

INTRODUCTION

Once while traveling with a friend of mine and chatting about life and fun times, I unknowingly took a wrong turn on a west Texas road. I went almost 80 miles before I saw a sign that alarmed me of just how lost I was. I had to turn around and go all the way back, wasting precious time. Something similar happened to me spiritually in the mid '70s, only it consumed 20 years of my life (unfortunately this happens to millions each year).

After about two decades of stumbling over false religion and error, I came to discover the truth. In the mid 90's I fell on my face in horror that I was wrong about all that mattered. On my knees I prayed and told God that I just wanted the truth, no matter how bad I looked or how much error I had to face. If I lost all my friends and family and even my life, it did not matter, as I was tired of being misinformed & on the wrong road.

It was then that I was passionately driven for years with intense hunger to backtrack and to do extensive research for the true path to eternal life. This book was written as a result of God answering that prayer. It is written to help as many as possible to discover the truth concerning the destiny of their life as well as coming to know and enjoy God here on planet earth for who He truly is. Our great God & savior once known, will then be deeply enjoyed not only as our Lord but as our intimate friend. I now love and enjoy God like never before. I want that for everyone so I wrote this free book. I now enjoy great security in my relationship with God & in His gift of eternal life through the work of Jesus Christ.

JOURNEY TO ETERNITY

I love children. They are so full of life, fun and opportunities. I enjoy watching their responses as you play with them, tickle them or make funny faces. There is such a freshness, purity and life about their laughter.

Conversely, death is the extreme opposite. I have been to two funerals in the last few months where people that I personally knew and touched were placed into a coffin, cold and lifeless. What an incredible contrast between these: joy filled new life - vs- death. I've heard it said that there are only two things that you can't avoid: death and taxes. While many people avoid taxes, death we'll not escape.

Is there, however, a means to eternal life? This book is dedicated to provide you with a confident "YES" to this unsurpassed treasure.

If you are like most, you have wanted to go back in time with your more mature wisdom and start all over; this time seeking to change all the foolish things you now realize you said and did. We can't go back in time, but we can do something to truly experience a new life. This life demands that we have a new heart & way of thinking. Yes, this demands we find a new source, & of course a reliable source which is neither fantasy and or man's assumptions. A source that is as solid as the unchanging principles of mathematics & physics and chemistry which once discovered changed the world. So, this new life you seek must be built upon unchangeable realities. Good news! The power source that you desire is available. Get this: it is found in the best selling book of all time. Over 100 million copies are sold each year.

What few people realize is that all the keys to life are hidden like treasures in this book. Believe it or not, God reveals himself in this book. The Bible is overflowing with all you need to know about not only this life's journey, but the true knowledge of far,

far better, “eternal life”. Yes, God has absolutely revealed from this book the keys to present victory and eternal glory in written form, and amazingly, so many ignore this power source of wisdom. The Bible makes some astounding claims; consider the following found in the Bible:

"No eye has seen, nor ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him."

In other words, the God who created the heavens and universe has prepared massive blessings, far beyond comprehension for those who love Him. Notice the verse is not directed to those who are religious and just go to church. Going to church is probably a good idea, but this is not the key to eternal life. Carefully note the verse says only those who “love Him” are the ones who attain to the riches of his treasures. Millions of people will miss out on eternity & all of God’s prepared blessings because they chose to ignore God’s wisdom revealed in His book.

What must we know in order to receive these treasures? Can we discover for certain the keys to eternal life? You and I can enjoy full assurance of this promise of salvation today. It requires having knowledge of who Christ is, what He has done, and a willingness to respond to Him in the right way. All of this requires specific knowledge, which we will look at in the pages to come. If there is one chance in a million that eternal life is available, you owe it to yourself to investigate with diligence this unsurpassed treasure. To begin with, I want you to realize that you need not follow the Bible on “blind faith.” The Bible is the only ancient book which proves to be undeniably valid and trustworthy. The bible claims to be God’s will, and God’s Words. If that is the case then the bible must provide scientific, historical, and supernatural evidence to prove itself....Right!!!!

Consider the following:

ANSWERS FROM THE PAST

About one hundred and twenty years ago, medical science believed it was necessary to bleed the feet of patients in order to speed up healing and to release poisons. Little did they know that they were actually draining the fluid of life out of the body? *The World Book Encyclopedia* states that George Washington died from this practice and so did many countless others. Ignorance always takes its toll.

God, in concern for the wellbeing of His people, had Moses pen the precautions for the spread of invisible disease. Leviticus, a book in the Bible, written 3,500 years ago, states that when dealing with human illness, one must wash with *running* water.¹This is amazing because up until 150 years ago, doctors washed their hands in a basin of *still* water. In 1845, Dr. Ignas Semmelweis was horrified at the death rate of women who were dying after giving birth in hospitals. Up to 30 percent of those giving birth died, and yet those giving birth at home rarely died. In pursuit of the cause, Dr. Semmelweis noted that doctors would examine the bodies of patients, and then, without washing their hands or washing in a basin of still water, go directly to the next patient and examine expectant mothers. This was the normal practice because an understanding of microscopic germs was unknown.

Dr. Semmelweis ordered the practice of washing hands with running water and these mortality rates dropped down to two percent. After publishing a classic work on his findings, he was ridiculed fiercely by the opponents of his ideas. After his death

¹ Leviticus 15:13

in 1865, another doctor began to practice his recommendations with great success and discovered that Semmelweis had been correct.² The scolding stopped. But how many people went to an early grave due to their ignorance or unwillingness to believe facts? History has shown that even what science defines as truth today may be laughed at in 100 years. What can we be sure of? Is there such a thing as “absolute” unchanging truth?

THE BIBLE IS SCIENTIFICALLY VERIFIED

The Bible reveals in Isaiah 40:22 (written between 740 & 680 B.C.) that the earth is round.

Also in Job 38:12,14, a book in the Bible written about 4,000 years ago, describes the earth rotating on an axis and explains the rising and the setting of the sun. It says that “it (the earth) turns as clay to the seal.” The McArthur study Bible notes the following concerning this verse: “Documents written on clay tablets were signed using personal engraved seals upon which was written the bearer’s name. The Hebrew word for ‘takes on form’ is ‘turned.’ It conveys the idea that the earth is turned or rotated like a cylindrical seal rolled over the soft clay. Such rolling cylinder seals were found in Babylon. This speaks of the earth, rotating on its axis, an amazing statement that only God could reveal in ancient days. The dawn rolls across the earth as it rotates.”

The Bible also speaks of the earth hanging on nothing, free-floating in space. At a time when it was believed that the earth sat on a large animal or a giant (1500 B.C.), we read, “He...hangs the earth upon nothing” (Job 26:7). Scientists didn’t discover that the earth hangs upon nothing until 1650.

