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FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE IN THE PSALMS

D. Gene West

One can say, without too much fear of contradiction, that every time the triplet gifts of faith, hope, and love are mentioned the minds of biblically educated hearers will immediately focus on 1 Corinthians 13:13, in which Paul stated that the greatest of all the gifts given to the apostolic church were faith, hope, and love. Paul called these gifts, “abiding” ones meaning that so long as Christianity would endure upon the earth these wonderful gifts would remain alive and well in the church. Many and long have been the sermons by Gospel preachers down through the ages on these great virtues, and millions of people have benefited by having their minds recalled to the spiritual value of faith, hope, and love.

Today, by appealing to the great Book of Psalms, we wish to demonstrate that these virtues existed in the mind of God, and in the heart of man, long before Paul ever wrote the first letter to the church at Corinth, and have been a part of the plan of God for man since even before He gave the foundational command that we should love Him in Deuteronomy 6:4-5. So, let us, at this time turn our attention to the Book of Psalms, an often neglected book when we study the Word of God.

It may surprise the average person to learn that the word *faith* does not occur in the Book of Psalms at all! However, there is another word that is a synonym of faith that is found in the book at least fifty times, and that word is *trust*. This word comes from five Hebrew words, four of which involve having confidence in God, or in His law, trusting God, hoping in God, making God one’s refuge, and

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to be secure in God. The fifth word means to select a well fortified place, and that too can involve trusting in God.

Unfortunately, we do not often think of the Old Testament concept of *trusting* God to be an equivalent to what the New Testament calls *faith*, but when you study the words, and their meanings in the Bible one soon learns that both mean virtually the same thing. When one trusts in God, as that word is used, especially in the Old Testament Book of Psalms, he has a deep and abiding faith, that is, confidence, hope, and security in the God of this universe. Essentially there is no difference between the concept of trust, as it is used in the Psalms, and the concept of faith as Paul used it in the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians.

As we study the concept of *trust* in the Book of Psalms, we find firstly, that it is *IN* God Who is our refuge and strength. There is no other being in all the universe in Whom we can trust as we can trust in the Lord, because in Him “there is no variation neither shadow of turning about,” as our Lord’s half brother put it in James 1:17. When it comes to salvation, God is our well fortified place, He is the One in whom we can, and must, have confidence, He is the One in whom we hope, and the One who gives us the security we need to make our journey from earth to heaven by way of the ordered and obedient life found in Jesus Christ. To place our trust in God means that we must know that He exists, and the evidence for the existence of God is liberally scattered throughout other portions of the Old Testament, as well as in the Book of Psalms. But since we are not arguing the case for the existence of God, we shall begin to look at some of the aspects of trust, or faith, in God as it is set forth in six or seven of the Psalms.

The first thing to which we give our attention is that trust in God should be something that we need from our youth. After praying to God to deliver him from the hands of the wicked, the unrighteous, and cruel man, the Psalmist gave the reason that he believed that God could do so by

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pointing out *For You are my hope, O Lord God; You are my trust from my youth.* This trust is upheld because the Psalmist states that it was God who separated him from his mother's womb, and that he would praise the God of his salvation continually. (See: V. 6) This psalm, as would be seen if we were to carefully exegete the whole thing, is a psalm of old age, and we have an old man, as is seen in verse nine, who begs for God to keep him through his old age and into the life eternal. The psalmist, probably David, expects God to continue to love and protect him through life just as he has done since he began to trust Him even as a very young man. God had never failed this psalmist, and near the sunset of life the psalmist gives the reason why God would never fail him. They had been friends throughout life and one always trusts his friends, especially the divine Friend.

It seems to this student of the Word of God that from youth, as was the case with Eunice, Lois, and Timothy, we must teach our young people to trust God to care for them and to look after them at all times, and point out to them continually that God has done that from the time that he separated them from the wombs of their mothers. We should, as Jesus did in his famous Sermon on the Mount, point out to our youth that they are under the careful and loving eye of the Father in heaven Who looks after the flowers of the field and the birds of the air, and that if God does that He will surely look after the crown jewel of His creation known as man. In the world in which we live, we are taught to trust in, depend on, everything but the faithfulness of God. We are taught to trust in self, in abilities, in education, in governments, in wealth and prestige. But do we teach ourselves and our youth to trust in God in the way in which the proverbist put it in Proverbs 3:5-6, when he said, *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways*

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acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. We cannot expect others around us, including our children, and grandchildren to have this kind of faith in God, which will cause us to lean upon him continually, unless we demonstrate that same kind of faith in our own lives.

Still another thing we can learn about the trust we are to have in God is that it draws us nearer and nearer to God even while we live upon this earth. In Psalm 73:28, again, presumably David, said, *But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all Your works.* Broadly, we may outline this Psalm as being one which contains the story of bitterness and despair, and it contains the same kinds of questions that were upon the heart of Job, questions that are from man's point of view unanswerable. Though the psalmist had not found the answers to the difficult questions of life, he knows that there is an answer and that God has it, and so he said that it was **good**, that is, it was that which would cause rejoicing, for him to draw near to God. This drawing near was accomplished by the ancient bard by his putting his **trust** in the Almighty One. He had no reason to believe that God would in any way desert him simply because he, the psalmist, did not have all the answers to all the questions of life. Rather than walking away from God disappointed, and feeling that God had let him down he would put his trust in God, and furthermore he would declare the works of God to the world.

If we trust the Lord with all our hearts, we do not need to answer every question that man can propose. If we could find answers to all the questions of life in our own minds and hearts then we would lean on our own understanding rather than walking in a trusting relationship with God. This is essentially that of which Paul spoke in his discourse on death and the resurrection when he said, *For we walk by faith, not by sight,* in 2 Corinthians 5:7. Essentially, God

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said to Job, You do not need to know all the answers to all the questions. Trust Me. The psalmist, in the poem we are discussing, is saying that it is better to trust God, to rely upon Him than to walk by our own wisdom, and really that is what faith is!

