

Salvation

" Soteriology 101 "

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**A Voice in the Wilderness
P.O.Box 9531
Spokane, WA 99209 USA**

www.a-voice.org

The unconventional punctuation styles you will see are related to the way these studies were originally intended for the e-mail audience, using plain text to keep file sizes smaller for bulk mailing; creatively 'formatting' with punctuation, for various kinds of emphases, in the absence of formatting the actual type. You may find occasional misspellings, and the more rare cases of a Scripture reference going to a wrong passage; those will be 'typos', not intentional. With this type of POD (Print On Demand) publishing, it seems simplest, and the most prudent use of time, to not completely go through and revamp everything, but to just leave things as they are. Please accept this book, warts and all; but rather, please pay attention to, and receive God's Truth presented herein.

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Introduction:

The dictionary defines: Soteriology =The theological doctrine of salvation as effected by Jesus. Etymology from Greek words including, "deliverance, savior, safe."

What does it take to get to heaven? Who gets to go there? Or...does heaven even enter the picture? This definition of "soteriology" includes aspects of "deliverance." Deliverance from what? A "savior?" Who might that be? Can we be sure of being "safe?" Are we even in "danger" that a discussion of "safety" is even necessary? What is the source of this danger?

Today many people talk of "being saved." They turn over a new leaf, and now proclaim themselves "born again." I know of one person who, out of one side of his mouth was proclaiming to me that he "got saved" and was straightening his life around, and at the very same time was trying to con his sister into sending him money so he could get his next drug fix.

People respond to "altar calls" and go forward. Over and over. What happens when they go forward at these emotional appeals? What gospel are they responding to? Are they being saved?

Church Member: if someone were to ask you "what you believe" can you tell them? "Well, let me check with my pastor what WE believe (as a church)...and I'll get back to you." Or..."let me get you in touch with my pastor, and HE can explain it to you." Dear person: Are YOU saved?

Pastor: if someone comes to you, wanting to know "how to be saved" can you tell them? What "gospel" do YOU preach from your pulpit? Are YOU, yourself, saved?

What about election? predestination? atonement? redemption? foreknowledge? repentance? forgiveness? judgment? justice? love? grace? mercy? etc?

Questions...Questions...Questions!

In this series we will find answers to all these questions from God's Word. Yes, even the question, "Are you saved?" By the time this series is complete, you will know in your heart if you belong to God. And you will have a firm foundation to base it on...the Scriptures.

Created in Perfection:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Gen1:1)

Quite possibly the first part of the "heavens and earth" that God created was the angelic beings. Angels were created to serve and worship God (Ps103:20,104:4,Is6:3) for the benefit of man.(Heb1:14)

According to God's word to Job, it would appear that the angels were created before the earth, as part of "the heavens" of Gen1:1, as He says, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? ..who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"(Job38:4,6-7)

Angels were created perfect. Even of Lucifer it is written. 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "You were the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes Was prepared for you on the day you were created. "You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created...."(Ez28:12-15)

The "anointed cherub who covers" is mentioned in the article "Treason." When Moses made the Ark, on top was the Mercy Seat and the covering cherubim. The Mercy Seat representing "God's presence" and most intimate fellowship of God. This Ark was a "pattern of things in heaven."(Heb8:5,Ex25:40) This was Lucifer's domicile at the beginning of creation. In God's very presence. Right next to God's union and fellowship. In perfection.

Then God created the universe, earth and man. What kind of creation was this? A perfect one. All along the way, after each step of creation God observes what He has just made and pronounces it "Good." (Gen1:10,12,18,21,25)

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth.."(Gen1:26) He "formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."(2:7)

God takes this man, Adam, and puts him in a most idyllic environment, the Garden of Eden. Vegetation was lush. All necessary food was available just for the picking. The climate was perfect for comfort. Animals were peaceful, as Adam had direct contact with them all, as he gave them all their names.(2:19)

Then, God provided man with the crowning glory to all this, and brought him a helper.(2:18) A woman. Eve.(2:22) This relationship was a perfect one. A perfect match. They were both naked.(2:25) Open, honest, with no barriers between them.

This perfect relationship supersedes all other earthly relationships, as children are to "leave" their parents and "be joined" to their mate. And become "one flesh."(2:24) And is also a picture of the fellowship God desires to have with man, as He came walking in the garden (3:8), and is what Christ desires to have with the Church (Eph5:32), as He called His disciples, His "friends,"(Jn15:15) as He was making known "all things" with them.

And "God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was VERY GOOD."(1:31)

The Fall:

"You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God..You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God..you were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you."(~Ez28:11-15)

With every advantage and opportunity for happiness, Lucifer's rebellion began while he was right in the midst of the most intimate place of fellowship with and service to God. Incredible!

"How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! ..your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor.. you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; ..I will be like the Most High'"(~Is14:12-14,Ez28:17)

"Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"(Gen3:1)

God had created a perfect paradise. Perfect climate. Enough food to eat. Animals to tend to. Perfect marriage. And they were essentially free to do "anything" they wanted to. There were no laws. No right and wrong. Perfect fellowship with God. No sin. No "repressed memories" of abuse and sorrow. No parents who had "failed" in their upbringing. No restrictions. Except one. The "tree of the knowledge of good and evil."(Gen2:17) They were not to eat of its fruit. If they did eat of its fruit, the promised outcome; "you shall SURELY die."

Satan comes along to Eve and plants a question in her mind. A doubt. 'God didn't REALLY say this did He?'

Eve responds something like, 'We are not to eat it or touch it, or chances are we'll die.'

Oh dear, Eve! Do you realize what you have just done? You have added to God's word. You have changed it. God only said, "you shall not eat." He never said anything about "touching" it. And, let's take another look. He said you will "SURELY" die. No questions about it. It is firm. It is sure.

Oh, but Eve. Let me tell you something. You won't REALLY die. What a silly notion! Indeed! Actually, listen up now. God is keeping a secret from you. Wouldn't you like to be enlightened? There is something called "good and evil." Right! You don't know about that, do you. Pity! That thing God didn't tell you about. This is a new experience for you to try. You think God is looking out for you, but actually He's kinda jealous. You see, the really 'deep secret' He's keeping from you is that, if you eat of this fruit, you'll actually be "just like God" ...knowing "good and evil." He knows this but He's trying to keep this from you. But you won't know what it's like

unless you experience it. Don't you want to be just like God? Feel the good! Feeeel the evil!! There there...sure, go ahead. No...REALLY...go Ahead! You're not gonna die. After all, do you think this "loving" God would REALLY kill you, just after creating you? Preposterous! Naw! Go ahead.... It's OK!

Eve starts out questioning God's word. Lies. Distorts God's word. Lusting after the promised benefits she's being allured to. And then, seduces her husband into her same lust.

And look! They're still alive! They didn't fall down dead after all! See?! God was withholding from them just like the serpent said! I can just about hear him, "See! I tol'dja. Heh, heh!"

Where was the first sin? In the HEART. "You have said in your heart..." "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." (Mat 15:19) "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?" (Jer17:9)

Was it sinful for Lucifer to be so beautiful, talented and full of wisdom? No. But rather than looking to God Who created him, and being content with God's perfect plan for him, he became puffed up with pride. "Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall. (Pr16:18) And before Lucifer was finished with his insurrection, he had conned a third of the angels to follow him.(Rev12:4)

So, the big question now! "Who made Eve sin?" Can Eve claim, "The devil made me do it."? Was it Satan's "fault" that Eve sinned?

Eve was deceived, most certainly. "...but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression."(1Tim2:14) Satan is the deceiver of the world. (Rev12:9) As he is the "father" of lies.(Jn8:44) However we are told, "each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires [lust] and enticed. Then, when desire [lust] has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.(Jas1:14-15)

Eve made the decision on her own, "when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate.(Gen3:6) The serpent did not hog-tie her, and force-feed her. He simply found some loopholes in her doctrine (her IDEA of what God had said), and presented the enticements before her, and her own pride and lust did the rest.

There are many speculations as to why Adam followed Eve in disobedience. But we do know from Scripture that he was not deceived.(1Tim2:14) He did it with full knowledge of what he was doing. Eyes wide open.

So, let's review briefly. Lucifer's pride vaunted him to rebel against God. He tempts Eve with lies; casting doubt regarding God's word, calling God a liar, directly contradicting God's word, questioning God's motives, appealing to her own sense of pride, self-worth, wisdom...and plain ol' sense of "feeling good," and ultimately...godhood. "You will be like God."(3:5) So Eve disobeys God. And then, in turn, seduces Adam to follow her.

God comes walking along in the garden for fellowship, and now with their new enlightenment, they are afraid of God, because, of all

things...they discover they are naked. And they run away to hide from God's presence. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way."(Is53:6)

Mankind today is just like this. As was Israel, "As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of the LORD, we will not listen to you! But we will certainly do whatever has gone out of our own mouth, to burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes..."(Jer44:16-17)

The Verdict:

"And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" So he said, I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."(Gen3:8-10)

Who told you that you were naked? Did you disobey? Did you do the one (the only) thing I told you not to do? To eat of that tree?

Did God need to ask? God already knew, didn't He. After all, "there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to Whom we must give account."(Heb4:13) God was cutting to the quick. Let's not dilly dally around. Face the matter head-on. And with this question, God was letting Adam know "what's what."

Why did God not come, calling for the serpent? Why not Eve? After all, the serpent "started" the whole thing. And Eve enticed Adam. God came right to the person "in charge." After all, He had made Adam, then Eve. Adam was made in God's "image"(Gen1:26,5:1) And Eve was taken from Adam.(2:21)(1Tim2:13) Eve was formed as a "helper"(2:20) for Adam, in his "glory."(1Cor11:3,8-9)

Adam did the only "manly thing" that could be done. "The woman..." made me do it. Ya Right, Adam! She tied you down, sat on you, and forced you to eat. Right!?

"The woman...WHOM YOU GAVE TO BE WITH ME..."(3:12) Oh dear! Not only are we not manly enough to take the blame, but let's blame it back onto God. God, it's all YOUR fault. If You hadn't given her to me, I wouldn't have done this. "But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" (Rom 9:20)

This follows right along with some current "christian" psychology trends. J.Dobson is quoted as having said that we must sometimes "forgive God" for what we perceive to be His failings on our behalf. Things haven't changed a bit, have they!

Ok, woman, "what is this you have done?"(3:13) "The devil made me do it!"

Passing the buck. Laying the blame on everybody and everything ELSE. Not on self. This is what makes lawyers so wealthy, and insurance so expensive. Everything is always the "other guy's" fault.

"But the Scripture has confined ALL under sin."(Gal3:22) It's a forgone conclusion. No excuses. It's all out in the open. Adam could not say that he had not done it. Nor could Eve. ...and God didn't even give the serpent a chance to speak.

They were all "found out." They were guilty.

The Curse:

So the Lord God said to the serpent...(3:14)

God begins at the lowest common denominator in His judgment. While he is a powerful angel, Satan is nothing. Let us never forget that Lucifer was merely the "anointed cherub that covers."(Ez28:14) But Adam was made in the likeness of God.(Gen1:27,1Co11:7) Angels were never intended to have a place of honor. They are ministering spirits, created to minister for Believers.(Heb1:14) When Satan came to tempt Eve, he did not come in the splendor with which God came. He could not even come "as himself." He came in deception; embodied in an animal.

The next three proclamations are the basis for the "next" 47000 years of world history. What we see today, traces its origins back to Genesis 3, and these three curses. To understand Sin and the human condition, and Redemption; we must understand the Curse.

1) The serpent was cursed from being the most splendid creature (3:1) to becoming the most revolting and despised.(3:14) Science tells us that the skeleton of snakes has places where, "presumably" they at one time had four legs. God removed the legs, and cursed the snake to crawl on the ground.

Why are women, typically, more afraid of snakes? "I will put enmity between you and the woman."(3:15)

"Enmity...between your seed and her Seed." Promise of a constant struggle between Satan with his demons, and mankind...leading up to the final conflict when Christ, the Seed (capital "S") of the woman(Gal4:4), would deliver a crushing blow upon Satan and his desire to destroy God's creation, man. (We'll discuss the "promise" aspect next installment.) However, until the "Seed" would arrive, the serpent would spend 4000 years trying to corrupt the human race, in order that the Redeemer could not come. His attempts would include a genetic perversion which was destroyed by Noah's flood. (Gen6:2,4,9,11) When Israel came along, he was constantly enticing them away from God, trying to corrupt and/or annihilate them. When Jesus was born, he tried to kill him through Herod, the 40-day wilderness temptation; and probably hoped he had succeeded when Jesus was on the cross.

2) Why is child-birth so painful? Why are the monthly cycles such a nuisance, and for many, a real pain? The Curse. "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children."(3:16)

And...'your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

There are several thoughts on this statement. And the original words don't really say any more than our Scripture translations do. So, let's consider them all; as I believe we will find they "all" apply.

Desire ==desire, longing, craving. Stretching out after. Overflowing with. The "intense yearning" of the woman will be "for" her husband/man..in contrast to women or God.

A woman's "natural" (by nature) inclination is to be under her man. Starting with her father, and then her husband.(Nu30:3-8,1Cor11:3)

While this is the "natural" inclination, women have been rebelling; lending credence to the other meaning of "for" in "for your husband." In other words, "your desire..." will be to try to circumvent and overtake the man's authority. And we certainly see this in modern feminist empowerment, as prophesied, "How long will you gad about, O you backsliding daughter? For the LORD has created a new thing in the earth; A woman shall encompass a man." (Jer 31:22) And of the end times, "And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, "We will eat our own food and wear our own apparel; Only let us be called by your name, To take away our reproach." (Isa 4:1) Give us sex, and let us have babies, but we'll raise them by ourselves...it's our "right." We don't need a "man" around, nor a family.

"And he shall rule over you." History has certainly proven this out, as men have regarded their women as "property" in most centuries and cultures. Have heaped abuse upon them. And generally treated them as second class creatures...often, as slaves.

The essence of our more "liberated" societies sees women adorning (or not) themselves to be beautiful. Alluring. While feminists will claim they do it for themselves because they're "worth it," even what they do, along with the others, is to entice the man. Once he's been "willingly" lured in, and their fantasies weren't met, "You don't really love me. You're just USING me! Boo hoo! Sob, Sob!" And the battle rages.

Perhaps this explains why Paul wrote, "Husbands love your wives and do not be bitter toward them."(Col3:19) I'm sure Adam was bitter towards Eve. "The WOMAN" ...made me do it. The man is willingly lured in because of his own lusts, and when he finds no substance, he feels "trapped." The beauty was only skin-deep. Bitterness, hate, wandering desires, and often abuse and cruelty ensue.

God created Eve as a "helper." Took her from Adam's rib. To be along- side. Now, because of sin, he "will rule," and you obey. (Eph5:22,33,1Pt3:1,Col3:18)

3) To the man: The plentiful land will no longer be cooperative. Working for a living will be burdensome and hard. Weeds and thistles. Disease, pain, suffering, and ultimately...dying and returning to the ground in decay.

All these things "just" from eating the forbidden fruit? Yes...because of disobeying God. How much time elapsed from God presenting Eve to Adam and the fall, we are not told. Exactly "when" in all of this did Lucifer rebel against God originally we do not know. But fairly quickly, all the elements of the sinful heart were created in this one

incident. Pride, self-esteem, lust, lying, deceit, disobedience, blaming, accusing, hate, etc.

Yes, the serpent lied. He said, "you shall not surely die."(3:4) And while they were physically still standing, their way of life was taken away. They were chased out of the beautiful garden lest they should eat of the Tree of Life, which was guarded by cherubim,(vs24) so now there was no more access to Eternal Life. Their diet changed from beautiful plentiful fruit, to include herbs.(3:18) They were out of fellowship with God. And the sentence of death was upon them.(Rom5:12) And they died.(Gen5:5)

The Provision & Promise:

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel...also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them."(Gen3:15,21)

Here, in a nutshell is the basis for this series on Salvation. So far we have only discovered the "background" for the topic. What God is promising "here" would not be fulfilled for another 4000 years into the future.

God has created man in perfection. But man, at the tempting of Satan, has rebelled. Disobeyed God. Has "sinned." And so before humanity can even get off the ground and get any "history" going, our very forefather and mother sinned, effecting the whole course of human history.

God, Who cannot lie(Tit1:2), promised death (Rom6:23) as a consequence of sin. In this short passage also promises a "provision." A "gift" (Rom6:23b,Eph2:8) of eternal life through the "Seed" of the woman. A "hope of eternal life.."(Tit1:2)

As a symbol of this promise, God instructs Adam and Eve regarding an act of faith. An animal sacrifice. He provides clothing to cover their "sin" through the representative, prophetic death of an animal. The shed blood representing God's imputed righteousness to them, which would be fulfilled ultimately by the "Seed" of the woman.(Heb9:22) The clothing, representing God's provision of the "robe of righteousness."(Isa61:10)

And almost immediately we find the first martyr. Abel offered, by faith, the firstborn from the flock.(Gen4:4) And Cain decided he would try his own idea. When God accepted Abel's offering, and rejected Cain; Cain did not repent. Rather, he became angry with Abel, and killed him. And even in that, what we see today is not new; as the unregenerate insist upon their own wisdom, reject God, and persecute those who do Believe.

At the very beginning God's provision for sin was the shedding of blood and death of a substitutionary animal by faith.(Heb11:4) Until Jesus died on the cross, throughout the O.T. we see the animal sacrifice. Shedding of blood, the giving of a life, since the "life is in the blood."(Gen9:4,Lv17:11) Salvation was "by faith."(Gen15:6)

This series will not cover the various "dispensations" in the O.T. They all, however, possess these two key elements. 1) The blood of the prophetic substitutionary animal sacrifice, 2) offered in Faith.

The rest of the series will discover how Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of those 4000 years of sacrifices. The relationship between God and man. ...and Salvation through Faith.

Human Condition at Birth:

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned...through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation...For..by one man's disobedience many were made sinners..(~Rom 5:12,18-19) Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. (Psa 51:5)

This pretty well sums up the matter. Adam sinned, and as a result the entire human race is corrupted.

The result of this sin is death. "The wages of sin is death.."(Rom6:23) The term "wages" indicates "payment-for-performance."

The payment is "deserved" and God is just in His judgment. "You are righteous, O Lord...because You have judged these things..for it is their just due..Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! For true and righteous are His judgments..."(~Rev16:7,19;1-2)

The payment is for deeds of sin committed. Just as an employer keeps records of the work and time performed by the employee, God keeps records. "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it...and I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened...and the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books...and anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire"(Rev20:11-15)

All humanity will be judged for their works. Believers, at the judgment seat of Christ.(2Cor5:10,Rom14:12) Where their works will be judged according to the quality of their service. (1Cor3:10-15, Mt25:21, Heb4:13) And will be the basis for rewards. (Rev22:12, 1Cor3:8,9:17, Col2:18,2Jn8)

Those who have not received Christ (not in the Book of Life), will receive their "reward."(Heb2:2) And will be judged, and condemned to eternal punishment and torment. "There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."(Mt8:12) It is a place of "outer darkness." A place where there is eternal consciousness.(Lk16:24) "...the corpses of the men Who have transgressed against Me...their worm does not die, And their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh." (Isa66:24)

Some will object, "I haven't sinned." Or.."my sins aren't all THAT bad."