The Scriptures speak of an invisible structure. Only in recent years has science discovered that everything we see is composed of things that we cannot see—invisible atoms? In Hebrews 11:3, written 1,900 years ago, the Bible says an amazing thing. It tells us that the “things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”

Did you know that the Bible describes the hydrological cycle – evaporation, condensation and precipitation? This may sound obvious, but not when it was stated in Ecclesiastes 1:7 and Amos 9:6 about 2,500 years ago. The Mississippi River alone dumps approximately 518 billion gallons of water everyday into the Gulf of Mexico. Where does all that water go? That’s just one of thousands of rivers. The Bible also confirms the first and second laws of thermodynamics. The Bible also speaks about dinosaurs and the Laws of Quarantine, and modern archeology is affirming the historical core of the old and new Testaments and much, much more.

How could a book written thousands of years ago be so accurate on information understood in recent times, unless it was divinely inspired? The world has no answers; they expect us to believe that everything just came out of a cesspool – all from a single cell ameba – millions of different forms of life – in a multiplicity of variety and complexity beyond human comprehension.

EVOLUTION OR CREATION?

Evolution explains that it took millions of years for man to evolve. But that brings up some unexplainable questions like how many more millions of years after that did it take female to develop so they could have children, and for that matter female

² The encyclopedia Britannica.

birds & giraffes & frogs & butterflies & elephants & tigers times millions of life forms? Could the life span of man have been millions of year in waiting? And what were they doing for millions of years while their food was evolving? And how long was it between his mouth evolving and his eyes and sex organs times hundreds of organs and systems that the body must have to function? Very few bio-chemist and true scientists believe in evolution today due to the ever expanding knowledge of the complexity of DNA and the complexities of cell reproduction. In fact the intricacies of a single-celled organism are such that natural selection could never produce, and which would require an intelligence far exceeding that of man's ability. Evolution proposes a scenario similar to a tornado going through a junkyard: how many times would it need to happen before a Boing 747 was assembled and how long before the female 747 so that they could develop a Pieper Cub? Just think logically for a minute or two and you will easily eliminate the insane concept of evolution. There are only two choices—either all of life is a huge accident or there was a creation by someone much higher.

THE SUN IS SHRINKING

Did you know the sun is shrinking in size? This creates another problem for the evolutionist. Projecting backwards in time just one million years, which is far less than the estimated age proposed by evolutionists, we discover what the great size the sun would have been if it had existed then. The amount of deadly radiation it would have transmitted would have made life on Earth impossible.

Solar specialist Jack Eddy of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics and the National Center for Atmospheric

Research and mathematician Aram Boomazian explain the following: "Thorough examination of records kept by the British Royal Observatory since 1750, has concluded that the sun appears to be shrinking at a rate of about one-tenth of a percent per century. Scientists have been observing the sun for over one hundred years; the evidence seems conclusive. Every hour that passes, our sun shrinks about five feet." Of course, five feet an hour isn't much when you consider the sun is 840,000 miles in diameter. But what are the implications? If you believe the Earth's age is only 6,000 years, there's no problem. In that span of time, the sun would have shrunk only 6%. But how can you contend with the shrinkage if you believe the billions of year's idea? If the sun existed only 100,000 years ago, it would have been double its present diameter. And only 20 million years ago (not to mention 4½ billion years that evolutionists claim for the age of the Earth), the surface of the sun would have been *touching the Earth*.³

Many false religions teach people to just accept their belief systems on blind faith. This is foolish. If there is an all-intelligent God who has left instructions in written form concerning life, then His book must be filled with supernatural and scientific facts which are verifiable. There are many books written today that confirm scientific data found in the Bible. Asking yourself hard questions and seeking solid answers is critically important. If this book called the Bible contains the key knowledge to eternal life, nothing is more important than this issue.

THE BIBLE IS SUPERNATURALLY VERIFIED

Did you know that the Bible foretells the future? Literally hundreds of prophecies have been fulfilled making the Bible the only proven source of prophetic truth. I recently watched an

³Lindsay, D. G. (1999, c1993). *The birth of the planet earth: And the age of the universe*. Dallas, TX: Christ for the Nations.

expose on Nostradamus, which revealed that he wasn't even a good guesser. Psychic hotlines are making millions every day, yet you never see a psychic win the lottery. In contrast, the Bible has never had one of its prophecies falter and there are more than 300 in total. Even in our century, there have been several prophecies fulfilled, with precision to details which were written thousands of years ago.

Do your own research... Jesus fulfilled more than 100 prophecies through His life, death and resurrection 2000 years ago.

One mathematician did research confirming that if only 8 of these prophecies were fulfilled it would be equal to the odds of any one man who lived from the prophecies were made until the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies is 1 in 10 to the seventeenth power.

Can we visualize this with an illustration? Suppose we took a man, blindfolded him and covered the state of Texas two feet deep with silver dollars. Then we put an **X** on one of those silver dollars and mixed them up. The odds of one person fulfilling just these eight prophecies would be the same as this man selecting the silver dollar upon which we have placed an **X**, in his first try. Get the idea... It is not even possible when you get to over one hundred prophecies. If you do a study on prophecy, you'd be surprised to find the multiplicity of prophecies that have come to pass with perfect precision that are confirmed not only by the Bible but also by archeology and secular writers from those time periods. No other ancient religious book has fulfilled prophecy to verify its authenticity.

This is too large a topic for this short book. I don't want to do it with injustice. So please do a YouTube search.

THE BIBLE IS HISTORICALLY VERIFIED

The Bible is also a historical masterpiece which amazingly backs up every statement with verifiable places, people and events from ancient secular sources and historians as well as early Christian apologists. Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Mara, Bar-Serapion, Cornelius Tacitus, Lucian, Justin Martyr, Josephus Phlegon, Tertullian, Quadratus and Eusebius, all of which lived at or near the times of Christ, wrote historical records concerning his birth, miracles, death, burial, and most importantly his resurrection from the dead. Jesus' life was well documented by eye witnesses. Additionally, four books called the Gospels were written documenting his life and ministry as well as 22 additional books and letters, which make up the New Testament. Critics have consistently been unable to disprove the historical facts which the Bible proclaims. Jesus Christ stands out above all other religious figures in that historical writings indicate that he alone was raised from the dead and ascended to the right hand of God. His resurrection from the dead is very noteworthy if it can be proven—and proven it was.

One or two eye witnesses is all it takes for a conviction in most courts, and yet His resurrection had more than 500 eye witnesses; these accounts were preserved in manuscripts and distributed around the known world so that we can now compare thousands of documents for authenticity and accuracy.

1 Corinthians 15:6 states, "After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep." Another amazing discovery took place in 1947, when a young Bedouin goat herder discovered a cave near the Dead Sea, which contained

clay jugs with scrolls in them. These are known as the “Dead Sea Scrolls.” An official archeological expedition was begun in 1949, which eventually resulted in the discovery of ten additional caves in the surrounding area also containing scrolls. Just to note the size of this find, in Cave 4 at Qumran, approximately 15,000 fragments from some 574 manuscripts were found.

