Irresistible Grace?

By John Hobbs, PhD.
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The doctrine of Irresistible Grace is the fourth cardinal point in the Calvinistic theology. It is the "I" in the T-U-L-I-P acrostic. Irresistible Grace is also referred to as Special Grace or Efficacious Grace.

How the Calvinists Understand Irresistible Grace

Calvinists deny that Irresistible Grace is God forcing someone to come against his own will. Rather, say the Calvinists, Irresistible Grace makes the individual willing to come. Berkhof defined it thus: "By changing the heart it makes man perfectly willing to accept Jesus Christ unto salvation and to yield obedience to the will of God."

The Canons of Dort state that when God chooses an individual to be saved, He "powerfully illuminates their minds by His Holy Spirit; …. He opens the closed and softens the hardened heart; … He quickens; from being evil, disobedient, and refractory, He renders it good, obedient, and pliable; actuates and strengthens it … this is regeneration … which God works in this marvelous manner are certainly, infallibly, and effectually regenerated, and do actually believe."

John Calvin wrote about "the secret energy of the Spirit" and "the pure prompting of the Spirit." Calvin meant that the Holy Spirit would have to be sent to an individual to call him to salvation and once called he could not refuse. Calvin wrote, "As I have already said, it is certain that the mind of man is not changed for the better except by God's prevenient grace." Prevenient Grace is defined as "Divine grace that is said to

operate on the human will antecedent to its turning to God." In other words man's will is totally subservient to the irresistible call from God.

David Steele and Curtis Thomas state:

> *This special call is not made to all sinners but is issued to the elect only! The Spirit is in no way dependent upon their help or cooperation for success in His work of bringing them to Christ. It is for this reason that Calvinists speak of the Spirit's call and God's grace in saving sinners as being 'efficacious', 'invincible', or 'irresistible'. For the grace which the Holy Spirit extends to the elect cannot be thwarted or refused, it never fails to bring them to true faith in Christ!*

Paul Enns states:

> *In the logic of Calvinism, God, through His Spirit, draws precisely those whom God unconditionally elected from eternity past and Christ died for. Thus the purpose of God is accomplished. He elected certain ones, Christ died for those very ones, and now through the Holy Spirit, God dispenses His irresistible grace to them to make them willing to come. They do not want to resist.*

Billy Graham wrote:

> *Being born again is altogether a work of the Holy Spirit. There is nothing you can do to obtain this new birth …. In other words, there is nothing you can do about it … The new birth is wholly foreign to our will. – No man can ever be saved unless the Holy Spirit in supernatural, penetrating power comes and works upon your heart. You can't come to Christ any time you want to, you can only come when the Spirit of God is drawing and pulling and wooing.*

James Boyce believes that for man it is “impossible for him to be delivered by his own acts, even if he had the will to perform them.” Boyce believes that God did not choose the “elect” because He foresaw that these individuals would be good and pious people; he believes that it was because of God’s unconditional selective choosing of the elect that the elect or chosen ones are led to believe. Boyce takes the position that salvation is not dependent upon “the choice of the elect” but solely upon God’s choice.

Thomas Nettles denies that an individual can contribute to his own salvation. He believes that man’s faith does not come from man’s willingness to receive the word but “only from God’s sovereign bestowal.” He says, “The Holy Spirit moves in such a way as to create willingness in the form of repentance and faith.” He denies that the New Testament commandments of repentance and belief imply that man has it within his own power to repent and have faith.

W. J. Seaton wrote:

> *What is meant by irresistible grace? We know that when the gospel call goes out in a church, or in the open air, or through reading God’s Word, not everyone heeds that call. Not everyone becomes convinced of sin and his need of Christ. This explains the fact that there are two calls. There is not only an outward call; there is also an inward call. The outward call may be described as “words of the preacher”, and this call, when it goes forth, may work a score of different ways in a score of different hearts producing a score of different results. One thing it will not do, however; it will not work a work of salvation in a sinner’s soul. For a work of salvation to be wrought the outward call must be accompanied by the inward call of God’s Holy Spirit, for He it is who ‘convinces of sin, and righteousness, and judgment. And when the Holy Spirit calls a man, or a woman, or a young person by His grace, that call is irresistible: it cannot be frustrated; it is the manifestation of God’s irresistible*

> *grace.*

Loraine Boettner defines Irresistible Grace as:

> *God's free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed by it.*

Man's Responsibility in the Salvation Process

Calvinism assumes that God has predetermined and foreordained certain ones to be saved, and that they cannot come to salvation until the Holy Spirit in a supernatural way works on the hearts of the elect. When the Holy Spirit calls the elect individual, he cannot resist. He has to respond, but he has to wait until the Holy Spirit calls him in some mysterious way. Also, if one is not one of the "elect," it will be impossible for him to be saved. Therefore, it is all the Holy Spirit's working. Man is a totally passive respondent in the salvation process, according to Calvinism, which denies that an individual can contribute to his own salvation.

In 1976, Robert Hudnut wrote the book Church Growth Is Not the Point. Hudnut is Calvinistic to the core. He writes,

> *We have been saved. It is not our doing. – No you don't even have to repent. Paul didn't. He was on his way to jail when it happened. He didn't do anything. – It is then we are driven to the passive action of repentance. You do not repent your way to God.*

Notice that Hudnut says repentance is passive. His theology is

corrupt. Man is told to repent in Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; and Revelation 2:16. In every verse cited, the Greek verb is in the active not the passive voice. Repentance is something man must do (Greek active voice); it is not what is done to him (Greek passive voice). There is not one case in the Bible of a person being passive while being saved. Even Paul was told what he "must do" (Acts 9:6). In Acts 2:38 repentance is tied to the remission of sins. If a man wants to be saved, then there is something he must do. Man does have a choice to make in his own salvation (Acts 2:40; Deut. 30:11-19; Joshua 24:15; Matt. 23:37; John 5:40). He must be involved. Without man's active role in the conversion process, he is lost.

The responsibility for man having an "honest and good heart" (Luke 8: 15), in order for the seed of the Kingdom to produce, lies with the person, not God. Man is told to "take heed how" he hears (Luke 8:18). The command in Luke 8:18 would be meaningless if man did not have a part in his own salvation. Why should one "take heed how" he hears if his salvation is a product of irresistible grace? Why "take heed" if the Holy Spirit is going to operate on the heart without a man's cooperation?

The Bible teaches man has a part to play in the salvation process. Notice these verses:

> *John 7:17, "If any man willeth to do his will"*
> *John 7:37, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."*
> *John 12:26, "If any man serve me, let him follow me."*
> *John 12:47, If any man hear my sayings, and keep them not."*
> *Revelation 22:17, "He that is athirst, let him say, Come."*
> *Revelation 22:17, "He that will, let him take the water of life freely."*

The point of all these verses is that an individual must

“will” and “thirst” and “want to” come to the Lord. It is the responsibility of the individual to “will” – it is not God’s responsibility!

God creates “will” in any person with “an honest and good heart” through the preached word of the cross (John 12:32-33; 1 Cor. 1:18, 21; 2:2). The word is to be preached to everyone (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). To hold God responsible for creating the right “will” in a person arbitrarily and unconditionally makes God a “respecter of persons.” This is something he is not (Acts 10:34-35; Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; 1 Pet. 1:17).

Is Faith Totally a Gift From God?

John Calvin wrote:

> *Faith is a singular gift of God, both in that the mind of man is purged so as to be able to taste the truth of God and in that his heart is established therein. – This is why Paul in another place commends faith to the elect (Titus 1:1) that no one may think that he acquires faith by his own effort but that his glory rests with God, freely to illumine whom he previously had chosen. – Faith – the illumination of God – Faith which he (i.e. God) put into our hearts – Our faith which arises not from the acumen of the human intellect but from the illumination of the Spirit alone – Faith flows from regeneration.*

Thomas Nettles wrote:

> *Faith is a gift of God and is bestowed gratuitously by him. – Neither justification nor faith comes from man’s willingness to receive but only from God’s sovereign bestowal. – Belief is still the result of the effectual call and regenerating power of God.*

Millard Erickson wrote: “Faith is God’s gift,” which refutes this Calvinistic mistake.

He wrote:

> *Is this Calvinistic view that faith is totally the gift of God correct? No! Does an individual have to wait for the Holy Spirit to come in some secret way to infuse faith? No! There are several reasons:*
>
> *For God to give certain people faith arbitrarily makes God a respecter of persons. The Bible is emphatic that “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34-35; Rom. 2:11, 10:12; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; 1 Pet. 1:17). Salvation depends upon man exercising his freedom of will. If salvation depends totally upon the Holy Spirit and a man is lost, that man can blame God. But, that will not happen because the Lord has done his part; man must do his.*
>
> *Faith comes through the hearing of the word of God not through some secret mysterious sending by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 10:17; Luke 8:11-12; John 6:44-45; 20:30-31; Acts 4:4; 8:12; 15:7; 18:8; 20:32; Eph. 1:13). None of these verses indicate faith coming through a supernatural calling. Faith comes as we hear and study the evidence and then we ourselves decide to believe.*
>
> *Faith is our part in the salvation process (1 John 5:4; Rev. 2:10). We have a responsibility to save ourselves (Acts 2:40) and to build our faith Jude 20; Acts 20:32). This is something we must do. Passages like Hebrews 11:6 are meaningless if the Holy Spirit is going to miraculously infuse faith. Jesus said, “Ye must be born anew” John 3:7). The word “must” is in the active voice indicating we have a part to play in our salvation. We are not totally passive in the salvation process. Our active obedient faith is necessary for us to be saved (Heb. 5:9; 2 Thess. 1:8; John 3:36; Rom. 6:17-18; James 2:24-26).*

God purifies the heart by faith (Acts 15:9). Calvinists have the heart purified before faith. Alexander Campbell said, "Why do we preach the gospel to convert men, if, before they believe the gospel, and without the gospel, men are renewed and regenerated by the direct and immediate influence of God's Spirit?" Good question!

Calvinists teach that "spiritual darkness" refers to man's depraved condition and that God has to perform supernatural secret surgery by the Holy Spirit in order to bring men into "spiritual light." But, in Acts 26:16-18, Paul was to preach the gospel to the Gentiles to "open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." A careful study of the book of Acts reveals that the early Christians depended upon the word of God to change the hearts of sinners and produce faith. Nowhere in the book of Acts do we find someone being converted by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit.

One is never so "spiritually dead" that he cannot hear and understand and believe the word of God in order to have faith (Eph. 5:14; John 5:25; 12:42-43). The rulers of the Jews "believed on" Jesus but would not confess him. Did they believe? Yes! Their problem was a "want to" problem not that they were so spiritually dead they could not understand. Calvinists misunderstand 1 Corinthians 2:14. The "natural man" of 1 Cor. 2:14 is the man who does not care about spiritual things – not the man who cannot understand them. Calvinists say the unsaved man cannot understand spiritual truth. Wrong! The rulers of the Jews, who were unsaved, in John 12:42-43 understood the truth exactly. They just "did not want to" obey the Lord. Wayne Grudem, and Ralph Gore, and Millard Erickson, who are Calvinists, do not even discuss John 12:42-43.

Dr. John Warwick Montgomery, a professor at Trinity Theological Seminary in Newburgh, Indiana – a Calvinistic school – believes that Ephesians 2:8 teaches that faith is a

> *direct gift from God and that man cannot do anything himself to get faith. The apostle Paul said in Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." After quoting this verse Montgomery said,*
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> *Don't get the idea that you did it. You didn't do it. Faith is the gift of God. The word 'that' in Ephesians 2:8 refers to 'faith' because 'faith' is the closest antecedent to the word ' that.' Once a person is saved, he cannot properly accredit that to anything but the Holy Spirit.*

Faith is, in one sense, a gift of God because God has given us the Word which produces faith. Without the Word, we could not have faith. But, the entire Bible and especially Ephesians 2:8 do not teach that faith is a direct gift of God in which we have no part. The word "that" in Ephesians 2:8 refers to the salvation process. The salvation process is "the gift of God." We are saved "by grace through faith" which is the salvation process. But, this does not mean we have earned our salvation. We cannot boast of our salvation as if we have worked for it and earned it (Eph. 2:9). Jesus said even after we have done all that we are commanded to do we are to say, "We are unprofitable servants we have done that which is our duty to do" (Luke 17:10). James said, "Faith apart from works is dead" James 2:26).

Verses Misused by Calvinists to Support Irresistible Grace

John 6:37: "All that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

WJ. Seaton said: "Note that it is those whom the Father has given to Christ -the elect- that shall come to Him; and when

they come to Him they will not be cast out."

Response: (1) All those with a submissive spirit will come to Christ. These are the ones whom the Father gives to Jesus and not one of these will he refuse (cf. John 10:26-29 where the verbs "hear" and "follow" are continuous action). One must come with a willing heart John 5:40; 7:17; Matt. 13:9; Rev. 22:17). (2) There is nothing here or in God's word that teaches that God arbitrarily chooses those who come to Christ. Jesus uses truth and love to persuade men to accept him John 12:32-33, 48; 2 Cor. 5:14-15). Calvinists are reading into the text an arbitrary decree that is not there! (3) The gospel is for all (Mark 16:15-16), but not all men will accept it (2 Thess. 1:7-10). Those who refuse to accept Christ do so because of their own willful rejection (Matt. 13:14-15; 23:37)- not because of some arbitrary decree. Paul Butler says, "Man's rejection by God is caused by man's rejection of God." (4) Jesus said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt. 11:15). Jesus did not say, "The Holy Spirit will supernaturally open your hearts so you can believe." In Matthew 11:15 Jesus was teaching that man has a responsibility to have an "honest and good heart." That is not the work of the Holy Spirit. If a man does not have an "honest and good heart," he cannot and will not come to Jesus. (5) In context John 6:40 explains John 6:37 and 39. It explains who the Father has given unto Jesus: Those who "beholdeth" and "believeth" on the Son! Both of these verbs are present tense verbs indicating continuous action. Those who continue to behold and believe on the Son are the ones whom the Father has given unto Jesus. It is our own individual free-will responsibility to continue to believe. We are not forced or coerced against our will.

John 6:44: "No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day."

John Calvin said: "But nothing is accomplished by preaching him if the Spirit, as our inner teacher, does not show our

minds the way. Only those men, therefore, who have heard and have been taught by the Father come to him. What kind of learning and hearing is this? Surely, where the Spirit by a wonderful and singular power forms our ears to hear and our minds to understand."

W.J. Seaton said: "Here our Lord is simply saying that it is impossible for men to come to Him of themselves; the Father must draw them."