"There is none righteous, no, not one...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."(Rom3:10,23) For there is not a just man on earth who does good And does not sin. (Eccl 7:20)

God is holy, and there is no person alive who can measure up to His standard. Isaiah, upon seeing God's glory, wailed, "Woe is me, for I am undone! I am a man of unclean lips."(Isa6:5) And if any would try to qualify their sins as being "not so bad" God says that even "our righteousnesses are like filthy rags."(Isa64:6)

How many sins does it take to be guilty? Only one. That's all it took for Adam and Eve. They had only one chance and they blew it. "For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all."(Jas2:10)

So, what of the theory promoted by psychology: that if babies could be born, and immediately placed in an environment where there was no contact with other humans, that they would grow up good, and sinless...because we are all "born good." They would not follow the examples of their corrupted, dysfunctional, wounded inner-self parents?

Well, consider: that was already "tried" as Adam and Eve had no parents to "corrupt" them. They were placed in a perfect environment. And sinned anyway.

Sorry. The sin exists at the time of conception. "In sin my mother conceived me."(Ps51:5) As mere zygotes we are sinners. The sin is "inherited." We were born "dead in trespasses and sins." We are "sons of disobedience." We are "by nature the children of wrath."(Eph2:1-3)

So, the question then. Which comes first; the sin, or the sinner? We do not sin, and thus BECOME sinners. We are born in sin, and thus, we sin. A dog barks, ducks quack, ...sinners sin.

If you were to attempt to insist upon your own goodness, and lack of need for God, and as such, no need to "believe in this stuff," you would be further illustrating the rebellion as stated, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way."(Is53:6)

Sin separates us from God. "Your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear."(Isa59:2) There is no fellowship. God is not obliged to hear and answer our prayers.

Those who claim to not believe in God, believe in God's laws "by nature."(Rom2:14) And their conscience speaks to them about God. As a result, there is no answer. Every mouth...is "stopped,"(Rom3:19) and all the world is guilty as charged and bears the sentence of death.

"The soul who sins shall die."(Ez18:4)

Sin: by actions or inheritance?

READER QUESTIONS:

are you saying that ,we are sinners because we sin or do we sin because were sinners?

VW ANSWER:

Perhaps you missed the paragraph: "So, the question then. Which comes first; the sin, or the sinner? We do not sin, and thus BECOME sinners. We are born in sin, and thus, we sin. A dog barks, ducks quack, ...sinners sin." ??

However, I can see where there might be some confusion, because we also spoke of Adam and Eve; being in the "perfect environment" and sinning "anyway". That they had "one chance and they blew it".

God created man perfect, sinless. But Adam and Eve "committed" acts of disobedience to God. Notice what Paul says resulted, "...just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to every person, because everyone sinned.." (Rom5:12)

This word "entered" is an interesting word. It is not the same word that one might use when one 'opens a door' and "enters" a building. But rather, it means "entrance into a condition" or "come into existence" or "begin to be". In other words, when Adam sinned that first time, sin in the world began to exist. Prior to that, there was no sin in the world. Adam and Eve, by their acts, "introduced" sin into the world.

So then, now that sin 'was' in the world, the resultant "death" spread to all men. Yes, Adam and Eve became sinners by sinning. But their sin nature subsequently passed on down the generations at "conception". (Ps51:5) Thus, the sin nature produces sinful deeds in everybody since Adam. There is "none righteous...none who does good, no not one" (Rom3:10,12, Ps14:1-3) Remember, we were "by nature children of wrath". (Eph2:3) The only ones who -BECAME- sinners due to their 'deeds' were Adam and Eve. The rest of everybody since then -INHERITED- sin at birth.

Babies who die: Saved/Lost?

READER QUESTIONS:

we here [sic] it stated that if a person dies before they reach the age of knowledge they go to heaven, were is this found in scripture? from the verses you stated ,this is not the case. They go to hell unless they are of the elect. like the elect angles, if what they are saying is true and they beleve it ,should they not be going around and killing them before they reach that age and choose not to beleve,and then go to hell? Because of my nature iam seperated from GOD not my action,i was born comdemned, GOD choose this way

READER QUESTIONS:

I am quite confused now.. are you telling us that a baby who dies shortly after birth is lost to hell because he was born in sin.. or the baby that lives a few months then dies with out having been baptized is lost for ever ? please clarify this..

VW ANSWERS:

Children/babies of the unsaved do not go to Heaven. Sorry if this hurts anybody with memories of lost ones. Let's explain...

To give the short answer here, please notice 1Cor7:14. As long as there is a Believing parent in the family, the children are "holy". This word "holy" means "saint"; the same expression Paul uses repeatedly of Believers in the assemblies. (2Cor1:1) They are "called saints". (Rom1:7, 1Cor1:2) But conversely, when none of the parents are Believers, the children are "unclean". This is a ceremonial/Levitical kind of word. It doesn't mean that they have been playing and in coming into the house, need to wash their face and hands. But ceremonially, in the eyes of the Levitical Law (of God), they are unclean. Outside of God's grace; as we learned recently from Ephesians 2:12, how Gentiles were not part of the "commonwealth of Israel" and God's Salvation. In the same sense, Gentiles were Levitically, ceremonially "unclean". In other words, children of families with no Believing parents are not saved.

For past in-depth discussions on this please check out:

Q/A -Age of Accountability www.a-voice.org/qa/qa1.htm#account

Q/A -Children at the Rapture? www.a-voice.org/qa/qa19.htm#children

However, regarding the notion that we "should kill the babies" before they come to the age of understanding... NO! NO! NO! First of all, God did -NOT- "choose" for babies to be condemned to death. It was not His "purpose" that "any should perish but that all should come to repentance". (2Pt3:9) If an "unclean" baby is killed before that age, they never have the chance to "come to repentance". -THAT- is the whole scourge of abortion! That is what is SO WRONG WITH abortion, and why satan's servants are SO MILITANT about killing as many babies in the womb as possible with today's "abortion rights" feminism and activism. Satan doesn't want them to ever see the light of day, so as to be faced with Christ, and (perchance) 'some' of them -might- come to Saving Faith in Christ. It is not enough to him that 99.999% of humanity is already on the "broad.way that leads to destruction" (Mt7:13), but he wants them -all-!! to confine as many as possible before they even have the chance. Those are "100%!!" On this topic please see:

Abortion: What's REALLY at Stake? www.a-voice.org/main/abortion.htm

Oh yes...By the way... "Baptism" does not save babies. Dabbing some water on a baby's head is a pagan ritual. It is a practice not found in Scripture. Salvation is a "gift" and "not of [pagan] works". (Eph2:8-9) The only way a baby is saved is by being "-in-" a family with Believing parent/s... "you and your household" (Ac16:31) just as, the only way a person of 'understanding' is saved is by being "-in- Christ". (2Cor5:17)

Jesus Christ: Seed of the woman:

To the serpent God said, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."(Gen3:15) This is the first recorded promise of a "future" Redeemer.

Satan tried to corrupt the human race genetically with the intermarriage between the fallen angels and human females. God destroyed the entire human race with the flood, and saved Noah, the only family whose "generations" were "perfect."(Gen6:9) Uncorrupted.

Shortly after the flood, God separated Abram out of Ur, to make a chosen nation through which to bring the Redeemer. "I will make you a great nation; ...and you shall be a blessing...in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed...in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed."(~Gen12:2-3,22:18)

Satan tried to destroy the nation of Israel in Egypt by drowning the male babies.(Ex1:15) But God preserved Moses, and 80 years later brought Israel out of Egypt as His own special chosen people.

Then, David became God's chosen one, as God's plans became more specifically narrowed and defined. "I will appoint a place for My people Israel...I will set up your seed after you...I will establish his throne forever."(1Chr17:9,12) "And the throne of David shall be established before the Lord forever."(1Kg2:45) Jesus is called "Son of David."(Mt1:1,9:27,12:23)

So then, Satan tried to thwart God's plans by enticing the succeeding kings of Judah away from God, sending Judah into captivity to Babylon. And then attempting to annihilate Israel through the schemes of Haman.(Es3:8) But God provided Esther as the savior and prevented the slaughter.(Es9)

After the dispersion have returned, along the way come Joseph and Mary. Both with legal and hereditary lineage back to David, Abraham and Adam.(Mt1:1-17,Lk3:23-38) And Jesus was brought to the "virgin" Mary through the Holy Spirit.(Lk1:35)

It is essential that Jesus was not born of a human male/female union. Otherwise, as we learned in the previous chapter, Jesus' zygote would have been corrupt with "inherited" sin. He would not be a perfect, unblemished, spotless sacrificial "lamb." Because it is through "man" that sin came into the world.(Rom5:12) God's promise was through the "seed of the WOMAN."(Gen3:15) Thus, Mary's pregnancy could not be a result of Human Male intervention.

Even after the fact, Satan tries to discredit the matter through his apostates who insist that in Isa7:14 "virgin" does not mean "virgin." And through perversions of Scripture, that say Joseph was Jesus' "father."(Lk2:33)

So, here we have Jesus: perfect Deity and perfect humanity.

"The Word, Who was in the beginning with God...Who WAS God...became 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."(Jn1:1,14) We know that He was Deity because it says, "in Him was life."(vs4) It was "God" who breathed into man's nostrils the "breath of life."(Gen2:7) Jesus later claims, "I am the...life." And further solidifies His claim to deity, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father."(Jn14:6,9) And later demonstrates His authority in the garden when identifying Himself, "I am He,"(Jn18:6) using God's eternal name (Ex3:14), and the throng who had come to arrest Him were knocked backwards to the ground at the power of His Name.

Being perfect Deity insures perfect sinlessness. "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth."(1Pt2:22) Who could claim, "I always do those things that please Him [Father]." (Jn8:29)

When human priests offered sacrifices, they had to first purify themselves.(Heb5:3,9:7) Then, they could represent the rest of the people. Thus, their sacrifices were imperfect.

Being Deity, and perfect, Christ was in a position to offer Himself. (Heb1:3,9:25) And He says, "I lay down My life that I may take it again, No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself."(Jn10:17-18) And, His sinlessness made for a perfect sacrifice, which could atone for mankind's sin. He did not have any sin of His own which needed atoning.(Heb4:15) He came from God, directly.(Heb1:5)

Not only was Jesus "Deity." He was also humanity. The "last Adam."(1Cor15:45) While Jesus' deity could save man's spirit, His humanity saves man's flesh. His resurrection is the "firstfruits" for those who have died in Christ. (1Cor15:20) Adam (a man) sinned and brought death. Christ (a man) brought resurrection of the dead.(vs21) Adam brought sin into the world. Jesus brings righteousness.(Rom5:19)

Being humanity, Jesus was an "equivalent" substitute for man's sin. "Man" had sinned, and thus "man" must die. Thus, if Jesus was to take man's judgment, He had to be a "man." He must undergo the same "test" Adam did to be sure He was well qualified. The opportunity to be tempted to sin, but then to resist the temptation. And that He did. "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Heb4:15) Thus, proving to all creation that He "measured up" to God's holy standard. (Col1:15,Heb1:4b,5:9)

While He said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father," illustrating his deity, He laid aside all His splendor of heaven, and took on humanity with all its frailties, He "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."(Phil2:7-8) As a person He, "learned obedience by the things which He suffered."(Heb5:8) This, the context of His crucifixion. He was in the garden praying, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me."(Mt26:39) And in Heb5:7 we see His agony, "supplication, with vehement cries and tears" to the Father. More agony than any other human could suffer as He sweat drops of blood.(Lk22:44) ...as His "humanity" **DESPERATELY DID NOT WANT TO** go to the cross!!

But He did!

Jesus Christ: Redeemer:

"..knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. (1Pet1:18-19)

And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. (Heb9:22)

"and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Lk24:47)

What Jesus accomplished for us can be illustrated in several ways. Due to sin mankind is in a state of eternal "hock." We have been set aside in judgment and eternal separation from God.(Eph2:12) Given over as "children of wrath."(2:3) But Jesus redeemed us out of the "pawn shop" of sin and destruction.

He did this with His own blood. As we learned that even "our righteousnesses are as filthy rags"(Is64:6), He washed us from our uncleanness "in His own blood."(Rev1:5) So, once saved, we are clean.(Rev19:8)

Scripture speaks of Jesus as the "Lamb." He is our Passover Lamb. Israel took the blood of the lamb and [struck] it upon the door posts of their houses.(Ex12:7) As it says of Jesus, "by His STRIPES we are healed."(Is53:5) And when the death angel was passing over the land of Egypt, when he saw the blood, he "passed-over" the house, and its occupants lived.(Ex12:13)

And thus, we come to this word "remission." In medicine a person is "in remission" of whatever the disease is. The symptoms are not visible. The person goes along in life as though he is now "well." However, the doctors know that at some future point it could flair up again, thus, the patient goes in periodically for examinations...just to be sure. But the doctor pronounces the person "well."

With Jesus' blood shed, the sinner is in remission. God does not "see" the sin. When the sentence of death is proclaimed, death "passes over" the person covered by Jesus' blood. Thus, John proclaimed, "behold the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world!"(Jn1:29) Jesus, our Passover Lamb.

We were cursed, but Jesus became a curse for us.(Gal3:13) He shed His blood. No other way is possible than through His blood; as He gave His life, since the "life is in the blood."(Lev17:11) And then we receive remission of sins...release from the debt, penalty, obligation due to sin. While Paul laments over the residual sin that is left in these earthly bodies (Rom7), It is the DECLARATION of righteousness. "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Rom3:24)

However, if Jesus had only died, His redemptive work would not be complete. He might have paid the penalty for sin, but these earthly

bodies would still die. But He rose from the dead so that, "just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."(Rom6:4) And not only that, those who have died in faith of Christ have the assurance of resurrection, as "Christ..has become the firstfruits of those who have [died]."(1Cor15:20)

In His resurrection Jesus leads the way into what we will become. "It has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."(1Jn3:2)

Adam was a "living being/soul." But Christ "became a life-giving spirit." (1Cor15:45) We start out in dishonor, but are raised in glory. The natural body is replaced by a spiritual body. The corruptible puts on incorruption, and the mortal puts on immortality. And death is then [fully] conquered. (~1Cor15:42-56) Jesus has already passed this way, making the way for us. For the believer, this fulfillment is yet future...which we will consider in greater depth in a later chapter.

Provisions: God

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God...For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus...which God prepared beforehand..(Eph2:8,10)

More often than not in Scripture, when the term "God" is written, the reference is to "God the FATHER." Salvation comes about because of the work of God, the FATHER.

Salvation is the "wisdom" of the Father (1Cor1:21), with a message which seems "foolish" to the world. It is the "power" of God.(1Cor1:18) The Father is "pleased" [He WANTS] to give us good things.(Lk12:32)

It was the Father's love which sent Jesus. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. (Jn3:16-17)

While God does not wish to condemn us (2Pt3:9), He is the one before Whom we stand at judgment, as the One Who sits on the throne.(Rev4:2,20:11)

Jesus said of the Father, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.(Jn6:44) So, while the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world (1Jn4:14), we do not even come to the Son in repentant faith without the Father "drawing" us. Tugging, coaxing (Jer25:4,44:4), putting up hedges before our wayward paths. (Hos2:6) Whatever His wisdom knows is required to get us to look to His Son.

Once we have believed, our service is to the Father. "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen."(1Pt4:11) We are to "glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom15:6)

Even the Son, Jesus, glorifies the Father.(Jn13:32) He said, "And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him." (Jn8:29) And when He (Jesus) was raised, He went and sat down at the "right hand of the Majesty on high."(Heb1:3) The person occupying the throne is of greater stature than the one who is at his "right hand." Paul puts it this way, "I want you to know that the head of very man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God."(1Cor11:3) And when God's wrath is about to be poured out upon the world, the Father is the One "on the throne" and Jesus comes as the "lamb" to take the scroll. "Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne." (Rev5:7)

And while Jesus has been given authority, and will rule the nations with a "rod of iron" ...when He is treading out the winepress of wrath, it is the wrath of "Almighty God."(Rev19:15) And while He has been given the

title "King of kings and Lord of lords" (19:16) This authority having been given to Him by the Father (Heb1:8-9,13), He ultimately will "return" everything back to the Father. "Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." (1Cor15:28)

However, as God said to Moses, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live." (Ex33:20) ...because, God is a "consuming fire." (Deu4:24)

So, how can there be communication between God and man? This is where Jesus comes into the picture. "Immanuel, God with us."(Mt1:23,Is7:14) Jesus said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father."(Jn14:9) Jesus is the "express image" of His [God's] person. (Heb1:3) He provides the mediation, "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1Tm2:5) While God is so awesome that the "earth and heaven fled away"(Rev20:11), Jesus came in the form as a man.(Phil2:8) Something that mere man could understand. An "equivalent substitute" as a propitiation for our sin...to satisfy God's requirement of "death for sin."(1Jn2:2)

Having redeemed us by His own blood, He is now seated at God's "right hand...making intercession for us."(Rom8:34,Heb7:25) As God would condemn the sinner, the Son, sitting at His right hand, says, 'I paid for him. He is righteous.' After all God "made Hm who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."(2Cor5:21) And if, as His children, we slip up and stumble, Jesus is right there, advocating our cause.(1Jn2:1) Because of Jesus, God does not see the Believer as a "sinner" but as "righteous." Righteousness is "imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead."(Rom4:24)

This word "imputed" means, "charged with, attributed to, credited" with RIGHTEOUSNESS. When our sin was washed away with Jesus' blood, our name was written in the Book of Life.(Phil4:3) (Next chapter we will note that this accounting was made "before Creation.") While our life was full of sin, Christ went in and "deleted our file" and even performed HD maintenance so that even the traces of it no longer exist in any clusters. "As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us." (Ps103:12) And has no more memory of it. "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."(Heb8:12)

And finally, it is Christ Who raises us up from the dead (or) raptures us, when He comes again. He said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die."(Jn11:25-26) In this context of Martha's words of the "Last Day," Jesus promised that the dead would be resurrected, and those alive [at His coming] would never die.

As Jesus was explaining that He was going away to prepare "a place" He promised to come again to "receive you to Myself."(Jn14:3) Those who have died before that time He promised, "I will raise him up at the last day."(Jn6:44) And He has authority to do this, since He was the "firstfruits" of those who are "asleep."(1Cor15:20) But not all will

"sleep."(15:51) But Christ will come in the clouds and all those who are in Christ, dead or alive, will meet Him in the clouds as He snatches us up to Himself (1Ths4:17) in the "twinkling of an eye."(1Cor15:52)

By comparison, the work of the Holy Spirit is much less "glamorous." Nevertheless, every bit as important as what the Father and Son do. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would not operate on His own authority as the Father does, or as was "given" to the Son. "...for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak."(Jn16:13) His "job" is to take of the Son and give it to us. Since the Father has given all things to the Son (vs15) this means that the HS imparts to us what God wills.

God, by His very essence IS "Spirit."(Jn4:24) Thus, we cannot know the Father without the Spirit. And we cannot have fellowship with the Son (1Jn1:3) apart from the Spirit.

When God draws us to Christ, He does so through the Spirit.(Jn16:8-11) And when Christ's blood cleanses us and gives us the "new birth"(Jn3:3,Rom6:4) the Spirit "seals" us with the "promise" of eternal life.(Eph1:13) So, as we become a "new creation" in Christ (2Cor5:17), and we have our "abode" with the Father and Son,(Jn14:23) This occurs through the Spirit. "He [the Father] will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever--the Spirit of truth."(14:16-17) And this, then, becomes a gauge as to whether or not we are truly In Christ. "You are...in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His."(Rom8:9)

As we can see, Salvation is something which God, all of Him, provides for us. We cannot cling to only one Person of the God-head, rejecting the others...and be saved. Each Person has His part. Each part is of equal importance, and intertwines inextricably.