The next Psalm to which we turn to learn something important about putting faith in God, that is, trusting Him with our very souls is Psalm 118:8-9. This is a psalm of praise, and tells of God's enduring mercy upon the nation of Israel, and how when Israel called upon God in a time of distress, God answered his plea and set him in broad places, and since he had done that this nation would know that the Lord was on their side, and they need not fear what man could do to them. Since the Lord was among his people, they need not fear those who would bring harm upon them. In verses eight and nine, the psalmist makes a statement of great truth when he said, *It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.*

Some have learned from observation, and others by experience that man will let you down. Often they do not mean to do this, as a matter of fact, most of the time it is probably true that man, including princes, do not make it a goal in life to hurt their friends. But they do! This may be done in many ways, such as, being inattentive in times of great duress, being unconscious of the special needs of a friend on certain occasions, or their being put between a rock and a hard place, and in an effort to salvage a part of their own lives, they will hurt, betray, or otherwise harm a friend. There is a truth often expressed that if we put absolute confidence in another human being, we are looking to receive absolute pain, and there is a great amount of truth in that concept. However, this is never true of God. David declared in Psalm 37:25, *I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken,*

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nor his descendants begging bread. From experience, as well as by inspiration, David had learned that the God of our universe does not let His people down. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that we place our trust in God, and not in man.

We do not mean to imply by this that we should never place our confidence and trust in brethren, but we cannot do that exclusively so far as the things of this life are concerned, and we can certainly never do that so far as our salvation is concerned. This is no doubt a part of the reason that Paul advised the Philippian Christians as he did in the following words: *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.* (Philippians 2:12-13) For the making of the paramount decisions in life, and for the salvation of our souls, let us trust in the Lord and not in men even though they are princes.

Since trusting God is spoken of some fifty times in the Book of Psalms we could go on and on drawing rich and rewarding lessons from the great hymn book of the Old Testament, but we still have two other gifts to consider. These are **hope** and **love**, and so let us turn our attention to **hope** next. The concept of **hope**, which may be defined as desire plus expectation with anticipation, is found some twenty-two times in the Book of Psalms. Since it is obvious that we cannot study all these we are going to select, as we did in the case of trust, some that we feel will be very beneficial, and devote our attention to these.

The concept of **hope** with which we wish to deal today is that **hope**, like **trust**, cannot be separated from the Word of God, and to show that we shall appeal to that great hymn of praise to the Word of God, namely Psalm 119. In Psalm 119:49-50, the psalmist said, *Remember the word to Your*

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servant, upon which You have caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your word has given me life. Hope, comfort in affliction, indeed spiritual life had been given to the great psalmist by the Word of God. What he called the Word of God was, of course, that portion of the Bible that we know as the Old Testament, but even here he found hope for this portion of the Word of God spoke of a coming Savior who would redeem all from their sins. Many of these prophecies are found in the Book of Psalms. God had caused the author of this magnificent psalm to have hope based upon the Word spoken and revealed to him. This is the only way one can find hope, for it is in the Word of God those things are revealed that give us hope.

In verse eighty-one of the psalm the author said, *My soul faints for Your salvation, but I hope in Your word.* The author said that his soul “wasted away,” or “pined” for the salvation of God, but the salvation which he desired was only a promise in the law under which he lived. However, since the Word of God promised that this salvation would one day come, the psalmist found hope in the promises of that Word. We, like the psalmist, have never seen the things that are promised to us by God that are in our future after death, but we can see them by the eye of faith, and through the great quality of hope we can see ourselves wearing glorified bodies like that of our Lord. (1 John 3:1-3) In the church upon the earth we have some insights as to that which awaits beyond death, such as the extension of eternal life, looking upon the glory of God, seeing Jesus who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross despising the shame and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, but our hope for these things is sustained by the Word of the living God.

We have the salvation in Christ which was promised by the prophecies of the Old Testament, and so our hope is sustained not only by the New Testament portion of the

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Word, but by the Old Testament portion as well. And so it is, that our hope of eternal life with our Lord is based upon the Word of God from Genesis 12:1-3 on down to the Book of Revelation.

In verse one hundred fourteen, the psalmist continued the theme of hope being built on the Word of God when he said, *You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Your word.* Hope that is not tied directly to the Word of God is not hope at all, but wishful thinking, and there is a vast difference in those two things. In Psalm 46:1, the writer said, *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble,* and in the verse we are now considering from Psalm 119 a very similar truth is being taught. It is to God that we go for refuge, strength, it is in God that we find our hiding place in times of distress, and it is behind the strength of God, which is our shield, that we find security in times of testing. But how do we know all this? We know it from the Word of God, and even from this Psalm itself which so forcefully declares this truth. Therefore, the Word of God gives us hope, no matter what the circumstances of life are, and with that hope anchored deep in our hearts we can live under any circumstance that may find us in life. The early saints of God surely proved that this is the case because they lived under the most severe persecution that the church has ever seen, and yet they hoped in Christ. God ultimately was their hiding place and shield, though many thousands died the death of martyrs.

The final verse at which we shall look today is Psalm 119:116. Here the psalmist said, *Uphold me according to Your word, that I may live; and do not let me be ashamed of my hope.* If David is the author of this Psalm, his hope was plainly declared in 2 Samuel 12:22-23, when speaking of his dead son who was conceived as a result of his sin with Bathsheba, David said, *While the child was still alive,*

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I fasted and wept; for I said, Who can tell whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child might live? But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. He, in the aforementioned verse, is asking God to uphold him according to His promise that he should live, (I understand this to mean eternally and not just physically.) and by receiving this gift from God, he would never be ashamed of the hope that he had in Him. Like the author of this psalm, we should never be ashamed of the hope that we have in God and in Christ, for our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. From time to time our hope may be pounded on severely, but we must never allow anything in this world make us ashamed of the hope that we have in Christ Jesus.

But let us now turn to the concept of love as it is found in the Psalms. It is found twenty-two times in the Book of Psalms, nine times in the 119th Psalm it refers to a love that the writer had for the law, the commandments, the testimonies, and the statutes of God. The word that is used in 1 Corinthians 13:13 is from the Greek verb "agapao," and refers to a sense of good will, benevolence, beneficence, and an undaunted desire to do good for those around us. In the Psalms, indeed in the Old Testament, there is no exact equivalent to this word, but the Hebrew word "racham" would come closest since it means to have a compassionate love for, or to show mercy toward. This word is found only once in the Book of Psalms and that is in number eighteen, verses one and two, which say, *I will love You, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.* Notice, if you will please that the Psalmist combined both love, that is, a compassionate feeling for, and trust, or what in the New Testament is called faith here.