Response: (1) Calvin assumes the drawing is a miraculous operation. We base truth on clear biblical teaching – not assumptions. (2) The next verse explains how God does the drawing and it is not miraculous. It is written that one must be taught (Jer. 31:31-34; Isa. 54:13). One must hear and one must learn! This is not miraculous! God draws men through teaching. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). The book of Acts is proof positive that Christianity is a taught religion – not a caught religion in the sense that the Holy Spirit must convert a man separate and apart from the word of God. The means and the method the Father uses to draw men is the preached word (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 4:4; 8:4, 12; 11:26; 15:7; 18:8; 20:20; 1 Cor. 1:18-21; 2:1-4; Col. 2:7; 2 Thess. 2:15; 2 Tim. 2:2; etc.). (3) Why did our Lord invite all men to come to him if he knew that it was impossible for some of them to come (Matt. 11:28)? That does not make sense. (4) Guy N. Woods said: "Some are not drawn, because they do not will to do so; it has been well said. that a magnet draws iron, but not all objects are drawn by magnets, because all are not iron! Similarly, one must be of the right disposition and have the proper response to the drawing power of the Father which he exercises through the gospel." (5) John 12:32-33 also teaches we are drawn to the Lord through Christ's death on the cross. Some appreciate his death, and sadly, some do not.

Acts 16:14: "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one that worshipped God,

heard us: whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul."

John Calvin said:

> *Indeed, it does not so stand in man's own impulse, and consequently even the pious and those who fear God still have need of the especial prompting of the Spirit. Lydia, the seller of purple, feared God, yet her heart had to be opened to receive Paul's teaching (Acts 16:14) and to profit by it. This was said not of one woman only but to teach us that the advancement of every man in godliness is the secret work of the Spirit.*

Charles Hodge said:

> *The truth is compared to light, which is absolutely necessary· to vision; but if the eye be closed or blind it must be opened or restored before the light can produce its proper impression." Hodge tries to use the case of Lydia as proof of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit in conversion.*

W. 1. Seaton said:

> *One outstanding illustration of this teaching of irresistible grace, or effectual calling, is certainly the incident that we read in Acts 16. The apostle Paul preaches the gospel to a group of women by the riverside at Philippi; and as he does so, 'a certain woman named Lydia heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things that were spoken of Paul.' Paul, the preacher, spoke to Lydia's ear – the outward call; but the Lord spoke to Lydia's heart – the inward call of irresistible grace.*

Response: (1) Calvin's admission that Lydia "feared" God before God "opened" her heart destroys his teaching of Total

Depravity. (2) It is a complete assumption that God opened her heart by a direct secret operation of the Holy Spirit. The text does not tell us what Calvin believes. Calvin gives us a classic case of eisegesis – i.e. reading into the text what is not there. (3) The word "heart" is used figuratively. Consider: John 12:40; Matthew 9:4; 13:15; Mark 2:6; and Romans 10:10. The word "opened" is evidently used figuratively – i.e. to expand or broaden the mind. Luke 24:45 states, "Then opened he their mind." Jesus "opened" the mind of the apostles by explaining the Scriptures to them not by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit. The word "opened" was simply a way of saying that the person came to an understanding of, and a belief in, the message under consideration. It is analogous to Paul's statement in Ephesians 1:18, "having the eyes of your heart enlightened." (4) Acts 16:14 indicates that the Lord opened her heart through the things which were spoken by Paul. The Spirit's work in conversion is not something done directly upon the heart apart from the preached Word. (5) J.W. McGarvey said, "The assumption, therefore, that her heart was opened by an abstract influence of the Spirit, is entirely gratuitous and illogical, while the real cause is patent upon the face of the narrative in the preaching done by Paul." (6) Dr. Richard Oster said, "It is significant that this opening of the heart came only after she had heard what was said by Paul. Perhaps the method of opening her heart was the preached word (cf. Luke 24:45)." (7) The word "heard" is an imperfect tense verb which means continuous action in the past. Lydia kept on hearing Paul. The hearing occurred before the opening of the heart. Wayne Jackson states, "The implication here is the exact opposite of that demanded by Calvinism. That doctrine alleges that one cannot give honest attention to the Word of God until the Lord first opens the heart, but this passage actually demonstrates otherwise. She kept on listening and thereby her heart (understanding) was opened by God!" (8) The words "give heed" implies that Lydia had a choice in her obedience. Study: Acts 8:6-12; 20:28; Luke 8:18 and Hebrews 2:1-2. (9) There are many passages which demonstrate that God,

as a general rule, works through means and not directly (2 Kings 5:1-14; Matt. 6:11; 2 Cor. 9:10).

Romans 10:16-17: “But they did not all hearken to the glad tidings. For Isaiah with, Lord, who hath believed our report? So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” John Calvin said, “To whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed. – By this, he means that only when God shines in us by the light of His Spirit is there any profit from the word. Thus the inward calling, which alone is effectual and peculiar to the elect is distinguished from the outward voice of men.”

Calvin believed that the Word of God could only produce faith in a heart of one already illumined by the Spirit of God. In commenting on Romans 10:17, Calvin admits that when Paul makes “hearing the beginning of faith he is describing only the ordinary arrangement and dispensation of the Lord which he commonly uses in calling his people – not, indeed, prescribing for him an unvarying rule so that he may use no other way.”

Response: (1) Calvin assumes his doctrine of total depravity is true. He insists they did not believe because they could not believe. The text does not say what Calvin believed. (2) If one must be regenerated before he can hear, then he is regenerated before he has faith. This contradicts many Bible passages (John 8:24; Acts 11:14; 16:14; Rom. 1:17; 5:1; Gal. 3:11). (3) Personal responsibility is definitely set forth in this verse. If anyone does not believe, it is because he does not “hearken” to the message preached – not because of inherited total depravity. Notice the parallel between “hearken” and “believed” with “glad tidings” – i.e. the gospel and “report.” To have a saving faith is to hearken – i.e. hear and obey. (4) Every case of conversion in the Bible involved a teaching situation. Christianity is a taught religion (John 6:45; Acts 4:4; 8:4; 11:26; 18:8; 20:20; Col. 2:7; 2 Thess. 2:15; 2 Tim. 2:2). There is no example in the Bible where the Holy Spirit supernaturally infused faith into an individual. A saving faith comes when an honest and good heart is taught

truth found in the word of God and then that truth is accepted and appreciated and appropriated.

Conclusion

There is not one passage in the entire Bible which directly or indirectly teaches Calvinism's doctrine of Irresistible Grace. In fact, it contradicts God's word. Calvinism would make God a "respecter of persons." But, the Bible says He is not! It is God's will for all men to be saved; therefore, salvation is conditioned only on man's will. God is always willing for all men to be saved. Calvinism is false doctrine. Let us follow the truth in God's word and reject the false doctrine of Calvinism!

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A Book of Errors Revised (Marriage, Divorce)

By Hugo McCord
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My long time friend, John Edwards, in whose home in St. Louis I have been a guest, has a sympathetic heart toward people with marriage problems. But it is sinful to allow a sympathetic heart to alter Jesus' teaching, which he has done in his book An In Depth Study Of Marriage And Divorce. He sent me a copy, and I wrote to him to reconsider and to return to "the old paths" where he formerly walked.

Instead, in a second edition he has only revised the wording

of his errors, saying that his book is intended to help those … involved in divorce to realize that God still loves them, and they do not need to live lonely, guilt-ridden lives (p. 13).

It is true that God still loves them, and will forever, but "fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4). It is also true that fornicators and adulterers do not need to "live lonely, guilt-ridden lives," for "the Son of man has come to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). When in penitence they hate adultery and turn from it, they will be perfectly forgiven (Acts 22:16; 1 Cor. 6:9-11) and will "rejoice in the Lord" (Phil. 4:4).

Everyone can go to heaven if he wants to do so, but Jesus said that some would have to "make themselves eunuchs" (Matt. 19:12). Apparently Jesus and John Edwards differ about that matter, for in a lengthy book of 203 pages John not once cited what Jesus said about eunuchs.

On page 15 John makes an admirable statement: "We need to search God's word for His answers." But immediately John turns, away from His answers to an emotional appeal to the readers' heart to make them sympathize with the much married who have two or more sets of children, and wants the readers to despise any preacher who would refuse to baptize them. John the immerser refused to baptize those who did not quit their sinning (Matt. 3:8), but John Edwards will baptize those married and divorced for any reason. He makes preachers who respect Jesus' words about marriage and divorce worse than murderers, saying they are sending souls to hell!" He quotes a preacher as saying a woman who had had three husbands as having too many "to even think of going to heaven." The preacher was wrong. Any one can go to heaven who wants to do so, as I have already proved. I am sorry that John leaves the impression that the woman at Jacob's well who had had five husbands was on the way to heaven.

John calls undoing “past marital mistakes” an “Evil Tree, whose fruit is corrupt.” But if, according to Jesus, a marital mistake causes one to “commit adultery” (Matt. 19:9), yes, to be living in adultery (Col. 3:5-7), what will make the tree and its fruit good? Paul tells how adulterers and homosexuals at Corinth made the tree and its fruit good: they “were washed were sanctified … were justified” (1 Cor. 6:11).

Though God allowed David to keep Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:27), and though God tolerated (cf. Acts 17:30) divorce for any cause and remarriage in the Old Testament (Deut. 24:1-4), and though he tolerated polygamy (2 Sam. 5:13; 1 Kings 11:3) in the Old Testament, that Old Testament has now been nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14). Then, the one of whom God said, “Hear ye him” (Matt. 17:5), made it clear that he repudiated polygamy (Matt. 19:4-5) and divorce (except for fornication) and remarriage (Matt. 19:9). What he said was directed to non-disciples (Matt. 19:3), but his disciples understood his “whosoever” as including everybody, and they were shocked, thinking that if marriage and divorce have such a rule, “it is not expedient to marry” (Matt. 19:10). John would have said that the number of times one divorces and remarries does not matter (on p. 16 he cites an example of a woman who had six husbands).

However, Jesus thought that even one divorce and remarriage makes a difference, and that under some circumstances one must refrain from marriage, or quit a legal marriage, and make himself a eunuch by will power (Matt. 19:12).

On p. 18 John writes that the Bible says nothing about “adulterous marriages” or “living in adultery,” but Matthew 19:9 is still in the Bible, saying that a certain divorcee on remarrying commits adultery, and Colossians 3:5-7 is still in the Bible, saying that some Colossians had formerly lived in adultery (cf. also Rom. 6:2; Eph. 2:3; Titus 3:3; 1 Pet. 4:2 on living in adultery).

On p. 18 John writes that “adultery in the gospel passages” is

not “the physical sex act in marriage,” but only “a violation of a covenant” (p. 50, and often). However, a covenant is broken in the first part of Matthew 19:9, “whosoever shall put away his wife.” At the divorce he has broken his vow and his covenant, but according to Jesus (not John Edwards) he has not yet committed adultery, and does not until he remarries. Adultery in Jesus’ eyes is not covenant breaking but is something that occurs after marriage.

On p. 21 John begins a discussion of Greek words, which is an admission that he needs something besides English translations to find his manufactured meaning of adultery. If we need to know Greek to understand marriage, billions of people are helpless.

In chapter 6 (p. 49-57) John, after citing figurative (Jer. 3:6-10) and mental adultery (Matt. 5:27-28), calls attention to the passive voice of moicheuthenai in Matthew 5:31-32. It is true the wife now discarded has not committed adultery, but in Jesus’ eyes she has been “adulterated.” The husband’s breaking his covenant with her, Jesus does not call adultery, but the husband has used her sexually and abandoned her, leaving her “adulterated.”

On p. 51 it is strange that John holds that moichatai in Matthew 19:9 is in the passive voice, for the verse would say, “Whosover divorces his wife, except for fornication, and marries another, is adulterized.” Also he asserts that the same word in Mark 10:11 is in the passive voice, which would make the verse read, “Whosover divorces his wife and marries another is adulterized against her.” Those senseless renditions do not appear if one says that moichatai is in the middle voice, calling for an active meaning, “he commits adultery,” and “he commits adultery against her.” The parallel in Luke 16:18 uses the active voice, moicheuei, “he commits adultery.” If one wants the whole truth, and is not simply trying to prove what he believes, he will by all means check the parallel readings in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. There is a

way, by looking to ambiguous Greek grammar, and by checking only Matthew and Mark, to assert Matthew and Mark meant for moichatai to be taken as passive (though the resultant English translation is senseless) but the Greek grammar is not ambiguous in the word Luke wrote, moicheuei, and even John would say it could not be passive.

Further, to say that moichatai in Matthew 19:9 is point action (do you know of a commentator who says so?) would make adultery two legal steps (divorce and remarriage), and would declare that sex acts with the new spouse are not adultery. It is strange that Jesus used a word that commonly refers to a violation of the marriage bed and makes it refer only to two legal ceremonies. If the disciples listening to Jesus had understood that adultery is legal ceremonies, would they have said, “It is not expedient to marry”? According to John, it would be expedient to marry, with no risks involved: marriage would be easy to get into and out of. Some have seen a difficulty in giving moichatai a linear or durative meaning, because the physical act in adultery is not continuous. However, the present tense in Greek not only can refer to point action (punctiliar) as in Matthew 13:14; 27:38, and to linear action (durative) as in Matthew 25:8; John 5:7, but also to iterative action (repetitive) as in Matthew 9:11, 14; 15:23; 1 Corinthians 15:31. Obviously if one is living in adultery the word iterative or repetitive is the correct description.

In John’s search to find some proof of his thesis that adultery is covenant breaking, not sexual activity, he refers to Luke 16:18, “Every one who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery.” However, if only the divorcing and remarrying ceremonies are the adultery, then if an innocent spouse divorces a spouse for fornication and remarries, that innocent person has committed adultery, for he or she has gone through the legal ceremonies that constitute adultery.

On p. 67f John quotes Greek scholars as saying that sometimes

the present tense is point or punctiliar action, but it is noticeable that he quotes no Greek scholar who says that such is true of moichatai and moicheuei in Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:11; Luke 16:18. Incidentally, John uses denominational terminology in saying that "Church of Christ teachers and leaders" take his position. One whom he quotes, Raymond Kelcy, says, "There's not a great deal to be had on the tense of that verb, Matthew 19:9," but John bases his whole thesis on the possibility that that verb might be punctiliar. Further, surprisingly, John quotes Kelcy, "A person who enters an illegal marriage, an unscriptural marriage, does continue to commit adultery," but according to John only the divorcing and remarrying constitute adultery, and that no one ever continues to commit adultery after marriage. Kelcy and John do not agree.

John quotes Carroll Osburn, but Osburn fails to say that Matthew 19:9 must be considered as punctiliar, yet John's thesis depends wholly on what Osburn does not say. Osburn holds that Matthew 19:9 is a "gnomic present," in which Osburn says "continuity may or may not be involved." A "gnomic present," according to Ernest De Witt Burton, Moods And Tenses, p. 8, expresses "customary actions and general truths." So, Matthew 19:9 expresses the customary action and general truth that a remarrying divorcee (except for fornication) commits adultery. Osburn fails to help John.

John also quotes from Jack McKinney, and got some help, for McKinney said that Matthew 19:9 expresses "point action" (p. 70). However, McKinney contradicted himself, for he also said (as had Osburn) that Matthew 19:9 is a "gnomic present." He cannot be right both ways. If Matthew 19:9 speaks of "point action" it does not use the "gnomic present." McKinney also misused the word aoristic, apparently thinking it means point action. But the word aorist says that an act is unspecified as to the kind of action (whether punctiliar, repetitive, or durative). A gnomic present can be aoristic (no specification

of the kind of action), but it cannot be punctiliar.