One of the most important contributions of the Dead Sea Scrolls is the numerous Biblical manuscripts which have been discovered. Until those discoveries at Qumran, the oldest manuscripts of the Hebrew Scriptures were copies from the 9th and 10th centuries AD by a group of Jewish scribes called the Masoretic. Now we have manuscripts around a thousand years older than those.

The amazing truth is that these manuscripts are almost identical to what we have today in our hands! Here is a strong example of the tender care which the Jewish scribes took through the centuries to accurately copy the sacred Scriptures. We can have confidence that our Old Testament Scriptures faithfully represent the words given to Moses, David and the Prophets.”

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A NARROW GATE

So we have learned that the Bible is:

- Scientifically verified.
- Historically verified.
- Supernaturally verified.
- Prophetically verified.

⁴ <http://www.christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr-a023.html>

This is wonderful news because if you are to have assurance of eternal life, you had best build on a sure source. And with that said, I must inject a stern warning that the Bible foretells that most will try false ways and not gain eternal life.

Matthew 7:13-14, 21-23 states, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it...Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"

This insightful text says there are two roads, one very wide road, where most travel in this world, and a very narrow constricted road where very few choose to go and yet is the true way to God. Some people going down the wide road believe that just because they do good works in Jesus' name, they are entitled to eternal life. But it is obvious from this passage that being known by Jesus is different from doing good things, even doing works in His name. Such were the fastidious Pharisees who were the religious rulers in the time of Jesus. The Pharisees endeavored to keep the law to the letter, and they did for the most part, but they never had any type of relationship with Jesus Christ, and they did not believe He was the Son of God. Jesus asked them, “How can you escape the condemnation of hell,” revealing that they were on the wrong road.⁵

Many people are on a broad road of destruction, thinking that they are on the narrow road to eternal life. These people believe

⁵ Matthew 23:33

that they can come to heaven through their religious organization and or meritorious works. This is the religion of human achievement, not the religion of divine grace, which is clearly warned against in the Bible.

Ephesians 2:8 states, “For by grace (unmerited favor) are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves it is a gift from God not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

Divine grace is God's loving and undeserved favor to provide that which we cannot supply for salvation. God pours out His unmerited grace upon those who believe enabling them to be transformed from the inside out. Religion tries to change us by placing rules, regulations, and pride, stroking mandates on us, which eventually fail miserably due to our internal nature. Conversely true salvation works from the inside out, by God-given intrinsic power. Instead of a burdensome, legalistic rule keeping system, God gives us a new nature. This new nature desires the wonderful things of God and overrules the cycle of self destruction.

“The many” which enter the “broad road of destruction” do so believing that they are on the narrow road which leads to life. One reason that many people stay on the broad road of destruction is due to the fact that they only accepted part of the truth. Those mentioned in Matthew chapter seven apparently confessed Jesus as Lord, and they certainly understood that He was a Savior, and it says they did many "wondrous" and supernatural (the Greek word means powerful) works, but what were they missing? The key words to focus on in Matthew 7 are, "I never knew you." The term “knew you” is used in the Bible to describe intimacy. Jesus did not deny that these people did multitudes of good deeds; rather He revealed that they did not have an intimate relationship with Him.

There are thousands of false ways and only one true way, which demands a relationship. Some have thought that salvation is a simple formula, like making a confession or simply going to the altar to pray the sinner's prayer or inviting Jesus into their heart. And many believe that they are saved by simply acknowledging Jesus as Lord, only to resume life as usual. Their lives do not reflect the Lordship of Christ.

THE TITANIC OR THE ARK?

There are two ships that I will use to illustrate the ultimate choice you must make. First there is the *Titanic*. Did you know that due to the unique design of this massive ship, the media enthusiastically boasted that the *Titanic* was unsinkable? Some were bragging that not even God could sink this ship. During the *Titanic's* first trip, a ship called the *Californian*, which was close by, warned the *Titanic* three times to slow down (the ship was moving at 20 knots). They were cautioning them because of the icebergs floating nearby. The *Titanic* crew laughed at their warnings. The massive ship struck an iceberg within a few hours. Later that night, as the *Titanic* began to sink, they radioed the *Californian*, but it was to no avail because the radio crew had retired after their final warning. At first when the call went out to board the lifeboats, only a few people did so. At first, the lifeboats, which could hold 50 people, only had 15 because so few acknowledged the approaching doom. People continued to eat, drink, and party as the ship began to sink into a cold watery grave. But as the ship was about to sink, millionaires were offering their fortunes for a place on the few remaining lifeboats.

As on the *Titanic*, the world is eating and drinking and laughing as it slowly sinks into the judgment of God, an inescapable doom to those who ignore His message of grace and love, His message of salvation. The lifeboat is Jesus Christ, and there is enough room for everyone. We must surrender to His authority

and provision and live or face the cold reality of God's judgment. God has sent out the warning to all humankind to board the lifeboat. Most respond by ignoring the warning.

The Bible says, "Today is the day of salvation."⁶ Some will ask, "How has God warned us?" To answer this question, let's look at the second ship, Noah's ark. When God told Noah to build the ark, it had never rained on the earth. Scripture states that a mist came up from the ground and watered the earth.⁷ Noah was told by God to build this ship, which happened to be nowhere near water, because God was going to send a flood upon the earth to destroy all mankind as a holy response to the wickedness of sinful men. Noah built this massive ocean liner, which was approximately 450 feet long and 75 feet wide and was divided into three stories of about 15 feet each. This ship was 1,518,750 cubic feet and is comparable to 569 modern railroad boxcars. It took 120 years to build. As Noah built the ark, he warned the people who were scorning his efforts that a deadly rain would flood the earth and no land creature would survive. The flood did come and even covered the mountain tops, and everyone but Noah and his family perished.⁸ By the way did you know that almost 70% of the rock in the world is sedimentary, and ocean life fossils have been found in the Himalayan Mountains and fossilized oysters found atop the Andes Mountains in South America? Even the tallest mountain in the world, Mt. Everest, has sedimentary rock deposits near its top.

The point is that God warned the world through messengers, or prophets, and they made known the coming destruction, and they also made known the way of salvation from the destruction, which was and is still today the salvation from God's justice. Jesus Christ is our ark of safety. He did come as was foretold,

⁶ 2 Corinthians 6:2

⁷ Genesis 2:6

and He is our only way to be saved, much like the ark was for Noah and his family. While men laugh and lightly esteem the Cross of Jesus, the dark billowing clouds are approaching. Remember that the Bible says, "But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when His righteous judgment will be revealed. God will give to each person according to what he has done."⁹

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Some think that they are good people and therefore will be allowed entrance into eternal life. This seems right, but according to the Bible, it is wrong. Our mistake is that we think that God's standards are the same as ours. Let's look at some of God's standards to see if we qualify as "good."

God gave the Ten Commandments to reveal His standard for moral behavior and righteousness (right living). Most people will tell me that being good is what gets them into heaven. Let's look at the standard for righteousness to see. Let's go through the Ten Commandments to see if we qualify on that basis.