For such a powerful, glorious, awesome God to look at mere insignificant, rebellious, obstinate sinners; and go to so much trouble to save us! Such Love! There aren't words to tell...to describe such Grace and Mercy!

"When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him [man] a little lower than the angels, And You have crowned him with glory and honor. (Ps8:3-5)

But-- "...salvation is far from us. For our transgressions are multiplied before You, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and as for our iniquities, we know them: in transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood, justice is turned back...truth fails. Then the LORD saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor...

Therefore HIS OWN ARM BROUGHT SALVATION for Him: and HIS OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS, it sustained Him. (Is59:11-16)

As a result- "...you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. (1Pt2:9-10)

Provisions: Past

"Knowing that you were...redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world.."(1Pt1:18-20)

"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.."(Eph1:3-4)

"..whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.."(Rev13:8)

"..whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world.."(Rev17:8) "..although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.."(Heb4:3)

As we have looked at our God Who provides salvation, we also see a God Who is in complete control. As people contemplate "creation vs. evolution" one of the primary arguments is that of "order vs. chaos." "Planning vs. chance." As theoretical mathematicians punch the keys of their calculators, the stark reality is that the universe as we know it could not possibly have come into existence apart from an intelligent Creator who specifically designed it. This same Creator knows each sparrow that falls, and has our hairs all numbered.(Mt10:29-30)

This same God knows all time. Past, present, future. One of the things which distinguishes our God Most High (Gen14:18,Ps57:2) from all other so-called "gods" is His relationship to time. He retorts against them, "Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,'" (Isa46:9-10)

Before He ever started creating, "Let there be light" He knew all things. He knew that Adam would sin. He knew that Jesus would be dying on the cross for sin. He knew who would believe in Him, and He knew who would reject Him. While we presently look to judgments as being yet "future" He knows the outcome. As far as He knows, the works that He will judge at the Great White Throne have already been completed from eternity past "before the foundation of the world." And the same with righteous deeds.

Thus, those who believe in Christ through faith have been "predestined." (Eph1:5) Many people struggle with the concept of "predestination vs. free will," as I used to. But it is actually very simple. Just as He knew that Lucifer would rebel, that Cain would martyr Abel, that Jesus would die on the cross...He also knew who would humble themselves in repentance and believe in His Son, Jesus. And so, he chose/predestined those..."whom He foreknew." (Jn15:16,Rom8:29) And thus, based on this foreknowledge, He takes each person so chosen and

"calls them" (vs30) and "draws" them to His Son (Jn6:44), and when they come to His Son in repentance, He "justifies" (Rom8:30) them and "glorifies" them. To us "glorification" is yet future as we wait for the "redemption of our bodies"(Rom8:23,1Cor15:42-44). But to God, it is already accomplished! And was, before the foundation of the world.

So, in review: According to the power of God, He "saved us and called us with a holy calling...according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began."(2Tm1:9)

He not only foreknew and purposed this, but this "hope of eternal life" God "PROMISED before time began."(Tit1:2) And He does not break His promises. (Josh21:45,23:14,1Kg8:56) He fulfills His word down to the minutest details. (Mt5:18,Rev9:15)

Provisions: Present

"As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. (Gal1:9) For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,(Heb10:26)

First of all we "have received," and NOW HAVE, the fullness of the Gospel and knowledge of the truth. These warnings indicate that everything we need, we have, and the warning against looking for something else and rejecting that which we have.

What is the "gospel?" Jesus summed it up, "for the Christ to suffer [die] and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name."(Lk24:46-47) Paul sums it up, "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day.."(1Cor15:3-4) ..and man's response: "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."(Acts20:21) And in vs.20 he claims that he had given them everything they needed to know and "held nothing back" to be saved. This Gospel is available to us...NOW.

One of the things we NOW HAVE is grace. "For by grace you HAVE BEEN SAVED."(Eph2:8) ..as we have received mercy.."(2Cor4:1) "Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not."(Lam3:22) The very fact that we are not obliterated from the face of the universe is testimony to God's mercies towards us. And thus also, our state of being "saved" is God's "present" mercy towards us.

As we are saved (Acts16:31), Christ redeems us, we receive forgiveness of our sins.(Col1:14) Typically, when forgiveness is granted, where there was guilt, there is a clearing of the conscience.(Heb9:14) Before we were cleansed, our conscience was defiled. But now we are purified.(Tit1:15) And when a conscience is cleared, typically there is a feeling of peace. Jesus gives peace. And even though the world may bring trials and sorrow our way, we can still "be of good cheer" because Jesus has "overcome the world."(Jn16:33) And this is a peace that the world does not give. It only comes from Christ (Jn14:27) And thus, there is no fear.

Purification also speaks of sanctification. God Who "called" us from eternity past, sanctifies us.(Jude1) He sets us apart as a distinct people, "His own special people."(1Pet2:9) We are no longer conformed to the world, but are transformed into the image of the "glory of the Lord."(2Cor3:18)

This transformation is because of the "new birth."(Jn3:3) We are a "new creation."(2Cor5:17) Old things have passed away, and we put on the new man.(Col3:10)

At the core of this transformation is the indwelling Holy Spirit. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by

God.(1Cor2:12) Jesus promised His coming.(Jn16:14) And He is actually THE DEFINITION of our salvation. Paul writes that we now are characterized by, "Christ in you the hope of glory."(Col1:27) As Jesus promised, "We will come and make Our home with him."(Jn14:23) Paul states that if we don't have the Holy Spirit, we do not belong to God.(Rom8:9)

What does the Holy Spirit do? First of all, at the very moment of salvation, the Holy Spirit "seals" us with "promise."(Eph1:13) Next chapter we will see the parts of salvation we don't yet have, which are yet future. But until those things happen, the Holy Spirit is the notary's official imprinted seal. The document of God's promise (1Jn2:25) of eternal life is stamped and signed. Jesus signed it with His blood, and the Holy Spirit seals it with His indwelling. And because of the Spirit's indwelling, it can then be said, "the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His." (2Tim2:19) And conversely, we KNOW that we are children of God because, "the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."(Rom8:16) In other words, if a person has a question in his/her mind as to "whether or not they are saved" ...they are not. By definition.

This "sealing" of the Spirit is also God's guarantee of the inheritance until the redemption of the "purchased possession."(future) (Eph1:14) We are not yet "fully saved" until Christ comes to "receive" us to Himself.(Jn14:3) We are not yet fully what we will be, like Jesus, because we do not yet see Him as He is.(1Jn3:2) So, until that day, the Holy Spirit guarantees our "spot" in heaven. Assures that our "reservation" will still be there when we are taken there to claim it, when Christ comes to claim us as His and "confess us" before His Father and the angels, as our names are in the Book of Life.(Rev3:5) And since we are not yet "like Christ" we presently have "Christ in [us] you"(Col1:27) through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, if a person has not become a Christian, has not repented and received Jesus in faith, the one other thing for the "present" is to come to God...NOW. "For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. (2Cor6:2)

Provisions: Future

"Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended [taken possession]; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."(Phil3:13- 14)

"We also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body."(Rom8:23)

The fact that our redemption isn't complete is illustrated by Paul, "The good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice...it is..sin that dwells in me...who shall deliver me from the [body] of death?"(Rom7:19-20,24) If anyone was a "Christian" it would have been Paul. He wrote most of the NT teaching on it.

While we have become a "new creation"(2Cor5:17) through the new birth(Jn3:3), we are still in these earthly bodies. Remember how we learned that sin is inherited at PHYSICAL birth. (Ps51:5) Our new birth is a SPIRITUAL birth.(Jn3:8)

One of the things that is yet future for salvation is the transformation of our bodies. Jesus promised, "He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"(Jn11:25-26) Jesus was responding to Martha about "the LAST DAY." When Jesus comes to "receive [us] to Himself"(Jn14:3) those who have died will "rise first" and those alive will "be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."(1Ths4:16-17)

When this happens, these corrupt earthly bodies will be replaced instantly (1Cor15:52) with Incorruption, Immortality, Power. A "spiritual body." (1Cor15:44) Where Paul laments the constant struggle in Romans 7 because of the two natures, flesh vs. spirit; "now" the two will be perfectly matched, "spiritual." And we will be "like Christ" because we will "see Him as He is."(1Jn3:2,1Cor15:49)

This transformation is closely related to another future aspect of salvation; that of being "Saved From Wrath" and the "Blessed Hope." We are told that we "have now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."(Rom5:9) The words "shall be" is future. "God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."(1Ths5:9)

What is "wrath?" "..wrath in the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God."(Rom2:5) "The wrath of God is reveal from heaven."(Rom1:18) "..His wrath...and the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction."(Rom9:22) Throughout the book of "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" we see the expression "wrath of God."(Rev6:16-17,14:10,19,15:1,7,16:1) We find that the "wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience."(Eph5:6) ..to judge the world.(Rom3:6)

Only a few times in history has God's judgment been poured out upon the earth in great measure. At "Noah's flood" God destroyed all air-breathing life.(Gen7:22) When He brought Israel out of Egypt, He rained judgments upon Egypt, destroying their gods, saving Israel through it and bringing her out.

What is the "blessed hope and glorious appearing" of Christ?(Tit2:13) It is the Pre-Tribulation "rapture" of the Church. God is going to judge the world and its unbelievers. His wrath is going to be poured out upon it. But He is not going to subject His Church to His wrath. Jesus speaks of "as it was in the days of Noah"(Mt24:38) and again, "as in the days of Lot."(Lk17:28-29) Noah was saved from the flood in the ark. Lot was taken out of Sodom before destruction. You notice He never says, "like it was in the days when I brought Israel out of Egypt." Israel went "through" Egypt's judgment..as they will again, through the time of God's wrath upon the world.(Mal3:3)

LET THERE BE NO MISUNDERSTANDING!! God's "wrath" often referred to as "the Tribulation" is not the same as the "tribulation/trials" that God allows satan to bring upon the Believer for testing. (Jn16:33, Job1:12,2:6, Lk22:31) The trials and persecution that the Church has experienced throughout the centuries is Satan's attempts to do away with the Church.(Mt16:18) And will also occur to those who "call upon the name of the Lord"(Joel2:32) during the Tribulation as the "beast" makes "war with" them to overcome them(Rev13:7), as he requires worship of the image(13:15) upon the pain of death. But that group, while being called "saints" as all believers throughout history are called "saints", is not the "Church." What is yet future, which God will spare His Church from is [GOD's] WRATH, poured upon the WORLD in JUDGMENT.

Jesus asked Martha, "Do you believe this?" VERY IMPORTANT, this question! You notice how Paul equates "having been justified by His blood" with "shall be saved from wrath through Him."(Rom5:9) Wrath begins with the Tribulation, satan and his followers being destroyed when Christ comes (2Ths2:8,10-12), and culminates at the Great White Throne where "anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."(Rev20:15)

The assurance that the Church will not endure God's wrath is the "blessed hope." "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast."(Heb6:19) This word "hope" is fascinating from this standpoint. It is not.. "well.. I hope I have it; perhaps, maybe, if I'm lucky I might have it." It's a sure thing!

It has been promised. "the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus."(2Tm1:1) This promise for the Future was made "before time began."(Tit1:2) And God does not lie. And since God Himself is the "guarantee" of it, through the Holy Spirit, (Eph1:14) we KNOW it is sure. There is no better guarantee than God's "own" word. "Since He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself." (Heb6:13) What greater guarantee is there! What greater security!

Another way of looking at the promise is with the word "Inheritance." We are "born again"(Jn3:3)...the God and Father...according to His abundant mercy has BEGOTTEN us again to a living hope through

the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1Pet1:3-5) When we were born into God's family, we received an inheritance. We don't have possession of it yet. But, considering Who our Father is, it's a sure thing. It is in heaven, waiting for us.

This inheritance is received when we are "adopted."(Rom8:23) This is a take from Greco-Roman society. A child was brought up and raised by teachers and guardians until an age predetermined by the father, at which point he came into "manhood." As a child he was heir to the father, but did not possess the inheritance...as he learned submission, obedience and did not have ready access to the father. But at the appointed time he officially was "adopted" and became the "son" with all the rights and privileges. During the time he was under tutelage, he "knew" that "one day" he would possess all, because he was "in the family." He could look forward to "that day" with "hope."

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus...and if you are Christ's, then you are...heirs according to the promise."(Gal3:29) "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ..."(Rom8:16-17)

"...if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."(Rom8:17-18) ..so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. (Heb9:28)

"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith; the salvation of your souls." (1Pet1:6-9)

What Must I Do?

Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent." (Jn6:28-29)

And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:30-31)

"...they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent..."(Acts 2:37-38a)

"how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 20:20-21)

With everything that has been said up to this point, one might be tempted to think that "salvation" is quite a "difficult" matter. So many things to think about and to know. But actually our "part" is the simplest part. God has taken care of all the hard things, because we were incapable, "when we were still WITHOUT STRENGTH [ability=infirmary, feeble], in due time Christ died for the ungodly."(Rom5:6)

Essentially there are only two things we do, and then we are "saved." We must 1) Believe on Jesus Christ, and 2) Repent.

Belief in Jesus is not merely a mental assent to His existence. That He lived historically. We must believe that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scripture."(1Cor15:3-4) This is the "Gospel."

When we believe in "Christ" we are affirming that He is [THE] "anointed One."(1Jn2:22) That the Word [WAS] God.(Jn1:1) Many, including JW, believe that Jesus was "a" god. That He is one (of many) "christ/s." But we must believe that there is ONLY ONE Redeemer, the Son of God. Satan "believes" in Jesus (Jas2:19), but seeks to replace Him with other things and people...and "trembles."

Even though we don't see Him, we believe that He rose from the dead. Jesus said to doubting Thomas, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believe."(Jn20:29) "...whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, (1Pt1:8)

As Jesus is knocking at the heart's "door"(Rev3:20) we must "receive Him" and "believe on His name."(Jn1:12) He then promises to, "come and make Our home with him."(Jn14:23)

The word "REPENT" is [the] definitive word in Scripture for being saved. While there are references to "saving" others (1Cor7:16,Jude23), a

person does not set out and seek to "get saved." What an individual, personally, does is to "repent." And their act of repenting is called "repentance."

The Lord leads us to repentance.(Rom2:4) "Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation."(2Cor7:10) God "grants" repentance. (2Tm2:25) God desires for all to "come to repentance."(2Pt3:9)

So, if we are called to repentance, we need to know what it is.

Repent; metaneo ==to change one's mind for the better; heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins. There is another word for repentance, "metamellomai" which speaks of "caring" after having done something wrong. An emotional, "feeling bad about" having done something. But the repentance we are called to is one in which our whole life and being are changed. Not just "sorry" for some deed here or there, but a total abhorrence of our whole existence and essence.

Most of what passes for "repentance" at altar calls is of the second variety. People come forward "feeling bad" about their sin[S]. But otherwise, they essentially don't look upon themselves as being really ALL THAT BAD; they are, after all, basically "good" people. Thus, that trip down the isle DID NOT SAVE them!

When Isaiah saw God, and then reflected upon himself, he moaned, "Woe is me, for I am undone!"(Is6:5) "Undone" meaning, "destroyed, perish/ing." In other words, "under damnation." Self-esteem went flying out Job's window when he saw God, "but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."(Job42:6) Remember our "condition at birth?" Even our "righteousnesses are like filthy rags."(Is64:6)

Our repentance, then, is not for our sin[S] (plural) but for our SIN. Our sin nature in which we were conceived.(Ps51:5) We are repenting of our VERY EXISTENCE in sin. Realizing we are utterly helpless. That our judgment is just. And we plead for mercy,(Ps51:1) and for God to blot out our sin.

The natural outcome of such repentance is transformation, which is the subject of the next chapter. If we have become "born again"(Jn3:3) and are, thus, "new creatures"(2Cor5:17), it will be a natural thing for us to "do works befitting repentance."(Acts26:20,Jas2:14-26)

This, too, is the scourge of modern "conversions." The message preached is "love and faith." Just have love "in your heart" (not for Jesus). Just have "faith." Some sort of generic nebulous "faith" in some ethereal never-never-land (not in Christ's redemptive work on the cross). People are told that "God accepts them...JUST AS THEY ARE" and that He "doesn't care" about their sin. Just "believe in Him" ...and incidentally... "don't worry about the sin." So, this newly "converted" person remains the same as they were. Aah! Let's see. Something is wrong there. "Conversion" means "change." They are NOT REALLY "In Christ."

A person repents "towards God."(Acts20:21) After all, it is He Who "sits on the throne" Who judges.(Rev20:11) Believing in Jesus Christ, Who

is our propitiation.(Rom3:24-25) We are "Saved" from wrath, (Rom5:9) which ultimately would have ended a person up in the "lake of fire."(Rev20:15)

Again, perhaps, with all these words the matter of Faith and Repentance seems complex? Not really. Jesus said that a person needs to come in child-like faith. (Mk10:15) If you feel you don't understand "faith" do what the man did, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." Remembering that even our faith is a "gift of God."(Eph2:8)

If you are reading this after the "Rapture" and all the intricacies of the Gospel seem to be lost in all the confusion of the Great Deception, God's message is quite simple...

"Whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."(Joel2:32)

The thief dying on the cross next to Jesus didn't have time for a mini- course in "Soteriology." He simply asked, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." (Lk23:42-43)

Qualities of the Christian:

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new." (2Cor5:17)

This is likely THE definitive verse describing a Believer in a nutshell. A "Christian" by the very word, indicates a person who believes in, is a follower of, holds to the teachings and characteristics of "CHRIST." In addition, there is fellowship. Jesus spoke of "abiding" in Him. (Jn15) And this happens through the agency of the Holy Spirit. (Jn16) There is, then, oneness. (Jn17) This oneness is likened to the marriage relationship, "...the two shall become one.."(Eph5:31-32)

While the Father might look at us yet in our flesh and frailty, and as Paul bemoans the carnal tendencies to fail (Rom7), Jesus steps up to the Father. He shows the document sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph1:13) which indicates Jesus' shed blood on our behalf as propitiation (payment) for our sins (Rom3:25) so God "passes over our sins" as Jesus sits at His right hand (Heb1:3) and serves as our Advocate before the Father.(1Jn2:1)

So, what the Father sees is, "Christ in you.."(Col1:27) When the Father sees us, He sees Jesus Christ. Christ owns us because He bought us.(1Cor6:20) So, we now have Christ's righteousness.(Phil3:9) As far as God is concerned, we are perfect. We are holy. (1Pt2:9)

We are "NEW CREATURES." This comes about by the new birth. (Jn3:3) A Spiritual birth.(Jn3:8) When we were born "of woman" we were born in Adam's sin. When we are "born again" we are born of the Holy Spirit.(Rom8:9,14-17) We gain a new entity. A new nature. John speaks of genetics. His "seed" remains in him; thus, he cannot continue in habitual sin.(1Jn3:9) We are "born into" Christ's righteousness.

Thus, OLD THINGS PASSED AWAY. There is a misguided notion that God "heals" our sin. Actually, our old nature was put to DEATH. When we were born again, we died to sin. When Christ died for us, that was actually "us" dying on that cross. When we come to the foot of the cross, we are symbolically "dying with Christ."(Rom6:3) Thus, the symbolism of baptism where the person goes UNDER the water. (Yes, immersion.) We are figuratively buried with Christ. (vs4)

As such Paul writes, "Put to death your members which are on the earth..."(Col3:5) and goes on to list the various characteristics of the unbeliever. And he says, "in which you yourselves once walked [past tense] when you lived in them."(vs7) In other words, in God's formula there is no such thing as "therapy" to "work-through" all sorts of things and learn "how to deal with" the past. No! It is PUT TO DEATH! Gotten rid of.