John pleads his case that Matthew 19:9 must be punctiliar, for he says that “the best Greek scholars” are with him, but none that he quoted says that Matthew 19:9 must be punctiliar. Then John (p. 73) quotes a Greek grammar that “simultaneous action relative to the main verb is ordinarily expressed by the present,” but in the case of Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:11; Luke 16:18 the action of the main verb is not ordinary: the action of the main verb is not simultaneous with the divorcing and the remarrying, for those actions are only legal ceremonies, and no lexicon or dictionary defines adultery as a legal ceremony. Adultery, a violation of the marriage bed, is not committed by divorcing and remarrying, but later. To interpret the gospel verses as point action is to eliminate adultery, for it is not committed in two legal ceremonies.

How refreshing in John’s book to come to chapter nine, “Homosexual Marriages” (p. 75-79). He is clear how sinful they are. But he is inconsistent. Homosexuals and lesbian marriage partners can appeal to John in exactly the same way he pleads with his readers to approve those divorced and remarried unscripturally. I can hear homosexuals and lesbians turning John’s words against himself: “Are we condemning people whom God wants to forgive? … let love and compassion rule over legalistic rules and judgments”. (p. 18). They would say the same thing that John says, “Far worse than taking someone’s life is sending their souls to hell! Christians, are you prepared to answer for the fruits of your teaching (against homosexuality) that drives people to hell?” (p. 16-17).

John is certain (p. 83) that God wants monogamy, and that Jesus pointed back to monogamy, but John on the mission field today would not teach polygamists to go back to monogamy.

John (p. 89) asks does divorce break the marriage? Legally of course it does, but it does not nullify the vow one made at his marriage to his spouse “until death doth us part.” John’s

words on p. 93 have relevance here: “Our oral words mean just as much to God as our written documents.” Jesus, not John, taught that a divorced person is not as free as a single person, for if a divorced (not for fornication) person marries, he commits fornication. Single people and divorced people are equal legally, but not in Jesus’ eyes. John and Jesus disagree.

John (p. 95) says that “God recognizes the marriage dissolved when the spouse deserts the marriage,” but Paul did not say that. In Paul’s inspired words a deserted spouse does not any longer have a sexual obligation (a voluntary bondage, cf. 1 Corinthians 7:3-4, 15) to the former mate, but to interpret a deserted spouse (no fornication involved) as free to marry again is to contradict the Lord Jesus. Jesus did not give two reasons for divorce and remarriage, namely, fornication and/or desertion. Paul gave a release from marital obligation but he did not give a remarrying privilege.

It is refreshing to come to John’s chapter fifteen, as he exposes the sins of pornography. But in the rest of his book (p. 123-203) he is even more determined to prove a non-dictionary, arbitrary, self-made meaning of adultery, a meaning that will give comfort and peace to people that Jesus said are living in adultery. I would not want to be in John’s shoes in the Day of Judgment. To destroy a weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is no light matter (1 Cor. 8:11). The first part of Romans 16:18 is not true of John and Olan Hicks, but the second part is true: “By their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent.”

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The Influences of Sin

CLAUDE B. HOLCOMB
March 10, 1970

Since we are living in a time when the reality of sin is being denied, it might be well for Christians to give more thought to its impact on past generations, and be reminded that the prevailing attitude toward sin today is the result of the influences of sin itself. Total disregard for God's revelation to man has led many to say that nothing is wrong except as a person's own thinking makes it wrong. They tell us there Is no such thing as absolute truth, and no definite standard of morals. The idea Is that every man is his own god, and what is right or wrong is determined in his own mind. This is anarchy in Its boldest posture.

Peter was constrained to write "to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them." Since sin is so subtle Christians should ever be reminded of its deceitfulness. We need to contemplate the lessons of the past lest we let them slip away from us. The impact of sin in man's history is seen in the Bible accounts of Adam's posterity, and "these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition."

Cain called God's way in question, and his presumption led him finally to murder his brother. As the sons and daughters of Adam multiplied on earth, man became so engrossed In the re-enactment of Eden's tragedy that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually, and it repented Jehovah that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." Repentance on the part of God doesn't mean that there was any vacillation or variation in his nature. It is merely an expression of pain felt in the great heart of the Creator because of the sin of his creature, and emphasizes the infinite love that God has for man. But

justice must be upheld, so man paid the penalty for his perversity, and was destroyed from the earth, excepting the small remnant of Noah's family. God's wrath revealed in the flood was legal wrath rather than emotional. Had it been emotional, it would have been executed without mercy, and that would have been the end of human history. God's mercy is demonstrated in the fact that he gave the antediluvians ample opportunity to escape the consequences of their sin through the preaching of Noah, but they would not repent.

The preservation of the race after the flood was made possible through the small remnant of righteous souls found in Noah's family. But the posterity of Noah was also subject to sin, and in his sons are found again the human proclivities to doubt and question the ways of the Lord. Ham, not completely purged from the vices of the old world, forgets the honor due to a father, and in sinning against his father he sins against God and brings a curse upon himself. He was the progenitor of those who later became the adversaries of God's people, and the sinful influences of Ham are seen in the deeds of his posterity.

It was the influence of sin that led those men to undertake the building of a tower whose top would reach unto heaven. The real motive behind this act was a desire for renown – the pride of life. Their object was to stay together, and thus they would fail to carry out God's purpose to replenish the earth according to his commandment to "bring forth abundantly in the earth and multiply therein" (Gen. 9:7). Their fear of dispersion could well have been that the in ward bond of unity and fellowship had already been broken by sin, and they were thus seeking to maintain a false sort of unity by this outward means. How presumptuous they were! God sent a confusion of tongues and scattered them abroad upon the face of the earth.

As men are multiplied, sin abounds. The great cities of Sodom and Gomorrah became so violently wicked that the Lord could no longer bear with them, and because not ten righteous souls

could be found In Sodom they were destroyed. This does not mean ten souls who were sinlessly perfect, but ten who through fear of God kept themselves from the prevailing wickedness of the city. So God rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from heaven, executing his legal wrath against transgression of his law. This catastrophe is a permanent memorial of the punitive righteousness of God, and serves lo keep the fate of the ungodly before the minds of all subsequent gene rations.

The fate of Lot's wife also becomes a warning to all ages against the evil of disobeying God, and the danger of "looking back" after having charted a course that leads away from death and destruction. Jesus exhorted the people of his day to "remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32). Peter makes reference to Sodom and Gomorrah and says that God "made them an example unto those that should live ungodly" (2 Peter 2:6).

Time would fail to tell or the multitude or individuals whose sins are recorded in divine history, and of the tremendous effects their conduct had on the lives and destinies of men. We could speak of Esau, who despised his birthright and sold it for a morsel of food; of Nadab and Abihu, who presumptuously offered strange fire in the place of that commanded; of the son of Shelomith who blasphemed the God of heaven; of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, who rebelled against the authority God had vested in Moses and Aaron; and of all the cases in subsequent History which so graphically inscribe upon our minds the stupendous impact of sin upon the human family.

The whole story of sin may be summed up in the failure of man to get rid of the lusts within himself. We cannot quite get away from selfishness. To gratify selfish desires we yield to covetousness and sacrifice our souls upon idol altars! Idolatry in our day consists largely in the form of worshipping self. We need to learn the lessons that all these examples in Israel's history teach us. We need to learn that sin on our part begins with the lusts in our own hearts. It is

true that the devil is the originator of sin, and ushered sin into the world through the first couple on earth, but we are not compelled to serve Satan, and we do so only because we are drawn away by our "own lusts, and enticed" (James 1:14). That is why Peter said, "Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11). That is why God gave us all these examples to warn us against the subtlety of sin.

No intelligent person can contemplate the influences of sin upon the human race from the beginning until now, and then with any degree or honesty deny the reality of sin. The idea that sin is only the figment of an imaginative mind, or that any impurity can be washed clean by one's own thinking, is just another one of the crafty contrivances of Satan to lead souls captive.

Let us therefore exhort one another daily, "lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3 :13).

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REVIVE US AGAIN

Leslie G. Thomas
January 3, 1950

One of the greatest needs of our day is a religious revival: not in the sense of a barn-storming, emotion-arousing type of evangelism, but a revival that will affect the whole man, and will result in nothing short of a religious revolution.

Any one who stops to think is aware of the fact that religious people everywhere are rapidly approaching a state of complacency; and unless something is done to stimulate their

thinking, there is little reason to hope for much more progress toward perfection. (Cf Heb. 6:1-3).

When people become satisfied with themselves their intellects become dull, and they are content to have some one else do their thinking for them. Such people do not hesitate to accept practically anything that is placed before them, if they have confidence in the one who suggests it to them.

However, if we are to have an effectual revival – one that will lead us closer to God and to a greater and more perfect knowledge of his will – it must be characterized by certain basic principles, some of which we shall consider in this lesson.

The first one is:

A New Sense of Dependence Upon God

No one can read the New Testament without being impressed with the idea that God is the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, and that every good and perfect gift comes from him. · "I charge thee in the sight of God, who giveth life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed the good confession; that thou keep the commandment, without spot, without reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in its own times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potenate, the King of kings, and Lord or lords; who only hath immortality; dwelling in light unapproachable whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power eternal. Amen" (1 Tim. 6:13-16). "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning" (James 1:17).

Time and time again we are taught that our wills must be lost in his; and that if we would be free from those distracting influences which undermine the soul, we must make every effort

to seek first his kingdom, and his righteousness. “Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth” (Matt. 6:10b). “But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33).

But, in the face of these plain statements of truth, how often do we find ourselves depending upon our own ideas and efforts, as if God did not exist, or had not said anything about these matters. “They profess that they know God; but by their works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Tit. 1:16). (Read also Rom. 12:17-21; Psa. 37:1ff; Phil. 4:6,7).

A Re-examination of Our Religious Convictions

If one is not careful his religious thinking is liable to crystallize into a form which, for all practical purposes, will become his creed. And when this happens be will likely find himself using this creed, written or unwritten, rather than the word of God itself, as a standard for measuring any new ideas which may be brought to his attention. “For we are not bold to number or compare ourselves with certain of·them that commend themselves: but they themselves, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, are without understanding” (2 Cor. 10:12).

Of course no one should hold any religious ideas which he does not believe to be scriptural; but at the same time he should always be willing to subject that which he believes to be the teaching of the Bible to a rigid examination. In short, like Martin Luther, he should nail the things which he believes to the “church door,” and offer to debate them with all comers. Compare 2 Tim. 2:15; 4:1-5.

Any one who is acquainted with the history of Christianity knows that the greatest progress toward the knowledge of the

truth was made during those times when religious debate was the order of the day. Alexander Campbell said, “A week’s debating is worth a year’s preaching”; and M. C. Kurfees averred that “truth has always flourished in the soil of controversy.”

A Growing Interest in the Welfare Of Others

All Christians are members of the family of God, and, as such, they should be interested in the welfare of each other. “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common” (Acts 4:32). “Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:1,2). (Read also 1 Cor. 12-27).

People who are in religious confusion, or in a lost condition, deserve the help of those who are enjoying salvation and the light of eternal truth. “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16: 15). “And if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that perish: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. Seeing it is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:3-6). “And on some have mercy, who are in doubt; and some save, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 1:22, 23).

Finally, the Lord's people should manifest a benevolent attitude toward all men. "So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10).

If we will allow the principles which have been set forth in this study to become a motivating force in our lives, there will be no doubt about the nature and the results of the revival which will follow.

Bruceton, Tennessee.

Original Sin

By T. Pierce Brown
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The dictionary defines *original sin* as "the sin by which the human race, rebellious against God because of Adam's disobedience, was deprived of grace, and made subject to ignorance, evil, death, and all other miseries." The doctrine of "original sin" has probably given rise to more additional false doctrines than any other single teaching. In its simplest terms it means that as a result of the fall of Adam every person is born depraved, and this perverted state is the cause of all his evil acts.

Ambrose of Milan (c. 340-397) taught that through the sin of Adam all men come into the world tainted by sin. When he baptized Augustine in 385, it was easy for Augustine to use that doctrine to excuse his life of debauchery. Although Augustine gave the framework of the doctrine, which Roman Catholics came to accept, Calvin made it more popular and acceptable to Protestants in his *Institutes of the Christian*

Religion.

The "tulip theory" is a summary of Calvin's theology. The *T* stands for *total hereditary depravity.* The *U* is for *universal condemnation.* Since some will be saved, Calvin followed Augustine's assumption that God elected all men and angels to salvation or condemnation and the number is so certain that it can neither be increased nor diminished. The *L* is for *limited salvation.* The natural consequence is that of *irresistible grace,* which takes care of the *I.* if a sovereign God saved a depraved person, he would not be able to resist God's gracious effort to save him. God then makes it impossible for that person to be lost, so the *P* is for the *perseverance of the saints*.

The teaching is false at every point. In *The Banner Of Truth,* June 1993, Fred Blakely said:

> *Man was not merely damaged by the fall of Eden; he was completely ruined. Adam's nature was defiled, and so separated from God – made spiritually dead – and this state has been transmitted by the natural birth to all his posterity.*

My questions to Blakely are: If a person is born completely ruined and spiritually dead, does God need to operate on him in a special way to get him into a position where he will receive the gospel? What causes a child to sin that is any different from that which caused Adam to sin?

Every false doctrine has enough truth about it to make it appealing but usually leads to many other doctrinal errors. For example, it is true that man has no power to move himself from a sinful state to a saved state by his own power. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23). Consequently, salvation is by grace.

Calvinistic theologians pervert those truths and assume that

since “no man can come unto Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him,” the Father must draw by “irresistible grace” because man is by nature incapable of coming to God, which makes God the sole actor in the salvation process.

Jesus said, “Every one that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me” (John 6:45). It is true that man has no power to save himself, but since “the gospel is the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16), Peter could properly say, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation” (Acts 2:40). They had power to accept or reject God’s offer of mercy and salvation.

The theory of inborn depravity is false from start to finish. It is assumed that Adam’s sin so corrupted his nature he could not choose to do right. Then it is assumed that the nature of his corrupted spirit was transmitted to his descendants. The Bible does not teach either of these views.

Adam had the same freedom of choice after his sin to obey or disobey that he did before. God made him with the ability to obey or disobey. He decided to disobey. If one takes the position that a person who sins today does so because of his “fallen nature,” he should be able to answer the question: If my fallen nature causes me to sin, what caused Adam to sin?

The Bible presents humans as having freedom to choose, and being blessed or cursed as a result of those decisions.

It is speculated that since man was made in the image of God, when he sinned, he broke that image. All his descendants are born after the image of an earthly father, who is totally depraved. It is assumed that when Genesis 5:3 says that Adam became the father of a son “in his own likeness, and after his image,” it means that Seth and all his descendants were no longer in the image of God.

Contrary to that, 1 Corinthians 11:7 says, “For a man indeed ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as he is the

image and glory of God." James 3:9 expresses the same idea when it says, "Men … are made after the similarity of God." There is not one verse in the Bible that teaches that mankind ceased to be born in God's image because Adam sinned. God is "the Father of our spirits" (Heb. 12:9). Man does not inherit his spiritual qualities from his physical father.