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He declared his love for God and recognized Him as his rock, fortress, deliverer, strength, shield, horn of his salvation, and stronghold, which is probably another expression of the concept of a fortress. Because God was all these things to the author of this Psalm, he will declare two things for God. (1) His love for God, that is, a compassionate, abiding, and undying love, and (2) his trust, confidence, faith in the God whom he loves. There are three concepts which are always tied together in Scripture regarding man's involvement with God. The One who draws our love is the One in whom we trust, and conversely, the One who holds our trust, that is, faith is the One we love. The One in whom our trust dwells, and the One who draws our love is the One to whom we are willingly obedient. There is no way to separate any one of the points of this triangle from the others. There is no such thing as loving God and not trusting Him, and there is no such thing as loving and trusting God and failing to be obedient to him. These things go together like love and marriage! If love and trust make up the marriage, then obedience is the child which it produces.

In the 3rd verse, the love of the Psalmist for *Yahweh* caused him to declare that he would call upon the Lord, that is, he would praise, honor, and adore God because this God is worthy (the word "worthy" comes from the Hebrew "eesh," which means to deserve to be honored because of virtue) of that praise. Many gods existed in ancient times, but only this God, *Yahweh*, deserved the honor, praise and adoration of man because of His virtue, that is, His purity, divinity and power. How could it be possible not to love such a God? Would it be possible, once one has come to know Him, to refuse Him the praise, honor, and glory that He deserves. God has always loved man with a kindness, benevolence, and beneficent nature that defies description, and in the Christian era of time, we are able to reciprocate

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with that kind of love, even as the Psalmist came very near it in the long ago. And if we love God, we love His Word, we delight in doing His will, and find great joy in His service and in the worshiping of His majestic person. For those of us who live in the Christian era, we have the full revelation of the God and His love demonstrated in the atoning death of Jesus upon the cross, and if anything our abiding love for God should be greater, purer, and more powerful than that of the Psalmist who sang of his love for God so many, many years ago.

In conclusion, we can only say, To God be the glory because we can trust in Him without reservation, we can hope in Him without fear, and we can love Him without limit. Having the ability to look upon all the reasons we should abide in faith, hope, and love for our divine *Elohim*, we say:

To God Be the Glory

To God be the glory, great things He hath done;
So loved he the world that He gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
And opened the life-gate that all may go in.

Great things He hath taught us, great things He
hath done,
And great our rejoicing thro' Jesus the Son;
But purer, and higher, and greater will be
Our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear
his voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father, thro' Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory, great things He hath done.

Fanny J. Crosby

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

D. Gene West was born in Chester, WV and received his early education in the Hancock County Public Schools. He obeyed the Gospel April 11, 1950, and was baptized into Christ by the late Jess W. Nutter. He attended Freed-Hardeman College (University) and received the A.A. degree in Religious Education. He also attended West Liberty State College and received the A.B. (Liberal Arts) degree in Philosophy, Religion, Spanish, and Speech. Later he attended Fairmont State College and received the B.S. in Community Psychology.

On August 5, 1957 he and Shirley Ann Bissett of New Freeport, PA were joined in marriage by brother Jess W. Nutter at Hundred, WV. They are the parents of three children, Kandi Davis of Canal Winchester, Ohio, Mary Amy Kessinger of St. Marys, WV, and Todd West of Morgantown, WV. They have six grandchildren, Nathan, Jacob, Rebekah, and Aaron Davis, and Daniel James (D. J.) and Thomas Kessinger.

Brother West has worked with seven congregations of the Lord's church in three states. He began at Hundred, WV, then to Martins Ferry, Ohio. From there the Wests moved to Kissimmee, Florida, then back to the Hillview Terrace church in Moundsville, WV. They moved to the Grand Central Avenue church in Vienna, WV, and from there to Oakwood Road in Fairmont, WV. In 1990 they moved to the Steelton church in New Martinsville. In addition to serving these churches brother West also taught five years at Ohio Valley College, and owned and edited **BIBLE HERALD**, a Gospel journal in the area. He has also taught for the last six years, and continues to teach, in the West Virginia School of Preaching in Moundsville, WV.

FAITH AND EVIDENCE

Charles C. Pugh

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). This is the only verse in the Bible in which the words *faith* and *evidence* appear together. However, as we will observe in this study, there is a sense in which evidence is implied every time the Scriptures refer to acceptable faith.

Faith is the *substance* (*assurance*, ASV) of things hoped for. *Substance* is from the Greek, *hupostasis*. It means “the whole body of documents bearing on the ownership of a person’s property, deposited in the archives, and forming the evidence of ownership . . . In all cases there is the same central idea of something that underlies visible conditions and guarantees a future possession . . . Faith is the title-deed of things hoped for.”¹

Faith is the *evidence* (*conviction*, ASV) of things not seen. The word *evidence*, is from *elenchos* (GK.) and was used to refer to the proof or evidence, used to substantiate a lawsuit in a court.² It means “a proof; that by which a things is proved or tested.”³ The verb, *elencho*, means “to give evidence in a matter . . . supply the proofs . . . make an inquiry and state the facts.”⁴ It would be obvious to everyone who studies these matters that it is the case that there is a conjunction between Biblical faith and evidence. In this study we will consider three areas which can help us in understanding this relationship between faith and evidence. These are (1) a law which implies the

1 Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary Of The Greek New Testament*, 660.

2 Moulton and Milligan, 222.

3 Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament*, 202.

4 Moulton and Milligan, 202.

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conjunction of faith and evidence, (2) a leap which denies the conjunction of faith and evidence, and (3) a lesson which applies the conjunction of faith and evidence.

A LAW

The law of rationality says that one should draw only such conclusions as are warranted by the evidence. Another way of saying this is that we ought to justify our conclusions by adequate evidence. The truth of the law of rationality is seen in the fact that the moment one asks, "how can I be sure it is true" he proves its truth. He simply is asking for the sufficient evidence which proves the law is true. To put it another way, one who inquires as to the truth of the law of rationality is seeking the adequate evidence which proves that it is the case that one ought to justify his conclusions by adequate evidence! Thus, the law of rationality is seen to be true on the very face of it. One could not even attempt to disprove it (i.e., setting forth evidence to negate it) without proving it.