When a person TRULY comes to faith in Christ, 12-step programs are not necessary to deal with drugs or alcohol. Counseling is no longer needed to discover repressed memories of childhood abuse. We will no longer continue lying and cheating. It is no longer in our "genes" (seed) to do so. When the prophet wrote, "by His stripes we are healed" (Is53:5) this is what was meant. The addict no longer "needs" that nicotine fix or the

alcohol, nor will there be those outbursts of rage; because Jesus takes it away. Period. Because the old has been put to death.

"Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him..."(Rom6:6-8)

This is why Jesus' resurrection is so important for us. We have died with Christ, putting away the old. And now, because of His resurrection, "we also should walk in newness of life."(vs4) We "reckon [ourselves] to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord."(Rom6:11)

ALL THINGS BECOME NEW. So, whereas we used to be characterized by lying, cheating, stealing, immorality, pride, etc. ...we are now characterized by humility, kindness, meekness, love, peace, etc.(Col3:12-15) And, doesn't this make sense? If we are "new" ..we should be characterized by "newness." Forget the notion that says, "God's grace doesn't care about our sin, or our old ways...He accepts us just as we are...and we can continue that way!" No! The new characteristics prove the new nature.(Jas2:14-26) e.g.If a friend claimed to have traded up to a brand new BMW or Porsche, and we went to have a look, and all we could see was "Y-U-G-O" on the name plate, and when he started it up, we could walk faster than it could go, we would wonder, wouldn't we! We would be pretty sure that he had not upgraded. By its very definition, "repentance" indicates a CHANGE. This is why we stated in a previous chapter that true repentance is more than "feeling bad about" the "naughty things" we've done; but is rather an utter hatred for our VERY EXISTENCE in sin. And in faith receiving Christ's "newness" which He gives us, "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit."(Tit3:5)

Furthermore, because we have the Spirit (His anointing --1Jn2:27), God's love has been "poured out in our hearts."(Rom5:5) And as such, we have the wherewithal to be obedient to Jesus when He commanded, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples.."(Jn13:34-35) This is not the warm-n-fuzzy "Luuuuuv" that the world swoons over. This is a love that gives one's self for the sake of another. God's love was demonstrated by Christ's death.(Rom5:8) And thus, we are to give our lives "for the brethren."(1Jn3:16)

What, now, is our relationship with the world? We are strangers and sojourners.(Heb11:13,1Pt2:11) We are passing through, not sinking in roots as though to settle in. Our citizenship is in heaven.(Phil3:20) As such, our time here in this world is as "foreigners." We don't really "belong" here. We are only here temporarily.

Furthermore, our demeanor should be as "ambassadors for Christ." (2Cor5:20) An ambassador is a "representative" to the "foreign"

people, retaining all the characteristics of the sending government. Not engaging in activities which would in any way jeopardize the integrity of the home country. An ambassador is uniquely distinct; different. Separate... "holy." (1Pt1:14-16) So, why do we see so many (so-called) "christians" trying with all their might to be as much LIKE the world as they can! Again, they are known by their fruits... (Mt7:16,21-23)

Finally, what is our task while thus engaged as ambassadors? We are "witnesses." Witnesses to what? "Thus it..was necessary for the 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 to all nations...and you are witnesses of these things.." (Lk24:46-48)

How can we, who live 2000 years after the actual events of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection be witnesses? We did not actually SEE these things take place. Remember, as Christians the Father sees Jesus when He looks at us. If we are truly "in Christ" (2Cor5:17) and Christ is "in you" (Col1:27), then, not only are we witnesses...they can actually see the resurrected Christ LIVING THROUGH US. Jesus said that the whole world will know we are His by our "love" we have for the brethren. We are witnesses to the work, change, transformation in the life that comes about through faith in Christ. This is why we are to be "different" from the world. To be "holy." If we are so much like the world, what will they see that they don't already know?

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles..." (1Pt2:9-12)

Culmination and Fulfillment:

"Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. (2Tim4:8) These, the words of the Apostle Paul, as he was facing certain execution, as he is nearing the end of his ministry and life. He could confidently claim, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."(vs7) He was about to go through the door and be met on the other side by his Master who would say to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant..."(Mt25:21)

As He was about to be crucified, Jesus assured the disciples, "In My Father's house are many mansions...I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."(Jn14:3-4)

Consider for a moment that the universe was created in 6 days. Jesus has been "preparing" for almost 2000 years. When we consider the vastness of the universe, can you imagine what the nature of heaven is, by comparison, and the new heavens and new earth? We are given a glimpse in Rev.21-22. All things will be "new."(21:5)

There is the river of water of life. The Tree of Life. The tree provides healing. There is fellowship with God, as He dwells amongst His servants, and His name is on their foreheads. Once God wipes away the tears, there is no more sorrow or crying. The past is forgotten. There is rest. And there is no more corruption and sin.

Overcomers Jesus promises to "not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but will confess his name before [His] Father and before His angels."(Rev3:5) If you are a Believer, can you imagine the gathering, like a graduation ceremony, and God the Father is at the podium. Jesus reads your name from the Book of Life, and announces to all creation, "This is [your name] whom I redeemed." And all the angels of heaven and all creation rejoice. After all, Jesus said, "Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Lk15:10) And you proceed to "go up higher"(Lk14:10) to meet your "Maker." "In that day a man will look to his Maker, And his eyes will have respect for the Holy One of Israel. (Isa17:7) "Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker." (Ps95:6)

And we will rule and reign with Him. "This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us." (2Tim2:11- 12) Those taking part in the "first resurrection" will reign with Him through the Millennium. (Rev20:6)

What tasks and responsibilities will we have? It would seem that our faithfulness (or lack thereof) during our present time in life will determine that. "His lord said to him, 'well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.'"(Mt25:21) The account in Luke19 seems to indicate that greater

faithfulness will result in greater responsibilities, and mediocre or lesser faithfulness, will result in lesser responsibilities.

However, if you are coming to Christ at the end of history, you still receive the full benefits of Eternal Life. "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard..." and throughout the day he goes and finds more workers. Now, about 5pm he goes and finds more unemployed and asks, "Why are you sitting around here?" ...'No one hired us.' So he says, "You also go..and whatever is right you will receive." 6pm comes along and he gathers the workers all around, and starts out paying those who came aboard at 5pm. They each received the "full-day's" wages, just like those who put in the full 12 hours.(Mt20:1-16)

Some who worked the whole day through the heat grumbled, that each was getting paid the same, some for only 1 hour's work. But the master replies, 'be content. It's My money. I can pay out as I wish. You agreed with me for [Eternal Life] and you received it. These who came along at the last hour also receive Eternal Life. This is what I wish to do.' This is what Jesus promises,

"And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. (Jn10:28)

Conclusion and Invitation:

"And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. (Jn4:36) Why do the [spiritual] workers "rejoice?" Because through our labors we can rejoice with you when you come to Christ..."because your names are written in heaven." (Lk10:20)

Through this long series many things have been covered related to salvation. Various terminology, complex thoughts and concepts. What if you didn't fully understand everything? Does this damn you to an eternity under God's judgment? No. Jesus said, the kingdom of heaven was such that a person has to come "as a child."(Mk10:15) Obviously, a child does not understand complex issues. So, let's review the important key points; without which, salvation is impossible.

The Gospel, in a nutshell was given by Paul, "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."(1Cor15:3-5~) And His "resurrection" was not a hoax...there were witnesses. This, Paul gave as introduction to his teaching about resurrection. And many will stop here. But do not be deceived.

God provides salvation. But if the sinner does not respond, the salvation is ineffective. Thus, this same Paul also states in review, "I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you...testifying to Jews and [Gentiles], REPENTANCE toward God and FAITH toward our Lord Jesus Christ."(Acts20:20-21)

So, in a nutshell; how do we become "saved?"

--GOD PROVIDED the means through Jesus'
1) Death and 2) Resurrection.

--WE RESPOND in
1) Faith and 2) Repentance.

Jesus summed it up succinctly, "...it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name."(Lk24:46-47)

Do not be fooled by those who teach that all you have to do is "believe." You must "repent." Without it, there is no "remission" of sins. For satan also "believes" ...and shudders.(Jas2:19) You notice Jesus' summary doesn't even include the word, "faith," Repentance being the primary need. ...however, it should be obvious that without faith it is impossible to please God.(Heb11:6)

While this series may have seemed "long" there is so much more that could be written about salvation. ...as John wrote about his account of Jesus' ministry, "and there are also many other things...which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written."(Jn21:25) ...but these are written "that you may know that you have eternal life."(1Jn5:13)

Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled...whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."(Mt5:6,Jn4:14)

And the invitation is given..."the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev22:17)

Amen!

Only Believe? © 1999

Recently a subscriber sent me some information obtained at another website, and when I went to that site I discovered quite a detailed series of files presenting the Gospel. The visitor is shown the way to salvation, the consequences for those who reject Christ. For the most part, a very good presentation. In fact, it was so good, I compared what I present at VW's website to it, to see if I had "left anything out" that, perhaps, should be there.

However, as I was checking this site, there was a key element about "how to be saved" that was missing. It reminded me of that same element I neglected to preach years ago, until a friend reminded me of it. So, along with some other things I wrote to the webmaster of this site, I'd like to share here the portion of that note dealing with their salvation presentation, and then, make further comments at the end:

--paste--

The item of concern has to do with your "how to be saved" file. You have presented VERY WELL the sin, Christ's provision, and receiving faith. But you have neglected the message as the early church preached it. Paul sums it up "I kept back nothing that was profitable...testifying to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, -REPENTANCE- toward God and -FAITH- toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts20:20-21) You've got the "faith" in there, but not the "repentance." In Mat28:19-20 Jesus tells them to -go-; and in Luke 24:46-47 the -message-... which is: 1) Christ's death and resurrection (provision), 2) repentance (response) & 3) remission of sins (result). Notice, He didn't include "faith/believe" in that summary. Check these passages: Mt9:13;Acts2:38,5:31,26:20; Rom2:4; 2Cor7:10; 2Tim2:25; Heb6:6,12:17; 2Pt3:9

You know... faith, alone, is not enough. The demons "believe and tremble." (Jas2:19) ...they have no place for repentance.

I do not fault you for this. I was caught in this same trap for years. I knew of repentance, but did not preach it. Just "faith, believe, receive." But you see, when there's only "believe", then the Christian life is limited to "legalism." The "Christian" is busy trying hard to live right before God, never having "put to death" the flesh. (Rom6, Col3:5) And so he comes up with his lists of "touch not, taste not, etc" (Col2:21) I know... I've been there. But we must be "crucified with Christ" (Gal2:20) and such a "death" puts away the past, and puts on the new (the very definition of "repentance") as we become a "new creation" (2Cor5:17) And then, the "life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith..."(Gal2:20) ...not the works of the law.(Rom3:20) So, while we live by faith (Rom1:17) Paul's order in Acts 20:21 is correct... 1) repentance towards God [first] and [then] 2) faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. If we've not repented, we cannot make a claim to faith.

We cannot -do- faith. That is a "gift" from God. (Eph2:8) All we can DO is to beat on our breast and cry out "God be merciful to me, a sinner." (Lk18:13) Jesus said that the person who cried out thus, was the one who went home "justified." We must realize that we have NOTHING GOOD in us (Rom7:18), "I abhor myself and repent.." (Job42:6) and that we are totally helpless to save ourselves. (Rom5:6) That is the point at which He...

"...bowed down to me...heard my cry. He brought me up..out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay...set my feet on a rock, and gave sureness to my steps...He has put a new song in my mouth, praise to our God..." (~Ps40:1-3)
--endpaste--

Since my past included many years in GARBC/Bible Baptist churches, and even today, if someone were to corner me and ask me -what label- of church would I recommend as being a place where the Gospel was likely to be preached, and where they could hear God's Word, it would likely be these labels. This website to which I wrote this note is a good KJV-only "Bible Baptist" site. With this as background, I would like to direct these comments to -you- who are associated with these churches... You are people from my past. You are the ones (collectively/generically) with whom I have fellowshiped. I've preached from your pulpits, have sung your solos, have directed your choirs and led your song services, and assisted in "invitations" by leading the song/s while the pastor met those coming forward. -You- are deeply on my heart!

It was in your churches I learned to preach "faith, believe, receive." In fact, one of the invitation hymns went, "Only believe, only believe; All things are possible, only believe.." And people would come forward. Trouble is, that's the WRONG FAITH! If you look at that song again, it begins, "Fear not, little flock, from the cross to the throne..." You see, those words "only believe" are to the Believer living along the Christian life. When Paul quoted, "the just shall live by faith" (Rom1:17) that is not "saving faith." He was speaking of "just[jified]" -ones- who are [now] continuing to live "by faith." But you see, before we can "live by faith" we must be "crucified with Christ." (Gal2:20) We must be dead. It should be obvious that a dead person cannot have faith (of any kind).

What is crucifixion? It was probably one of the most horrendous kinds of death the Romans could devise for regular consistent predictable use. The subjects were first beaten up when the soldiers ganged up on them and used them as punching bags. Then, they were whipped till the flesh was hanging, often exposing internal organs. And then, nailed through the wrist and ankle joints, and hung out buck-naked on a roughly hewn cross. The whole purpose in this process was -humiliation-. That's why it says that Jesus "humbled Himself...unto death...of the cross." (Phil2:8)

If you have merely "believed in" Jesus, you are not saved. Remember, the demons also believe... If you have merely "received" Jesus to become "-PART OF- your life", you are not saved. Many wanted to follow Jesus but were not willing to leave -ALL- behind. (Lk9:57-62)

When -repentance- is left out of the equation, a person has not fully come to himself. Has not fully seen that "in my flesh dwells no good thing" (Rom7:18) So we have the Oprah Doctrine. Just believe "in yourself." Just have faith "in yourself." She celebrates "people-hood" by showering them with -things-. Vacations, debts paid, limousines, trips with Tina Turner, make-overs and shopping sprees. Anything is possible... if you only have faith (in yourself).

And those (formerly me) who wish to be "Christian" keep laws. If repentance and self-abhorrence have not been faced, and a "new creation" been "born again" (2Cor5:17,Jn3:3) there is a need to -fix- one's life. In an effort to make one's self -right- before God, in the absence of that -new nature- and the "witness of the Spirit" (Rom8:16) [Ed: maybe that's why they don't talk about the Holy Spirit much? ..they don't know Him!], a whole set of rules are kept. "touch not, taste not, handle not." (Col2:21) And notice, Paul recognizes "these things indeed have a reputation of wisdom in self-imposed worship and humility, and unsparing severity of the body..." (vs23) They "appear" to be good, but as NKJV words it, it's a "false humility" and "are of NO VALUE" regarding keeping pure.

If all you've got is "faith, believe, receive" and are legalistically being a faithful "list keeper" ...you ARE NOT SAVED. You have side-stepped -repentance- on your way to -faith-. You have never given up self. You've never given up -control- to your life. You've never come to realize that you are, on your own merits, worthless and rotten in God's site. (Is64:6) You have not realized that you are totally helpless. You still have PRIDE. You have not been "humbled before God" but typically you "speak against one another" (Jas4:10-11) as you compare everybody else to your -lists-. Such judging is the very emulation of pride. You correctly preach that sin exists and that Jesus came to save, but you, yourself, have not taken the first step that gets you from sin unto Faith.

You are busy -doing- to be a "good Christian." Someone came to Jesus and asked, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?." And when Jesus told him the conditions, he went away "sorrowful" (Lk18:18-26)

You see, the JUST shall LIVE..by faith. (Rom1:17) He's living by faith, BECAUSE he's -just-. Where does justification come from? Righteousness? The Righteousness is "OF GOD." It is God's righteousness, which He "gives" to us. (Eph2:8) We don't keep -lists-. Or -law-. God's righteousness is "apart from the law." (Rom3:21)

But we must start at the bottom, with NOTHING. That's where repentance takes us. Like the thief, we are on that cross with Christ "in the same condemnation" (Lk23:40) realizing that we "receive the due reward of our deeds" and that Christ was sinless and righteous, the spotless Lamb of God (1Pt1:19) recognizing "I deserve death" ...in fact, "I AM DYING! I am dead!"... all we can do is plead with Christ, in Your mercy "Lord, remember me..." When we have done this, then Jesus assures us, "...you shall be with Me.."(vs43) and... "I will come again and receive you to Myself, so that where I am, you may be also." (Jn14:3)

Once this has happened then we can truly sing, "...Only believe...all things are possible, only believe" -because- we have been "From the Cross" (repentance and death), and are now on the way "to the Throne" (Eternal life)

Amen!

The Last Domino has Fallen! ©1999

After finishing the commentary "Only Believe..?" I went back to the website cited. My thoughts have troubled me regarding this subject. We are talking about a "conservative of the conservatives" here. Those who, of all people, should know Truth. I wanted to -BE SURE- I had not missed or overlooked their reference to "repentance" because the rest of their Salvation presentation is so good. So this time I went through with a fine-tooth comb, and what I found was even more disturbing...

Not only did they -not mention- "repentance", they actually proclaim that it is NOT -necessary- for salvation. In a little paragraph I had skimmed over the first time, they list some things that salvation "is NOT." And as they list them off.. "not repenting" is amongst them.

To leave out this most crucial element is like having a future complex Pentium III motherboard, having zillions of megs of RAM, running at 1000 Mhz. If a jumper is placed across the "reset" pins and left there, there is nothing you can do to make that computer work. It won't! Out of all the billions of transistors embedded in those chips, super speed and tons of cache, all it takes is -one- jumper to keep it from working.

I've been in a kind-of "stupor" the last couple days with the impact of what this means. I've been "numb." While I -hope- that not all GARBC or Bible Baptist teach this, I was remembering back to my times in those churches. With these labels, we are talking about many years of -my- background. Sin was proclaimed with all "hell-fire and brimstone." Jesus' death on the cross for our redemption was faithfully proclaimed. Scripturally. And error was diligently evaluated and exposed. But it wasn't until the Lord had led me to a place of being "on sabbatical" from ministry (and from these groups) that He also caused my path to cross, for a time, with an individual who in one letter wrote about "repentance." And my eyes were suddenly opened -wide- as I realized that I had not been preaching it!! Are -all- these churches preaching like this? I don't know. But it was in that fellowship that I learned -not to- preach it. Nobody said not to. Simply, nobody did. But when this webmaster proclaims that salvation does -NOT- include repentance, it brings all these other places flooding back into my memory. And now, suddenly, a LOT of -things- about these places make a lot of sense. These places had other -problems-, too.

And thus, we get to the title of this Portion. Over the past few years the Lord has been allowing me to see first -this-, and then -that-, and then the -other- entity, people, organization/s that I had assumed, along with everybody else, to be "Christian" ...were really -not-. It's been like dominos set in motion; one falling, knocking the next down. All in a row, falling... one after another. And with this recent realization, we have come to the "last domino" and it is fallen. Actually, it has been down a long time... I am only -now- realizing it.

As with any group, denomination, church... there -are- Believers within it. But they are -individuals-.

Let's review Scripture on this most important doctrine:

When Jesus commissioned the disciples, the -message- He capsulizes that they are to proclaim is "repentance and remission of sins...in His name..." (Lk24:47) Notice, He does not mention "faith." While we know from other passages that -faith- is an integral part of salvation, that "without faith it is impossible to please [God]"(Heb11:6), we cannot even get to the -faith- stage until we've been to the -repent- stage.