- The first commandment is "to have no other gods before Me." Basically it equates to loving God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and therefore to keep Him first. In other words, your love for God is so intense and real that your strong love for your friends and family doesn't even come close. God is the first thing you think about in the morning and you meditate upon His words and character every day. Your voluntary response is a passionate life of worship and thankfulness, which results in complete trust and dependency. Have you always done this? If not, then you have broken the first commandment.

⁸ Around the world you can find layers of sea life in the fossil records revealing a worldwide catastrophe.

⁹ Romans 2:5-6

- The second commandment is “to not make for yourself any other gods.” This means to not worship an idol. Before you think, “I am safe on that one,” consider what it means. If you conceive God in your mind in any fictitious way (such as many who imagine God will not judge and condemn them for rejecting Him), or if you imagine that this God gives you the right to do as you wish, irrespective of who God is, you have set up a false god in your mind, which is an idol. Actually, the most wretched idolatry is self-worship. All of us have ignored our moral conscience and followed the god of self. No honest person could actually claim that they have never broken this commandment.

- The third commandment is to “not take the name of the Lord our God in vain.” The Bible says that “whoever takes the name of God in vain will not be held guiltless.” This is a very, very serious thing in God’s eyes.

- How are you doing so far? That's only the first three! Have you always kept the Sabbath day holy? Have you always honored your parents? Here's one: the sixth commandment is to not murder. The Bible defines murder even as hating someone. God accounts hatred as murder.¹⁰ How many of us have been guilty of deep bitterness and hatred in our hearts for someone in the heat of a moment? The one who kills is the same as the one “who wanted to kill” come judgment day.

- No. 7 is to not engage in adultery. Jesus said that if you look at a woman and lust for her in your heart, you have already committed adultery in your heart. In other words, God judges lust in our hearts as actual adultery.

- No. 8 is to not steal. Have you ever stolen anything, even if it was small? The amount does not matter, and time does not forgive sin.

- No. 9 is lying. Have you ever told a lie? I have met no one who could claim to never have lied. Some people think that because they haven't told very many lies (and none recently) that God will overlook their little mistakes. But the Bible specifically states that if we have broken one commandment, we have broken the whole law. Jesus said, “For every idle word that men may speak, they will give an account for in the day of judgment, for by your words you will be justified and by your words you'll be condemned.”¹¹

- No. 10 says, “You shall not covet,” which means we're not to envy someone else's success or someone's property. That one nails me for sure.

So if you are like the rest of us in the world, you have broken at least 9 out of 10 of God’s standards, leaving us “not so good” come judgment day.

JUSTICE AND MERCY

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, only about 62.6% of homicides are “cleared” each year, leaving a substantial portion of murder cases unresolved. In 2004, there were 16,137 cases of murder or non-negligent manslaughter in the United States. Because 37.4% of these cases went uncleared, around 6,035 people “got away with murder”! Do you think that God will turn a blind eye to this wickedness and let those crimes go unpunished? Consider a hypothetical scenario of a jury finding Bin Laden guilty, only for the judge to simply turn to the man and say, “I don't think you'll do it again—not

¹⁰ 1 John 3:15

¹¹ Matthew 12:36

guilty. Case dismissed!" The public would be in total outrage! Would anyone consider this person to be a good judge? I think not. He would be considered a very wicked judge. How about God, who is a perfect, righteous and a holy judge? Do you think that He would be an even more righteous judge and see that justice is done? Some figure that God will forgive them if they only ask. Should Osama's judge forgive him after he was found guilty simply on the grounds of asking? God will never forgive you or me on those grounds, and it is futile to even ask God to compromise His holiness, simply on the grounds of a sincere request. But God did choose a way of total forgiveness in which He could satisfy His righteous standard and not compromise His justice. How? Perhaps the following analogy will help you understand.

AN ANALOGY OF MERCY

Many years ago there was a small town, whose city council gathered in order to resolve a problem. This country town primarily had only horse and buggy carriages running through its streets. But then a new problem arose. A young man regularly raced through the town on his motorcycle at high speeds. The council agreed to place a new law into effect which stipulated that anyone going over 20 miles per hour would be fined one thousand dollars for every mile over the limit and likewise receive one lash for each mile. The young man, not knowing the extreme penalties of the law, raced through the streets going 80 miles an hour. He was apprehended and brought before the judge.

The judge recognized the young man as his own son, whom he loved dearly. But the law was clear and the good and righteous judge gave the appropriate sentence to be carried out the next day at noon. The young man was brought back the next day to receive his sentence, knowing full well that he did not have the money to pay the fine. He would have to remain in jail for the

rest of his life. The angry city council stared anxiously, awaiting their revenge. The good judge looked at his son and said, "I have no choice but to enforce the law, for this is right. But being your father as well as the judge of this city, I have chosen to sell all that I have and pay your fine. And as for the 60 lashes, I have chosen to receive those likewise.

He stepped down from his bench took off his robe and commanded that he receive the punishment in place of his son. The council was satisfied, but the beating was so severe that the Judge's heart gave way, and he died upon receiving the last lash. The law was satisfied. Justice had been done. The son was acquitted and freed from the penalty of the law.

This analogy should remind us of the extreme price God paid to deal with our indifference to His righteous laws. We all know better than to lie, steal, lust, blaspheme, rebel against our parents, and hate, etc., because these laws are written by God in all people's hearts. Isaiah the Prophet spoke concerning the high price God paid hundreds of years before Christ came, revealing the immeasurable cost of our redemption. God being holy and just must punish sin... If he doesn't then God is flawed and they can never be. If God is good and He is then you and I are in serious trouble unless God intervenes with Love and Mercy.

Isaiah 53:5-6 states, "Isaiah 53:5-6 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

LOVE SHOWS MERCY

Have we not all completely demonstrated our lack of love for God? Even after He has poured His riches into our lives?

Everything we enjoy has come from His hands—every relationship, every sweet smell, every pleasant taste, and every sustaining element. The air we breathe, the water we drink has come from a benevolent Father who cares for those whom He has created. We should be so thankful that God has given us life and its blessings that we should seek God's will. Yet everyday men strike a fist in the face of God in rejection of his goodness—denying his right to honor. If we are honest, we can all confess that we have returned God's kindness with disdain and indifference at many points in our lives.

I want you to journey back in time and see God's love in action. Let's look at John 8:2-11; we see a glimpse of the compassion of Jesus and his willingness to forgive.

"Now early in the morning He (Jesus) came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do you say?' This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.

"So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, 'He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.' And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, 'Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?'

"She said, 'No one, Lord.'

"And Jesus said to her, 'Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.'"

Jesus is the only one there qualified to cast the first stone, yet he chose to show mercy. Jesus exemplified God's tremendous compassion to forgive instead of condemn, while never compromising His standard of holiness.