No one, from Augustine down, can answer these simple questions:

- If it is possible for a sinful person to transmit a depraved nature to his offspring, why is it not possible for a redeemed and pure person to transmit his holy nature to his offspring?
- We may become "partakers of the Divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4). Why is that not transmitted?
- What is there in man's present nature that causes him to sin that was not in Adam's nature that caused him to sin?

Some answer, "We have a greater tendency to sin than Adam did." We then ask, "Where do you get that information?" Apparently the first time they were tempted, Eve and Adam succumbed. Whatever tendency they had, it was before the fall. Adam's tendency before the fall appears to be as great as ours after the fall.

Here are some Bible truths showing the falsity of the doctrine of original sin: Ezekiel 18:20 says: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son." Children are not born hereditarily, totally depraved.

Jesus said in Matthew 18:3, "Except ye become converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Can any sensible person imagine him saying, "Except ye become converted and become unable to do a good thing or think a good thought (totally depraved), you cannot

enter the kingdom of heaven?”

In Mark 10:14 he says, “Of such are the kingdom of heaven.” Does the kingdom of heaven consist of corrupt and totally depraved sinners?

Genesis 3:5-7 says:

> *God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.*

Instead of their sin causing moral blindness which was transmitted to their children, as all who theorize about their “fallen nature” teach, they now could recognize good and evil.

Adam and Eve, before the fall, knew what was good and evil. They had intellectual awareness that it is right to obey God and wrong to disobey him. If they had not known it was wrong, they would not have been condemned for eating forbidden fruit. Then when they sinned, they knew by experience.

It is impossible for us to live without sin. Paul says, “All have sinned” (Rom. 3:23). And 1 John 1:8 says, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

If we rephrase the question, we can better understand the answer. “Is my nature such that I have to sin all the time?” The simple answer is that the statements of Paul and John, indicating the universality of sin, are general truths that do not apply to specific situations. Suppose you were standing by Paul after he was told, “Arise and be baptized and wash away

thy sins," and you asked Paul as he arose from the water, "Do you now say you have no sin?" Paul's answer, "My sins are washed away and I have no sin." If a person can live without sin for one minute, then he does not have a sinful nature that makes him sin all the time. That does not deny the general truth that all have sinned.

The idea that a person is created so that he has to sin, and then God condemns him for doing it, places God in a bad light. It makes God a respecter of persons. What sort of God would it be who would say, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden" (Matt. 11:28), and make man where he could not do it, nor even want to do it?

No wonder those who concocted that idea had to come up with another false doctrine like "irresistible grace" to help solve the problem! The other false doctrine only made the problem worse, for then God would have to arbitrarily elect some to salvation and others to damnation by sovereign grace. You would have no right to question him!

No civilized society could function properly founded on the premise that man is born naturally evil and unable to make any moral choices. We admit that a pregnant mother who is a drug addict may pass on to her child a physical body that craves dope. But to pass on a physical characteristic is far removed from having an evil spirit.

The easiest and proper way out of all those problems is to recognize the Bible answer: All men are born with the same nature Adam had when he was created – with the ability to choose right or wrong. When man chooses wrong, he sins, but does not transmit that nature to his children any more than Adam did. Even though every mature person sins, it does not follow that he is required to do so by divine decree. It is true that "there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth

good, no, not one” (Rom. 3:11-12). Still, this is the choice of the created and not the ruling of the Creator.

Measures of the Spirit John 3:34

By Frazier Conley
Vol. 115, No. 11

In biblical language, especially in the OT and in the Gospels and Acts, often when the Spirit is said to come upon someone, the meaning is that the Spirit comes upon that one to bestow a gift of power. The angel said to Mary, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you” (Luke 1:35). This is typical phraseology in Holy Scripture (Num. 11:29; Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 14:6; 15:14; 1 Sam. 19:20, 23; 1 Chron. 12:18, etc.). It is hardly correct to say that the Spirit himself is not present when he comes to bestow a measure of power. It is more accurate to seek to determine what role or office the Spirit chooses to take when he comes upon someone.

Further, it is entirely correct to speak of “measures” of the Spirit.

In Numbers 11 the text tells how God took “some of the Spirit” which he had given to Moses and put it on the seventy elders. Since the text (Num. 11:17, 25) speaks of taking “some of” the Spirit it is implied that they received a lesser measure of the Spirit than that possessed by Moses. The text says, “And when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they

did so no more" (Num. 11:25). Again it seems to be indicating that their gift of the Spirit was limited when compared to that of Moses.

It is related in Numbers 27:18ff that Joshua became vested with "some" of the authority of Moses, a measure of it. In the same way that Joshua was vested with some of his authority (Num. 27:18-20), so he was possessed of a measure of the Spirit: "And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the Spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands upon him [presumably in the events of Num. 11]; so the people of Israel obeyed him, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses" (Deut. 34:9). The text is careful to say however that though Israel followed the Spirit-endowed Joshua, yet there had not at any time, "arisen a prophet … in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, none like him for all the signs and the wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, and for all the mighty power and all the great and terrible deeds which Moses wrought in the sight of all Israel" (Deut. 34:10-12). Certainly it is implied that Moses had a greater measure of the Spirit than Joshua or any other prophet of the Old Testament.

In 2 Kings 2:9-15, the text gives an account of the passing from Elijah to Elisha of a double portion of his spirit. Although the translators use a lower case "s" for spirit, there should be little doubt that the reference is to the prophetic Spirit of God as it, or he, resided in Elijah to empower prophetic gifts. Elisha received a "double portion," implying again that greater or lesser measures of the Spirit dwelt in the prophets of the Old Testament.

In 1 Samuel 10:6 a promise was given to Saul, "the Spirit of the Lord will come mightily upon you, and you shall prophesy with them and be turned into another man." It would appear that in saying "mightily" the conception is that the Spirit sometimes came less, and sometimes more powerfully upon

recipients. It might again be noted that the text does not say that Saul received the prophetic gift of the Spirit, but that he received the Spirit himself for the purpose of being endowed with the gift of prophecy.

For the preparation of the tabernacle, the Lord bestowed the Spirit upon certain ones. The Lord said to Moses, “See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Un, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze” (Ex. 31:1-4). It should be noted that Bezalel did not receive the Spirit so that he might have unlimited powers. The gifts were limited and measured and specific.

In the Old Testament, the Spirit came upon some to bestow gifts for conducting war (Judges 3:10) and on some to bestow physical strength (Judges 14:6, 19; 15:14).

The ancient Jewish rabbis also noted the existence of measures of the Spirit in the OT prophets. Rabbi Acha said, “The Holy Spirit, who rests on the prophets, rests [on them] only by weight … [by measure].”

The early Christians also were limited in the gifts of the Spirit, “But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift” (Eph. 4:7). As the context shows, the gifts were not all equal and certainly not without measure, but by measure. This merely confirms what is said of the gifts of the Spirit in I Corinthians 12:4ff. and Romans 12:3ff.

Again in Hebrews 2:4 the gospel affirms, “God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will.” There is no indication here that the Spirit came on the early Christians in fullness of power, but that the role he played

in them was limited and varied.

An interesting expression occurs in Acts 2:18. Peter quotes Joel 2, “On my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy” (Acts 2:18). When the text says “out of” it implies that the Spirit was not coming upon the recipients in its entirety, but in measure.

As Moses had laid his hands on Joshua (Deut. 34:9; and presumably in this way he had also conferred a measure of the Spirit to the seventy elders) so at Samaria Peter and John bestow (with prayer as well as hands) the Spirit in a measure upon the Samaritan converts (Acts 8:14-17). Although Simon was also surely a recipient of the same Holy Spirit empowerment as the other Samaritan believers, he perceived that the apostles had a greater measure, the power to confer the Spirit, and he coveted it, “Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money, saying, “Give me also this power [taking *houtos* as emphatic], that any one on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:18-19).

The Holy Spirit had also come upon Paul for this same office, and he too could confer the Holy Spirit so that early Christians could be empowered in a measure (Acts 19:1-7).

This brings us to the case of our Lord, Jesus. The author of Hebrews implies that while the Spirit-inspired prophets of the Old Testament did speak God’s Word in various ways, their gifts could not compare to the revelatory gifts of the Son of God (Heb. 1:1-3).

The famous prophecy of Christ in Isaiah 11:1-3 implies a great fullness of the Spirit, not a limited measure: “There shall come forth a shoot’ from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the

spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord."

In John 3:32-35, the text speaks of Jesus, "And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand" (KJV). Or, as Goodspeed renders: "For he whom God has sent speak God's words, for God gives him his Spirit without measure."

It is true that a number of translators have taken a text and an interpretation which leaves ambiguous who gives the Spirit to whom, rendering the passage: "for he giveth not the Spirit by measure" (ASV, NKJV; NASB, NIV, RSV). Some will say that the passage is affirming that Jesus (not God) gives the Spirit. And it is also affirmed that in any case the Spirit as a general rule is never given in a measure, that is, always in fullness to believers. But a number of translators remain in agreement with the KJV that it is grammatically sound to supply "to him" that is, to the Son, (see Goodspeed, the New Living Translation, Today's English Version, Williams, Phillips, NIV, Beck, Moffatt, the Jerusalem Bible, the Jewish New Testament, Contemporary English Version, Amplified, and Barclay's translation. Further many of the most erudite commentators on John also affirm this rendering: Bengel, Olshausen, Godet, Alford, McGarvey, Lipscomb, Barclay, Morris, Pack, Deissner in Kittel's TDNT, iv, 634, etc. Of course, luminaries are also to be found taking the opposing view: Meyer; Westcott, Brown, etc.). No simplistic interpretation holds the day unquestioned.

At any rate, in the context of the passage, the argument is that Jesus is able to bear witness to God in truth. Jesus has seen and heard, having been with the Father (John 1:18). Further, he is able to speak the exact words of God because

God gave the Spirit to him. John 1:32 says that John “saw the Spirit descend as a dove from heaven, and it remained on him.” This was no temporary or limited office. Jesus possessed all the fullness, John 1:16, “And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace.” Verse 3:35 continues the thought, “the Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand.”

Who is it that is receiving from the Father? The Son (see also John 3:27). Whose words are being validated? Jesus’ words. From whence does Jesus get his words? From God through the Spirit.

Also it seems reasonable, given their proximity, to correlate the word give in verse 34 to the word give in verse 35. In both cases God is giving to the Son.

Therefore, regardless of the variant textual readings, and the ellipsis to be supplied (“to him,” that is, to Jesus), the context indicates that the force of the passage is that God is giving the Spirit without measure to the Son.

As we saw above, all the rest of God’s revelation indicates that in the Spirit’s role in empowering those on earth, no one had the fullness of the Spirit in the limitless measure of our Lord. Believers then received from his bounty: “But each one of us has been given his gift, his due portion of Christ’s bounty” (Eph. 4:7 NEB)

Seek and Ye Shall Find

By Burl Curtis
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The beginner might think this is an unrestricted promise but a search of the scriptures will show seeking and finding are regulated. Jesus qualifies asking and receiving by showing an earthly father would not give his son a stone for bread nor a serpent for a fish. He concludes, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him" (Matt. 7:11)? Asking, seeking and knocking will *not* get you everything you want anytime you want it because God only gives "good and perfect gifts" (James 1:17). Often people ask for things not good for them and do not come close to knowing what is perfect for them.

Those who think this is an unqualified promise need to follow the example of David Lipscomb who said, "We do not have enough on a question until we study everything that God has said on that subject." He impressed upon his students the great importance of not being satisfied with the investigation of any Bible subject until every related scripture had been examined *(I'll Stand on the Rock: a Biography of H. Leo Boles,* Lipscomb and Choate, 1965).

1. We must seek in the proper order. Jesus said, "But seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things (food and clothing – Matt. 6:31-32) shall be added unto you" (v. 33). Any person or group who does this will use God's blessings to provide the basic necessities for life upon this earth.

2. We must seek in the right manner. God rewards those who "diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). Diligence requires making every effort. The man who found the treasure in the field went with joy and sold all he had and bought that field (Matt. 13:44). Many do not find the great treasures of life because they seek half-heartedly (Col. 3:23-24).

3. There is a time to seek. Isaiah warned, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near"

(55:6). Jesus taught a person can wait too late to seek. “Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are” (Luke 13:22-30; John 7:33-36; 8:21-24). If these words do not strike terror in your soul now, they will when it is too late.

4. We can seek the wrong things. Certain scribes and Pharisees sought after a sign but most of them rejected the greatest sign of all, the resurrection of Jesus (Matt. 12:38-40). Whoever seeks to save his life shall lose it (Luke 17:33). We may seek honor from men and “not the honor that cometh from God only” (John 5:39-47). Paul told the Corinthians “the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after [worldly] wisdom” (1 Cor. 1:22-23).

5. We may seek the Lord at the wrong place, like the women at the tomb who were asked by the two angels, “Why seek ye the living among the dead” (Luke 24:5). We may seek the truth from false teachers who teach the doctrines of men.

6. Men may seek the Lord for the wrong purposes. People came to Capernaum seeking Jesus but he confronted them, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled” (John 6:24-29). James wrote, “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts” (James 4:3).

7. Sometimes we have to seek and wait. Jesus told the disciples they could not go where he was going at that moment but they would follow him afterward (John 13:33-36). Those who go to heaven must wait for the “revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek

for glory and honor immortality , eternal life" (Rom. 2:5-11).

Ask, seek and knock are not unconditional promises. If we seek according to the will of God we will find; we will seek to excel in edifying (1 Cor. 14:12), to be unselfish (1 Cor. 13:5), things that are above (Col. 3:1) and peace (1 Pet. 3:11). John understood these promises when he wrote, "If we ask any thing *according to his will,* he heareth us" (1 John 5:14-15).

Limited Atonement?

By Dr. John Hobbs

The third cardinal doctrine in Calvinistic Theology is the doctrine of "Limited Atonement." It is the "L" in the T-U-L-I-P acrostic. Most Calvinists prefer the term "Particular Atonement" or "Definite Atonement."

What Calvinists Believe About Limited Atonement

> *The Canons of Dort, article 8, states, 'It was the will of God that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby He confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those, and only those, who were from eternity chosen to salvation.'*
>
> *Henry Fish, a Baptist wrote in 1850, 'Did the atonement, in its saving design, embrace more then the elect? The elect only; for whatever he designed he will accomplish, and he saves only his people from their sins.'*

David Steele and Curtis Thomas wrote, 'But He came into the world to represent and save only those given Him by the Father. Thus Christ's work was limited in that it was designed to save some and not others.'

WJ. Seaton said, 'Christ died to save a particular number of sinners.'

Lorraine Boettner said, 'The value of the atonement depends upon, and is measured by, the dignity of the person making it; and since Christ suffered as a Divine-human person the value of His suffering was infinite … The atonement, therefore, was infinitely meritorious and might have saved every member of the human race had that been God's plan.'

Ralph Gore wrote, "Christ died for the elect. The extent of the atonement is identical with the intent of divine election."

Paul Enns wrote, 'If God is sovereign (Eph. 1:11) then His plan cannot be frustrated, but if Christ died for all people and all people are not saved then God's plan is frustrated.'

R. B. Kuiper said, 'God purposed by the atonement to save only the elect and that consequently all the elect, and they alone, will be saved.'