Thompson has stated, "By *evidence* we mean what the term literally suggest, that which 'shows' or 'exhibits' or 'brings into view.' The evidence shows or brings into view the basis upon which the claim of truth rests."⁵ In a logical context, evidence consists of statements called *premises* which imply the statement (proposition) which is believed to be true. For example, if X implies Y, then we can believe Y is true because of the evidence (X).

To be rational simply means that one honors the law of rationality (i.e., he draws only such conclusions as are warranted by the evidence). The Bible teaches (1) the law of rationality is true and (2) all men ought to honor this law. Isaiah wrote, "'Prepare your case,' says the Lord. 'Bring forth your strong reasons, says the King of Jacob.'"

⁵ Samuel Thompson, *A Modern Philosophy Of Religion*, 44.

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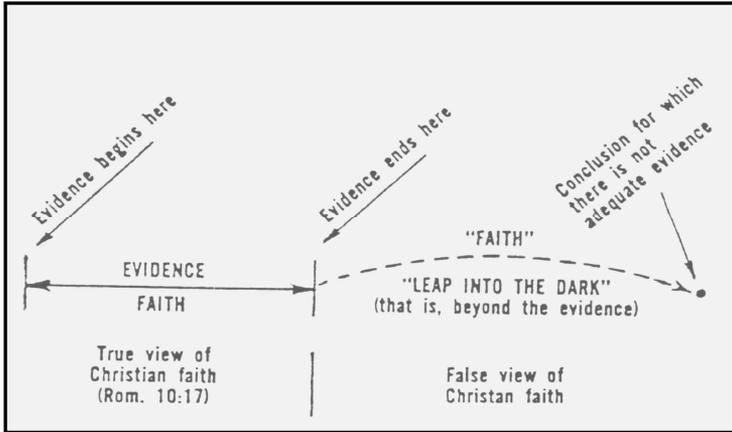
(Isa. 41:21). Paul wrote, “Prove all things . . .” (1 Thess. 5:21). John stated, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). When Paul made his defense before Agrippa, he (Paul) was interrupted by Festus who had succeeded Felix as governor in Judea (Acts 24:27). During Paul’s speech Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!” (Acts 26:24). Paul answered, “I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason” (Acts 26:25). The word *reason* here is from the Greek word *sophrosyne* which means “what is intellectually sound.”⁶ The footnote on Acts 26:25 in the NASV states: “Lit. of truth and rationality.” The apostle Paul affirmed that his faith in Jesus Christ was rational (i.e., Christian faith honors the law of rationality which demands that we justify our conclusions by adequate evidence).

A LEAP

Although it is the case that the Bible teaches Christian faith is rational, and God does not ask us to believe anything for which He does not give us sufficient evidence, some today affirm that faith is irrational. They hold that Christian faith must involve the espousal of some inadequately supported conclusion by a “leap into the dark” beyond the available and relevant evidence. The following diagram contrasts the true view of Christian faith as set forth in the Sacred Scriptures with the false view which claims faith is some “leap into the dark.”

⁶ *Theological Dictionary Of The New Testament*, VII, 1097.

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[Warren, Thomas B. *Logic And The Bible*, 15.]

The Bible teaches that faith comes from the sufficient evidence provided by the word of God (Rom. 10:17). To claim that faith is a “leap into the dark” beyond the evidence is to espouse irrationalism which implies agnosticism which implies that, for all we know, Christian faith may not be true. This is not to say that one understands, or fully comprehends, all the details of the basic propositions of the Christian faith (i.e., God exists, the Bible is the word of God, Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and to be saved one must believe in love and obey Jesus Christ). However, it is to say that God has provided sufficient revelation (evidence) for believing and knowing that Christianity is the one, true religion. There are sufficient reasons for being a Christian (cf. 1 Pet. 3:15). As Sweet has stated:

The logical result of discrediting or depreciating human reason is agnosticism, which is a state of mind wherein the power of evidence is lost because of a fixed belief in the infirmity of the human mind as the organ of divine knowledge. The false and artificial antithesis which has often

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been established between reason and revelation spells ruin to the task of the apologist. Reason becomes a blind faculty which tells us nothing about God. Revelation becomes a sphere of extra-rational beliefs indistinguishable from superstition. Faith becomes an asylum for the feeble-minded. Christianity becomes a mode of interpreting the unknown, the truth of which it is impossible to establish on any recognizable rational grounds.⁷

Where there is no revelation (evidence) from God there can be no true faith in God. No word of God equals no faith in God (Rom. 10:17). God has spoken through two basic sources (volumes) or revelation: (1) General revelation and (2) Special revelation. General revelation includes evidence He has set forth in (1) the world and (2) man. Special revelation includes evidence set forth in (1) the Bible and (2) the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. The Bible implies the value, and adequacy, of general revelation to provide sufficient evidence to produce faith in the existence of God (Ps. 19:1-6; Acts 14:17; Rom. 1:20; Heb. 3:4, et al). The Bible also implies the necessity, and adequacy, of the special revelation which is set forth in the Sacred Scriptures as sufficient evidence to produce faith in, and obedience to, Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 3:14-17; 1 Cor. 2:7-14; John 20:30-31; 2 Pet. 1:16-21, et al). Christian faith is not a “leap into the dark,” but it is a walk in the light provided by the sufficient evidence of God’s revelation (1 John 1:1-7).

A LESSON

A lesson in John 20:24-31 applies the conjunction of faith and evidence. Thomas was not with the other apostles

⁷ Louis Matthews, *The Verification Of Christianity*, 16.

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when Jesus made His first appearance to them (John 20:24). The others reported to Thomas that they had seen the Lord but Thomas said, “Unless I see in His hands the prints of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe” (John 20:25). We should not be inclined in the least to criticize the attitude of Thomas. In fact, we should respect and admire the attitude of Thomas. He implied an attitude which said, “Without evidence I will not believe. Give me the evidence, and I will believe.” The Lord came and said to Thomas, “Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing” (John 20:27). The Lord gave Thomas the evidence. Then Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28). When Thomas saw the evidence, he drew the conclusion warranted by the evidence.

Faith does not always mean the absence of sight. Sometimes faith and sight are contrasted (2 Cor. 5:7). However, the incident with regard to Thomas implies there can be faith where there is sight. The Lord said to Thomas, “Because you have seen Me, you have believed . . .” (John 20:29a). What Thomas saw, empirically, did not preclude his believing on Jesus. However, there can also be faith where there is no sight. Jesus also said to Thomas, “. . . Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:20b).