At Peter's preaching the people were not feeling "good about themselves" being full of -faith-. They were "stabbed in the heart" (Acts2:37) and when they ask what they must do, Peter replies, "repent." If you think that "God saw -worth- in you" and -that's why- He saved you, you are NOT SAVED. "Our righteousnesses are as a menstruous cloth." (Is64:6) When we come to Him we must come with "I am not worthy to be called your son..." (Lk15:21) as we cry out, "be merciful to me, a sinner" (Lk18:13) Like the thief on the cross recognized that he was "worthy to die" he then turns to Jesus, mustering to ask, only, to be "remember[ed]." (Lk23:42)

If we have not repented with "I am nothing. I've sinned...I'm sorry for my sin. I deserve every punishment God could mete out to me" then "salvation" has no meaning. And also "faith." If we have not repented and realized that we cannot save ourselves, -faith- in Christ's salvation is meaningless, because we are still going on "self." What is there to be saved from? And so then, naturally, we will live lives of obeying "lists." That is not true Faith. If there was not true repentance, what is the -NEED- for "receiving" Christ? There isn't, is there...

To "receive" Christ (Jn1:12) is not like Bill Bright's published testimony, that he had a "void" or "emptiness" in his life. He studied creation and saw all the awesomeness of God, and wanted God 'in-his- life'. And so we end up with a gospel that so many preach, that Jesus "came alongside me, and took my hand, so that where I was going, He was there right beside me...and that's how He came-into-my-life." That's not repentance. Repentance means -stopping- going in the direction I'm now going, -changing- directions, and going in -God's- direction. Rather than "God going -with- me" we respond with, "Lord, what will -You- have me to do?" (Acts9:6)

True salvation begins with "death." A -dead- person isn't -going- ANYWHERE! When that -seed- the "sower" (Mt13:3) planted starts to grow, it first has to "die" (Jn12:24) It must loose its -hard- shell, and become soft (the beginning stages of rotting - death) before the germ springs to life. As Paul teaches, "Foolish one! What you sow is not made alive unless it dies." (1Cor15:36)

Thus, salvation does not make us "better" people, as many -prayers- word it, as they promise, "I'll do -better- (legalism) from now on." We "count [our]selves also to be truly dead to sin" and when we cry out to God in Christ, He makes us "alive to God in Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom6:11)

When there is true salvation, like this, then the "lists" are no longer needed, because we "do not let sin reign in [our] mortal body, that [we] should obey it in its lusts..." (Rom6:12)

But it all starts with "repentance" and -then- comes "remission of sins." (Lk3:3,Acts5:31) If there is no repentance, God will NOT hear. "..your iniquities have come between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, from hearing." (Is59:2) NKJV/KJV words it "He -will-not- hear." This is purposeful on God's part. Against rebellious Israel, "[God] has -withdrawn- Himself from them" (Hos5:6b) as He says further, "I will go; I will return to My place until they confess their guilt and seek My face;" (vs15)

"Therefore repent and convert so that your sins may be blotted out..." (Acts3:19)

What is Repentance? ©1999

The commentary "Only Believe..?" stirred up quite a few replies and questions. I expect the "Last Domino..." will answer some questions that came up. It will stir up others. At first I thought to make another "Q/A" out of these replies, but this time, instead, I think it's appropriate to write this way. The commentary and portion were like me "rarin' back and preachin'." Now, if you will, let me just 'talk' with you all. And I'll try to fit in the various questions that were raised. And to you who wrote, please accept -this- as my reply to you, rather than a -personal- note...

First of all, the people who responded this time are different from the usual ones. When we speak about charismatic or new-age issues, many retorts obviously contain -anger-. This time, however, I sense that many of you are 'squirming' in your chairs a bit. The message is no longer about "them" -out there-. But it is hitting squarely between the eyes at "home" in -your-heart. It is uncomfortable, because you realize you haven't submitted to God in this way...but you know you -must-. And yet, you are trying to -hold-out- with excuses ...uh, sorry..."explanations." Some of you are trying to explain "faith only" to me...trying to claim that -repentance- is a "work". You are trying to -reason- your way around and round-about the Truth.

In your squirming, you might also be trying to -excuse-away- repentance as though "it doesn't apply to me." Because repentance was a "Jewish -thing-" and so Paul 'graduated' from -repentance- to -faith- as he gravitated from 'Jewishness' to 'Gentileness' in his teachings and writings. (first time I've heard -that- one!)

OK...so, let's talk...

First of all, repentance IS -for- EVERYONE. "...now [God] strictly commands -all- men everywhere to repent.." (Acts17:30) Paul uttered these words to "Gentiles" on the Hill of Aries in Athens. When he reviewed the Gospel message in Acts 20:27 "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" he was "testifying both to Jews, and also to the Greeks" (27a) ..as he actually spoke these words to the church leaders he had called together from Ephesus. (Gentiles) If you look up that long list of verses I sent to the webmaster (who, by the way, has not replied to my note in the two weeks since I wrote him) you will see they are to both Jews -and- Gentiles. Furthermore, Jonah (a Jew) was sent to Nineveh (Gentiles) where they repented. Job, while likely a descendent of Esau, was not a "Jew" (from Jacob) but -repents-. (Job42:6)

So... is -repentance- a "work"? It continually amazes me -the- "God" we have! This morning, in my personal reading, again, -before- I retrieved these responses to the commentary, was God's reply to this question. When I read it I knew it would be related to answers I would be giving, even before I knew what the questions were, or 'how many' there were.

Here it is...

"..return to the LORD your God, for you have fallen by your iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the LORD. Say to Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously, that we may repay with the calves [sacrifices] of our lips." (Hos14:1-2)

...as this prayer goes on to recognize that salvation does not come from self or any other human means...

"..for in You the fatherless finds mercy." (vs3)

This is God's definition of "repentance." Is this description a "work"? Well, if you want to call the process of "appearing before God and saying 'I'm sorry'" a "work" then, I suppose it is. But I think we all know better. Let's see if we can paint a visual image of what this is like... (please don't nit-pick every doctrinal detail from this sketch. remember...we are talking about "repentance" with this..)

Isaiah "saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up" (Is6:1) Since I doubt we can really fathom what Isaiah saw, let's borrow from Hollywood and archaeology. A pyramid/ziggurat with hundreds of steps going upward. At the very top, in golden splendor sits the King on His throne...attended by dozens of servants. Rows of guard angels up near the throne, coming down the sides of the stairs, and out the walk-way to the gate of the palace. Along comes raggedy, dirty sinner...and he sees all this splendor. And as the angelic beings make the place shake thunderously when they cry out "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts..." the ground under "sinner" shakes, and at the foot of these hundreds of stairs he falls to the ground, face-down, prostrate, "Woe is me! For I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips..." (vs5)

-THAT- is the 'place' of repentance. Is that a "work"? Not hardly.

He is prostrate with his face in the dirt. He has no means to 'get up'. He is without strength." (Rom5:6) Was "faith" involved up to this point? Well, he knows God exists (Heb11:6) because it is He to whom he has come. "repentance -towards- God" (Acts20:21) But this "faith" isn't any more than what satan has. Satan also knows this scene...he's been there many times. (Job1:6) While it may involve -a- faith, it is not "Saving Faith." He has merely come, recognized, admitted and confessed his guilt.

Perhaps some of you are confusing "repentance" with the catholic "penance"? The little I know about RCC, one must do -good-deeds- to "compensate" and "tip the scales" towards the good. If bad deeds have been done, good deeds must be done to 'outweight' the bad. And thus, "protestants" ...still -of- "Rome"... carry over the same concepts. And then, Evangelicals fall into a -legalist- "list keeping" scenario. But true

repentance sees the sin, and the hopelessness to be able to do anything about it. He knows that any attempts to 'tip' any scales are impossible. He knows he cannot possibly -do- anything to measure up. He knows himself...and sees God's holiness...and along with Isaiah wails..."WOE IS ME!" I've HAD IT! I'm doomed!

The seraph touches a live coal to Isaiah's mouth to cleanse him. (Is6:6) 'Here, this cleanses you. Now you are clean.' Isaiah did -nothing- no "work". He -received- the cleansing which was offered him.

Well, in -our- scenario here, God looks down at -dirty-sinner- and speaks a word to His Son sitting next to Him. 'Go down there, clean him up, and bring him up here.' So "God..sent His only-begotten Son" (Jn3:16) and Jesus comes next to -sinner- and says, 'I need to wash you. (Jn13:8) If I wash you, you will become a part of Me and I'll take you up there. (Jn14:3) God is calling and wants you to come. (Jn6:44) But I must wash you with My blood so that your clothes will be white. (Rev1:5,7:14)

Saving Faith -now- comes into play. Sinner must believe what Jesus is telling him. While he doesn't understand "how" it can happen that clothes will be made "white" from being washed in -blood- he "trusts in" Jesus that He is able to do what He is claiming to be able to do. (2Tm1:12) However, this trust/belief comes from Jesus speaking with him. And of course in the mean time, God has sent the Holy Spirit who is convicting -sinner- in the inner recesses of his heart [conscience] (Rom2:15-16, Jn16:8) Because "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." (Rom10:17) This "faith", however, is being infused (Rom10:8,10) -into- the sinner as God's "gift" (Eph2:8)

But none of this -salvation- scenario comes about if sinner does not find his way to the bottom of those stairs... -willingly-. If he is not at the base of the stairs, he is "outside" (Rev22:15) and when he eventually is -brought-before- the throne, Jesus won't be coming down to offer Eternal Life, but judgment will be handed down as the "books" are read. (Rev20:11-15)

You see... repentance is a -place- ...not a "work". It's a place of realization and confession. A place of "nothingness" and utter "worthlessness." A realization that one is helpless of one's self to do anything about it. The realization that Jesus Christ is the only -One- Who can. But, until the place of worthlessness is reached, there really isn't any concept that salvation is even a -necessity-. So, then, "faith" is non-existent. What is the -need- for faith, if the need for salvation isn't realized? So, you see...repentance does come 'first'. THEN, in the process of realizing that Christ is the only One Who can save, "Faith" is given by God to "receive" Jesus as -the- Savior. (Jn1:12)

When -sinner- 'believes in' and 'receives' Jesus Christ, it is -BECAUSE- he has repented. -Because- he realizes that he's a sinner. Without the

realization of -sin- God's -grace- (through faith) is meaningless. "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." (Rom5:20)

Perhaps some of you are also confused about 'faith'? When faith -only- is believed, without repentance, the faith you -think- you have is not true "faith unto salvation" (2Tm3:15) Many of you are striving to "have faith" because you've been told "only believe" because of being "justified by faith" (Rom5:1) and talk about not being "weak in faith" (Rom4:19 -out of context) So there is a kind of "straining" to have -enough- faith. But, because there wasn't true repentance -first- that faith is false. And so this non-existent 'faith' is continually being "proved" by the 'list' by which one lives and compares everybody else to. But you're -NOT- Saved...

Others of you are continually "wondering". You are -NOT SURE- you are saved. You faithfully read your KJV-only, and have this "appearance" (1Th5:22) of righteousness, and "abstaining from evil" by the 'lists' you keep. But, since you have never been to the base of those 'stairs' (foot of the cross) on your face before God, you have not -truly- experienced forgiveness. "Blessed (happy & at peace) is the man whose transgression is forgiven.." (Ps32:1) You don't know -what- that experience is....so you continue to wonder. You don't -know- because it didn't happen. And in the end, all you have is your KJV and -appearances- It's not -real- in your heart.

Therefore, if you have not repented...you are -NOT- Saved! Because without repentance, by the very definition, there is no admission of guilt/sin. Without sin, there is no forgiveness of grace. Without grace... "salvation" does not exist...! In other words, if you are already "pretty good" and -merely- want Jesus "in-your-life" you are -NOT- saved. If you are living the 'good' Christian life, righteously adhering to your 'list' you are - NOT- saved. Jesus didn't come for you, as He says, "I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Mr2:17)

How much -time- goes by from 'repentance' to 'faith'? It likely varies from person to person. For one, the two will be almost instantaneous. For another, repentance will occur...and there may be a time of "seeking" the solution, or of the Holy Spirit working on the conscience...for the message to reach him that it is, in fact, Jesus Christ who saves. But even in that, it is Jesus Christ who does the work, because it is He who knows the "thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb4:12)

But once sin has been repented of (confessed and renounced), -then- "Faith" believes (Acts16:31) that Jesus Christ is the -only- means of salvation (Acts4:12), and the "gift" (Eph2:8) is -received-.(Jn1:12)

What about 'The Reformers' and... "Sola Fide" ?? ©1999

In follow-up to:
Only Believe?
The Last Domino has Fallen

OK... I guess we're not -quite- finished with this subject. Somebody wrote about understanding "the reformers clarion call of sola fide (faith alone)" subsequently making reference to the Gospel of John, as John summarizes, "These are written so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in His name." (Jn20:31) That the word "repent/repentance" is not once mentioned throughout the entire book, and yet John was claiming that what was written was sufficient to give a person eternal life. I had already been wondering about addressing Acts16:31. So, I guess now's the time.

First of all...

To base -anything- on "the reformers" is **WRONG FOOTING**. Many of them were not even saved. And yet people are -of- "so-n-so" (1Cor1:12) The -supposed- 'great men.' Wrong foundation! The foundation is Jesus Christ. (1Cor3:11) Get your heads out of those books and into -THE-Book!

And along the same lines, some of you are even beginning to follow -me-. If you are...unsubscribe from this e-list...NOW! IMMEDIATELY!!! You should be following Jesus Christ through God's Word, the Scriptures. I'm merely a person God has appointed in these days as a prophet and guide; trying to point anyone who will receive it..to God's Word and Truth. But if you are developing a "Paul Becker says...." mentality... then, please leave! ...and get into the Scriptures!

OK... let's get down to business...

We can approach an understanding of this from a couple of directions.

The word "believe" (evidently) appears 97 times in John. (Apparently this person counted them...I didn't) So...if we want to split hairs. This word "pisteuo" means different things. I didn't follow the word "believ(*)" all the way through John, but through a third of it, pisteuo is used every time... including the belief that healing would take place (Jn4:50) and in Jesus speaking of their -not- believing Moses' writings (5:47) In these kinds of cases it is not necessarily -always- "saving faith" but believing in the existence of an event or thing.

If we look at Jn3:36, the -opposite- of "believe" ("not believe") is a word meaning to 'not allow one's self to be persuaded; to not comply with.' In other words, to be disobedient to God's call. In that case, believe would loosely mean "obedience." Such as "obedience to faith" (Rom1:5) or "obedience to righteousness" (Rom6:16) We can spent all year splitting hairs semantically for each instance of the word "believe" in John's gospel.

So, what was the purpose of the book? That the reader might "..believe that Jesus is the Christ." God's annointed. The -SON- of God. Deity.

When people truly met God, and -saw- Him, what was the typical reaction?

- He showed me my sin (Jn4:29)
- I am a sinful man (Lk5:8)
- woe is me (Is6:5)
- I abhor myself and repent (Job42:6)
- fell at His feet as dead (Rev1:17)
- we shall surely die (Judg13:22)

The 'place' of Repentance...!

When Paul and Silas -only- said "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ..." (Acts16:31) from the account we know that the jailer was already at the place of repentance, from his actions. He was at the bottom...about to kill himself (vs27) and then comes "trembling" (vs29) and asks how to be saved. In that scene, the jailer was supposedly "in charge" of prisoners...but humbles himself in front of a couple of them to receive Christ. He had -already- humbled himself. 'repentance' was evident. Now, he needed to receive Christ. Thus, the message, "Believe..."

-Whom- is repentance "to"? "...toward God.." (Acts20:21) The Gospel of John is -about- "Jesus". "...and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." John is about Jesus as Deity. Of course it's going to be about "faith." Because what is necessary 'regarding Jesus' ...is "Faith." He is our High Priest before God the Father...before Whom we must repent.

So, if you are trusting in the gospel of John, knowing that it presents Jesus as Christ, and the means to "life in His name", Jesus says, "unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." (Lk13:3) -Jesus- is the One who gave the disciples the -message- they were to proclaim, "repentance and remission of sins." (Lk24:47) But yes...you must -believe- that it is true, what Jesus said...that you must repent.

Jesus came as the "Savior" ...savior from -what-? God's wrath. (Rom1:18) Jesus is the "mediator" between God and man. (1Ti2:5) God is the One, on His throne, before Whom we give account. (Rev20:11, Dan7:9,13) It is God to Whom Jesus will "confess" those who have placed their faith/trust in Him (Jesus). (Mt10:32,Rev3:5) Because of Jesus' work we now have

bold access to the Father. (Heb4:16) The "Father" before Whom we have repented...as we stand in "Faith-in-Christ".

Let's not forget that it was "God" Who sent Jesus (Jn3:16) and if we disobey and don't receive Jesus (in faith), it is -God's- wrath that "abides on him." (vs36) We do not repent -to- 'Jesus'. Jesus was not sent "to condemn" the world, but to "save" it. (Jn3:17,Lk19:10)

Remember that "in the beginning God..." (Gen1:1) God (the Father). He is the One who has exalted Jesus and "given Him a name that is above every name" (Phil2:9) Now, even though it states that "every tongue shall confess" and that "every knee" shall bow before -Jesus-, God, the One Who gave Him this position is still -above- Jesus. The -giver- of that High Name is greater than the -Recipient-. And ultimately, Jesus will be subjecting Himself and all under Him to the Father, "so that God may be all things in all." (1Cor15:28)

So yes, John presents Jesus, and the necessity of Faith in Christ. Because that, precisely, is what we must have with Christ. Faith only. We receive Jesus...only. But WHY? Because we are separated from God -the Father-. God sent Jesus. Jesus died. We must believe, have faith in, put our trust in... Jesus. Period. Nothing else. Jesus is our -only- Savior. There is no other means of salvation "by which we must be saved." (Acts4:12)

But -WHAT- is Jesus saving us from? The wrath of God. It is God, ultimately, before Whom we are accountable. It is at the 'bottom stair' to His [God's] throne that we must prostrate ourselves and -repent-. That's why God sent Jesus, so that in turn, we can believe in the ability of His redemption to make us "accepted" before God. (Eph1:6)

So, to summarize...

Once we see our helpless state, then, yes, it is by "Faith Only" that we are saved. Jesus Christ provides the salvation and redemption "through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." (Eph1:7)

But we don't know that redemption is -even- a "necessity" until we've seen God's holiness, our own utter depravity, and the resultant judgement of God upon us. -humility & repentance- The typical attitude is "yea, yea, yea...I know all that...let's get on with the faith." Or as in one e-mail, I'm sure, -not- intended for me...sent to me by accident, someone -joking- to the intended recipient about one of these recent mailings, "I'm gonna repent later on today.. -grin-grin-" They have not yet seen themselves as God sees them. Until they do, Saving Faith is non-existent. Is not possible.

If you're having a hard time understanding this, it is probably because you have not been there. You are not saved. Yes, salvation is by "Faith Alone" (sola fide). But we don't even know our -need- for salvation until we've seen God's holiness, and our utter depravity. In the wilderness Moses

made a bronze serpent and all that people had to do was -turn- (repent) and look at the bronze serpent. They didn't go anywhere or do anything. But if they merely -looked-, they were healed of their snake bites. (Nu21:9) But they had to realize they'd been bit, and feel the life leaving them as the poison was taking over, and consciously turn and look.

As Moses "lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so the Son of Man [was] lifted up." (Jn3:14) The condition is "sin" and the result is "death." (Rom6:23) The person must realize they have been -bit- and are dying. The Father (who draws-Jn6:44) says, 'look to My Son'. They turn (repent) and look (in faith) to Jesus "lifted up" on the cross for salvation.