Surely, you have heard that Jesus died upon the cross. Have you ever asked yourself "why"? The reason will astound you. The Scriptures state in Romans 5:6-8: "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

God saw that man could not achieve his own righteousness for entrance into heaven and escape eternal judgment, therefore God sent His only Son to pay the penalty for sin. In God's eyes, we were like Osama Bin Ladin—evil and corrupt, and because God cannot compromise His justice, He sent Jesus to pay the penalty for human sin. Can you take that personally? You should, because He did it for you! That should melt your heart, my friend. The grand question is how can we attain mercy to receive these benefits?

WHO DOES GOD GIVE MERCY TO?

Mercy is God withholding Judgment. Isaiah 66:2b states, "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite (or crushed) spirit, and trembles at my word."

God is looking for a heart that would love Him, a heart that is tender and broken from haughty pride, not one concerned with external religion or self-will. God is looking to dwell in the heart of a person who wants to take His Word seriously, a person who wants know Him and wants to realize the holiness and awesome kindness of God. Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3).

"Blessed" means happy, blissful, and genuine in gladness of heart. The Greeks called the island of Cyprus "The Happy Isle." They did this because they believed Cyprus was so beautiful, fertile, rich, and fulfilling that no man would ever have to go beyond its shores to find the perfect life.

Jesus' use of the word "blessed" speaks of a completely untouchable internal joy and contentment which is not affected by the fleeting external happiness of the world, which ebbs and flows with occasional good conditions. Poor in spirit means without any resources and is the opposite of self-sufficiency. This speaks of the deep humility of recognizing one's utter spiritual bankruptcy to supply what is needed for eternal life apart from God's resources. Being "poor in spirit" describes those who are acutely conscious of their own lostness and hopelessness apart from divine grace. Jesus is saying true happiness comes when we realize that all of our human efforts are vain and we come with a beggar mindset, empty and lowly of heart. Salvation is God's gift which comes on God's terms and His terms are "poor in spirit." The false way and the world's way says happiness is noble, famous, rich, popular, self-exalting, and successful. No one ever enters God's kingdom on the basis of pride.

Luke 18:9-14 states, "Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed

thus with himself, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

This passage pictures saving grace given to those who are poor in spirit. This tax collector came to the point where he recognized his poverty and saw God's right to judge him. But he had a right attitude towards God; he perceived God as merciful. He received imputed righteousness from God while the Pharisee was condemned for his self-righteous pride. Take serious heed to this point. Have you sought God with a poor heart? Have you sought him as a God of great mercy?

SALVATION BY FAITH

I find that young children who are in a happy mood are extremely entertaining. They are constantly saying or doing something that causes adults to smile and laugh and interact with them. I heard this quip recently. A four-year-old girl and her mother were listening to a Christian radio station while driving in the car. The man on the radio said that some people only call on God when they are in desperate need. The daughter looked at Mom and said, "I didn't know God had a phone, can I call Him too?"

Children are uncomplicated, trusting and sincere. Their outlook brings out the simplicity and lightheartedness in all of us. People pressure a child to grow up and be an adult, and grow up we must. But God wants us to "grow down" in simplicity and be like

a child for salvation. God gives salvation only to those who have a child's simple faith. God forbid if I told one of my kids that we were going to the zoo on Saturday and I not do it! They would remind me over and over and over what I said. Well there it is, exactly what God is looking for in us; simple child-like faith. Faith that says "I trust you" and "you said" and "I am getting ready to go now, because you said, is it time to go yet?..." If Saturday came and I was sick, I would take them to the zoo before I went to the doctor because I just don't have the heart to betray that kind of trust. How about God, who is perfect in Love—would He betray your trust in him? If we want salvation, then perhaps we should sit down with a four-year-old and gain wisdom. Yet they have no status and no authority.

Jesus said: "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.' And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them" (Mark 10:14-16).

I think children are much easier to come to salvation for they are teachable and trusting. They have no way to earn it, so they just hold out their little hands and dare to think that if they believe God, He will provide.

John 3:16 states, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

God made the Gospel simple enough for a child to receive and yet many adults with their complicated preoccupation with the world can't find it in a lifetime. Keep in mind that the faith that God wants is a child's faith, a faith which follows a parent and does not seek to go his own way. I remember my youngest child was always worried that he might get separated and lose his mommy. He was always careful to stay close and if she took

him to a crowded mall he would stick closer than glue to her. This is the only faith that saves. False faith is a faith that says "sure I believe the facts of the Gospel," but then goes about life not seeking closeness with God. Genuine saving faith is evidenced in its continuing passionate pursuit to both know and follow Jesus Christ as Lord. The bible says: "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Hebrews 11:6

God is not looking at the perfection of your life, but rather the direction. He is looking for those who have a seeking heart which diligently searches to know and follow Him...

REPENT AND BELIEVE THE GOSPEL

If there is one point where most will fall short of salvation it is concerning repentance. Do not miss God's call to repentance or you will find salvation's door double locked. It is crucial to both understand and see with crystal clarity this key to salvation. Some suggest that one can mentally assent to the Gospel without turning from their sin. These think simply that by acknowledging who "Jesus was" is sufficient to be saved. If the Bible is true, then this is impossible. Believing which results in salvation includes, at the same moment, repentance.

Repentance is a complete turn from defiance and any sin which holds you from embracing Jesus as your "Sovereign Savior and Lord". Often it is simply that one thing that gives you validation other than God. It is the sin that puts you on the throne of your own life. Often it is an attitude of self-trust rather than trusting in the God who greatly desires to love, serve, care, and help you. Repentance is surrendering your "I will" or your "me, me, me" attitude over to holding on to Jesus' hand with a willing and trusting heart to follow & obey Him. God does not suggest

repentance, He demands it. Look at this truth in the following passages.

Mark 1:15 states, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. **Repent**, and **believe** in the gospel."

Acts 11:18 states, "God has also granted to the Gentiles (non-Jews) repentance to life."

Picture repentance; let's look at a parable which Jesus spoke to see this vital truth for salvation. This is the well-known story of the Prodigal son. In this story the son reached perhaps his late teens when he went to his father and said, "Give me my inheritance," desiring nothing more to do with his father. The father was grieved, but gave his son his portion, which was a large amount. The son went into a distant country and squandered all the money on harlots and loose living until he came to ruin and found himself starving and feeding pigs. Now, this is where we will pick up the story in Luke.

Luke 15:15-21 states, "Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."' And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'"

This is not only a beautiful portrait of our heavenly Father's love and forgiveness, but a defining portrait of what we are commanded to do in coming to Christ for salvation. The son in this story came to realize how foolish and sinful he was to his father. He foresaw that he would die if he continued to rebel and follow his own ways. Now listen carefully to the next point: He decided to make himself as a hired servant, if that is what it took to be back again with his father and under his counsel and provision. Keep in mind we are traveling over roads which you and I must cross. Consider what this son did. He came to an awareness of who his father was, i.e. good, kind, just, caring, forgiving and loving. Now consider what the son had to do to receive acceptance in his father's house.