The question may be put this way: When Christ died on the cross, did he pay for the sins of the entire human race or only for the sins of those who he knew would ultimately be saved? Calvinists would answer the latter group.

Wayne Grudem wrote: The term that is usually preferred is particular redemption, since this view holds that Christ died for particular people (specifically, those who would be saved and whom he came to redeem), that he foreknew each one of them individually (cf. Eph. 1:3-5) and had them individually in mind in his atoning work.

The Foundational Basis for Limited Atonement

The doctrine of Limited Atonement is based on the concept of double jeopardy (trying a person twice for the same crime). The argument goes like this: If Jesus died for the sins of all men, then the sins of all men are paid for and one has already been judged for those sins. On the Day of Judgment, if God would bring a man into judgment and commit him to hell even though Jesus had already paid for his sins, God would be putting that person in double jeopardy. God would be unjust – something he is not (Deut. 32:4).

The argument is: Since we do not permit double jeopardy in our own legal system, surely we would not expect God to do something we would not do.

Calvinists argue therefore – Jesus actually died only for the sins of the elect, the chosen, the saved.

However, just because there is an analogy from a human viewpoint, this does not prove that it coincides with the truth of God's word.

Isaiah 55:8-9 states, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Proverbs 14:12 states, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death." We are warned: "Lean not upon thine own understanding" (Prov. 3:5).

We do not formulate doctrine by analogies or examples. They may illustrate doctrine, but they do not prove doctrine. We

must determine truth from the Word of God and not human reasoning. There are some great truths of scripture which are beyond our comprehension and we accept because the Bible teaches them (such as, the Trinity, God's love, nature of sin, and such like), and therefore are not proved by reason, but are known by revelation.

Scriptures Used by Calvinists to Support Limited Atonement

> *Matthew 1:21 states, "For it is he that shall save his people from their sins."*
>
> *Jesus "loved the church and gave himself up for it" (Eph. 5:25).*
>
> *Romans 4:25 reads, "Who was delivered up for our trespasses."*
>
> *Romans 5:8 says, "But God commendeth his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."*
>
> *Romans 5:10 reveals, "We were reconciled to God through the death of his Son."*
>
> *Romans 8:32 declares, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all."*
>
> *Acts 20:28 states, "To feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood."*
>
> *In John 10:15 Jesus said, "I lay down my life for the sheep."*
>
> *2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "Him who knew no sin he made to be [a] sin [offering] on our behalf."*
>
> *Galatians 1:4 says, "Who gave himself for our sins."*
>
> *Ephesians 1:7 says, "In whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses."*

Titus 2:14 states, "Who gave himself for us."

Calvinists use the above Scriptures as proof texts that Christ died "only" for the elect.

Christ died for his people. That is the main point of these verses! However the Bible does not teach Limited Atonement – that Christ died "only" for the elect, "only" for a limited class.

Calvinists "twist" and "pervert" other plain Scriptures that clearly teach that Christ died for all men. They do so unto their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:15-17). When we come to the Bible, we must take all of it to arrive at total-saving truth. Psalms 119:160 states, "The sum of all thy word is truth." Matthew 4:4 says, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." It takes all of Scripture for the man of God to be complete (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We must preach "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

Christ died for all men. Christians appreciate the fact that Christ died for them. The verses used by Calvinists emphasize that point. Unbelievers do not appreciate that fact and therefore do nothing about it.

A True Story Concerning Hebrews 2:9

In 1980, I took second year New Testament Greek through Wheaton College at the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Dallas, Texas. My professor was Dr. John Werner, an outstanding world-recognized Greek scholar. But, he was a Calvinist through and through. One day we were reading the book of Hebrews in class. When it came my time to read, I was to translate Hebrews 2:9. I translated the verse, "But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with

glory and honor, that by the grace of God he should taste of death *only for the elect."*

My professor and the class laughed. After the laughter subsided, I added, "Excuse me – that should be – for *every* man."

Brethren, if the grammar makes sense, anything else is nonsense. To deny that Jesus tasted of death "for every man" is to deny the plain and clear teaching of Scripture! Dr. Werner agreed that the verse should be translated "for every man." But, he denied that is what it meant. He believed that it meant "every redeemed man" even though that is not what the text says!

We should not base biblical doctrine on "feeling" or "thinking." Biblical doctrine is based on God's Word!

If the Holy Spirit wanted to say that Christ died only for the elect, he could have easily done so. But, he did not do so. There is no "specific" passage in the entire Bible that teaches Limited Atonement.

Wayne Grudem, a Calvinist, says, "Hebrews 2:9 is best understood to refer to every one of Christ's people, every one who is redeemed."

Grudem is reading the Bible with his rose colored glasses on and sees what he wants to see instead of what is really there! The text does not say that Christ tasted of death for every "redeemed" man. Grudem is reading into the text something that is not there. This is something that God's Word explicitly forbids (Rev. 22:18-19; 1 Cor. 4:6; Gal. 1:8-9; 3:15; 2 John 9-11; Matt. 4:4; Prov. 30:5-6; Deut. 4:2; 12:32).

The words *every man* in Hebrews 2:9 are translated from the Greek word *pantos* (in form it is a genitive masculine or neuter singular word from the adjective *pas, pasa, pan* meaning "all" or "every").

Bruce says:

> *So far as the form goes, pantos might be masculine ("everyone") or neuter ("everything"); but since our author's concern is with Christ's work for humanity, and not with cosmic implications of His work, it is more probable to be taken as masculine.*

Alford says, "The singular brings out, far more strongly than the plural would, the applicability of Christ's death to each individual man." Jesus died for each individual person (which equals all mankind). The singular *pantos* emphasizes his care and love and concern for every human being!

This fact is a strong factor for each individual person to give his life back to him and live a holy God-fearing life (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

This same Greek word, *pantos,* is found in Matthew 13:19 and is translated "when any one." It is obvious in Matthew 13:19 that the Greek word refers only to lost human beings.

It is interesting that the Greek New Testament uses the word *pantos* at least once specifically to refer "only" to condemned human beings. Calvinists say that the word *pantos* in Hebrews 2:9 refers "only" to saved "redeemed" people. If the word *pantos* in Matthew 13:19 refers only to lost people who will spend eternity in hell, does that mean that in Hebrews 2:9 that the same group is being considered? No!

Can the word *pantos* refer to all mankind including those who appreciate Christ's death for them? Of course! Christ "tasted of death for every man." It is important to understand that the meaning of *pantos* will have to be determined by the context. Therefore, we can conclude that in Hebrews 2:9, the Greek word *pantos* refers to all humans period – not just the saved, not just God's special people. Jesus died for all humans – those who are lost and those who are going to heaven.

Calvinists deny the plain teaching of God's Word and add to it when they say Jesus tasted of death for every "redeemed" man.

An Examination of God's Word and Limited Atonement

The Bible is very clear that Jesus died for the sins of "all men" and not just for "the elect."

Consider these passages as to who Jesus died for:

1. John 1:29: "the one that taketh away the sin of the world" – i.e. all mankind
2. John 3:16: "the world" – i.e. all mankind
3. John 4:42: "This is indeed the Saviour of the world" – i.e. all mankind
4. John 12:47: "I came … to save the world" – i.e. all mankind
5. Romans 5:6: "Christ died for the ungodly"
6. Romans 5:8: "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"
7. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15: "he died for all"
8. 2 Corinthians 5:19: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" – i.e. all mankind. Those who believe in Limited Atonement say this refers to "the world of the elect." Again, they are adding to the Word of God.
9. 1 Timothy 1:15: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"
10. Timothy 2:6: "Who gave himself a ransom for all"
11. 1 Timothy 4:10: "Who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe"
12. Titus 2:11: "bringing salvation to all men"
13. Hebrews 2:9: "He should taste of death for every man."
14. 2 Peter 2:1: "Denying the Master that bought them" – Christ provided redemption for the false prophets but

they refused to accept it.

15. 1 John 2:2: “And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.” – i.e. all mankind
16. 1 John 4:14 “The Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” – i.e. all mankind

A Study of 1 John 2:2

One passage that must be the focus of our attention is 1 John 2:2. Here John wrote, “And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.”

Vine defines “propitiation” as “a means whereby sin is covered and remitted.” The text is very clear that sin covering has been provided “for our sins” – that is, Christians’ and “for the whole world,” or all humanity. If there was ever a verse in the Bible that taught the possibility of unlimited salvation – this is it!

Brown says that the word “world” is the “sphere of human beings and of human experience.” The apostle John uses the word “world” several times to refer to all humanity (John 1:29; 3:16-17; 4:42; 12:46-47; 1 John 4:14).

It is sad that some people “twist” the scriptures from their true meaning (2 Pet. 3:15-17). The same basis for forgiving one man’s sins is also the same basis for forgiving the sins of all men – the death of Christ.

It is not implied or taught that sins are forgiven unconditionally. The Bible does not teach the doctrine of Universalism, i.e. all men will be saved. The Bible does teach that only those who appropriate the blood of Christ over their sins will be saved (Rom. 6:3-4, 17-18; 1 Pet. 1:22; Rev. 2:10; 7:14).

Wayne Grudem, a Calvinist, writes, “The preposition ‘for’ [in

> *1 John 2:2] is ambiguous with respect to the specific sense in which Christ is the propitiation "for" the sins of the world.*
>
> *The Greek word translated "for" in this verse is peri, and means 'concerning' or 'with respect to." It does not define the way in which Christ is the sacrifice with respect to the sins of the world.*
>
> *It is consistent with the language of the verse to say that John is simply saying that Christ is the sacrifice available to pay for the sins of anyone and everyone in the world."*

There are several problems with Grudem's twisting of Scripture:

(1) Grudem does not deal with the word *world* in his defense of Calvinism. It is obvious that John uses the word "world" in the verse and in the other verses cited to refer to all humanity. Jesus died for all mankind.

(2) It is true that the word *for* in the phrase *for the whole world* is the Greek word *peri*. I agree that it means "concerning" or "with respect to."

Robertson says that *pen* has a sense similar to *hyper* in the verse. The word *hyper* means "in behalf of." It must be pointed out that the word *for* in the phrases *for our sins* and *not for ours only* in 1 John 2:2 is translated from the Greek word *peri*.

The Holy Spirit inspired John to use the Greek word *peri* three times in 1 John 2:2. This word is sufficient to define the way Christ is the sacrifice "for our sins" but not "for the sins of the whole world."

Grudem says that the preposition *peri* "is ambiguous." He is straining the gnat and swallowing the camel in order to avoid accepting the clear truth. Grudem would say that its third use

in the verse is ambiguous but not its first and second uses.

The emphasis in the verse is on Christ's "propitiation" – not the preposition "for."

John says Christ's propitiation is "for our sins" and "not for ours only" but also "for the sins of the whole world."

A Study of 1 Timothy 4:10

Paul wrote, "For to this end we labor and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of them that believe."

This verse is important to the discussion. Here the apostle clearly states the salvation of all men. He does not teach Universalism. But, he does teach that salvation has been provided for all men, i.e. all humanity. However, that salvation is appropriated and appreciated by those who believe. All men are potentially saved by Christ's death, but only those who appropriate the blood of Christ over their sins will be saved.

Grudem says:

> *He [Jesus] is referring to God the Father, not to Christ, and probably uses the word 'Savior' in the sense of 'one who preserves people's lives and rescues them from danger' rather then the sense of 'one who forgives their sins,' for surely Paul does not mean that every single person will be saved.*

Grudem misses it again.

(1) No, Paul is not teaching that every single person will be saved. No New Testament writer ever taught that.

(2) There is no problem with taking the word *Savior* as referring to God the Father. He is the Savior of all men in that He sent Jesus to die for all men (John 3:16; 1 John

4:10). The Father and the Son are one in purpose, aim, plan, and design (John 10:30).

(3) For Grudem to say that the word *Savior* does not refer to "sins" shows his theological bias. In Matthew 1:21, the child is to be called Jesus. Why? Because he will save his people from their "sins." The word "Jesus" means "Savior." Grudem does not want 1 Timothy 4:10 to refer to "sins," so he denies it.

(4) God desires "all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). Jesus "gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:6). Salvation for "all men" has been provided (1 Tim. 4:10). However, this salvation is "specially" for those who "believe." This word does not imply that all will be saved. The Greek word *malista* translated "specially" is also translated "particularly" or "especially" in 1 Timothy 5:17 and "above all" or "especially" in 2 Timothy 4:13. Paul is saying that God is potentially the Savior of all men. For the individuals who "will" to come to the Lord, these individuals "will in no wise be cast out" (John 5:40; 6:37).

J.W. Roberts wrote, "He is the savior (potentially) of all men, but especially (or actually) of believers."

Dr. J. C. Davis states, "God is the potential Savior of all men (John 3:16; Rom. 10:13; 2 Pet. 3:9). God is the actual Savior of believers" (Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:8; Rev. 2:10).

J. N. D. Kelly wrote, "Paul is no doubt giving expression to his conviction that the certainty of salvation belongs in an especial degree to those who have accepted Christ." True!

1 Timothy 4:10 is like Galatians 6:10. Christians are to "work that which is good toward all men and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith." We have an obligation to do "good toward all men" (even the ones who have not named the name of Christ). But, we have a special obligation to help those who are Christians. Christ died for all men but

especially for those who believe.

An Invitation Is Given to All Men

In Matthew 11:25, Jesus said, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” The church, the bride as it is called, and the Holy Spirit perpetuate that invitation as shown by John in Revelation 22:17:

> *And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.*

The invitation is given to all men. Why offer salvation to all if that is not possible? The text says “whosoever” will.

God Desires All Men to Be Saved

In (2 Peter 3:9) we read:

> *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

God wants “all” to come to repentance! Boettner, a Calvinist, denies that it is God’s plan for all to be saved. Seaton, a Calvinist, asks, “The over-riding question must always be the Divine intention; did God intend to save all men, or did He not?”

The fact that God desires that “all” should come to repentance implies that God has provided provisions for “all.” Christ died for all men. This verse teaches that if a man is lost, it is against God’s will because he wants “all” to come to repentance and be saved.

In 1 Timothy 2:4, Paul wrote, “Who would have all men to be

saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." Here again God's Word is clear. God desires that all men be saved.

In (Ezekiel 33:11) we read:

> *As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*

God desires that the wicked turn from his evil ways and live. God does not want or wish that any person be lost.

Paul Enns, a Calvinist, wrote, "If God is sovereign then His plan cannot be frustrated, but if Christ died for all people and all people are not saved, then God's plan is frustrated."

God is sovereign, but his plan involves the free will of man. His plan is that those who by their free will elect to believe and become obedient will be saved.

God is "frustrated" or "grieved" when men do not respond to his saving grace (Gen. 6:5-6; Mark 3:5; Luke 19:41; Eph. 4:30).

God's desire and will is frustrated when men are lost. God wants "all" to come to repentance and "all men" to be saved. He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11). "God is not willing that any should perish" (2 Pet. 3:9).

But, some will perish – not because Jesus did not die for them. He died for each individual person to show his intense love. If an individual is lost, it is because he has rejected God's intense love. God does not desire it that way. But, he respects the right of a person to make his own decision.