Q/A -So Much for 'Sola Fide'? © 2001

READER COMMENTS:

I have some thoughts on something you said... So much for "Sola Fide" or "only believe." You dismissed it by citing that the demons believe and unbelievers will know the Truth in hell. I think the original intent of "Sola Fide" is TRUE faith unto salvation without a works based salvation. I think the demons and unbelievers have and will have a mental knowledge of actual facts, but it is not a saving knowledge which leads to repentance. This leads to the related topic that you have to come to a "faith-knowledge" (If I may make up a term to help my explanation) by hearing and believing the Word in order to repent or else you have no reason or mandate to repent. I bring this up because I am troubled by a trend towards a works-based salvation message being heard today and that is very subtle. I think true repentance is on-going as we understand more of the Word we see more stubble and rocks in the field of our hearts, of which we must repent, but we are still saved by faith and not our works or our working out of our salvation. I realize there is much more of the other side of the coin being promoted today in the easy "repeat this prayer after me" false salvation message. It is a real mine field of false doctrine in the Christian world today. I've heard another man preaching that you can repent, pray asking to be saved, read your Bible, go to church, etc, etc, etc and still not be saved. At that point you have to start questioning the message and say what is true salvation? Even though it may sound very holy and pure and "narrow-roadlike" it is works salvation at that point. Only Jesus blood can save us and we can only avail ourselves of it by faith because all of our righteousness is filthy rags.

VW ANSWER:

It's time to address this subject again. Not "harping". But as Paul said about his continual repetitions, reminders and warnings, "For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe." (Phil3:1) Also, this answer will not necessarily directly 'answer' this person's comments. But the entire note is included because it contains several items for consideration. It represents several topics that have come to my attention

recently from several different sources. But, while being different topics, they are all inter-related.

Another recent communication from another source, totally unrelated to these mailings/studies, sent me to a website to check out the matters that were of concern to them, and I got to reading a bit of the website's (ministry's) doctrinal statement on "how to be saved", etc. As well... little passing comments some of you make in your correspondence to me from time-to-time also suggests we need to revisit this subject briefly.

There is a confusion between 1) repentance, 2) repentance, 3) faith, and 4) works. [Editor: Nope, I'm not 'losing' it with #1 & #2. No, my senility hasn't got the best of me.... yet!!] The confusion for many is, precisely, the fact that there are two types of repentance.

Yes, I, too, am noticing a proliferation of a "salvation" doctrine that teaches something on the order of: 1) Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts16:31), and... 2) O.T. works of the form... "But if a man is righteous and -does- what is just and right; if he has not eaten on the mountains, nor lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, nor defiled his neighbor's wife, nor approached a menstruating woman... if he has walked in My statutes and kept My judgments faithfully; he is righteous. He shall live life, says the Lord Jehovah." (~Ezek18:5-9) After all Paul says, "Yet the Law is not of faith; but, The man who -does- them shall live in them." (Gal3:12)

While not limited to them, this doctrine seems to be proclaimed most militantly by many "messianic/Hebrew roots Christians". They see how Jesus said that He came to "fulfill the Law" (Mt5:17), and that S/Paul was a Torah-observant Jew, keeping all the Mosaic traditions (Gal1:14); therefore Christians -really- should, too. But they seem to ignore the whole gist of the book of Galatians, that one cannot keep the Law. That "...by the deeds of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight" (Rom3:20)

Do we need to review "Faith"? I hope not. At least, we won't right now. The need for Faith unto Salvation proliferates the entire Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments. God sent His Son for the purpose that anyone who "believes" in Him might have "eternal life". (Jn3:16)

Do we need to review the fact that Salvation is "NOT of works"? (Eph2:9) I hope not. To prove out Paul's comment in Rom3:20, we see Israel's history, that, although they had the Law, based on works, "with most of them God was not well pleased..." (1Cor10:5) "...because of unbelief.." (Rom11:20, Heb3:19)

The confusion is with "Repentance". If you were to look at someone's theology, looking at how they view salvation, if they proclaim "repentance" (their doctrinal statement has the -word- "repentance" interspersed here

and there all over the place), are they proclaiming Biblical Salvation? Does the fact that they use the -word- "repent" guarantee that they are saved?

Well, Billy Graham has proclaimed "repentance" with the definition that goes something like: "turning and changing one's mind and behavior". In other words, I used to go one way, doing certain things; but now I turn 180 degrees, and -do- different things. Become a better person. Get a new lease on life. Promise God to not do all those bad things I used to do. Trouble is, even at the end of his life of preaching this doctrine, when interviewed, his own words out of his own mouth have proclaimed that he is not sure that, when he should arrive at the Pearly Gates, if God will even receive him into Heaven or not. He is not even assured of his own salvation! (For you newer subscribers, find "Billy Graham's Gospel" in the Discernment Archives) It is also reported that he has membership in one of those godless, satanic secret societies. And recently he was in the news receiving knighthood in the UK. Is -his- "repentance" ... unto Salvation?

When it became exposed awhile back that Dave Hunt doesn't believe in repentance for Salvation (or at least, doesn't think it should be proclaimed because it's too "confusing"), his public questioning of the matter was words to the effect of, How would one know when they had repented for 'every' sin? How would they know when they had repented 'enough'?

The website I mentioned above gives a very clear Biblical presentation of Saving Faith. Then, they briefly quote Paul's words, "...repentance toward God.." (Acts20:21) but then proceed to follow-up that quote with O.T. concept of -doing- good, not sleeping with one's neighbor's wife, being honest in dealings, etc. All this, in their "how-to-be-saved" section.

Those who typically proclaim "Sola Fide" (Faith Only), denounce the concept of the "works-of-repentance". If we are saved, "not of works", and they view repentance as being what we have just observed in the preceding few paragraphs, then, perhaps, we can understand why they balk at "repentance". If one has to repent 'enough', such a 'kind-of' repentance is certainly a "work", isn't it. However, I still haven't figured out how they then explain away Scripture's very clear proclamation, that God "...now commands all men everywhere to repent.." (Acts17:30) That God's purpose is that "all should come to repentance" (2Pt3:9) That Jesus came to call, "...sinners to repentance" (Mt9:13) Not one of them (to my knowledge) has answered, or explained how their beliefs correspond to these clear proclamations.

Another person the other day in an e-mail asked something on the order of: Is it possible that a person can Repent unto Salvation, but never actually use the -word- "repent"?

!!! EXACTLY !!!

Such a question gets closer to the Truth than pretty much all the other arguments or objections. Such a question indicates an understanding of the -other- "repentance" (numbered above). And it is this -other- repentance that, without it, a person cannot get to Heaven. This "repentance" is the very root and core of the October article from John ch3, "Born of the Spirit" and the one from November, "Spirit and Truth".

It is the difference between Repentance unto Salvation, and "penance". You see, the confusion comes because most people (who haven't yet "come out of her My people"-Rev18:4) are stuck on the Babylonish concept of penance. What Babylon calls "penance", people are confused into thinking is the same as Biblical "repentance" unto Salvation. The Reformation rebelled against certain aspects of Rome, but apparently never figured out what Biblical repentance is. Thus, rejecting Rome's "penance", they also threw Scriptural Repentance out the window (or never even saw it??), and embraced "Sola Fide". (Or, perhaps, the fact that they reject it is another proof of them being the other 'side' of the "coin" of Rome? The one 'side' being -obviously- in pagan error, and the other 'side' -appearing- to rebel against the first side...thus -seeming- to be 'True' by contrast... but in its falseness, actually being even more damnably deceptive for any who embrace it! And this includes -most- of christendom.)

Repentance Unto Salvation is -NOT- a sorrow and penitance for all the "things" I have -DONE-... that I have lied, cheated, stolen, slept with people not my spouse, been mean and nasty to people. Yes, it is on account of all these things that the "wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience" (Eph5:6), and we will certainly have sorrow for them. But why does the sinner do these things? Because he is, in fact, a -SON- of disobedience. He was "born" into sin. "...in sin my mother conceived me.." (Ps51:5) He DOES them, because that is his NATURE. The problem is not the 'deeds', but the 'nature' that produces the deeds. Penance only takes care of deeds. But it has no effect over the nature. The Law (with its punishments and rectitudes/repentances) only gives a "knowledge of sin". (Rom3:20)

It is a "heart" problem... "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual perversions, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." (Mt15:19)

As God is presenting Himself to Job, when Job "repents" (Job42:6) he does not reply, "Oh, God, I have -done- so many terrible things!" No! Even satan agreed with God's assessment that Job was 'doing' all the right things. (Job1:8) No, he says, "I -am- vile" (Job40:4) When Isaiah sees God's glory, he replies, "I -am- undone! I -am- a man of unclean lips.." (Is6:5) Again, he does not list off all his terrible -deeds-. Presumably he was already a Law-abiding Israeli...keeping the Law. In both of these cases, the individuals see themselves as dirty, filthy, rotten. You see, even anything "wonderful" we might come up with, as humans, even things that

we consider to be "good"... "...are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like a menstruation cloth." (Is64:6)

The one Jesus proclaimed had gone home "justified" was the man who cried out to God to be "merciful to me a -sinner-!" (Lk18:13) Unlike the pharisee who was listing off all his good deeds (vs11-12), the one who was justified did not list anything. He merely implored God's mercy because of -what- he was... a "sinner".

Yes, Dave Hunt is correct. How could we possibly know when we had 'listed off' -all- the sins we needed to repent -of-? We cannot! It is impossible. Repentance Unto Salvation replies to God, saying, "I cannot even remember all my sins! If it were up to me, it would be a hopeless situation, because everything about me is sinful! You, God Most High, know me. You know me better than I know myself. You know my sins. You know my heart is filthy. I haven't even a clue as to what is needed in order to 'fix' my life. Please extend Your mercy to me, take away my sin (nature), and give me Your eternal life and nature."

When I used to perform in Handel's "Messiah", there were always disputes about the words, "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the -sin- of the world" (Jn1:29) Some editions print "sins" (plural). Certainly, Jesus came to take away sins (deeds). But that can never happen until SIN (the 'nature') is taken away, and the person is made into a "new creation". (2Cor5:17)

True Faith unto Salvation, thus, is synonymous with True Repentance. The two, actually, can not be extricated from each other. Today's doctrine of "just have faith" (like Oprah teaches), goes on to suggest that if you have "enough" faith... Well, there we come to Dave Hunt's question again. How do we know when we have repented "enough"? How do we know when we have "enough" faith? You see, both of these are "works". I am 'grunting' to -feeeel- the faith as those feelings eventually work themselves around to a feeeeling of "holiness". Same as, "wracking-my-brain-to-remember" all my sins to repent of them, as though going into a confessional and listing them off. Both of these; this 'kind-of' faith, and 'kind-of' repentance are, truly, "works". They are of man's efforts. They do not save!

True Saving Faith does -NOT- "give our life to Jesus"! But rather, "receives Him". (Jn1:12) The self-abhorrence of Repentance realizes that my own state, of my own "strength/ability" (Rom5:6), is hopeless. I am "undone". "Woe is me!" I've had it! There is no hope. But hand-in-hand with that revelation of my own heart is the understanding that Jesus provided "redemption through His blood". (Eph1:7, Col1:14) Thus, Saving Faith "trusts/leans on" the salvation Jesus provides. It doesn't necessarily understand it all, as the man cried out to Jesus, "I believe, help my unbelief!" (Mk9:24) Remember, even our faith is a "gift of God" (Eph2:8)

It's like when Jesus met the woman of Samaria. Salvation does not happen unless the "Father draws" the person. (Jn6:44) God meets the sinner; the sinner is NOT (as one famous witnessing tract proclaims) seeking after God. We have all "gone astray" like sheep; we all go our "own" way. (Is53:6) "There is none who seeks after God" (Rom3:11) Such a tract, essentially, says God's Word is lying, when they say that mankind is seeking after God. Well, if "God is true...and every man a liar" (Rom3:4), it becomes obvious that that tract is LYING to those it purports to witness to. (Yes, folks, the "4 Spiritual Laws") God comes to the sinner... not the other way around.

So, when a person is confronted with the Holy Righteous God, and sees one's own sinful state, he has two options: to reject God, or to acknowledge one's sinful state and receive God's new nature through Christ. The two are essentially part of the same event. One does not repent without receiving Christ. Nor does one receive Christ without the repentance which acknowledged the need for Him; otherwise, why would one ever "receive" Him? The Samaritan woman proclaimed in Jn4:29

1) He told me everything that I ever did.. 2) is this not the Christ
(what she -did- indicating her heart)

1) Repentance...

2) Faith

1) Acknowledge sin...

2) Receive Jesus Christ

No... there is no such thing as "Sola Fide". If Sola Fide is all you embrace, you are on your one-way ticket to Hell!

[Editor: If that seems like much too "harsh" of a statement, you should have seen "Dr. Phil" on Oprah last night! He was yelling at his group trying to get them to be 100% in his program of pulling themselves up by their own bootstraps. But here, we are talking about your eternal soul! Your eternal destiny. Your Eternal Salvation, or its alternative, eternal damnation!]

If you think that all you have to do is 'add' Jesus to yourself along with your list of other "friends" (Just like the Japanese used to want to add Christianity to their pantheon of "yaoyorodsu no kami") [Oh, "What a friend we have in Jesus..."], and you "believe" in Him in 'that-way', you didn't really meet Jesus! The "shepherd" you met was an impostor who "climbed up some other way" (Jn10:1) If it is not coupled with Repentance, it is not True Faith. That's "#1-Repentance", not "#2-Repentance" ...or, "#2-Repentance", not "#1-Repentance". Since we didn't label them... take your pick.. at any rate, it's the -other- "repentance" from the one most people proclaim.

"For [Jesus says] to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of Heaven." (Mt5:20) It is a righteousness that goes beyond SELF-righteousness, repenting of sin[s], and keeping lists of righteous deeds.

"Deeds" is nothing, if the matter isn't resolved in the "heart". "For he is not a Jew [Believer] who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God." (Rom2:28-29)

Amen!

Conversations on: "Repentance" © 2000

- from an e-mail subscriber
- from the webmaster that started the whole thing
- Hunt right - VW wrong 1Cor15:1-4

from an e-mail subscriber:

[Editor: This subscriber used to be of "[the denomination]" and I believe still has periodic communications with some of them. Names and places are blanked to protect the innocent (or guilty); and to not give credit where notoriety is not deserved, and to also let us focus on the issue/s, not the labels of those holding those views. It's been edited in a couple of places for length.]

COMMENTS:

As you will remember over a year ago you started writing on the lack of repentance in preaching. Also, you may remember I forwarded it to a lot of preachers I know. Most, even the ones that don't like me, wrote back and thanked me for the article. (They were scared to death to ignore it).

The thing I have noticed over the past year, there have a bunch of [the denominational] Groups having week long conferences on repentance. (Like they discovered something new!). The ones that were the worst on not preaching on repentance seem to be the ones putting these conferences together. Like they needed to straighten everyone else out.

[name] just did a series on the lack of repentance preaching. [another name] had a conference where he.. supposedly had over 5,000 people get saved one Sunday.

If [this other name] actually preached on repentance at a Pastor's conference like [he] claims to have, he should now be the most hated Preacher in America by all his followers since he hasn't apologized for leading his followers astray.

After all these conferences in the past year on repentance, shouldn't we notice a revival in this country?

Or shouldn't we notice a mass exodus from [the denominational] churches because people are getting there toes stepped on by brave preachers that are now preaching on repentance?

Anyway, whatever has happened in the past year on this repentance issue, you seem to be the first to notice the lack of repentance in preaching. Also, you were about the only one that was able to clearly explain it without a week-long conference. And were about the only one

that made people mad when you brought it up. And interesting also the only one that left [the denomination].

ANSWERS:

It's interesting how you say that these things originating from VW are stirring up these conferences. But the lack of any "revival" makes me realize that this, too, is like another phenomenon I've noticed in the past, when I used to be "in" the churches. With my music background, the Lord also gave me a "gift" for leading worship... particularly while sitting at a piano/keyboard...accompanying and leading off with songs. Since I -am- a Believer, the Holy Spirit would lead out through me, and they would be times of true Holy Spirit worship of God. (Not the charismania-style swooning mantracizings) This one particular pastor, I remember specifically, -saw- what was happening when I did this, and he -liked- it. And so, he would seek to -imitate- what I did. He would imitate the "form" and "methodology", but it was not the same.

At the time, I observed this, and 'wondered' about it. Now, thinking back on it, I have come to realize that he was not a True Believer. An unbeliever cannot mimic the "form" and expect that the Holy Spirit will bless. The Spirit does not reside in such a person.

In the same way, these churches you speak of can become fearful of not including "repentance" in their messages. But if they, themselves, are not saved...as we say from time to time, "wolves do not beget lambs", do they! (Mt7:16)

Where this all started...

In January,99 the militance on this whole "Repentance" theme began in earnest. VW has proclaimed repentance all along. But in visiting a website that promotes "Independent Baptist", I spied his "Gospel" presentation. Just like the "Gospel of Jesus Christ: an Evangelical Celebration", it was pretty much all 'right on' ...except for one thing. Repentance. Where GJC simply ignores the subject, this website actually specified that Salvation did "not" include Repentance. Just as many ex-Catholics wax militant against the error from which they escaped, so did I regarding IB's.

When this series began, I had written to the webmaster, and he had not responded. A little over a month ago, now, the webmaster contacted me about something else, totally unrelated, and when I replied, I also brought up my communication of a year previous. The few brief exchanges were interesting (revealing). Excerpts are included below:

ME:

You never did reply to my query about a year ago about the fact that you used to (do you still?) proclaim that salvation does -NOT- involve repentance. Acts 20:21 Lk24:47 Acts 17:30

HIM:

I believe salvation "incorporates" an element of repentance but the Bible CLEARLY teaches new testament salvation does NOT depend on a WORK of repentance.

A very good definition of New Testament "repentance" (which of course is AFTER the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ - see Heb 9)

The Bible doesn't teach a person has to repent of all their sins (which is humanly impossible) in order to be saved. [Ed: quotes Acts16:30-31]

ME:

Not to get into a lengthy discussion with you, but...

Herein is your error... that repentance is a "work". When Job said, "I abhor myself and repent..." he was not "working". He was at a "place" of self-worth-LESS-ness...of utter filthiness. (Is64:6) If we are -totally- filthy before God and "undone" (Is6:5) there is -nothing- good. This repentance is not regarding all our -deeds-, which as you point out, we could not possibly remember them all...but regarding our 'nature' in sin. Our nature before our "new birth". It is about "what I -am-" not "what I -did-". (We -sin- because we are "sinners"...not, we are sinners because we sin. We sin, because that is our 'nature' to do so.)

This "repentance is -works-" is what Billy Graham preaches. But we are not saved "by works". (Eph2:9, tit3:5) We are saved "by faith"...once we have repented of our sin -nature-. ...like the verses I sent you the references to in the previous note. It is what Jesus commanded to be preached. Lk24:47 Unless we are going to say that Jesus didn't know what He was talking about when He gave that command...

HIM:

Question:

What if a person trusts and believes in the blood of Jesus Christ as their Savior, etc. - and they do NOT repent as you describe:

Do they go to heaven or hell?

ME:

"...even the demons believe and shudder.." (Jas2:19b) And they believe that Jesus is the Savior...the way to salvation. (Mk1:24, Acts16:17) But Jesus cast the demons out of people who made these 'confessions', and Paul did so, too, from the girl that followed after them.

When you quoted in your other note from Acts16:31, the jailer, by his attitude as he came before Paul and Silas already had repented, by implication. He was at that "place" of humility. (Jas4:9-10) So, what he needed at that point was the "faith" part. (Acts20:21) The fact that he

comes "trembling" and asks, "what must I do to be saved?" indicates that he's already -there-, at 'repentance'.