How do those who have not seen come to faith? Jesus said those who have not seen are blessed, because they draw the conclusion warranted by the evidence. It is not that they are blessed because they believe without evidence, but because they believe without sight. Following this statement of our Lord with regard to not seeing and yet believing, John wrote, “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written

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in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31). The very existence of the written revelation presupposes the need for evidence to produce faith.

CONCLUSION

There is an essential conjunction between Biblically approved faith and evidence. The law of rationality implies this conjunction of faith and evidence. Faith is not a “leap into the dark” beyond adequate evidence. The lesson learned from Thomas, as he desired to see the resurrected Lord, before he believed, is that faith and evidence are essentially conjoined.

We must remind ourselves that Christianity claims to be a rational system. It makes much of belief, and emphasizes strongly the necessity of faith as an organ of spiritual vision. As we have seen, however, faith (that is, trust beyond the range of experiment) is an element in all reasoning processes. Christianity admits the unprecedented nature of the events which it alleges in the career of Christ, but maintains that the belief in these events is entirely reasonable because they are supported by many infallible proofs.⁸

The nature of the evidence which produces Christian faith, and the nature of that faith with regard to its credibility and certainty, are well summarized in the inspired words of the sacred historian, Luke, in the marvelous preface to his gospel account:

Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which are most

8 Sweet, *The Verification Of Christianity*, 92.

surely believed among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which we were instructed (Luke 1:1-4).

Biographical Sketch

Charles C. Pugh, III was born in Marietta, Ohio, and grew up in the Parkersburg area. He presently lives in New Martinsville, West Virginia, where he is a member of the Bridge Street Church of Christ. After thirteen years of pulpit preaching with the Bridge Street congregation he was forced, because of a voice problem, to resign from the pulpit work there effective in July of 2000. He is now focusing most of his time and energy in the areas of writing, teaching Apologetics and other classes at the West Virginia School of Preaching and preaching in gospel meetings and lectureships. He continues to assist in the work at Bridge Street as he is able. Charles received his college education at Ohio Valley College, Harding University and his Graduate work is in Apologetics and the Philosophy of Religion from Harding Graduate School of Religion. He and his wife are the parents of two daughters and one son. They also have a granddaughter and a grandson.

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W. Terry Varner

Every religious generation has its doctrinal controversies. Our present age and the church are no exception. This is because religious thought affects the church of our Lord as we exist in the religious world called *Christendom*.

One of the present problems in religious thought is the *inerrancy* of the Scriptures. The term *inerrant* means “free from error or mistake” and the same dictionary¹ considers it a synonym for *infallible* meaning “not liable to deceive, certain.” However, Edward J. Young sets forth in clear terms the difference between the two words: *inerrant* means that “the Scriptures possess the quality of freedom from error”; whereas, *infallible* means that “the Scriptures possess an indefectible authority. As our Lord Himself said ‘it cannot be broken’ (John 10:31). It can never fail in its judgments and statements.”²

It is our purpose to discuss the subject of *inerrancy* and how it relates to the Christian faith as follows: (1) the *Doctrine’s History*, (2) the *Doctrine’s Importance*, and (3) the *Doctrine’s Critics*.

THE DOCTRINE’S HISTORY

In surveying the history of the doctrine of *inerrancy*, we find that the discussion concerning the importance of this topic belong to the modern period of religious thought. The norm of the patristic writers, also known as the early church fathers and who followed the apostles and New Testament period, was to accept the inspiration, authority

1 *Webster’s Third International Dictionary*, II:1156

2 *Thy Word Is Truth*, 113

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and inerrancy of the Scriptures as an assumed and self-evident fact.

For example, Origen (A. D. 185-254) of Alexandria, Egypt, constantly appealed to the Scripture as the final authority in his controversy with Celsus.³ Augustine (A. D. 354-430) of North Africa, in writing in A. D. 405 to Jerome, makes a very clear statement concerning the inerrancy of the Scripture:

For I confess to your Charity that I have learned to yield this respect and honour only to the canonical books of Scripture: of these alone do I most firmly believe that the authors were completely free from error.⁴

Instances such as the above could be multiplied time and again, but these will suffice for our point of emphasis. Let us observe that with Scripture being the final authority in religious controversy among these early writers, the doctrine of inerrancy is implied as inherent in inspiration and authority of the Scriptures.

The medieval or Scholastic period, which followed, had a high regard for the inspiration of the Bible, but produced little or no new development in reference to inerrancy. Students were far more interested “in defining the status the Bible in relation to that of other authorities in the church.”⁵

It was during the Reformation that emphasis was given to the doctrines of inspiration and inerrancy. However, these doctrines did not occupy a large segment in their writings. They realized the importance of inspiration and

3 see, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson [eds.], “Against Celsus,” IV:395-669

4 “Letters,” *Nicene And Post-Nicene Fathers*, Philip Schaff [ed.], I: LXXXII:1, 3

5 Geoffrey W. Bromiley, “Church Doctrine of Inspiration,” *Revelation and the Bible*, Carl F. H. Henry [ed.], 209

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inerrancy in their arguments for biblical authority against the claim for the authority of the Pope and tradition in the Roman Church. So convinced of these truths, the Reformers spent little time in a systematic development and defense of inerrancy. Martin Luther (1483-1546) wrote in clear terms: “I have learned to ascribe this honor; i.e. inerrancy, only to the books which are termed canonical, so that I confidently believe that no one of their authors erred.”⁶ Likewise, John Calvin (1509-1564) referred to the Scripture as the “sure and infallible record.”⁷ Francis Turretin (1623-1687) wrote that God did not allow “the scared writers either to err and to forget, or to introduce into it [the Bible, WTV] irreparable deceit”⁸

It has been within the last two centuries or so that the doctrine of inerrancy was systematically developed. Early on, Rationalism argued that rational fallibility produced the Scriptures and that human reason was infallible in interpretation of the Scripture. Such reasoning involved attacks on both the historicity and authenticity of the content and text of the Scripture. Consequently, the biblical doctrines of inspiration and inerrancy fell under attack. This resulted in a number of able writers expounding and defending the inspiration and *inerrancy* of the Scripture in works that remain classic to this day.