First he had to recognize his utter sin, depravity, and failure. Second he turned around and went the other direction towards God, not even considering a return. Third, he decided to give his life in service to his father knowing that his father would love and care for him. This is repentance, and it comes only by God gracious help. It is a gift from God.

Repentance is coming in wholehearted fashion under His loving authority and care. Do you trust God to care for you with His loving provision and His patience and His perfect wisdom? Then come to Him and receive Him as your Lord, friend, and Savior. Some will say, "I am willing to place my faith in Christ's work on the cross but I am unwilling to forsake my alcohol addiction." Or perhaps you consider yourself a respectable person but you hoard money and are full of greed, and the love of money is your troubling sin. At this point you may not have Christ, for He will not have you on these terms. He will accept the wicked sinner in the world, but they must be willing to forsake their idols. You cannot hold onto your rebellious attitude and your Savior at the same time. Now how this looks abandoning action looks will vary from person to person. One person I know weaned herself

off of alcohol over the course of 6 weeks and another just quit... The how is between you and God. Repentance demands genuine passion to go the other direction towards Jesus Christ.

But you may say, "I cannot change myself, and this sin will not let me go." God is not asking you to change yourself, my friend. That is His job. Your job is to turn and trust him to change you. The prodigal son could not keep his pig job and have his father's mansion and wealth....let go and then you may have Christ. Hold on to your sin and you forsake all thoughts of Him as Savior. The idea that we can have Christ and the world is precisely what brings his words of judgment we saw in Matthew 7, (depart from me, I never knew you). The attitude is one of willingness to forsake all for Him.

Matthew 10:37-39 states, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."

The prodigal son had true repentance. He did not return to his pig pen but was fixed on his father's goodness. Now consider the end of that story and see how the father responded to this wayward, rebellious child who had disgraced his name and squandered his gift by living a shameful life.

Luke 15:20-24 states, "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry."

This is a picture of you, my friend, if you will with sorrow turn from all to embrace Him. You must turn from the pigs and cast your eyes down the road to the Father who awaits you with kisses of compassion. Yes, He will receive you with robes of righteousness and a ring of family honor and sandals which are for sons, not servants. You will abide in His royal house as a restored son of his love. His feast is for you and he will never leave you or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). The evidence of genuine repentance is you continuing to repent.

GAZING UPON THE PIERCED ONE

Now consider what you must gaze upon to find repentance. For as an archer must look gaze upon his bulls eye, so must those seeking salvation gaze upon a certain place. Look with me for a moment at one of Jesus' disciples who had forsaken him on the night of His betrayal.

John 20:25-31 states, "The other disciples therefore said to him, 'We have seen the Lord.' So he said to them, 'Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.' And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, 'Peace to you!' Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.' And Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.' And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

Consider the divine truth of repentance—that it is God who must draw you to Christ and reveal your need of Him. But you say, “What must I do?” Well, repentance is not a condition for you alone to fulfill, lest salvation be of human effort and therefore be of works—God forbid that we think that we save ourselves by our mechanical actions. But Thomas did, by the help of God, gaze upon the wounded bleeding side and upon the nail pierced hands with conviction that this friend of sinners had sacrificed His divine life for Thomas’ own sin of unbelief and doubt. Repentance comes as we see Jesus on that cross with “our” sins to bear and “our” guilt to carry. That was “your” crown of thorns which He allowed to be driven into his brow and those were “your” nails to be driven into your hands. You must journey to Calvary and kneel before His cross where you should have had to endure for all eternity and see Jesus in your place. Let tears of anguish against your sin fill your heart, and disdain those maggot sins which deserved wrath and see the wrath poured out by God the Father upon His own Son for your sins.

Now consider the heart response of Thomas when he said, “My Lord and My God.” And Jesus’ response which was “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” Thomas came to a deep revelation that Jesus was his Lord and His God. If you desire salvation, then you must realize whose feet and hands were nailed to that cross on your behalf. They were the hands of the One who said, “If you have seen me, you have seen the Father.”

Have not the Scriptures said: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.” (Matthew 1:23)? This truth is too large for us to fathom completely, but suffice it to say that Jesus is God. God the Father sent his Son on a mission to seek and to save that which was lost.

Christ was born of a virgin, and was conceived by the Holy Spirit of God. Therefore God was the Father of Jesus, and Mary, who carried him, was His human mother. Thus Jesus was both God and man. I cannot explain this to you fully, but perhaps consider that you are a complex being with more than a body. You are also a soul which has a spirit, which directs your body and even argues with your body to not eat too much or do certain things. Does the fact that you are both a body and a spirit mean that you are not one? No—you are one, though you are more than one. God is unexplainable and beyond description. But know this: that God the Father is one with Christ in person. This is seen in John 1, where it says “the Word was God and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and all things were made by Him.” Space prohibits us from delving into this subject as I would like, but realize that for you to believe in Christ, you must know and believe that He is the Son from eternity (Micah 5:2) who came veiled in flesh and acting as servant, who humbled himself, even unto the death of the cross (Philippians 2:6-11), so that He could redeem mankind (for HE so loved us), and He has received a name above every name and all shall bow the knee in worship to him as Lord.

Now consider, first Thomas saw his Lord and said, “My Lord and My God,” then the following verses say, “but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.” What is being said here is that Jesus’ name is one with God’s name. And if you want true salvation, then you had best do as Thomas did and confess from your heart who Jesus is—“My Lord and My God.” Life only comes when we believe that the Son of God is The Lord from heaven. God has given Him all power and all authority in heaven and earth to rule supreme (Matt. 28:18; John 3:35; 5:27; 17:2).

We will all one day stand before his judgment seat and give account of our deeds done for the sake of receiving rewards.

You see, what you think about Jesus determines your destiny. If you think He is only a created being or a good prophet, then you will not enter into His life.

COME AND BUY WITHOUT MONEY

Isaiah 55:1 states, “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come; buy wine and milk without money and without cost.”

This verse reveals God’s call to participate in the free benefits of redemption paid for by Christ’s suffering. God is telling the sinner to buy wine without money. Wine is that which makes the heart merry. This figure of speech reveals what the Gospel does in our lives. The new life that salvation brings, brings with it great joy of the soul. The weights of sin and self-generated corruption fall off like chains as we partake of Christ, thus we enjoy life with a merry heart. Milk represents that which gives strength and that which comes without human fabrication. Unlike wheat which must be ground and added to and baked—milk is ready to go. Salvation is like that, it is finished, it is complete in itself, and it gives all that is needed without human invention and hard labor.

You may say, “That is too simple...surely I have to sweat and pray hard and confess all my sins and be water baptized in order to receive something so grand. I need to work, work, and work and then if I perfect myself I can be saved.” That attitude is precisely what will prevent salvation.