Pardon for Sins Can Be Rejected

It is possible for pardon and salvation to be offered and rejected. In 1829 two men, Wilson and Porter, were apprehended in the state of Pennsylvania for robbing the United States mail. They were indicted, convicted, and sentenced to death by hanging. Three weeks before the scheduled execution, President Andrew Jackson pardoned one of the men, George Wilson. This was followed by a strange decision. George Wilson refused the pardon! He was hung because he rejected the pardon.

Today, God has provided eternal salvation and pardon for all men. He has accomplished this by sending his one-of-a-kind Son to die for the sins of each and every individual person. However, this salvation can be refused.

If one chooses not to appropriate the blood of Christ over his sins initially and continually, he is refusing and rejecting the salvation which has been provided for him by God Almighty. While we can recognize the foolishness of such a decision, we must be aware of the fact that the majority of mankind will refuse their pardon (Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 13:23-24). How sad!

Why Did God Create Man?

A lady asked me, “Why did God create man if he knew so many would be lost?”

This is a thought-provoking question. I answer this with two thoughts:

(1) Whatever God does is right and just. We may not understand what he does but that is because we are human and finite while he is divine and infinite (Isa. 55:8-9). Deuteronomy 32:4 states, “For all his ways are justice: A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is he.” God himself asked Job, “Wilt thou even annul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be justified?” Job attacked

and condemned the present righteousness of God. Job sinned by doing this. Job later repented Job 40:35; 42:1-6).

(2) I think the answer to this tough question is that God respects our free moral agency. If a man is lost, it will be his fault – not God's! God has done everything possible for the salvation of each person. God will not overtake one's will and force him to obey. Life is what we make it! We can avail ourselves of God's love or we can spurn it and reject it. The choice is ours (Deut. 30:11-15; Joshua 24:15; Acts 2:37, 40).

Seaton, a Calvinist, said, "If it was God's intention to save the entire world, then the atonement of Christ has been a great failure, for vast numbers of mankind have not been saved."

Seaton misses it. Christ's death was not a failure. The failure is man's free moral will. Man by his own free will chooses not to obey. Christ is "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9; cf. John 3:36; Rom. 6:17-18; 2 Thess. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:17).

On the Day of Judgment if a person is cast into the Lake of Fire for all eternity, it will be his own failure – not God's! The failure lies with man not with God.

Calvinists say they focus on God's sovereignty while we focus on man's free will. I say it is not an either/or situation; it is a both/and situation. Both of the these concepts are respected in the scriptures. We must accept both.

Conclusion

To deny the Bible teaching that Christ died for all is to make God a respecter of persons – unjust and unmerciful. The doctrine of limited atonement is false. All men are potentially saved. If a person refuses pardon, death is not the fault of the one who offered mercy, but of the one who

refused to accept it.

> *(Editor's Note: The word atonement means to cover or conceal. It is an Old Testament word and is not found in the New Testament. The sins of people before the cross could be atoned, but after the cross the sins of the obedient believer were forgiven. There is a dramatic difference. Under Moses there was a remembrance made of atoned sins year by year [Heb. 10:3 – the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins]. The blood of animals could cause God to overlook sins while remembering them year by year, but could not remove the sins. This was atonement. The blood of the Lamb of God is able not to merely cover or bypass sins, but to remove every transgression and disobedience. To receive the forgiveness available in the blood of the cross, one must obey [Heb. 5:7-8].)*

The Seal and Earnest of the Spirit (J. C. Brewer)

By Jerry C. Brewer
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The application of the terms *earnest* and *seal* to the Holy Spirit's work belong to the apostolic period when the gospel was being revealed in parts and portions and define two necessary aspects of the gospel scheme of redemption – revelation and confirmation. Purposed from eternity and hidden beneath the types and shadows of the old covenant, the scheme of redemption was a mystery that is now revealed.

> *…how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery;*

> *(as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ,) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. (Eph. 3:3-4).*

The word mystery in the above passage does not mean "mysterious" or "mystical." It means unknowable through human reasoning and wisdom.

> *The word mystery in Revelation comports with the same meaning of the word as used elsewhere in the New Testament – that is, the spiritual truths not discoverable by human reason; understandable, but hidden from human knowledge until revealed. The word has the connotation of secret doctrine, hence prior to revelation it was a hidden thing; but when revealed, it was brought within human intelligence and understanding. …The word mystery did not mean mysterious. It meant that which could not be known until it was made known, or revealed, and it meant the gospel plan of salvation. The doctrine of the New Testament is, in this sense, called a mystery. (Foy E. Wallace Jr., The Book of Revelation, Sec. II, Part IV, p. 82).*

Undiscoverable by human wisdom, God's plan could be known only by revelation, which requires inspiration. Inspiration requires confirmation. The scheme of redemption was revealed in words, (1 Cor. 2:10-13), and confirmed by signs and wonders (Heb. 2:1-4). Inspiration was the means God used to reveal his plan. Miraculous gifts of the Spirit confirmed that those through whom it was spoke the word of God. This was the function of the Holy Spirit whose work of revelation and confirmation is expressed in the terms "seal" and "earnest."

The earnest of the Spirit relates to those gifts of partial revelation of which Paul spoke in 1 Corinthians 13 and is used only in 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5 and Ephesians 1:14. From the

Greek word *arrhabon,* defined as, "a pledge, i.e. part of the purchase-money or property given in advance as security for the rest: – earnest." (James Strong, Exhaustive Concordance of The Bible, "Greek Dictionary of The New Testament," p. 16).

That which was given as an "earnest" was not the Holy Spirit, but that which the Spirit gave – partial knowledge of God's word, which blossomed into the perfect (complete) revelation of His will. The earnest of the Spirit constituted a partial revelation until the "redemption of the purchased possession" which was the completion of divine revelation.

> *Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail whether there be tongues, they shall cease, whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away (1 Cor. 13:8-10).*

The partial revelation of the gospel, imparted to Christians in the first century, was an earnest or pledge of the full revelation to come. That partial knowledge would cease when those parts were gathered into the whole, which Paul styled "that which is perfect." The revelation we now possess in the New Testament is the sum of the parts extant in the apostolic age. (The word *perfect* in 1 Corinthians 13:10 means "completeness" and when the parts of the mystery were gathered into the whole, the full price was paid of which the earnest was a pledge.)

The Holy Spirit was not the earnest in the hearts of men in the first century, except in a metonymical sense where the cause was put for the effect. When Paul said God had "given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts," he referred to that which the Spirit revealed, not the Spirit himself. Neither is the Holy Spirit an earnest in the hearts of Christians today. Many who so teach contend that the Spirit constitutes a "down

payment" or "pledge" from God of eternal salvation. But the full purchase price of anything is paid in the same currency as the down payment. If the Holy Spirit is the pledge or earnest of salvation, then God is making his down payment with a currency other than that which he will issue as the balance of the purchase. Besides, to say that God must make a "down-payment" on salvation is tantamount to saying we cannot trust him to fulfill his pledge to us!

When Paul said God had "given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts," (2 Cor. 1:21-22), he distinguished between himself and the Corinthians. The pronoun "you" in this passage refers to the Corinthians and the pronouns "us" and "our" refer to Paul and the other apostles. The anointing of the Holy Spirit was Holy Spirit baptism, which the apostles received. He made the same distinction in the Ephesians' epistle.

> *In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory (Eph. 1:11-14).*

The Ephesians were sealed with the gift of tongues and given the earnest of prophecy when Paul laid hands on them after they were baptized (Acts 19:1-6). Paul explains the purpose of the earnest and seal of the Spirit in the Ephesians in the following statement:

> *Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of*

> *our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened (Eph. 1:15-18).*

The earnest of the Spirit was revelation, which came through Holy Spirit baptism, and the seal of the Spirit was the confirmation of that revelation. When gifts of revelation were imparted through the laying on of the apostles' hands, they were accompanied by miraculous powers for confirmation.

The genuineness of the earnest of the Spirit, or the gospel that resided in inspired men, was attested by the Spirit's seal of "signs and wonders and divers miracles" upon them. From the Greek *sphragizo,* the word *seal* is defined as, "to stamp (with a signet or private mark) for security or preservation …to keep secret, to attest. … The stamp impressed (as a mark of privacy or genuineness), lit, or fig. seal." (Strong, p. 70). This seal or sign of genuineness was a visible attestation of the authority by which inspired men spoke.

Those who claim this seal for Christians today cannot produce any visible sign of such seal. Their argument is the same one made for the direct indwelling of the Holy Spirit – "I know it because the Bible says I have it." But what is the purpose of a seal of authority? The great seal of a state attests to and confirms the genuineness of documents issued by the state's authority and is visible to all who read them. The seal of the Spirit was composed of the signs worked by inspired men of the first century and visibly attested to their authority from God. The seal of the Spirit wasn't some invisible thing placed upon them for God's benefit. Why would God have to attest ownership of Christians to himself? Does he not know them that are his without having some sort of mark placed upon them? The visible seal of the earnest of the Spirit was what Paul called "the signs of an apostle" (2 Cor. 12:12). That was the sign or

seal of his apostleship and of all who had the earnest of the Spirit in the first century.

On 1 John 1:7 (Forgiveness)

By H. A. (Buster) Dobbs
Vol. 106, No. 11

There is considerable misunderstanding about automatic forgiveness of sin. Some seem to have the mistaken idea that Jehovah God, by the sheer exercise of his unqualified grace, will wipe out "secret sins."

The notion that the Creator ignores innocent-looking wickedness by the operation of his unlimited mercy takes various twists. A few say that all men walk under the protection of boundless grace and therefore no one will be lost—not even Adolph Hitler and Charles Manson.

Others claim that it is impossible for any man to know and do all that God requires of him. Hairsplitting arguments attempt to show that if a person does not fully understand niceties of divine injunctions, his ignorance or transgression or omission will be spontaneously dismissed.

Advocates of the idea of grace dispensing with some law are unwilling or unable to name specific sins that God "winks at" in our age. Still, they cannot bring themselves to believe that God will enforce his laws absolutely. They fear lest some tender soul might be tortured with nameless guilt and beset with nightmares and look for some basis to say to the transgressor that God will impulsively forgive, and grant the sinner peace and rest.

The one verse to which all advocates of automatic forgiveness appeal is this:

“If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

Though we had a lengthy discussion on this around the first of this year, I will again consider the question because a few dear brothers are still having trouble grasping John’s teaching—they don’t seem to catch his drift, as the dudes say. Certain nervous-nelly types wring their hands and clutch their chests and bemoan the poor soul that violates some obscure and petty rule in the divine lawbook.

Shall such a one go down to eternal perdition simply because he/she was caught on some technicality? Thinking about someone floundering forever in flames of fire because of being entrapped on the hook of some minor point of doctrine is more than they can bear. Surely, they think, we can stretch the strait gate just a little—just enough to take care of insignificant violations.

There are several things amiss in this wrong-headed thinking. In the first place, it casts doubt on God’s love and goodness and suggests that the Lord makes loopholes in his law and plays games with us (it does seem God is wise enough to speak to us in our language so we can understand him). The laws of God are not all that complicated. Any person who wants to do the will of God can understand his will (John 7:17).

In the second place, it denies God’s holiness and purity and suggests that, after all, God ought to tolerate some sins —*teeny-weeny ones* —(mortal sins deserve hell, but venial sins should be purged in some temporary confinement, or entirely overlooked, according to this view).

In the third place, it does not take into account the justice of God. God is love, but he is also just. His mercy tempers

judgment, but according to rule and not by whim. “Behold then the goodness and severity of God: toward them that fell, severity; but toward thee, God’s goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off’ (Rom. 11:22).

In the fourth place, it assumes superior knowledge about what is minor and unimportant and about what is major and necessary. If you keep the whole law but offend in one point—even if you think it is a tacky point—you have violated the whole law (James 2:10). The essence of sin—even so-called small sins—is rebellion. If we rebel in one point, we will rebel in another because we have an indisposition to respect the law. There may be large and small consequences of law-breaking, but all infractions are equally serious. Otherwise God is a respecter of persons. We must understand what it means to walk in the light. The condition upon which the blood of the lamb is cleansing us from all sin is walking in the light, according to 1 John 1:7. Please don’t forget the condition—the passage begins with an “if’—”if’ we walk in the light, then—and only then—does the blood of Jesus keep us clean from all sin. If we do not walk in the light, then the cleansing does not follow.

Walking in darkness is the opposite of walking in light. Either we walk in darkness or we walk in light, and we cannot do both simultaneously.

Note: “If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth” (1 John 1:6).

Note: “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:3).

He who walks in darkness and says he knows God lies (1 John 1:6).

He who keeps not God’s commandments and says he knows God lies

(1 John 2:4).

Therefore walking in darkness is the same as not keeping God's commandments.

If the negative is true, the positive is also true. Walking in darkness is not to keep his commandments. Walking in light is keeping his commandments. Therefore, John is saying if we keep the commandments of God the blood of Jesus keeps us clean from all sin.

Question: How can a person sin who is walking in the light—keeping God's commandments? *Answer:* One who attempts to hear and do the words of Jesus can fail—he may omit to do something the Lord requires of him or do something the Lord forbids. If he should sin, he repents and confesses; that constitutes walking in the light—keeping God's commands—and the blood of the lamb is cleansing him from all sin. If a blood-bought child of God sins but excuses his wrong and will not confess and repent, he is not walking in the light and the blood will not cleanse his transgressions. The key is walking in the light. Walking in the light is a continuous action. Cleansing therefore is a continuous action because walking in the light involves keeping the commands of God, which involves confessing sin and repenting of sin. All of this—walking in the light, confessing, repenting, and cleansing—is continuous action.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). This passage, by the way, is in the immediate context of 1 John 1:7.

Yet some would have us believe in spite of this that somehow, someway, sometime, God will forgive his child of a slight infraction of sacred precepts, that walking in the light magically forgives casual sins—whatever that is!

That won't wash! The verse under study says, "If we walk in

the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin." We are continuously cleansed not from some sin, nor from haphazard sin, nor from unknown sin, but from all sin—all sin!

If walking in the light is something other than keeping all the commands of God, if it is approximate obedience and just getting close, then all sin—all sin!—adultery, murder, stealing, lying, idolatry—all sin—is automatically forgiven. The verse says "all sin," just as verse 9 says "all unrighteousness."

If the liberalizing view that grace dispenses with complete obedience to every requirement of heaven is true, then "all sin" is washed away in the blood of the cross unconditionally and all will be saved—Adolph Hitler and Charles Manson included. Simply put— Calvary was a mistake.

Some say "the light" is God, because verse *5* says, "God is light." So, the passage would read, under this understanding, "if we walk in God, as Jesus walked in God. . .." The question comes: How did Jesus walk in God—in the light?

Question: Did Jesus obey his heavenly Father incompletely and only when it was handy, or did he obey Jehovah always and in all things? The passage requires us to walk in the light as Jesus is in the light, if his blood is to keep on cleansing us from all sin. Jesus claimed sinless perfection and challenged his contemporaries to convict him of wrong (John 8:46-47). None did! He always pleased Jehovah (John 8:29). Keeping divine law gladdens the heart of God (1 John 3:22). Therefore Jesus always kept the commands of Jehovah, and that pleased his holy, heavenly Father. "Then said I, Lo, I am come (In the roll of the book it is written of me) To do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7). The unbending rule of the life of Jesus is "not my will, but thine be done."

