . Neither do I, but there is NO doubt in your mind or mine that someone with intelligence and skill built that building. Time, physics, and chance don’t put structures like that together. Time, physics, and chance tear

down structures – a consequence of the 2nd law of thermodynamics. And that building is really fairly simple. Look – mostly rectangles, perhaps some triangles, bricks, stone, glass – if an architect wants to win an award he may throw in a curve or two. YOU, on the other hand, are walking nanotechnology. Every cell in your body is far more complex than a supercomputer. And time, physics, and chance don't make supercomputers. Nor the nanotechnology of life, which is way beyond man's capabilities.

The designer of life is almighty God – the Lord Jesus Christ – who walked among us 2000 years ago. When an engineer builds something he doesn't throw it away. He has a purpose for it. And God has a purpose for you – first that you find Him.

That mind of yours – your soul – is going to live forever somewhere. You have a God-given conscience – you know the difference between right and wrong. Is murder wrong? . . . Is rape wrong? . . . Is molesting children wrong? When terrorists behead a captive, your heart cries out for justice. But are YOU ready for justice?

Did you ever murder anyone? . . . and off you go into the usual Gospel presentation.

By this point, most atheists will be doubting their faith. You'll have given them plenty to think about. Trust God to convict them of their need for the Savior.

Relevant Scripture for atheists, but more for your benefit than for theirs:

Psalm 14:1-3 and Romans 3:10-25 (Note the progression in Romans 3 – accusation of functional atheism, then the law, and then the Gospel.)

John 12:44-50 (How to find God)

John 20:30-31 and John 1:1-14 (How to find God)

Matt 7:7-8, 13-14, 21-23, Mark 1:15, 1 Peter 3:18, Rom 10:9-13 (How to find God TODAY)

Psalm 10, John 3:19-21, Proverbs 14:6, Proverbs 28:26 (After the atheist gets past his intellectual barriers, these are the only reasons he won't get saved.)

Some relevant data and arguments to help someone get over evolutionism – the underlying philosophy of the atheist's worldview:

1. Good websites:

Truthreallymatters.com – I have a lot of useful material on my site, including a free e-book, *Creation vs. Evolution? No Contest!*

AnswersInGenesis.org

icr.org

creation.com

Search through the archived articles on these sites.

2. THERE IS NO THEORY OF EVOLUTION: Life is too complex for time, physics, and chance. Even if the whole universe were filled with amino acids, you couldn't get one useful protein molecule in 30 billion years. Or DNA. Do the math.** Also, from any kind (like reptiles) to another (like birds) requires the same mathematical impossibilities – WAY TOO MANY changes in the DNA. Also, there is no theory for

the first complete cell. Or from single cells to invertebrates, etc. Evolutionists have NO THEORIES, HYPOTHESES, SPECULATIONS, OR EVEN FANTASIES to address these problems.

3. THERE IS NO FOSSIL EVIDENCE FOR EVOLUTION: The fossil record shows separate kinds throughout. All of the paleontologists' "trees of life" show fossils only at the tips of the branches and none at the branch points. Ergo, no evolution in the fossil record. Many creatures, like dinosaurs and dodo birds, are extinct. Extinction is death, not evolution. Reptiles (like dinosaurs) used to be bigger. Plants and insects used to be bigger and enjoyed habitats spread from pole to pole. The evidence shows that life is de-volving, not evolving.

4. THERE IS NO TIME FOR EVOLUTION: Radioactive dating (plus hundreds of other methods) prove a "young" Earth. Carbon 14, for example, has a short half-life, yet is found in coal and diamonds which are supposed to be hundreds of millions to billions of years old. For carbon 14 to be present, the age limit is thousands of years – it's NOT POSSIBLE for carbon 14 to survive millions of years. So evolution doesn't even rise to the level of science fiction.

5. THERE ARE NO OBSERVATIONS OF EVOLUTION: Life always comes from life. No exceptions. In fact, humans come from humans, dogs from dogs, bananas from bananas. The variations within any kind have definite limits, which has been proven by many, many experiments over the last 150 years. The entire variation among humans on planet Earth is just 2 tenths of 1 percent of our DNA. (And "racial" characteristics are only about 1/20 of that.)

6. WHERE DO THE FOSSILS COME FROM? A worldwide flood, as recorded in Genesis: If it happened, what would you expect to find? Billions of dead things, buried in rock layers, laid down by water, all over the Earth. Guess what you find?