Why do you argue -against- it? God "..COMMANDS all men everywhere to REPENT.." (Acts17:30)

For your edification and possible interest, I would suggest a reading of the series of articles that was spawned originally by my visit to your website, and my e-mail to you at that time, a little over a year ago. If you click "Commentaries", go down to Jan, 99 "Only Believe...?" and follow the two subsequent Q/A links "Last domino..." and "Reformers and Sola Fide"

HIM:

>>What if a person trusts and believes in the blood of Jesus Christ as their Savior, etc. - and they do NOT repent as you describe: Do they go to heaven or hell?

Again you will NOT answer the question. You know why -- you do NOT know what you believe! Ask ME I'LL ANSWER IT! This will make an interesting web site page! Thanks for the ammo!

ME:

I -DID- answer it! Trouble is, my answer didn't fit your "formula". The formula that says, "repeat after me with these ritual words...and now you are saved". My answer requires you to -think- and -understand- the answer.

So...to 'explain' my -answer-... Do demons believe? Do they go to heaven or hell? (It is assumed you know the answer to this...) Merely 'believing' does not save. The girl at Philipi called out, "These men are preaching the gospel of salvation to us.." did that acknowledgement of the Truth save her? (again...assumed you know this answer, too) She was demon-possessed.

If you read the links I suggested (did you -read- them?), you would see a repeated concept throughout those three articles/Q-A's...

"...if you blah, blah, blah....but don't repent...YOU ARE NOT SAVED..."

I don't know how much clearer the answer could be. Again, my question to you... why do you rebel against God's clear word to "repent"?? (I won't repeat the references here, I already gave them...if you didn't receive them before, you won't now, either...) Or, do you pretend they don't exist? Jesus didn't really mean what He said when He commanded that the salvation message is "repentance and remission of sins" (Lk24:47) God's command for "all men everywhere to repent" ...that, too, God didn't really mean that!!?? If you don't proclaim repentance, how do you reconcile those passages? God's Word does not disagree with itself!

[Editor:]

At this point he made no further replies. Nor have I seen that "page" at his website that I had given him the "ammo" for.

This website is a fine AV1611-type website, only endorsing other ministries that are "KJV-only". Links to any other (non-KJV) sites are with disclaimers. For all the firmness into KJV-only-ism, and "separation" from things that don't agree, he has quickly jumped on the band-wagon to rejoice and proclaim Jane Fonda to be a True Christian. Shortly after we addressed the issue about whether or not she might possibly truly be a Believer, I happened to see her being interview on one of the mid-week prime time network news shows. There was nothing in what she said that "bore witness" with my spirit that she was a "child of God". (Rom8:16) The whole thing went by too quickly, so I have now forgotten the details to share with you-all here, but there were a couple of things she said in that interview that actually confirmed to my heart that she is -not- a Believer.

You see, folks, the label does not save. Over the years when pretty much everybody was relaxing Biblical doctrines, the various Independent, Conservative & Bible Baptist groups refused to water down their message and be friends with ecumenism. On the surface such fundamentalism seems like a good thing. But if you have -all- the correct doctrines, but leave out "Repentance" (either direct or implied), there is no salvation. Remember, you can have the latest fastest Pentium computer...but if the "reset" jumpers are shorted, it doesn't matter what else you do, it won't run. You can have the fastest most powerful race car or monster truck, with fancy paint, chrome and pin-stripes...but if they are missing the ignition wire, all those other expensive, custom-machined parts will do no good. It will not run!

You can adhere to KJ-only-ism. Yes, the KJV has been used of God down through the centuries. But if you are fighting KJV-only battles, but not actually -reading- that KJV you fight over, and taking God's Word (even as you read it from your KJV) into your heart, you will not be saved. FAITH comes from hearing, and hearing by the...what? WORD OF GOD. (Rom10:17)

Hunt right, VW wrong...? 1Cor15:1-4

COMMENT:

Mr Hunt is correct and you are wrong

The Scriptures tell us to "REPENT and BELIEVE THE GOSPEL". The truth is that repentance is not part of the gospel which Paul defines in [1 Cor 15:1-4; Gal 1:6-12] as Hunt affirms. Christ said to "Repent and [THEN] believe the gospel. " Repentance is not part of the gospel as CHRIST said "Repent and believe the gospel" We clearly see repentance is separate from the gospel message itself.

ANSWER:

Before I get going here, please note, first, that your cited Gal1:6-12 passage does not 'define' -what- the Gospel is. It merely 'refers to' it...you state that Paul "defines" it in that passage. He does not.

However, in your own words you are recognizing Scripture saying what VW has been proclaiming all along. You see that Scriptures teach "repentance". This is what Paul proclaims in Acts20:21 "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ".

- 1) repentance toward God - REPENT
- 2) faith - BELIEVE
- 3) toward Jesus Christ - THE GOSPEL

But Mr. Hunt proclaims that it's better NOT TO -proclaim- "repentance". He claims that Scripture does not tell us to proclaim it. He agrees that it is there, in Scripture, but that we should not preach it...that it's too "confusing" a topic...thus, he doesn't. That it's "best left...out"

How does a person believe the Gospel of Salvation through Jesus (Acts4:12), if they don't first see the condition of their heart, their need of salvation, due to being "stabbed in the heart" (Act2:37) in conviction of their sin, and see their own hopeless state in utter worthlessness and "powerlessness" to save themselves? (Rom5:6) If the drowning person doesn't -realize- (repent) that he's drowning, he's not going to grab (receive Jn1:12) the life preserver being thrown to him.

It is a -confusion- of terms to proclaim that a person is "saved" if he didn't repent. If he's already "OK" (which is what a lack of repentance implies), 'what' is he being "saved" -from-? He might understand how wonderful Jesus is, and life in heaven. But if he doesn't realize that he's not going there, but rather is on the "broad way" to "destruction" (Mt7:13), he sees no 'need' for help. He's sitting in the 'calm' waters above the spill-way, not realizing he's just about to "go over" the falls. Repentance is "seeing" that his boat is just about to go over, and that he can't paddle/row fast enough to get out of there; so Salvation is grabbing the rope that is being thrown to him from the shore.

Refusing to preach Repentance is like a person on the shore seeing how precariously close he is to going over, but refusing to -shout- to them to "grab the rope...LOOK OUT FOR THE FALLS!!!"

By your own admission, you see that Scripture proclaims Repentance. Jesus commanded that Repentance be "-proclaimed- in His name" (Lk24:47)

Paul did not mention it in 1Cor15:1-4, because in that place, (just like John's Gospel presents Christ as "Deity" and thus doesn't mention "repentance"), he is explaining the work "OF CHRIST" for salvation thru

the -RESURRECTION-. Paul is explaining the "gospel" of "how" Christ saves. Remember also that one of the primary things the early apostles preached was the Resurrection (Acts4:2); as did Paul(Acts24:15) -That- is what Paul is teaching in 1Cor15. The -whole- chapter. Vs 1-4 merely introduce the topic of that whole passage, ch15. The work -CHRIST- DID for our salvation. The -basis- for the Eternal Security of the Believer's salvation which he proclaims in Rom8:31-39. It is -because- Christ rose from the dead that the Believer is no longer "lost". (1Cor15:17-18) Because He lives, we know that those who "hold fast" are "kept safe". (vs2) "..for I know -WHOM- (Christ) I have believed..-HE- is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that Day." (2Tm1:12) If Jesus had -remained- dead, He could no more keep us in the future, could He. Dead men don't do anything. But because He is -ALIVE-, He is able to fulfill His promise of "everlasting life". (Jn3:16) Since we are "dead in sins" (Eph2:5), how can we be assured of Eternal "life" if Christ, Himself, was not the "firstfruit"? (1Cor15:23) -THAT- is what 1Cor15 is about!

In the 1-2-3 'list' above, where Paul in a nutshell is proclaiming -everything-, not having left anything out that was "needful" (Acts20:21), 1Cor15 is #3. In the boat/falls illustration, if you will, the preparation for "throwing the rope". Paul is not describing the nature of "faith" (#2). He does that in other places, like Romans, etc. He is not explaining "repentance" (#1). That is not his 'current' topic in that chapter. It is the "resurrection". First of all, Christ's. And then, the Believer's. When he is fully explaining #3, he is not negating or ignoring #1 & #2. They, simply, are not the 'current' topic. He is not addressing our depths in sin, he is discussing the nature of death and resurrection, the "flesh and blood" bodies of corruption vs. the new spiritual bodies. It is the closest the Scriptures come to explaining "technically" how death, resurrection and incorruption are related, and how one passes from death to life.

This whole argument, that "Paul doesn't mention repentance in 1Cor15:1-4" makes as much sense as retorting that the "transmission" section of an auto shop manual doesn't contain any information about the "electrical" systems; therefore we don't need to be concerned about the electrical. It's not -intended- to discuss "electrics"... it's the "transmission" section! At the risk of being accused of 'beating a dead horse', Paul is speaking of "Christ" and -Christ's- "work" in 1Cor15. Exactly -what- it is that Christ provides for our Salvation; not Repentance or Faith. And since we cannot save ourselves by works (Eph2:9), it is -God's- "gift", yes, it is the "gospel..in which we stand" because it describes what Christ did/does/will-do. When we repent and receive Christ, 1Cor15 describes in technical terms -what- it is that we are 'receiving' (vs1) from Christ. We long for "..adoption, the redemption of our body". (Rom8:23) 1Cor15 describes how that happens in resurrection and change from corruption into incorruption. That all happens (STARTS) (vs1-4) with the "Gospel" (good news) that Jesus ALREADY DID IT, and His resurrection was documented/verified/witnessed (vs5-8); paving the way as our "firstfruit", proving that our "hope" is not a blind hope. He did it. It is possible. Our

faith in what He promised is not "foolish". (vs17) Because "..now Christ has risen from the dead.." (vs20)

When a person "receives" (Jn1:12) Christ, -what- is he receiving? John's Gospel presents and describes 'Jesus Christ - Deity'.

When a person is saved what is the -nature- of his "everlasting life" (Jn3:16)? -How- does one become transformed from corruption into incorruption? Paul explains that in 1Corinthians ch15. The 'Resurrection - Rapture'.

However, neither of these things becomes reality for a person until they humble themselves before God in repentance. The one who cried "God be merciful to me the sinner" was the one Jesus declared "went to his house...justified, rather than the other one" who was too proud to repent. (Lk18:13-14)

Yes, contrary to the detractors, Paul -did- continually proclaim repentance. (Acts20:21, 17:30) "..to those in Damascus, and Jerusalem, and to all the country of Judea, and to the nations, I made known the command to repent and to turn to God..." (Acts26:20) Anyone who refuses to acknowledge or obey that command (Lk24:47), disobeys Christ.

Repent & Believe ...not Suggesting © 2000

"To this One all the Prophets witness, so that through His name everyone believing into Him will receive remission of sins." (Acts10:43)

"..they..glorified God, saying, Then God also has granted to the nations repentance unto life." (Acts11:18)

"..as I kept nothing back of what is profitable...earnestly testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts20:20-21)

We often talk about "repentance". We speak of the necessity of it for salvation. We periodically notice that some proclaim that repentance is NOT NECESSARY. And when we proclaim the NEED for repentance, some object strongly to such words, saying that it is "sola fide" that the "church fathers" proclaimed. Faith alone...nothing else. And they 'support' their view by explaining how John's Gospel doesn't once mention repentance, and that Paul and Silas said, "believe...and you shall be saved..." (Acts16:31) ...not "repent".

We've covered this many times, but let's review again. When Paul is making a point of reviewing the main points, when he says 'what' it was that he had been proclaiming, keeping "nothing back", it was "repentance..and faith". However, Peter is -only- preaching "believing" into Jesus to receive remission. And as the true "Church fathers" are talking about what just happened with Cornelius, analyzing the fact that non-Jews were also being saved, they speak of "repentance unto life". So... which is it?

It's the complete package. Faith is meaningless if a person has not repented. But repentance is also futile unless one receives the free gift of salvation which Jesus offers. (Jn1:12, Eph2:8)

So, is it wrong to preach "believe and be saved"? No. As long as "repentance" is also in the arsenal of in-depth explanation. Were John and Jesus wrong in preaching "repent...for the kingdom of heaven" is here? No. Because they also proclaimed Faith.

It's somewhat like a "pickup truck". The full terminology for the vehicle is a "pickup truck". However, on some occasions a person will talk about getting in their "pickup" to go somewhere. Or, that they need to load their "truck". Both expressions refer to the same vehicle.

In the same way, salvation is via "repentance and faith". But sometimes a person may refer to "repentance". Other times, to "faith". But it must be remembered that the two belong together, just like an icecream cone consists of the "ice cream" -AND- the "cone".

I don't know that I've ever heard a person who proclaims "repentance" deny the need for "faith". But there ARE -many- who proclaim "faith" WITHOUT "repentance". This latter is the error we expose periodically.

Jesus commanded to preach, "repentance and remission of sins preached on His name" (Lk24:47) You can get to faith from repentance. But repentance is well-nigh impossible if approached from "sola fide". That's why Jesus said the repentant one, crying for "mercy", was the one who went home justified. (Lk18:13-14) Once repentance is achieved, it is 'easy' to receive the "gift". But if a person only wants the gift, it doesn't mean he has humbled himself before God. (Jas4:10)

Just a brief note on Faith and Believing. Above, Acts10:43 was quoted from the LITV "..believing into Him..." Since I've been reading LITV regularly, I've also been using this expression when communicating with people, and a couple times the person has retorted back with words something like "believing -INTO- Christ...or whatever strange doctrine you are promoting.." You see, most translations say, "believes in Him." But if you look up the lexicon, you will see "into, unto, toward", etc. "In" is not one of the options.

What -KIND- of Faith is this? To merely "believe in" Jesus is no better than satan and his demons. They "believe and shudder" (Jas2:19) Saving Faith is a faith which results in a "New Birth". (Jn3:3) The person is "transformed by the renewing of your mind". (Rom12:2) The person is a "new creation" by virtue of being "In Christ" (2Cor5:17) The Holy Spirit comes to dwell (Rom8:9) and so the relationship is one in which Christ is "in you". (Col1:27) The Believer becomes part of that "oneness" with the Father and Jesus Christ. (Jn17)

Saving faith does not merely believe in the -existence- of something called "Salvation". No. It is a "joining" -with- Christ. (Rom6:5) When Jesus stands at the door knocking, wanting entrance (Rev3:20) it is an "occupation"... "dwelling". People speak of "going INTO business" or going "into" marriage. Everything about the person is devoted to this thing.

Thus, "believing INTO Jesus" is a total life commitment. "..old things have passed away, all things have become new.." (2Cor5:17)

Amen!

Repenting... not suggesting

"And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before you, and no longer am I worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his slaves, Bring out the best robe and clothe him, and give a ring for his hand and sandals for his feet...and they began to be merry." (Lk15:21-24)

Notice a little word in this passage. "But". I think it's safe to say that we don't usually see that word as we read along in this story of the "prodigal son". But why is the word "but" used there, instead of "and"?

Consider that the son has been in a distant country, far away from home, squandering his inheritance. And then he hits rock bottom. No money left. Famine. He is going naked and hungry, and is reduced to -desiring- pig food. For a Jew, to eat pig's food would be about as low as one could get, since pigs were "unclean" and detestable.

He comes to his senses and sees his predicament. Decides to go home and repent. And notice the 'speech' he plans; I have sinned, I'm not worthy to be called your son, make me as one of your hired servants. As he goes home, he is planning to 1) confess his guilt, 2) acknowledge his unworthiness, and 3) suggest his new status.

The father RUNS to meet the son. The son gets through #1 & #2, and before the son can continue on to #3... "-BUT-" The son considers his just deserts to be as a slave -BUT- instead, receives royal treatment.

There are two things for us to consider from this at this time. First of all, the son was coming in repentance. But he was also making "suggestions" as to what his fate should be. On one hand, he had come from honor and was reduced to nothing. In his mind he felt that "servanthood" was a low place. But actually, he deserved even less. In his dire straights he is reminiscing 'how good' his father's servants have it. He deserved exactly what he had... nothing, along with the pigs. He was not even worthy to be 'as high' as his father's servants. So, father, I'll 'settle for' being like one of your servants.

Society today is much like this prodigal son. A person commits murder, and is sentenced to 20yrs or life in prison. That "isn't fair"! That's such a harsh sentence! Well, how "fair" is it for the person he killed? They are DEAD! Recent news has told of some youths expelled from school for fighting in the stands at a sports event. There is no question as to "who" was doing "what". But a big ruckus erupted over the "harsh" sentence handed down in expelling them from school. A youth vandalises property at great cost to the owners. They are "grounded" for a month, and don't have to pay compensation. Oh, a "whole month" of being grounded is "so harsh". The parents are so "unfair"! The person doing the wrong... also commentating on their -own- punishment.

People come to God this way. I know I've done some bad things, but I'm basically a good person, so won't you let me -have-...? Yes, God, I'm coming to You... now -give-me-...!

There is no understanding of one's true position, being in the pig slop! NOT deserving ANYTHING! God's servants, the angels, would be insulted at the suggestion that we could maybe be 'like them'! In reality we are like

a fresh new-born, uncared for, squirming in the afterbirth. (Eze16:6)
Rotting away like a smelly "menstruous cloth" (Is64:6)

Fortunately, God knows that we don't fully understand our true state. His mercy comes "running" to us because "He delights in grace".(Mic7:18) He sees us in our true state, squirming in our afterbirth blood and says, "Live!" This is the true state you are in.. -BUT- .."there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner repenting." (Lk15:10) The sinner deserves nothing, 'BUT' God's love rebirths us into "sons of God". (Jn3:3, Gal3:26) And while our human minds cannot conceive of our just deserts, nor of what we 'think' we might be worthy of after repentance...

"Eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, nor has it risen up into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those that love Him."
(1Cor2:9, Isa64:4)

Repentance is in the Heart © 2003

"..yet when they have returned in their minds in the land where they have been carried captive, and have repented in their hearts, and made supplication to You in the land of those holding them captive, saying, We have sinned and done perversely, we have committed wickedness; and when they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies who have taken them captive, and have prayed to You toward their land which You have given to their fathers, the city which You have chosen and the house which I have built for Your name: then hear in Heaven Your dwelling place their prayer and their supplication, and attend to their cause, and forgive Your people who have sinned against You, and all their transgressions which they have transgressed against You; and grant them compassion before those who took them captive, that they may have compassion on them.." (1Ki8:47-50)

This is part of Solomon's dedicatory prayer for the glorious temple for which David drew up the designs, and Solomon built it. Unlike typical dedications today that glorify 'man' and his own efforts at having built the building, and praising all the people who scrimped and saved, and ran the fund drives to make the building program "a huge success", where the city mayor and other dignitaries of the world are also invited to the building's 'christening'...

The glory of the holy God has just entered the building to where the priests could no longer stand at their posts where they were ministering with the offerings. (vs10-11) Solomon is praising God's greatness, and speaking of all peoples of the earth seeking to God towards the temple. He continues by acknowledging that God's people are going to sin...

And "When they sin against You (for there is no one who does not sin), and You have become angry with them and delivered them to the enemy, and they have taken them captive to the land of the enemy, far or near..." (vs46)

This is the context. When there is sin, and resultant judgment; what is the cure? Reading through the verses, do we not see, essentially, the definition of "repentance"?