Jesus walked in the light, and so must we if his precious

blood is to keep us clean from all sin. He never failed. We may fail, but provision is made for forgiveness, if we walk in the light as he is in the light.

It is tragic for a professing teacher of righteousness to encourage people to think that any rule of God can be disregarded with impunity. Instead of trying to comfort the guilty by offering false hope, let us console them by rebuking sin and calling for repentance. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

“For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need” (Heb. 4:15-16).

Now, that gives some real help and lasting relief! “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

Holy Spirit in the New Testament

By H. A. (Buster) Dobbs
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- I. Introduction
  - A. The writers of the Old Testament looked for a time when the Holy Spirit would do a greater work

than was done in their day.

- B. They stressed the importance of words that would be spoken and written because of the work of the Holy Spirit. Consider the importance of the words of revelation.
    - 1. “The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me; because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the year of Jehovah’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of Jehovah, that he may be glorified” (Isa. 61:1-3).
    - 2. The context of this passage shows these words were spoken to Judah before the Babylonian captivity and refer to the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple but have a second and ultimate fulfillment in Jesus (See Luke 4:16-21). The message was from “the Spirit of the Lord Jehovah.”
- C. The power and importance of the revealed word is emphasized. The word heard, revealed, preached, believed and obeyed is dominant.
    - 1. Matthew 4:12-17 and Isaiah 9:1-2– Jesus began to preach.
    - 2. Matthew 11:2-6; Isaiah 35:5-10–gospel is preached.
    - 3. Matthew 12:15-21 and Isaiah 42:1

-4—Jehovah's servant shall declare judgment.
        - 4. Matthew 13:14-17 and Isaiah 6:9-10— see, hear, believe.
        - 5. Matthew 13:35 and Psalms 78:1-3— teach and reveal.
        - 6. Luke 4:16-2 1 and Isaiah 61:1-3—preach good tidings.
        - 7. John 12:37-41 and Isaiah 53:1; Isaiah 6:9-10—a message is to be believed.
    - D. The Bible deals with the message more than the messenger. The real messenger was the Holy Spirit, and, being God, he is deep, inscrutable, and incomprehensible, but we can grasp the words the Holy Spirit revealed.
- II. The Holy Spirit and the Word in the New Testament
    - A. John the Baptist was a forerunner.
        - 1. He was filled with the Holy Spirit from birth (Luke 1:15).
        - 2. He was to prepare the way for Messiah (Isaiah 40:3).
        - 3. He would turn the hearts of the people to God (Malachi 4:5-6).
        - 4. He did his work by exhortation and preaching (Luke 3:18)
    - B. The work of Jesus was planned by God.
        - 1. "He that hath received his witness hath set his seal to this, that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for he giveth not the Spirit by measure. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:34-36).
            - a) Note: Jesus is the one God sent. Jesus spoke the words of God: for (the

reason is) he (God) giveth not the Spirit by measure. Obviously, the one who spoke the words of God, is the one who received the Spirit without measure—Jesus received the spirit without measure.

- b) Others must have received the Spirit by measure; otherwise it does not make sense to say Jesus had an immeasurable measure of the Spirit.

- 2. Emphasis was put on the teaching (the words) of Jesus: "Never man so spake" (John 7:46).
    - a) "The multitudes were astonished at his teaching" (Matt. 7:28).
    - b) "Hear ye him" (Matt. 17:5).
    - c) "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).
    - d) "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that y, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock" (Matt. 7:21-24).
    - e) "It is the spirit that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you are

spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63).

- f) “No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he that is from God, he hath seen the Father” (John 6:44-46).
- g) “Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I came forth and am come from God; for neither have I come of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and standeth not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof. But because I say the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convicteth me of sin? If I say truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth the words of God: for this cause ye hear them not, because ye are not of God” (John 8:42-47)
- h) “If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also: from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the

> Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works" (John 14:7-10; Amos 1:1). Daniel said, ' 'heard I the voice of his words" (Dan. 10:9). Balaam said, ' 'The word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak" (Num. 22:38).

Comments on the Outline

God instructs the people of earth through the medium of words. The Holy Spirit used words in instructing chosen leaders who repeated the words to the public. The words would sometimes come to the receiver through the eye, at other times through the ear, and occasionally the words were put in the mouth, but the message always came in the signs and symbols of ideas and was communicated to the people in words.

"The words of Amos, who was among the herdsmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel…." (Amos 1:1). Daniel said, "heard I the voice of his words" (Dan.lO:9). Balaam said, "The word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak" (Num. 22:3 8).

The Bible stresses the importance of inspired writings. The New Testament says the Holy Spirit influences human minds through a medium, except in some miracles—*miracles confined to the first century.*

God made the world by the creative power of his spoken word.

God said, “Let there be light, and there was light.” God said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters.” God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together unto one place.” God said, “Let the earth put forth grass, herbs yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit after their kind, wherein is the seed thereof, upon the earth: and it was so.” God spoke, and it was done. “By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God” (Heb. 11:3).

“… It is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6). Paul’s argument is that the same God who called light out of darkness in the beginning, de- monstrated how weighty and mighty his word is, by giving the revelation of his gospel of salvation. We dare not ignore nor belittle it.

The force of God’s word is well documented in the Bible. The gospel is God’s power to save (Rom. 1:16). Still, some misguided souls call it “the mere word” and “the dead letter.” Those who faithfully follow the teaching of the Bible are called strict constructionists and legalists. These terms are used in derision and are not unlike the Jews’ calling Jesus a Samaritan to disgrace him. Jesus set the proper response pattern for us when he discounted their slap by saying they dishonored him and pointed out that he was doing his Father’s will, but they were not so disposed. The apostle argues we do not handle the word of God deceitfully. ..The gods of this world blind the minds of the unbelieving to prevent them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ…We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God” (2 Cor. 4:1-7). He calls the scriptures “the word of God…the gospel of the glory of Christ…a treasure…an exceeding great power.”

We do not war according to the flesh, but “casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to

the obedience of Christ; and being in readiness to avenge all disobedience, when your obedience shall be made full" (2 Cor. 10:5-6).

Our obedience is to be full, complete, perfect. It is the Comforter—the Holy Spirit—who gives to us divine revelation. "Wherefore, even as the Holy Spirit saith, Today if ye shall hear his voice" (Heb. 3:7). "Brethren, it was needful that the scripture should be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spake before by the mouth of David concerning Judas" (Acts 1:16). "The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me, And his word was upon my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:2). "But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1).

The word of truth revealed by the Holy Spirit is sufficient and adequate to make sinners acceptable to God. We are not to follow the ambiguous leadings of doubtful feelings but are to submit to the absolute standard of scripture inspired of God.

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

"Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth" (Matt. 6:10).

"The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul: The testimony of Jehovah is sure, making wise the simple" (Psalms 19:7).

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

"And that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. That the man of God may

be complete, furnished completely unto every good work” (2 Tim. 3:15-17)

“It is the spirit that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, are life” (John 6:63).

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death” (Rom. 8:2).

“But he that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing” (James 1:25).

“For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves” (James 1:22).

“Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures” (James 1:18).

“Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently: having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever, For, all flesh is as grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower falleth: But the word of the Lord abideth for ever. And this is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you” (1 Peter 1:22-25).

“For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God’s good pleasure through the

foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21).

“Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21).

John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth finished their God-given assignments through the power of words. The overriding importance of the message is prominent in the God-given scriptures (writings). As we look at the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the apostles of Jesus, certain disciples in the first century, and all the saved, we will understand more fully the Spirit’s work of revealing, confirming, and protecting the plan of salvation as given in the new covenant.

“Now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give {you} the inheritance among all them that are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).

Do We Know God?

By Carl G. Hecker
Vol. 107, No. 02

A basic understanding of the true nature of our God can come only from the Bible. Our ideas of him develop over years of spiritual growth. If our fundamental understanding is wrong, we will never come to an adequate appreciation of what he requires of us. The following simple thoughts seem helpful in searching for deeper insight from the scriptures. See if you agree.

The Godhead

A clear, simple concept of the God of the Bible is essential to the proper faith and practice of the religion of Christ. The Hebrew word translated God *(Elohim)* in Genesis 1:1 is plural in number. It shows plurality in the persons of God. The New Testament also presents the same idea (John 1:1-14).

We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold or silver or stone, graven by art and man's device (Acts 17:29). Material representations of the Divine Being are idolatry (Exodus 20:4-6). God is spirit and we must not allow ourselves to think otherwise (John 4:24).

God *(Elohim)* has revealed himself as three persons. Each one in the Godhead is a distinct person but always one in action, thought, and purpose with the other two in the Godhead. These three persons always moved in perfect unity, with each having a specific identity and work apart from the others.

The Father is the designer. The Son, (also designated the Word) is the executor. The Holy Ghost is the organizer. When we read of God in the Bible, it always helps to have these basic thoughts in mind: God, the Father, as Designer; God, the Son, as Executor; God, the Holy Ghost, as Organizer.

We see these three in the redemption of mankind. A proper understanding of their individual roles in this divine plan is essential to overcoming the often confusing and always conflicting denominational doctrines so prevalent today.

Our God in Redemption

We would expect to see the same unity of purpose and the definite assigned work in the revelation and enforcing of the scheme of redemption. The Father is the designer, the planner (Eph. 3:11; II Tim. 1:9). It was his eternal purpose. It was his grace and it was to be expressed in his gospel (Titus

2:11).

The Son is the one who executes by taking the form of a man (John 1:14) and dying on the cross to save all mankind (I Tim. 1:15). The Holy Ghost then did his divine part by revealing the reasonable and orderly plan in the New Testament. He did this by inspiring the apostles of Jesus.

Jesus gave the promise of the Father (infallible guidance) to his chosen apostles just before returning to the Father (John 14:25-26; Acts 1:4-9). The Comforter was to guide them into all truth. This he did. He then confirmed the word with gifts of signs and wonders and with divers miracles (Hebrews 2:1-4). The person of the Holy Ghost is always in the masculine gender (he or him). He is always singular in number. He revealed the word of God but he is not that word. The Holy Ghost has great influence but he is not merely an influence. The Holy Spirit is not some sort of "glorified it."

The Holy Spirit possesses all the divine attributes equally with God, the Father and God, the Son. He is co-eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient. He is a person of the Godhead.

The term *Holy Ghost* equates with the expression *Holy Spirit.* They mean the same. The two English words translate one Greek word. He is a person and always functions as a person. He can be grieved (Eph. 4:30). The Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit is one person the same as God, the Father, and Jesus Christ, the Son are individual persons (Eph. 4:1-4).

Just as one individual cannot dwell literally within another person, so neither God the Father, Christ the Son, nor the Holy Spirit dwells in us personally. Such divine indwelling is a beautiful expression pointing to the closeness of our relationship to them. When one misapplies these scriptures by making them literal, he not only comes up with conflicting and confusing denominational doctrines but deprives himself of the

real beauty of the revelation! The indwelling of the Godhead can only be effected by the words of the Eternal One. When this word is in the heart of the sincere individual it is God dwelling in us and we in him!

God dwells in us. Christ dwells in us. The Holy Spirit dwells in us. We dwell in them, that close! Such a close relationship is described by this beautiful and satisfying figure of speech. Other figures express the close relationship, such as we walk with him; he leads us; we are his sons and daughters. These physical, worldly images are descriptive of the spiritual. Our God is spirit (John 4:24). If any one of them is taken literally, that conveys an unreasonable idea leading to confusion and often unwholesome superstition. Do not allow this to happen to you.

The Blood Of Christ

Neal Pollard

The topic above should cause one's mind to focus on some precise areas. Naturally, the blood of Christ implies thoughts of the "incarnation" of Christ (that Christ took on the form of man, while all God, and, thus, had blood coursing through His veins; Philippians 2:8). The blood of Christ further educes from one's thoughts the atonement Christ made for all mankind through the shedding of His blood at the cross (cf. Hebrews 9:12-14). The blood of Christ also elicits reflection upon the suffering and death of the sinless man from Nazareth (1 Peter 2:24). And on one might reflect.

The phrase, the blood of Christ, appears verbatim in the New Testament in four verses. With each reference one finds important lessons about the function and significance of His

blood. Christ's blood is central in the Father's plan of salvation and life within His favor. What does the blood of Christ bring to needy man?

The Blood Of Christ Brings Redemption (1 Peter 1:19)

In 1 Peter 1, one sees the inspired apostle speaking to persecuted (1), predestined (2), purified (2), and pliant (2) people of God. What would cause a Christian to suffer wrong for doing right? What would cause a Christian to search out from the scriptures the terms of election, accept the terms of pardon, and follow the terms of Christian living? Simply, an understanding of redemption.

Perhaps the verse most loved and quoted is John 3:16. Yet, so beknown and familiar, this verse is sorely misunderstood and underapplied. Jesus, the speaker of the words recorded in this verse, foretells the act of redemption. With His divine foreknowledge, Christ understood that the gift of the Father's only begotten Son (Himself) meant the shedding of His blood at Calvary. The purpose of that shed blood, He knew, was to redeem the lost race of man from the power and hopelessness of sin. Paul says, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Galatians 4:4,5). By inspiration, Paul reinforces this with Titus (Titus 2:14).

The Blood OF Christ Brings Removal (Hebrews 9:14)

The King James Version uses, in this verse, the word "purge" in translating the effect of the blood of Christ upon the conscience of one to whom that blood is applied. Purge means "to purify, especially of sin, guilt, or defilement" (The

American Heritage Concise Dictionary, 1994). Thayer shows the original word translated “purge” in this verse means “free from the guilt of sin” (The New Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon, 312). Clearly, the Spirit-guided writer of Hebrews speaks of the effect of the applied blood of the Savior. The audience of Hebrews, of which modern man is a part, needs some agent to remove the guilt of sin (dead works) from their lives. The blood of Christ is that agent. For the agent to be effective (to do the job it was intended to do), one must come in contact with it. Where does one come in contact with the blood?

Jesus shed His blood when He died (John 19:34). Paul writes “that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death” (Romans 6:3). One cannot literally go over to Jerusalem to a hill called Mt. Calvary and find the man Jesus bleeding to death on a cross. Furthermore, because one cannot do this, one cannot in some literal way reach up to Him and take some of His shed blood and apply it to himself. Thus, there is no literal, physical way for today’s man or woman to contact the actual, shed blood of our Lord.

Yet, Revelation 1:5 reveals that Christ, on His cross, washed us from our sins in His shed blood. God would not allow His Son to shed His life-blood and then provide no means for mankind to contact that blood in some way. And, there is a way and only one way. In identifical terminology, Acts 22:16 says that baptism washes away sins. In summation, Christ shed His blood in His death. We are buried with Christ in baptism. Christ washed our sins with His blood. We wash away our sins in the act of baptism. The blood of Christ and baptism, inseparably joined, remove the sins of those who recognize and submit to the authority of Christ in being baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21).