THE DOCTRINE’S IMPORTANCE

Does *inerrancy* matter? Is *inerrancy* much ado about nothing? Is *inerrancy* a necessary element in the inspiration, authority and trustworthiness of the Scriptures? Does *inerrancy* erode the Christian faith, in any manner, if denied? Why we stand where we stand makes all the difference in the world, as we will see.

6 M. Reu, *Luther and the Scriptures*, 24

7 *Commentary on Job*, 744

8 *The Doctrine of Scripture*, 60

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The importance of Biblical inerrancy can be understood in its relationship to divine matters. The Bible teaches inerrancy. Inerrancy is (1) **True**—the idea that the Scriptures affirm some falsehoods must be dismissed as blasphemous nonsense (Psm. 119:160; John 10:41; 1 Thess. 2:13; John 8:32; 17:17). (2). **Clarifies**—by asserting the inspiration, authority, and infallibility of the Scriptures (John 10:31; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 2:13). (3) **Health-giving**—i.e. “sound doctrine” (1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 1:13; 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1)—leads to submission to God’s Word which saves us (John 15:3; Acts 13:26; Eph. 1:13; 2 Thess. 2:10, 13-14). By affirming inerrancy we can be true to the nature of the Biblical records. To affirm otherwise is to twist and distort the Scriptures.

Consider some of the relationships associated with Biblical inerrancy; thereby, understanding the importance of inerrancy.

Inerrancy in relation to the character of God. God is true (John 3:33; 17:3; Rom. 3:4; 1 Thess. 1:9). God is infallible. The Bible is God’s Word. The Word of God is truth (John 17:17). It is the case that the true God is the Originator of the Scriptures. It is the case that if God is the God of truth, then the Scriptures must be wholly truthful or inerrant. What the Scripture says is to be received as the infallible Word of the infallible God.

To assert biblical inerrancy and infallibility is to confess our faith in (1) the divine origin of the Bible and (2) the truthfulness and trustworthiness of God. Benjamin B. Warfield wrote: “Revelation is but half revelation unless it be infallibly communicated; it is but half communicated unless it be infallibly recorded.”⁹ The Bible is from God (2 Tim. 3:16), but God used holy men as they were borne along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 2:21) to reveal His Word. This is what keeps the Bible from error and in harmony

⁹ *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 442

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with God's character, which is error free. An attack on the Bible's inerrancy is an attack on the character of God Who does not lie (Rom. 3:4).

Inerrancy in relation to Jesus. Jesus appealed to the Bible (Old Testament) as an inerrant and infallible authority. In the temptation of Christ by the devil (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-11), Jesus three times appeals to quotations from His favorite Old Testament book, Deuteronomy (8:3; 6:16; 6:13).

In John 10:33-36, Jesus states: "The scripture cannot be broken." These verses (John 10:33-36) involve a quotation from Psalm 82:6. Jesus in essence states that because this portion of the Psalm is a part of Scripture and Scripture cannot be broken, neither can this portion be broken. Note some important matters from this text: (1) He builds His entire argument on the consequent reliability of the Old Testament quotation. (2) He designates the words of the Old Testament as Scripture; and because they are Scripture, they must be accepted; for they cannot be broken or nullified. (3) He does not say "this Scripture" but simply "Scripture." The point is that Scripture as a whole stands inviolate, infallible and inerrant.

On several occasions Jesus appealed to Scripture in support of both His teachings and actions, for example: (1) the heavenly status of marriage and the resurrection (Matt. 22:23-33; Ex. 3:6), (2) the cleansing of the temple (Mark 11:15-17); and (3) His submission to the cross (Matt. 26:53-54); (4) prophecy was fulfilled in His ministry (Luke 4:18-19; Isa. 61:1-2; Matt. 5:17). These passages and others show clearly that Jesus regarded the Old Testament authoritative and inerrant. He taught the Bible bore witness to Him. Because the Old Testament is the Word of God, Jesus recognized its inerrancy even to the smallest point of grammar.

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Inerrancy in relation to inspiration. The Bible is “inspired of God” or “breathed-out” from God (2 Tim. 3:16). Verbal (word) and plenary (in all parts) inspiration requires inerrancy as a natural and necessary part of it. As W. Robert Cook states: “the doctrine of inerrancy is part and parcel of a Biblical doctrine of inspiration.”¹⁰ Errancy and inspiration are incompatible! If there are parts of the Bible that are not inerrant, then the question properly arises, *who* decides which parts are true and which parts are erroneous? One cannot hold both to inspiration and inerrancy of certain parts and inspiration and errancy to other parts. The Bible that is inspired is a Bible that is inerrant. There is no middle ground.

Inerrancy in relation to the Bible’s witness concerning itself. Frank E. Gaebelin writes: “Internal evidence is always the essential subject matter of criticism....There is nothing ambiguous in the teaching of the Bible about itself.”¹¹ We rightly appeal to the Scriptures in the defense of basic doctrines—the doctrine of God, the deity of Christ, the atonement, the resurrection, the church, etc. However, if the Bible is accurate and authoritative in these matters, and it is, there is no reason why it should not be considered equally accurate (inerrant) when speaking about itself. If the Bible is not inerrant, then it bears false witness and cannot be trusted in any of the matters of which it speaks. Paul writes: “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, *ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God*, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thess. 2:13). If every utterance in the Bible is from God (2 Tim. 3:16), and it is; and if God

10 “Biblical Inerrancy and Honesty,” (*Bibliotheca Sacra*, April-June, 125:498, 167)

11 “The Unity of the Bible,” *Revelation and the Bible*, 390-391

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is the God of truth, and He is, then the Bible must be wholly inerrant. F C. Grant states: “No New Testament writer would ever dream of questioning a statement contained in the Old Testament.”¹² All New Testament writers were inspired; therefore, were guided in their inerrancy in reference to the Old Testament, as well as, the New Testament Scripture they were writing. Consequently, the Bible is characterized by its truthfulness and authority. Inerrancy is vital to the Bible’s own claims.