**The math – Simplified, but only for the benefit of the evolutionist (a detailed analysis paints a far grimmer picture): There are 20 useful amino acids for life. Only the 'left-handed' varieties of those are employed. A random mixture of only the useful amino acids will contain equal numbers of left- and right-handed versions. A typical protein molecule often requires a precise sequence of over 200 amino acids. The odds against getting the first one in the chain are 1 in 20, for the second, 1 in 20, and so on. The odds against a precise sequence of 200 are 1 in 20^{200} , which is equal to about 1 in 10^{260} . The odds against getting all left-handed amino acids are 1 in 2^{200} . Multiplying the two probabilities gives 1 in 10^{320} .

How ridiculously tough are those odds? If every one of the only 10^{80} atoms in the universe were replaced with a test tube containing the right mix of amino acids, and a new sequence was produced every trillionth of a second (that's about the maximum molecular collision rate), and this universal experiment continued for 30 billion years (twice the alleged age of the evolutionary universe), then only 10^{110} sequences would be generated. This is not even in the ballpark of the number required to match the odds above. The "simplest" cellular life form codes for roughly 1000 different proteins. If you get one wrong, you die. You can't even get started with an evolutionary fantasy for life.

Some might object that if somehow that first cell "came into being," then evolution could "take over." The odds get even tougher as you go from single-celled life to invertebrates, and then to vertebrates, to

fish, to reptiles, etc. Every significant transition requires simultaneous generation of perfect code for thousands of new genes and proteins. And I'm still oversimplifying. The closer you look at this problem, the worse it gets for those committed to the religion of evolutionism.

Appendix 2

How to Share the Gospel with a So-Called "Jehovah's Witness"

"So-called" (because they are not God's witnesses) JWs are often argumentative – therefore, when you run into one, just quickly sigh (quietly) and determine to give it your best shot, trusting in the Holy Spirit to work through you. Remember that JWs are simply one element of the religious lost, although an unusually zealous element. If a pair of JWs knocks on your door, by all means invite them in! The admonition in the book of 2 John against inviting heretics into your house refers to the "church in your house," which was the common meeting location for 1st century believers. So don't ask them to join your church, but do invite them to repent and be saved!

JWs are simply lost people and, therefore, no different from Roman Catholics or Mormons or unbelieving Baptists or Protestants. Too many Christians, when confronted with JWs at their doors, turn them away without sharing the truth with them. Shame! Shame! Shame!

Interestingly, as I prepared this morning to include this appendix in the manuscript, a pair of JW men in suits knocked on our door. One was a grizzled veteran, 79 years old. His quieter partner was about 50. I quickly invited them in and sat down with them at our kitchen table. I wasn't planning on this visit, of course, but Scripture admonishes me to be "instant" with my testimony.

Before they could get into their pitch, I worked to take over the conversation, politely, but with passion and compassion. JWs expect the rest of the world to hate them, particularly those of us in "false churches." So show them much compassion. JWs love to argue about their pet false doctrines. Don't waste your time trying to prove the existence of Hell – they won't believe it. They believe in soul sleep for the saved and annihilation for the lost. Only the ones faithful in their system will enjoy the resurrection in the coming kingdom on Earth. They also deny the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Don't get into a discussion on these points. If by some miracle you convinced a JW of the deity of Christ and the falsity of soul sleep, he would still be lost due to his doctrine of works-based salvation – just like multitudes of Roman Catholics and liberal Protestants.

My side of the conversation included the following points:

1. The most important issue of life is salvation. If saved, we will enjoy a resurrection on the New Earth. I know we both agree on that. So just what does it take to be saved?
2. You admit that you have to keep the commandments and keep working to have a hope for salvation. Therefore, you have no assurance.
3. How obedient to God's laws do you have to be? How good? (At this point I went through the law to show that we are all guilty.)
4. Let's look at Revelation 21:8 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. Such sinners will not inherit the kingdom of God. You admit that you fall into these categories of sinners. Example: Jesus taught that adultery of the heart and anger condemned as thoroughly as physical adultery and murder.
5. Let me give you my testimony. (I explained how I was raised as a Roman Catholic, became an atheist, and later repented and trusted Christ. It is always good to give a JW your testimony, which includes salvation apart from any JW Kingdom Hall.) I've been saved for 42 years now, because I did what the Bible said to do (repent and believe) and my direction / road / life has changed dramatically and borne

appropriate fruit. Yet you believe that I cannot be saved because I am not part of your Kingdom Hall. My salvation is in Jesus, but yours depends on your Kingdom Hall. That's not Biblical.