The Blood Of Christ Brings Return (Ephesians 2:13)

At the creation of man, there was no need for means whereby man could return to a right relationship with Jehovah. The idea in Ephesians 2 that, specifically here, the Gentiles were "far off" implies the need to return. How could they come back to God? Paul stresses the fact that Christ's blood was the only means whereby reconciliation could be made. Thus, Paul penned the glorious fact that Christ " made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself" (Colossians 1:20). As if an inseparable gulf was crossed by Adam and Eve through their sinning at Eden, that gap of sin separated man from God (cf. Isaiah 59:1,2; Note: This is not to suggest that all inherit Adam's sin– the false idea of Hereditary Depravity – but rather that through Adam sin entered the world, Romans 5:17, and, consequently, all have sinned, Romans 3:23). Not with acts of goodness or meritorious works could man ever earn his salvation (Titus 3:5). Yet, there are conditions that God expects man to meet in order to have past sins forgiven and the restoration of a right relationship with the Father (Titus 2:12; Hebrews 5:9; Ephesians 2:8). By shedding His blood, Christ paved a road of return (i.e., the "narrow road" of Matthew 7:13,14) to take us back to God. There was no access before and without Him and after sin was in the world (cf. 1 Timothy 2:5; John 14:6). How did Christ effect this return with His blood?

He took the first, old covenant God made with Moses and Israel out of the way by dying on the cross (Ephesians 2:12,14-15). He placed all believers in the faith into one body [the church](Ephesians 2:14,15,16; 4:4). He provided the message of reconciliation in commissioning the preached word to all men (Ephesians 2:17; Acts 1:8). He opened the avenue of prayer by His death on the cross, encouraging petitioning the Father to enhance our relationship with Him (Ephesians 2:18). He sets

aside a place in the Kingdom [the church] for all the faithful obedient into which all spiritual blessings flow (Ephesians 2:19-22; 1:3; Matthew 16:18-19). To all who obey the commandments of God relative to entrance into His church, reconciliation and return to God are provided.

The Blood Of Christ Brings Remembrance (1 Corinthians 10:16)

As Eden shows the importance God stressed in mankind before the cross to anticipate that great event, this verse shows the importance God stresses in mankind after the cross remembering it. Those washed in the blood of Christ, contacted in baptism, are added to the church (Acts 2:41-47). Therein, those added [Christians] are governed by the Word of God in worship and conduct. A vital part of New Testament worship is the weekly participation in the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7). Why has God authorized that Christians do so, and with such frequency?

The answer is "communion." In connection with the Lord's Supper, this word is translated "communion" only once in the New Testament. Yet, the original word from which it is translated is koininia, among the most recognized of all Greek words even among those who have little knowledge of that language. Most often, koininia is translated "fellowship." "Fellowship" is also employed by the inspired New Testament writers to make reference to the "Memorial Feast." The apostles and early Christians continued steadfastly in the fellowship of the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42). The fellowship of the Lord's Supper was not to be defiled by the presence of idolatry at Corinth (1 Corinthians 10:20), but rather the communion was to be exclusively with the Lord.

In 1 Corinthians 10:16, Paul stresses that there is communion. That fellowship is with the blood of Christ, which suggests a multitude of things. First, the blood of Christ places one into the one body (the church– Colossians 1:18)(Acts 20:28).

Therefore, the fellowship of the Lord's Supper involves corporate (collective) activity. Together, children of God are drawn closer to one another remembering the Savior whose blood purchased them from sin. This communion, then, is a means of expressing encouragement and thanksgiving together as the redeemed. The Lord's Supper cannot, then, have significance to those not members of the body as there is no celebration and fellowship with Christians. Also, the Lord's Supper provides a communion between the individual Christian and his Lord. Thus, Paul instructs each to "examine himself" (1 Corinthians 11:28). None other can obey the command of self-examination and remembrance for another in the Lord's Supper or in any spiritual matter. Yet, the Lord's Supper is special because of both the sharing with others and the individual responsibility. As an institution, the Lord's Supper is, in both regards, a crucial means whereby Christians remember the sacrifice, suffering, and death of Christ in shedding His blood on the tree.

The blood of Christ purchased man's pardon (1 Peter 1:19). The blood of Christ purges man's conscience (Hebrews 9:14). The blood of Christ propels man closer to God (Ephesians 2:13). The blood of Christ provides recollection of atonement (1 Corinthians 10:16). His blood was important in prophesy (Isaiah 53:3-5). His blood was important in physicality (John 19:34). His blood is important in perusal (Matthew 26:28; 1 Corinthians 11:28).

Lord’s Supper

By H. A. (Buster) Dobbs

I. Introduction.

A. “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and
brake it; and he gave to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took a cup, and gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins. But I say unto you, I shall not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matt. 26:26-29).

B. The Lord’s Supper was instituted during a Passover Feast.

1. Passover was observed with unleavened bread.

(a) “Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel” (Exodus 12:15).

2. The juice of the grape, or fruit of the vine, was also on the Passover table.

(a) “But I say unto you, I shall not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matt. 26:29).

3. The bread represents the body of Jesus; the grape juice represents his blood.

(a) It is basic to understanding language to regard every statement as literal unless the context requires a figurative application.

(b) Jesus said many things that are figurative: “I am the door…I am the vine…I am the bread of life…I am the water of life.”

(c) When Jesus said of the cup containing the fruit of the vine, “this is my blood of the covenant,” and when

he said of the bread, “this is my body,” he obviously did not mean literal blood and literal flesh. He was present with them in the flesh. They had to understand he was saying the bread is symbolic of my body, the fruit of the vine is symbolic of my blood.

II. Essentials of the Lord’s Supper.

A. The time of observance.

1. First century disciples assembled regularly on the first day of the week to worship.

(a) “Not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh” (Heb. 10:25).

(b) “Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come” (1 Cor. 16:2).

(c) “And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, intending to depart on the morrow; and prolonged his speech until midnight” (Acts 20:7).

2. Since the first day of the week is the day of worship, and since the Lord’s Supper is a part of worship, it follows that the Lord’s Supper is to be observed on the first day of the week. Acts 20:7 shows this was the practice of the early church.

B. Who may partake?

1. “For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me. In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord’s death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be

guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup. For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself, if he discern not the body" (1 Cor. 11:26-29).
(a) Each person is to examine or prove himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.
(b) The fruit of the vine or the cup is Jesus' blood of the covenant. A person who is not in a covenant relationship with Jesus is not a proper candidate to partake of the cup or eat the bread.
2. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ? seeing that we, who are many, are one bread, one body: for we are all partake of the one bread"
(1 Cor. 10:16-17).
(a) No person can discern the body of Jesus who has not obeyed the conditions of pardon given in the New Testament.
3. To discern the body and blood of Jesus and, therefore, to partake in a worthy manner, one must have the right attitude toward the supper. A part of that attitude is to know ourselves to be unworthy; only then can we partake in a worthy manner.
4. Still, each person is to prove himself, and then eat and drink.
C. The communion is not the most important part of the worship (one of God's commands is not more important than another) but it is the centerpiece of our worship.
1. In all worship we must have proper feelings of piety and devotion.

NOTES ON AUTHORITY

By Dub McClish
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A necessary question is, What is Scriptural authority? Sometimes people who ask this mean, where is this or that specifically mentioned in the Bible as approved of God?

The truth is some things are authorized by the New Testament that are not specifically named. This brings up the subject of the two kinds of authorization found in the New Testament.

First: specific authorization is a given practice named with God's approval. Many examples can be cited, such as going into all the world with the gospel (Mark 16:16), assembling each first day of the week to partake of the Lord's supper (Acts 20:7), and baptizing people in the name of Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

Second: authorization permitting the use of arrangements not specifically mentioned in the Bible. For example automobiles are not mentioned in Mark 16:16, but are authorized in obeying the command to go into all the world with the Gospel? A plate is not mentioned for serving the bread of the Lord's supper, but is it allowable?

For a thing to be generally authorized there must be behind it the implementing of some specific command. A thing resting upon generic authority must not conflict with any other precept of Scripture. Using a car to preach the Gospel is scriptural, but one may not steal a car in order to preach the gospel.

Building a church building rests upon generic authority and not specific authority. The command to assemble (Heb. 10:25) implies a place to assemble, whether borrowed, rented, or purchased.

Many things about a church building fall in the realm of generic authority. Restrooms, water fountains, carpet on the floor, padding on the pews, ceiling fans and other things fall into this category.

The use to which property of a local church can be put is in this realm. Who is to decide such matters? The obvious answer is the elders. Elders have oversight of every optional part of the work and activity of the local congregation (Heb. 13:17).

Elder's authority does not extend to releasing what Christ has bound or binding what He has released (Matt. 16:19-20). The Lord has made all the spiritual law men need (2 Tim. 2:15), and He has left it with us in His "perfect law of liberty" to implement his teaching.

Elders, like every child of God, must protect against false teachers, and keep the church faithful to the law of Christ (Acts 20:28-30). Elders have oversight of the policy and programs of the local church. They determine what will be done in matters of generic authority.

Electricity and plumbing in the building; eating a meal on the church premises; whether one or more gospel meetings per year; whether to have a lecture- ship every year and what subjects to study, and the speakers; whether to publish a book and audio and video tapes with which to preserve the messages for further reflection and wider distribution all fall into this category—all are matters of general authority, but authority nonetheless.

The specific authority for a lectureship, publication of a book, and tape recordings of the messages are found in the command to preach the Gospel to the whole creation (Mark 16:16). If such lectureships have solid authority, and if the reproduction of the messages by print and tape rests upon solid authority, then it must follow that distribution of said materials also rests upon solid authority.

If it is right to produce such materials for the Gospel on church property, is it right to sell such, for a fair price, on the same property?

The same general authority authorizing a church building, water, electricity, and gas, authorize the making and distribution of sound Gospel materials for the information of saints. Is the church supporting private business when the plumbing fails, and the plumber makes repairs for which the church pays? A plumber is not expected to clean out the sewer lines for nothing!

Some think a thing is all right as long as it is small, but when it is big it is wrong. Question: how big is big, and by whose judgment? Such a person is a law maker for God!

Another point relating to littleness/bigness. Neither size nor quantity has anything to do with the rightness or wrongness of a matter of judgment. If it is not wrong for an eldership to decide to install a refrigerated drinking fountain in the church building, then it is not wrong to install a refrigerator in a church building. The size of the thing has nothing to do with it! If it is wrong for people to eat bread and fish in the church building, then it is wrong for the church to install a drinking fountain. Conversely, if it is right to install a drinking fountain, it is right to eat bread and fish (or even chicken) in the church building.

SALVATION IS BY GRACE BUT NOT BY GRACE ONLY

by Thomas B. Warren
Vol. 106, No 05

There is an enormous difference between affirming (1) that salvation is by grace and (2) that salvation is by grace only. The difference is of great importance.

Recently, I saw an article written by a brother in Christ which alleges that it "is a scandalous and outrageous lie to teach that salvation arises from human activity. We do not contribute one whit to our salvation." (Rubel Shelly, *"Love Lines,"* October 31, 1990; Woodmont Hills Bulletin, Nashville. p. 3.)

It is quite serious to charge brethren with lying.

These statements remind me of the booklet (Sam Morris, *Do A Christian's Sins Damn His Soul?* [Sic] [No publisher or date indicated], pp. 1-2, written by a Baptist preacher) which affirms that all of the deeds which one may do in obedience to the Gospel of Christ "will not make his soul one whit safer." In so saying, he taught that loving obedience to Jesus Christ has nothing whatever to do with his becoming a Christian or, finally, with his going to Heaven when Jesus comes again to judge the world.

In regard to the sins which one may commit, the same booklet teaches that "all the sins he may commit from idolatry to murder will not make his soul in any more danger. The justification of the human soul is through the atonement of Christ and not through the efforts of man. **The way a man lives has nothing whatever to do with the salvation of his soul"** (emphasis mine. TBW).

Let us compare these two statements.

The Baptist said: "The way a man lives has nothing whatever to do with the salvation of his soul."

Our brother said: "We do not contribute one whit to our salvation" and that it is an "outrageous lie to teach that salvation arises from human activity."

How do the statements compare? Is there a significant difference between them? I aver that there is not.

They both teach salvation by grace only.

Our brother taught that it is an outrageous lie to teach that salvation "arises from human activity."

The Baptist also taught that the way a man lives (this would include all of his thoughts and deeds) has nothing whatever to do with his salvation. So, this is a clear affirmation that after the moment when one believes in Christ. there is nothing he can do which would result in his eternal damnation. I even heard one Baptist preacher say. "Since I trusted Jesus as my personal Savior, I could not go to Hell even if I wanted to!" Also, during debates, I have heard Baptist preachers argue that John 6:28-29 teaches, not that man must do the believing, but that God does the believing for him.

Our brother eliminates all human activity from salvation. If he were right, then every human being will be saved, because God's grace is offered to all men (Titus 2:11)! So, if this false doctrine really were true, then there would be no need for the preaching of the Gospel (all men would be saved without it, without ever hearing it, without ever believing it, without ever obeying it) either to become a Christian or in the living of the Christian life. May it be remembered, that the brother whom we are reviewing also taught that "good works are the fruit of salvation." Given this doctrine, the things we do in becoming a Christian are not "good works." This he teaches in spite of such passages as James 2:24-26.

In contradiction to our brother's positions, the New Testament conditions both becoming a Christian and living a life which will result in eternal salvation on certain specified things. The Holy Spirit, in inspiring the writing of the New Testament, put the little word "if" before quite a number of conditions. Following are just a few of such passages: (1)

Galatians 6:7-9: "… in due season we shall reap IF we faint not" (Gal. 6:7-9); (2) Hebrews 10:26: "For IF we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins" [emphases mine in the two preceding points]; (3) Galatians 1:6-9 clearly teaches that if any one preaches a gospel which is different from that of Christ, he will be under the curse of God.

There are many other passages which use "if" in this fashion. May all people be warned that there are works (acts of obedience which are required by Christ in the Gospel) which one must do in order to become a Christian. Also, there are works which one must do in order to go to Heaven when this life is over.

I want to lovingly affirm without reservation that no one can be saved without the grace of God—no one can earn his salvation. Every person who is saved is saved by grace! But—note this please—no one is saved by grace only! People are saved by the grace of God when by faith they obey the relevant instructions of Christ, who taught that only those who do the will of the Father will enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 7:21). Our brother contradicts Jesus, His Apostles, and His prophets.

It should be clear that while the works of man cannot earn the forgiving of even one sin, it is nevertheless the case that salvation by the grace of God is contingent on man's faith in, and obedience to, the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 5:8-9).

James 2:24-26 and Revelation 2:10, among many other passages, ought to settle it for all of us: (1) those who live and die in faithfulness to the Gospel of Christ will be saved eternally and (2) those who live and die in unfaithfulness to the Gospel of Christ will be lost eternally (cf., James 2:24-26; Matt. 25:46).

One is saved by grace but faith also has a part (Eph. 2:8-9).

But Christ says, through His word, that men are saved by works and not by faith only (James 2:24-26).

The seed of God (His word) must be both believed and obeyed (Luke 8:4-15). Each person is free either to stay in the "mudhole" of sin or, by faith and obedience, to get out of the "mudhole" of sin (2 Peter 2:20-22).

Again, I kindly suggest, that ought to settle the matter for all of us.