Inerrancy in relation to authority. To state that religious thought and the church is at a crossroads is to become rather trite and commonplace, especially in regards to the authority of Christ and the Bible. The authority of the Bible is under attack by charging that some make it a “paper Pope.” Rather, they reason, the authority is in Christ and the Bible is non-authoritative. It is often argued that Christ must not be “petrified in a dead record.”¹³ No solid Biblical authority can exist without inerrancy. We ask how can Christ have any authoritative meaning to us if the witness to Him (the Bible) is not inerrant and authoritative? We cannot know about Christ and His authority except by the inerrant Bible. If the Bible is subject to error, then it is conceivable and very likely one of those errors would concern our knowledge about Him. If in some detail He is not all that He claims to be in His witness (the Bible), then we would have our doubts about the inerrancy of the Bible and His authority would be in question. Both the authority of Christ and the authority of the Bible depend on the inerrancy of the Bible. Warfield makes an acute observation: “The authority which cannot assure of a hard fact is soon not trusted for a hard doctrine.”¹⁴

12 *Introduction to New Testament Thought*, 75

13 J. K. S. Reid, *The Authority of Scripture*, 279

14 *op. cit.*, 181

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Inerrancy in relation to preaching. Paul wrote: “it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21). When the church was scattered from Jerusalem “they...went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). This is what Paul and Barnabas did on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5; 15:36). The preaching message, known as the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-2; 2 Cor. 11:7; Gal. 1:11; Heb. 4:2), was/is God’s power to save (Rom. 1:16). The message included, among other things, preaching about (1) Jesus (Acts 4:42; 8:35; 10:36; 11:20; 17:18), (2) the kingdom or church (Acts 8:12), (3) the cross or atonement (1 Cor. 1:18), (4) the faith (Gal. 1:23), (5) repentance and baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), (6) the resurrection (1 Cor. 15), and (7) peace (Eph. 2:17). Inerrancy is a divine safeguard against subjectivism; i.e. it keeps us from preaching our own desires, preferences, inclinations and prejudices. If the Bible contains errors, it is not God’s Word and it is not reliable. If it is not God’s inerrant Word, then it cannot be preached with authority.

Inerrancy in relation to the providence of God. Under this point, we set forth the affirmation that the human writers used by God did not render the written revelation (Scriptures) of God fallible and erroneous. The Scriptures are the revelation of God the Father and are given by and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:19-21). The Holy Spirit providentially determined the writing of men, “But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit...Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth” (1 Cor. 2:10, 13), thereby giving Scriptures a divine quality unattainable by human powers alone. Warfield states: “these books become not merely the word of godly men, but the immediate word of God Himself,

speaking directly as such to the minds and hearts of every reader.”¹⁵

THE DOCTRINE’S CRITICS

Believing and affirming the doctrine of inerrancy is not the only responsibility of the Christian. He is also responsible for defending the doctrine of inerrancy of God’s Word. The Christian, especially preachers and elders, need to be prepared “to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15). Paul wrote: “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21). Let us consider some objections offered by critics to the biblical doctrine of inerrancy and give adequate response.

Objection 1: *Inerrancy is not important.* It is argued by some critics that inerrancy is quibbling about insignificant details. After all, what really matters is a Christian’s relationship to Jesus.

Answer: We would never dispute that the Christian’s relationship to Jesus is not important; however, you cannot know Jesus except as He is set forth in the Bible. If the Bible is not inerrant, then the Bible does not set forth a Jesus that we can know and trust. You may be believing and following a Christ of your own imagination rather than what the Bible teaches. You end up in sitting in judgment on Scripture and become free to disobey, believe or judge the Scripture in error as you please.

Objection 2: *Inerrancy is not Biblical.* Critics argue that the Bible does not state that it is inerrant, but only that it is inspired.

Answer: This like reasoning that the Bible does not teach the doctrine of the Trinity, because the Bible does not use the word “Trinity.” Yet, the Godhead is composed of

15 *op. cit.*, 174

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three divine and distinct persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The doctrine is merely a logical way to express these truths concerning the Godhead. It is true that the word inerrancy does not occur in the Bible, neither does the Bible say that it is without error in all that it teaches. However, it is the case that Biblical errancy is the necessary and obvious conclusion based on the facts that: (1) the Bible is God’s Word; i.e. the very words of the Scripture and the very words of God. (2) God is a God of truth and therefore speaks truthfully. The conclusion, that is implied, is that the Bible is inerrant in everything it teaches.

Objection 3: *Inerrancy is divisive.* It is argued that we lose the perspective of Christ’s centrality when we insist on inerrancy.

Answer: While it is the case that some in the academic world and some brethren reject an inerrant Bible, the division results from those who reject the plain Biblical teaching of inerrancy. If it is the case, (1) that inerrancy relates to the character of God, (2) that Jesus recognized the inerrancy of the Scriptures, (3) that inspiration and errancy are incompatible, (4) that inerrancy involves the authority of the Scriptures, and (5) that inerrancy gives substance and solidity to the gospel message; then it is the case that those who reject inerrancy are those who are divisive.

Objection 4: *Inerrancy is arguing in circles.* Critics argue that we believe in inerrancy because we believe the Bible teaches inerrancy, but you believe the Bible because you believe in inerrancy.

Answer: The logical case for inerrancy is not circular. The argument begins with the nature of the Bible, then the person and teaching of Jesus, and concludes by accepting His teaching where the nature of the Bible is concerned. It goes as follows:

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The Bible is the divine revelation of the God of truth and as such is a reliable and trustworthy document. This is established by the Bible as its own witness and treating the Bible as any other historical document; i.e. as the works of Josephus, Aristotle, Tacitus, Suetonius, etc. The central personage of the Bible is the Lord Jesus Christ. As the unique Son of God (John 3:16), He is an infallible and trustworthy authority. Jesus not only assumed the authority of the Old Testament, but He taught that the Old Testament was authoritative, eternal and inerrant. If it is the case that the Scriptures are the inerrant Word of God, as Jesus taught, then for this very reason the Scriptures must be entirely trustworthy and inerrant. This is not circular reasoning.

Objection 5: *Inerrancy is a matter of opinion.* It is the case that in matters of opinion we must allow liberty.

Answer: While we must allow liberty in all areas of opinion, the doctrine of inerrancy is not an opinion, but rather the most basic of all matters. If God has not revealed Himself clearly in His Word, then everything is uncertain and we merely grope hopelessly after truth. God is the God of truth, the truth of God is inerrant. To contend that inerrancy is merely an opinion is the same as saying, "I can question God and His Word." God forbid that we assume such an irreverent and illogical position.