Charles Spurgeon was perhaps the most profound preacher on the subject of salvation in the 19th century. The following insights come from his book “Grace, God’s Unmerited Favor”: “Salvation is a free gift and you must stand indebted to God’s mercy for it, or else you will forfeit it. To pretend a right to it is deception and will be to insult God, whose heart is set upon the exercise of His free graciousness. He will not barter and bargain

with you—so much grace for so many tears, so much mercy for so much repentance, so much love for so many works—the idea is shameful to His person. Salvation is not at market except under these clear terms: “without money and without price.” Freely you can be saved if you will cast away from your mind any thought of making God your debtor. So you say, “I think it would be good for my resume to show kind deeds done to the poor.” Or perhaps you are rich and could give a billion dollars in pure gold to the church—now you think God will accept you. That would not buy enough for your foot to stand on heaven’s floor, for the streets are made with pure gold. We cannot buy heaven with gold nor good works, nor prayers, or anything in the world. So how is it to be had? Heaven is for the asking to those who come in despair and simply request it of God’s mercy. Do you know that if you want Christ, you may have Him.

“Salvation is the gift of God—that is to say, it is completely so, in opposition to the notion of growth. Salvation is not a natural production from within; it is brought from a foreign zone and planted within the heart by heavenly hands. Salvation is a gift from God in its entirety. If you will receive it, there it is, complete.

“Will you accept it as a perfect gift? ‘No, I will produce it in my own workshop.’ You cannot forge a work so rare and costly, upon which even Jesus spent His life’s blood.

“If my Lord Jesus gives you salvation at this moment, you have it, and you have it forever. He will never take it back again. And if He does not take it from you, who can? If He saves you now through faith, you are saved—so saved that you will never perish, neither will anyone pluck you out of His hand” (John 10:28).

Did Jesus speak of hard works to achieve salvation? I should say not. John 5:24 states, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who

hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”

Can you hear? Will you believe? Then you may have Him—but I warn you; drop your money bag and dead works at the door.

CONNECT WITH A GOOD CHURCH

If you are a genuine saved Christian you must seek and find a good church group. Why... God said so!!! Hebrews 10: 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Do not think yourself as saved if you find it proper to ignore God’s command here. A good church must first and foremost handle scripture carefully. Next it must love and care for people’s lives. Thirdly it must reach out to the world with the Gospel to draw all people to Jesus Christ the Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

John 14:6 states, “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

We do need to be involved with a good church for the purpose of having godly, wise counsel and a place where we can learn God’s Word. Next we need to join hands with other Christians to serve God. Good churches are helping and serving the community. Perhaps it women’s shelters or homeless shelters or caring for widow’s who are desolate. There are hundreds of godly endeavors that you may find to fulfill you calling to serve God.

Some people say, “The Church is full of hypocrites!” That’s true, and there’s always room for one more. We are all hypocrites at

times. The church wasn’t made for perfect people to attend; it is like a hospital for those desiring help and transformation. True Christians are the ones becoming less hypocritical. It is amazing and fulfilling to join hands to love others. Yesterday, I saw Christians buy a car for a homeless family. A Mom, and Dad and 4 small children. You should have seen their happy hearts when they were handed the keys... It was the work of many not just one or two persons.. God loves the team concept. It is called the family of God His Church. Church is a place where your life can make a big difference. Yes, it can be an exciting adventure.

IS MY SALVATION REAL?

Please read the following and answer this question. Who were genuine and who were not?

Mat 25:32-46 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. 34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' 37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' 40 "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' 41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was

hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' 44 "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' 45 "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' 46 "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

It seems to be that those who were saved were very active in loving those who were fellow Christians... No doubt they were loving others as well, but Jesus took their active loving service to His own people as if it were done to himself? Also note that they were not working for salvation, but the Holy Spirit was empowering them to love. If you are genuinely saved you too will do likewise. Those who refuse to fellowship with other Christians should be concerned.

TRANSFORMED WITH A NEW IDENTITY

Tim Keller said "Without the Bible, without the Scriptures ... Unless you know *why* I died and rose, just being scared, or just being amazed, or just being impressed, or just being inspired, that won't change your identity. Here's why. You have to have love to change your identity." Why do you so desperately want to be successful, want people's approval, or want the love of this person?

Why do you build your identity on the items you do? You're looking for love. That's why you're there. You can't say, "Well, I've listened to this sermon tonight, and this is very interesting. I see that I do put too much importance on this, and I do put too much importance on this. I'd better not do that."

I'm sorry. You're not going to be able to change by an act of the will. You can't change by trying. You can't change by being scared. You can't change by being amazed. Jesus says, "You have to go to the Bible and listen to *why* I died and rose. Because unless you know why I died and rose, you won't really be changed, because what you need is to see how much I love you."

Okay. Let's go to the prophets. What does it say? Here's what it says in Isaiah 52 and 53 about the suffering servant, the one who's going to come and pay the price for sin. It says, "**It was the Lord's will to crush him**, and we looked upon him and were appalled. He was disfigured beyond human appearance, and his form was marred beyond human likeness. The Lord made him a guilt offering, but the results of his suffering he shall see and be satisfied." Let me meditate with you on that last statement.

Jesus says, "If you want to know how much I love you ... You have to know my love. You have to have such a transforming, overwhelming experience of my love that it will pull your heart away from these other things that are giving you such an unstable, disintegrating, isolating, despising, detesting identity. If you want what I can give you, you have to see how much I love you."

He says, "You need to see how much my suffering is tied to your value." "The results of his suffering he shall see and be satisfied." What are the results? Us. What Jesus is saying is, what the Bible is saying is, YOU ARE SO VALUABLE THAT THE SUFFERING WAS WORTH IT. He went through this much suffering because his love for you was greater even than the suffering. Well, how much suffering? That's the key. It's all tied. Your value is tied to how much suffering he went through. How much suffering did he go through?

When he was on the cross, what did he say, "My God, my God, how these nails hurt. My God, my God, I think I'm suffocating"? Crucifixion. You're pulled up here. "My God, my God this spear is terrible. My God, my God, the thorns are

terrible”? No. Do you know what he says? “My God, my God, why have you cast me far away? Why have you forsaken me?” What’s going on?

You’re never going to have your heart utterly changed, your identity utterly changed, by a sense of the love of Jesus unless you realize *how much* he suffered for you, because your value depends on the suffering. How much did he suffer for you? Do you see that? Dr. Lloyd-Jones used to tell this story.

He said something like, “If I came home and you were there, and you said, ‘Oh. Something came in the mail. It was a bill, and I paid it for you. It was a bill to you, but I paid it ...’ well, how excited should you be? Well, it depends. Right? You have to figure it out. Maybe it was just postage due on a package, and it was \$3. ‘Thank you, very much.’

But what if it was the IRS saying, ‘you owe 10 years of back taxes, and we’re going to take everything,’ and he paid that?” In other words, you have no idea whether to shake his hand or whether to fall on the earth and kiss his little toes until you know how much he paid, how great the cost, how great the sacrifice.