6. Let's look at John 5:24, 3:16, and 3:36. When did you pass from death to life? I got everlasting life 42 years ago. It's not that I hope to acquire everlasting life in the future. The Bible says I have it now and can have assurance – 1 John 5:13.

7. You admit that you don't have assurance. You have never been saved. You therefore do not have everlasting life. Therefore you are lost, under the wrath of God. I'm worried about you. You need to be born again.

8. Your offer to me that I can hope for salvation, maybe, if I study hard and work, work, work to obey the law is refuted by such Scriptures as Galatians 2:16 and 3:10-11, Romans 5:1, Ephesians 2:8-9 (verse 10 says that works follow faith), and Titus 3:5-7 (verse 8 shows that works follow faith).

9. James 2 points out that one sin is enough to send you to Hell and that real faith is demonstrated by a lifetime of good works. But nothing in the Bible teaches that you work for salvation.

10. I left your doctrines behind when I left the Catholic church. Your belief of work, work, work, and repent continuously sounds very Catholic. Mormons believe the same thing, as do Muslims and Hindus.

11. I know that you believe that if you leave the Kingdom Hall that you will be lost. But the Bible says that salvation is in Christ, not in any Kingdom Hall. Your dependence is on a system that has existed for only about a century.

12. I care about you guys because you admit that you are not saved. If you're interested, I would like to help you come to know Christ and have the assurance of salvation.

The point is to focus repeatedly on the issue of their lack of salvation and your own assured salvation. They would love to argue their pet doctrines, which can be refuted to a reasonable man's satisfaction, but not often to theirs. If they get worried about their lost condition, there will be time to teach them the Biblical doctrine of Christ's deity and the doctrines of Heaven and Hell.

By the time I got to point 12 above, the two fellows were ready to leave. About 25 minutes had passed and they had admitted to all that I imply above. They had few responses to these points. One was to deny the doctrine of "everlasting life," which they called "once saved, always saved." I told them I'm not claiming "once saved, always saved," but the Biblical truth of everlasting life which is a present possession for the believer. The two phrases above are equivalent, but one is used to scoff, while the other is clearly Biblical. I also pointed out that Jesus said that He held His children in His hand and wouldn't let them go. And that the Holy Spirit seals us up until the day of redemption. The senior fellow challenged me whether this was in the Bible. I showed him John 10:27-30 and Ephesians 1:12-13 and 4:30.

On these subjects, the trained JW is very weak in the Scriptures. Stay on the subject of salvation. As long as you do, you will find the 121 encounter with the JW very similar to that with a Roman Catholic.

If you get a follow-up meeting with a JW who is concerned about his soul, continue to stick to the basics. If he is looking to learn, it is easy to show him Scripture on the deity of Christ and other doctrines that refute Watchtower literature. For example: My faith is in God my Savior. Quote Isaiah 12:2-3. Jehovah is my Savior. Now look at what the New Testament says. Quote Titus 3:4-6 and 2 Peter 3:18. Look at John 4:13-14. You see, Jesus Christ is both God and Savior. There is only one Savior – He's revealed in the New Testament as Jesus.

Then compare Isaiah 43:11 and 45:22-23 with Phil 2:10-11. Every knee shall bow before God, Jesus Christ, who said that He is one with the Father (John 10:30). Consider Isaiah 7:14 and Isaiah 9:6 with Matthew 1:21-23.

There are lots of other Scriptures on the subject, of course. You may not have liberty to get very far. On the street, I sometimes terminate the conversation before the JW does, if he interrupts or argues too much. In that case, I'll suggest . . . *Look, it's clear to me that you are not interested in listening. If I'm wrong about that, I'll make you an offer. We can get together another time and spend about an hour going through the Scriptures. I'd be glad to show you how you can be saved and repent from the false teachings of the Kingdom Hall. Do you want to do that?*

If not, then move on with your life. If he agrees, then study up! It could be that the Lord has been sowing discontent in his heart about his false doctrines and is trying to draw him to the truth. The serious JW may be living a morally clean life, but still needs to repent of his false doctrines and his association with false teachers. Like the Roman Catholic, repentance that produces salvation will include leaving his false church. See Revelation 18:4-5.