We can see the utter despondency in the accounts of Isaiah, Job and the man in the temple. (Is6:5, Job42:6, Lk18:13) We can see the emotional wailing of "mourning" over our sin (Jac4:9) as we humble ourselves before God. But because the anti-christ "church" of Rome has proclaimed a doctrine of "penance" for so many centuries, which also conforms to heathen paganism's "appeasement" of angry gods, many people are confused. Penance becomes a "work", and we know that salvation is "not of works". (Eph2:9) And so, the opposite false doctrine came out of the

Reformation, of "faith only", sans "repentance". They proclaim, specifically, that salvation DOES NOT INCLUDE (the work of) "repentance" thus illustrating that they, also, do not understand what it is. People wonder "how much" they need to repent; or... how will they know when they've repented "enough"? You see... that's a form of "penance".

But you see...salvation does not come from outward physical acts. The Jews thought that circumcision guaranteed salvation for them. But Paul informs us that salvation is not through circumcision, but is from the "heart". (Rom2:28-29)

What is it that condemns a person? Surely, a sinful person will be judged according to their works. (Rev20:13) But the "condemnation" results from what is in the heart. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jer17:9) It is out of the 'heart' that evil spews forth out of the mouth. (Mt12:34)

Thus, notice how repentance 'progresses'. Solomon prays, "...when they have returned in their minds.." Salvation is not something that "comes over us" without our own control. I have heard testimonies similar to the nature that a person was musing over their own sins, and then suddenly this 'aura' overshadowed them, and they 'knew', inexplicably, at that moment they were "forgiven". But no. Repentance involves the "mind". Regarding righteous things, Paul says, "-think- on these things" (Php4:8) Even regarding spiritual things Paul says that we pray, sing, worship, and learn "with the mind". (1Cor14:15) The 'spirit' is not without the 'mind'. When the prodigal son was in famine, it says that he "came to himself" and starts 'reasoning' (a function of one's mind) regarding his hungry state, and the better state of his father's servants. (Lk15:17)

And then, "...and have repented in their hearts.." Now, where is the heart? That is that innermost part of our beings that we, even, do not fully understand. In another study we learned that God made it. (Pr16:1, Ps100:3) It is Jesus Christ (the Word) who "pierces" into our soul and spirit and "discerns" the thoughts and intents of our hearts. He knows, when a person is going forward at an altar call, if the person's heart is genuine or not. He knows if that "decision card" was filled out because a person had truly repented, or if they were merely "shutting up" the person hounding them...just to get rid of them from their door, but not wishing to shut the door in their face. Beyond this, there is not much more we can say about the heart...because it is that secret place that each individual has from God. It is that place where only the person and God know about. No other human can truly know what is in another's heart, at the VERY CORE of that person's being. It is at 'that' place where a person either repents, receives Christ and is saved; or rejects God. And while you may fool other people, you cannot fool God. Like the words of that old song, "You cannot hide from God..."

It is in that place where a person makes "supplication to God". This supplication is -NOT- the repeat-after-me so-called "sinners prayer" that so many use as a formula. Because it is in that place which God made, which only God and the person know; and since it is God who meets and "draws" the person (Jn6:44); the conversation and the nature of that supplication is something which is unique to that individual. Salvation is not like a scene from that TV movie I saw years ago (I don't know it's name): The scene depicted America's South just after the slavery years, and the white kids and black kids were playing together. They were doing as children do...playing/enacting what they see adults do. So, they were -playing- "church"; the white kids were "making a christian" out of the black kid... and to do this, they were "baptizing" the black kid. The kid would get dunked under the water, and back up...Are you saved yet? No. Back under the water, and back up. Are you saved yet? No. This repeated a few times, until the black kid was having enough of his head being dunked under water, and when asked: Are you saved yet? says, "I think so! So... 'one-more' dunk, "just to be sure". Are you saved now? Yes! And everybody is now smiling, and the little one has just "become a christian". No. Salvation is not something where the "counselor" can ask the person "are you saved now?" after running them through the formula they were trained with. I dare say very few conversions actually take place around the altar (of the church), or the open field (of the crusade arena). If a person got saved at that meeting, it happened way back when the person was still in their seat/pew, as God's Word was convicting them, God spoke to their heart...and IN THEIR HEART they 'responded' to God's Call. I dare say that more people who actually got saved in their seats, turned away again after being 'confused' by the unsaved counselor, than ever got saved 'while' talking to a counselor; as "...the wicked one snatches away what was sown in his heart" (Mt13:19) Repentance and supplication happens, not to the counselor, but to God...IN THE HEART. The evangelist might proclaim God's Word, and the counselor may clarify things on a personal level; but the "drawing" happens by the Father. (Jn6:44) The repentance is "-toward- God" and the Faith is "-toward- Jesus Christ". (Ac20:21)

Now notice that this repentance includes "confession". "We have sinned and done perversely, we have committed wickedness." You see why so few are really being saved today? They are being told, "God accepts you JUST AS YOU ARE"; and they go-forward to the hymn "Just as I am..." And the preacher "encourages" them by telling them, "You are all wonderful people." And the basic 'sin' in many minds is the 'sin' of not recognizing JUST HOW WONDERFUL they are; repenting of not having any self-worth and self-esteem. Do you begin, now, to see why we continually say that most of today's so-called "[c]hurch" is not part of Christ's [C]hurch? True salvation comes after acknowledgement and confession of our sin and depravity. Today's [c]hurch is preaching an "other gospel". It is "accursed". (Gal1:8-9)

And so, repentance is not a grunting and straining REAL HARD with physical emotions. We often quote Isaiah wailing "woe is me", and the man in the temple "beating his breast". But what actually goes on in each 'individual' heart? Truly, what goes on in the heart manifests itself outwardly, because that's how we were designed by God. But each person is going to outwardly behave differently, just as each person's unique personality will dictate, and as the depths of each unique depravity is, out of which the person is saved. Remember, ".. her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." (Lk7:47) Some may show -no- outward emotion, but may go off someplace alone in quiet; some will cry; and still others will be exuberantly jumping up and down, screaming and crying with joy, grabbing everybody they see and will blurt out their new-found Faith.

But whatever the case, repentance is "with -ALL- their heart and with -ALL- their soul.." When a young man asks a girl to marry him, if he is of a divided heart, he will still think on other friends he has known; and often this divided heart causes strain in the marriage. But a 'total' heart is one where, the young man "loves" his bride, and totally "forsakes all others"...even in his heart and soul. Those others no longer 'exist' in his heart.

A person cannot have "family values" and also be with God... you know, where after the wedding, all the inlaws continually intrude into the marriage, and the new couple don't have the will-power (or feel the need) to invite them to leave, with the exhortation: "don't come over unless you call first, and/or are invited". This is what Jesus meant, "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." (Mt10:37) "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." (Lk14:26) As Paul says, "But no, rather, I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, that I may gain Christ.." (Php3:8)

That sort of repudiation of one's sin and past is ONLY POSSIBLE when it is repentance of the HEART.

Now, when repentance is of that nature, as we continually proclaim, the life will change. If the past is repudiated, what takes it's place? "..to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments.." (1Ki8:58)

When the man gets married, he no longer goes running at the beck and call of those other friends. He no longer goes 'running' when mama calls with every little thing, because he has "left father and mother" and is "cleaving" to his wife. (Gen2:24) In the same way, when we repent of our

sin, having "confessed and forsaken" it (Pr28:13), when the world comes over uninvited, we show it the door. When the world calls to us with its little annoyances, we tell it to take care of its own problems... We repudiate our former "family values" with the world, because they are no longer our family; because we, now, are the "bride" of Christ. (Eph5:) We are newly married. We have forsaken "all others" and our heart is -TOTALLY- Christ's. Thus, we desire to do what God desires, His commandments.

Solomon asks God that, when a person does this, that God would "forgive Your people". (vs50) And then in a dream God tells Solomon, "...if My people who have been called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from the heavens, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." (2Ch7:14)

Now notice that Repentance is the same, whether it is a wayward child coming back to God, or a sinner responding to God's call. In both cases, it is in the heart. And notice God's Word to "My people". In Solomon's day that was Israel. Today, that is the "church". God's people are exhorted to call upon God, be humble, seek God's face and what? "...turn from their wicked ways.."

Except for Smyrna and Philadelphia who were faithful before the Lord, the other five churches were all commanded to "repent...or else..." they would receive judgment. (Rev2-3) They are not exhorted to "believe" more, or "worship" more, or to heal their self-esteem issues. But to "repent".

The condemnation of those receiving judgments in Revelation is not that they didn't Believe enough, that they didn't have 'enough' faith (Remember: the demons "believe and shudder" -Jac2:19), but that they "did not repent of the works of their hands" of idolatry, sorcery, immorality, etc. (Rev9:20-21,etc) While Jesus does speak of the "unbelief" of various ones, notice that His 'condemnation' is leveled at those who don't repent. "Unless you repent you will likewise perish" (Lk13:3,5) "Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent..." (Mt11:20)

When Nineveh repented, "God was moved to pity with regard to the evil that He had spoken to do to them, and He did not do it." (Jonah3:10) Israel, in pretense, rested on circumcision, but refused to humble themselves before God with pure hearts, to shun idolatry; and God sent them into captivity. The 'heathen' Nineveh repented at Jonah's preaching, and was spared God's judgment.

Today's "church" sits smugly, assuming they are the head. But like the religious leaders of Jesus' day, God says to them, "Truly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you." (Mt21:31)

However, for all the complexity the pretenders attribute to this topic, claiming to not understand it, putting different spins to it; for the pure of heart it is actually quite simple. Jesus prayed: "I thank You, Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent, and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight." (Mt11:25-26)

Because it is of the -HEART-. If a person complicates the matter, it is because they are in rebellion against God. They love their sin too much, and so, twist the Scriptures to their own destruction. (2Pt3:16) But for the pure in heart, who is ready to hear God's voice in simplicity, and respond to Him, the psalmist says...

"For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abounding in mercy unto all those who call upon You." (Ps86:5)

Repentance and Emotions? © 2004

"For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death." (2Co7:10)

"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to shame. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will exalt you." (Jac4:8-10)

I've been reading several (new) 'explanations' of repentance lately; I suspect, from those who hadn't been proclaiming it, but since some of us are proclaiming from Scripture that without it, one cannot be saved but will "...likewise perish" (Lk13:3,5); they have joined the bandwagon to proclaim it.

But they also, then, make a point of -defining- it according to their own terms so as not to jeopardize the doctrines they've been proclaiming all along when they weren't proclaiming it. The common saying is that: Repentance is not about emotions and doesn't include them; repentance is not about being 'sorry' for one's sin, because repentance means "change"... "changing one's mind". This is also part of Billy Graham's famous definition of repentance he proclaims at his crusades. Making a 180-degree turn and change one's mind, and going a new direction.

So, if we want to be a bit foolish (2co11:17,21,23) for a moment, I suppose with that definition, a person could easily go: Eeeny meeny miny mo...which way shall I go? Well, sh'zamm! Lookie here! I think I'll decide to go to Heaven. I've been not-much-the-wiser, not given it much thought, but I think I'll change my thinking on the matter, and 'think about' and 'decide' that I really do want to go to Heaven. I'm going to make that -mental-'change' in attitude and outlook. See what a wonderful person I am for availing God of 'me'!?

And these people come "just as I am", dragging the world along with them. And after their claimed "commitment" to Jesus, you can't tell that anything has changed. They still talk the way they used to, behave as they used to; after all, they have been assured that God -accepts- them "just as they are" (sin, filth and all), they don't need to change the outside, just the inside.

At a website that somebody recently invited me to check out, they say this: "To repent means to change ones mind. It is an act of will, not simply a showing of remorse." This statement certainly gets closer to truth with the inclusion of the word "simply".

However generally, this -new- 'repentance' changes the mind; claiming it does not include remorse. They claim this is so... by definition. They claim this from purporting to have looked up the matter in lexicons and dictionaries. So, let's do that briefly, shall we...

In 1Sa15:29 God does "not repent": Hebrew, 'nacham' -to be sorry, regret, suffer grief, etc.

In Ezk14:6 "Repent and turn away from your idols": 'repent' and "turn away" are the same word, 'shuwb', -to turn back, return, restore, etc

In Lk13:5 "unless you repent you will all likewise perish": Greek, 'metaneo' -to change one's mind for better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins. Are not "heartily" and "abhorrence" expressions of emotion.

Most lay claim and give extra weight to ordinary 'dictionary' definitions. So, are you ready for this?

Repent:

- To feel remorse, contrition, or self-reproach for what one has done or failed to do; be contrite.
- To feel such regret for past conduct as to change one's mind regarding it
- To make a change for the better as a result of remorse or contrition for one's sins. (American Heritage Dictionary)

Does this not agree with our opening Scripture passage! And is this also not what most people think of repentance, until somebody comes along explaining it away, suggesting that the word doesn't really mean what it means. Most people really -do- know what it means; which is why they also reject it in their hearts, and welcome the new (false) definition. So, what is the order of progression towards salvation? Godly sorrow leads to repentance; and repentance, in turn, leads to salvation.

And then, according to the second passage, when there is remorse, 'who' does the saving? "He (God) will exalt you" ('lift you up' KJV).

I would suggest that today's remorseless repentance is a product of today's psychology, whose primary goal is to heal the wounded inner child through the building up of self-esteem. Remorse, and its accompanying 'shame' (being ashamed for one's sins), goes contrary to striving after self-esteem.

I would submit to you that those who follow these doctrines CANNOT be saved... by definition. Self-esteem is the opposite of remorse, shame and humility. But notice that the "lifting up" that God does for the sinner follows one's remorse for their sin.

Jesus told about two: one was full of self-esteem; and the other, shame. The one loved himself and his own accomplishments and standing in the community and church; and the other would scarcely lift his eyes heavenward and implores, "God be merciful to me, a sinner" (Lk18:13) Notice Jesus' verdict upon the two: "I tell you, this man (the 2nd one) 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." (vs14)

But... isn't the 'first' thing needed: Faith? After all, Paul and Silas proclaimed, "BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved..." (Ac16:31)

Certainly, Faith comes first. One must believe that God exists, and that God is the "rewarder" of mankind (Heb11:6); giving Eternal Life to the righteous and everlasting judgment to the ungodly. (Mt16:27, Rev22:12, Dan12:2) But merely believing God exists does not save. Satan and his demons also believe in God's existence, and "shudder" (Jac2:19); because like Esau, they have "no place for repentance" (Heb12:17)

The sinner sees God's glory and wails, "Woe is me! for I am undone! for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Is6:5) He understands God's verdict that "there is none righteous" (Rom3:10, Ps14:3), and that even the goodness we view in our self-esteem is like a filthy "menstruation cloth" (Is64:6), and even our own "mouth...condemns" us. (Job9:20) As Jesus would proclaim: "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (Mt12:34)

So the sinner 'repents' (according to this current 'new' definition). He decides, "I -NEED- to change (repent)". The more he thinks on it he realizes, "I -WANT- to change". So he makes a resolution, "I'm -GOING- to change". Perhaps he even goes 'forward' at a crusade meeting, and makes a "commitment" to "do better...from now on". He 'promises' God that he won't sin anymore; he is going to do his very-level-best to accomplish this goal. He has set this as a 'goal' for himself.

Thing is, he quickly makes a discovery: "I -CAN'T- change!!" I try and try; but the harder I try, the more I fail. He comes to the same awful conclusion that the apostle does: "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom7:24)

What is the solution? "...through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (vs25)

You see... -this- is where Saving -Faith- steps in. Repentance acknowledges that a change is 'needed', and may even 'desire' to change; but it comes up against that brick wall of -CAN'T-. In my own efforts I cannot be saved. It is only at the "name of Jesus". (Ac2:38, 4:12)

Saving Faith "receives" Jesus (Jn1:12), submitting to -His- change. What Jesus provides is the birth "from above" (Jn3:3) all complete with a new -nature-, becoming a "new creation"; becoming "in Christ". (2Co5:17) The old -self- of self-esteem does not belong. Faith lets go of that which one clung to...one's own self-sufficiency, and receives the "sufficiency [which] is from God" (2Co3:5)

What is the nature of that initial repentance? Jacob speaks of lamenting, mourning and weeping. And indeed, many do weep. That is a very -emotional- response. But no two people are alike. Perhaps another will suddenly be 'jolted', an emotional/spiritual 'switch' will flip within their being, their eyes of understanding (Eph1:18) will pop open, they'll get a 'chill' where the hairs on the back of their neck stand on end (as they suddenly suck in their breath) with the sudden realization of God's holiness, and their own sin and state of doom, the realization of their past blindness, and they will spiritually knock themselves up-side their own head with their palm with an exclamation of, "WELL, OF COURSE!!" And they will come "trembling" (Ac9:6, 16:29) to God. Is such a trembling any less emotional?

What comes first? What comes next? It's kind of like a car engine. Before you can start your car you need to make sure it has fuel. The fuel has to be delivered to the engine cylinder. But the engine will not run unless that fuel is ignited; which requires a spark. The spark is supplied from the battery and the electrical system. So, you need to make sure the car has a battery. In the olden days you might pull the choke knob and pump the gas pedal, to make sure there is fuel; so you might think that the fuel is "first", and 'then' you turn the key to start it. But in truth: if there is no fuel the engine will not run. And equally true: if there is no spark, neither will the engine run. It requires -both- for the engine to run.

In the same way, Salvation requires -both- Repentance -and- Faith. As Paul reminded, as he claimed that he had not left out any necessary details, "...repentance toward God -and- faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ac20:20-21)

And repentance -includes- both 'remorse' -and- 'change'. The remorse comprised of deep outward emotional expression or the tight-lipped trembling (according to the person's personal emotional makeup) based on what is in the person's 'heart' (Rom2:29, Jer17:9, Ezk36:26); and the change involving "fruits worthy of repentance" (Mt3:8) If the change has taken place, the person is saved; they have received God's new nature, and are behaving as such. They have experienced "repentance unto life" (Ac11:18)

See how that works? A person believes in God, but that belief contrasts the sinner's sin, and so the response is repentance (remorse); but repentance cannot function by itself without the faith that Jesus can save; but submitting to Jesus' salvation of the birth from above cannot be

entered into without the humility and submission aspects of repentance. Just as the car will not run without both fuel -and- spark, salvation is not possible without faith (in God), remorse (for sin), (desire to) change, faith (in Christ's salvation), submission to Christ's new nature receiving the "faith -of- Christ". (Ga2:16, Php3:9)

It's the complete package. It is -not- "sola fide" (faith alone). That doctrine from the 'church fathers' of the Reformation is sending many who believe in it, down the path to Hell! ...because typically, those who promote that doctrine also -refuse- to repent!

The Gospel of Jesus Christ which Paul proclaimed: "...that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised the third day according to the Scriptures..." (1Cor15:1,3-4) And what Jesus did when He died: He "loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Rev1:5) As a result, Eternal Life is available to "everyone believing into Him" (Jn3:16)

Thus, "God...now commands all men everywhere to repent" (Ac17:30) And, as Jesus proclaimed, as He began His earthly preaching ministry, and the message He commanded to be proclaimed after His departure: (these are Jesus' own words)...

"Repent and believe in the Gospel." (Mk1:15)

And in this next one notice where the middle comma is, that the "gospel" precedes the comma, and "repentance" and "remission of sins" are linked together after the comma...

"Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day(,) and that repentance and remission of sins be preached in His name to all nations, beginning out of Jerusalem." (Lk24:46-47)

The 'mere' fact that Jesus came and died on the cross (the Gospel) does not save. Salvation is offered by God's "grace" as a "gift"; but in "faith" (Eph2:8) the gift must be "received"...

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those believing into His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (Jn1:12-13)

Amen!