How do you know how much God loves you? Are you the kind of person who says, “Oh, I don’t believe in hell. I can’t believe in that. I believe God accepts everybody. God loves everybody”? Okay. Is that going to change you? No. It hasn’t, has it? If you don’t believe in hell, you’ll never know how much he loves you. If you don’t believe in torment, you’ll never know what he went through. If you say, “Well, I don’t want to believe in hell,” fine, but you are doomed to never knowing just how much he loves you.

On the cross, he didn’t say, “My God, my God, these nails hurt,” but “Why have you cast me away?” *He* was being thrown away. *He* was far away. *He* was getting the fire. *He* was being separated from the Father. He was experiencing hell, all the infinite disintegration. He was experiencing it on the cross. The Apostles’ Creed says it. He descended into hell for you, for me. You don’t believe in hell? You just think he went through nails?

When he says, “I value you so much that hell was worth it,” then you have a measure, then you know what you’re worth, then you know who you are. Who cares whether you’re a successful this or that? Who cares whether you’re dating anybody now or not? Think about that. You’re dating somebody; you start to feel better about yourself. You’re not dating anybody; you feel worse about yourself. What is the matter with you?

Either you don’t believe this, or you haven’t thought about it. Jesus says you must *listen* to Moses and the prophets; you must *listen* to the Bible. You must *listen*. It’s not enough just to believe he rose from the dead. You could have been there and seen him rise from the dead, but unless you know why ... “Unless you know what I went through, you’ll not know how much I love you.”

Please, please, embrace this. Believe in hell so you can know how much he loved you. Believe in hell so you can see it and meditate on it and rejoice in it and think about it until it gradually, gradually pulls you off of these other things and puts your identity so firmly on him that you’ll still be you no matter what. In this life, you’ll be loving people around you, being generous and liberal to everyone all around you in this life. In the next, you’ll have life everlasting.

I’m asking you to do two things. One is *embrace this; accept this*. If you say, “Father, I’ve been self-justifying all my life. I had my religious phases when I was trying to be a good person, but then I was just looking to my morality. Then, I had my irreligious phase, which I’ve been in for a long time, and I was looking to other things; but now finally, I ask would you please accept me because of what Jesus did? I see how much you love me. Receive me, accept me, because of what Jesus did ...”

When that happens, you begin the TRANSFORMATION OF IDENTITY we’ve been talking about. You do not know how fast he will start to make himself real to you. You don’t know how fast he’ll come to you, one way or another, and say, “It was all worth it, just so you and I could be together.” There’s one other

thing. *Don't be afraid of death.* Jesus took death. He didn't just take the physical death; he took eternal death. You don't have to be afraid of it anymore."¹²

SAVED WITHOUT A DOUBT

God is eager to accept you into His eternal kingdom if you come with repentance (true change of heart coupled with a trust to be changed by God's loving grace) and confess Jesus as Lord. The Bible says, "Unless you are born again, you shall not enter into the kingdom of God." To be born again means that you have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is the spirit of Christ, who comes into your heart to live. God in His infinite love provides the power to change your life. This change begins immediately in that Christ comes into your heart and He begins a process that continues to transform your mind, your soul, your very being more and more towards perfection.

Salvation is the result of God's power; you literally are *reborn* spiritually. God comes into your heart and you are changed by His power. This instant spiritual transformation begins to affect your thinking, reasoning, and actions. Think about it. Christ, who died for your sins and was raised from the dead is now in your heart perfecting you so that you will receive not only entrance into the kingdom of God, but eternal rewards for obedience to the truth.

Christ comes into the heart of those who come to Him, and He begins to reveal to them the treasures of God's kingdom. He fills them with meaning, with joy and fulfillment, with peace and thankfulness, with humility and trust, with self-control and patience, with wisdom and discernment, with love that overpowers darkness, consumes selfishness, and directs the

heart to forgive. He identifies with others in sorrow and joy, and guides them toward godly pursuits.

Of course this is only a small portion of what the power of Christ does when He enters the heart of a person who believes in His name and confesses Him as Lord of their life, which results in your following Him. Are you one who is willing to give up all to pursue the Ultimate One, one that forsakes emptiness for the fulfillment of His friendship and lordship? He gives life eternal.

Another critical element that takes place is that God makes a covenant (a promise between two) which is noted in the Bible.

Hebrews 10:14-18 says: "For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary."

Could God love you anymore than He does? I think not! Only one offering was required to perfect you and to sanctify you, to separate you out for God's kingdom and purpose. It says He will put His law in your heart. The truth is not just some external rules that must be learned and practiced with diligent effort, which would not result in genuine change. Rather, it is placing the perfect character of Jesus into your heart to effect deep and progressive change. Unlike other religions, where lofty standards are imposed on a feeble person, breeding failure and discouragement, the high standards of Christianity are achieved by God's empowerment. He is strong for His children.

¹² Keller, T. J. (2013). [*The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive*](#). New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church.

God puts His law into your heart, and He writes it on your mind. On a day-by-day basis, He interprets the meaning of His words and applies them to your individual walk with Him. God is passionately and personally involved in helping you. This transformation will affect your whole life. God has a covenant with you—a promise to see you all the way through to the very end. He will be with you as a friend and a comfort through every challenge that you face. There is no need to ever feel lonely again. He is your companion; He is your Father. The God who created the universe wants you, your friendship, your love and your trust. And you owe Him your heart of worship and obedience. What an awesome reality! Keep in mind that the circumstances of life may not grow better once you become a Christian. They may grow worse, but now you have His resources to gracefully endure. You have His promised friendship and care to the very end. When you pass you will pass into the loving arms of the one who died to give you eternal life where there are no more tears...only joy. The bible says: “No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor has entered into the heart of man the things God has prepared for those who love Him.” Today is the day of salvation, do not neglect this opportunity to say YES to the Lord who loves you and wants to bring you into eternal blessings. Say YES to the only One who ever cared enough for you to die on your behalf. Say YES to the One who promises to save you by His power and life. Jesus said, “Whosoever comes to me, I will in no wise cast out.”¹³ The Scriptures say, “He that has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ.”¹⁴ In other words, what Christ has begun, He has the wisdom and power to perfect, and He will present you as blameless before God. Christ perfectly fulfilled every commandment God gave, and because He sacrificed His life, died for our sins and was raised from the dead on the third day for our justification, we are able to enter into eternity and experience the ultimate relationship with our

¹³ John 6:37

heavenly Father. It is by God’s grace that we are saved, from ourselves and from this world that is so full of despair and destruction.

Romans 10:9-11 says, “That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’”

On judgment day, when you, as a believer, go before God to be judged, your attorney will be the Lord Jesus Christ, and He will tell the Father that you are acquitted because of His own payment for your sins. Your heart will melt with thankfulness and joy as you enter into eternity robed in brilliant perfections of His righteousness.

Thank you for reading this book. Please feel free to contact me if you have a concern or question. I do not promote a denomination or a movement, and generally I do not recommend where you should go to church. I believe that if you will seek the Lord for His help, He will lead you to the right place.

Further help: Email: WittKeith@Hotmail.com

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¹⁴ Philippians 1:6