Appendix 3

How to Share the Gospel with a Roman Catholic

The typical Roman Catholic is not eager to engage in conversation – especially an older one. They may try to brush you off with a comment like, “I have my own church.” It’s almost always Catholics that make that particular comment.

If a Catholic will talk to you, witness to him like anyone else. Go through the law and then explain the Gospel. But if you’re getting brushed off with a comment that identifies him as RC (such as “I have my own church”), and you don’t want to give up easily, you need to try to say something to ‘freeze’ him. It would be a good guess to offer . . .

Oh, you must be a Roman Catholic. I’ve never known a Catholic to care enough about others to actually share something about their faith. KEY POINT – THIS IS A ‘DESPERATION TACTIC.’ Not to be used if you already have a relationship with a Catholic, but rather in a ‘cold turkey’ situation on a street with a stranger who wants to brush you off.

Anyway, in the ‘street’ scenario . . . if that freezes him . . . don’t be abrasive, but rather pleading. You might try . . .

But in the Bible, Jesus says an amazing thing . . . “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” And . . . “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” You see, the official Catholic position, proclaimed by all the popes for the last 1000 years, is that salvation is found only in the Catholic church, through the sacraments, by the priests, under the cardinals and pope.

But the Bible says that salvation is only in Jesus Christ. The apostle Peter said . . . “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under Heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

Saved from what? Judgment is coming – for you and me – and Jesus preached that most people are on their way to Hell . . . the broad road to destruction. And that the road to life and Heaven is narrow and few find it.

Do you need this precise script? Of course not. The main thing is to try to get him to listen and then challenge his thinking. Then take him through the law to the Gospel, as always. If he hears you out, you will need to be explicit about repenting from Catholicism. It is essential to communicate to the Catholic that he is *LOST* – not just in a different denomination. After all, how can one truly understand the Gospel and trust Christ, and yet still be content to participate in the abomination of the Mass – which claims to be a perpetual re-sacrifice of Christ? Or how can he continue to “receive Christ” through “Holy Communion,” believing that his “priest” has the power to yank the Lord Jesus Christ out of Heaven and put Him into a wafer?

For the Catholic to “believe in Jesus” he necessarily repents from Catholicism with all of its pagan practices. It’s your duty to make this plain – as graciously but as clearly as possible.

A short list of Catholic heresies and Scriptures you can use to teach the truth in an extended encounter:

1. The Mass as a continuing sacrifice: John 19:30, Hebrews 9:25-28, Revelation 1:18
2. Works added to faith for salvation: Ephesians 2:8-10, Titus 3:5-8, Galatians 2:16, Romans 4:4-5
3. Infant baptism: From John the Baptist through the book of Acts, only believers are baptized. No exception.
4. Peter as the first “pope,” the “rock” on which Christ allegedly established His church: Acts 4:8-12, 1 Peter 2:6-9, Deuteronomy 32:3-4, Psalm 18:1-2, 1 Corinthians 3:11. (The “rock” in Matthew 16:18 is found in v. 16b – it’s the proclamation that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.)
5. Priests vs. priesthood of the believer: 1 Peter 2:9, Revelation 1:6, Hebrews 7:25, Hebrews 4:14-16

Appendix 4

A Short Biographical Sketch of the Author

Dr. Dave is a former atheist / evolutionist who became a Christian as a teenager, and has been involved in many levels of ministry throughout his Christian life. Presently, he is a full-time street evangelist. He holds five academic degrees, including a Ph.D. in laser physics and an MBA. He enjoyed a 20-year Air Force career in research and development, and has won the Air Force R&D Award for Advanced Technology. After retiring from the Air Force he enjoyed a second career as an R&D manager at a large defense contractor and then as a professor at a major state university.

In ministry, by the grace of God, he has served as a Sunday school teacher, a junior church director, a bus captain and bus ministry director, taught evening classes at a rescue mission, created a training program for street evangelism . . . and should have done far more and wasted far less of his discretionary time through the years. Presently, he is blessed to be leading a small house church and doing street evangelism in Rockford, Chicago, and other northern Illinois locations.