CONCLUSION

Inerrancy relates to the faith of the Christian, as well as that of all believers, for the following reasons:

1. God cannot lie (Rom. 3:4). God has given us His Word; therefore, it is the case that His Word is truth and without error (John 17:17; Psm. 119:160).
2. Jesus affirmed the inerrant and infallible authority of the Old Testament--"The scripture

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cannot be broken” (John 10:35). Since the New Testament is also Scripture (2 Peter 3:16), then it is the case that the Bible (OT/NT) is inerrant.

3. Inerrancy is a natural and necessary part of the inspiration of the Bible. Since all of the Bible is inspired (2 Tim. 3:16), it is the case that it is likewise inerrant.
4. The Bible is “in truth, the word of God” (1 Thess. 2:13); therefore, it is the case that inerrancy is vital to the Bible’s witness to itself.
5. No solid Biblical authority can exist without inerrancy; therefore, it is the case that if the Bible is not inerrant then the authority of the Bible is in question and cannot be trusted.
6. If the Bible is not inerrant, then it is the case that it cannot be preached with authority.
7. God’s providence in giving man the Bible and His preservation of the Scriptures as a whole render the Bible infallible and inerrant.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

W. Terry Varner is married to the former Lillie L. Garrison of Littleton, WV and they have four children and eleven grandchildren.

He is retired from full-time located work. He presently preaches on Sunday in various congregations. He has been an Instructor at West Virginia School of Preaching since its beginning and presently teaches five courses. He owns and edits *Therefore Stand*, a monthly eight-page paper in its 16th year. He has several books and articles for various brotherhood publications and journals.

THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE

Eddie Cooper

Romans 4:17,18 --"(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be." (KJV)

I wish to thank Emanuel Daugherty and the elders at Hillview Terrace for the invitation to speak on this great lectureship, with the theme: Faith, Hope and Love. This has continued to be a great lectureship and I am humbled to be asked to speak this year. I owe so much to so many in the Ohio Valley who have encouraged me to continue preaching the gospel of Christ. My prayer is that the lesson will be of benefit to one and all.

One of the great blessings of being a Christian has to do with relying on the promises of God. There is a song that we all enjoy with the phrase "standing on the promises of God."

The word *PROMISE* is defined: "an agreement to do or not to do something, indication, as of a successful future, something promised, to give a basis of expecting."¹ Thus, we are discussing an agreement by God to do something and Abraham expected the promise to be fulfilled.

We know that God is faithful in all things. "**Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)** (Hebrews 10:23) There are many examples throughout the Bible of those who were

1 *Webster's New World Dictionary*, 1990

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given great promises of God and never once did God lie. How much of an advantage for the believer versus the unbeliever to know that he can rely on the promises of God, especially when it has to do with one's eternal destiny.

When God decided upon a manner in which to share His goodness with creation, He called a man named Abraham. Abraham's place in the Bible is unique. He stands out as a landmark in the spiritual history of the world. Chosen of God, he became the father of a new spiritual race. "Abram" means "exalted father," and was the name given to him by his father, Terah. God changed his name to "Abraham," which means "father of a multitude." Abraham was the husband of Sarah, and through them Christ came. It is interesting to note that with Abraham begins the history of the chosen people. He is the father of God's people in a fleshly sense, and he is also the father of God's people in the spiritual sense. This makes Abraham prominent in the history of Israel and in New Testament teachings.

Let us read the Old Testament reference which has to do with the Abrahamic promise found in Romans 4:17,18. Our reading is in Genesis 17:1-5: **"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abraham, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee."**

Through Abraham, God intended to bless the nations. Abraham's relationship with God resulted from God's initiative, not Abraham's. Abraham probably served other

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deities until he was called. (Joshua 24:2) When the call came, Abraham responded. God promised that His descendants would be as numerous as the stars (Genesis 15:5) and that He would give him the land. (Genesis 15:17-21) Neither of these promises were Abraham's by natural right; they were gifts of God because of His love.

We also remember that the law of Moses was primarily a system of works, and it is declared that "the law is not of faith." (Galatians 3:12) It postdated the promise to Abraham by four hundred and thirty years, but was only temporary, until the Christ should come, to whom the promise was also made (because it was to Abraham and his seed, and Christ was of the seed of Abraham), and it did not "disannul" the promise and did not make it of "none effect." (3:15-22)

The law was not contemplated at all as expressive of the condition on which Abraham and his seed were to receive the promise made to him--and particularly the promise that in Abraham and his seed would all the nations of the earth be blessed, with Christ in mind especially as the seed in which they would all be blessed. The promise was on the condition of faith, not of keeping the law of Moses. That would make the promise sure to all of Abraham's seed, whether Jews or Gentiles, and without even Jews having to keep the law of Moses after it was done away at the cross of Christ.

Abraham's faith was in God, who had made the aforementioned promise--a God who "giveth life to the dead" (giving life to Sarah's womb so that she could conceive and rejuvenating Abraham's aging body so that he could beget, and also raises the dead as Abraham thought he might do in regard to Isaac)--and a God who calls things that are not as they were (as in speaking to Abraham of his seed when as yet he had none). Faith in God as that kind of

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God was, and is, necessary to inherit the promise made to Abraham and his seed.

Notice in the reading, that it is quite evident that Abraham is a marvelous example of a man of faith. And, to realize the vastness of the promise made to him that “**he might become the father of many nations,**” surely was a marvel.

Do you believe that God can be depended on to honor His promises? Abraham did.

All of us rely on the promises of others in our daily lives and work. Vendors promise to deliver products in specified quantities and qualities. Project groups promise to deliver results by certain dates. Companies promise to stand behind their products with “satisfaction guaranteed.” If we can believe the promises of fallible human beings, how much more can we trust the promises of God, who never fails?

Of course, if we are one of God’s people, we need to live and work with the same trustworthiness and reliability. When we give our word, we need to fulfill it. When we make a commitment, we need to honor it. When we enter into a contract, we need to abide by it. Otherwise, we bring discredit to God.

BACKGROUND

God’s initial promise of Genesis 3:15 is now developed and confined to *one man*, Abraham, and to *one family*, his descendants; thus, the covenant that God made with Abraham involves the development of a people (Israel) to whom is given a land (Canaan), and through whom comes a blessing for all the families of the earth, the Messiah to come.

Our Bibles would indicate that the covenant that God made with Abraham involved three promises: 1] ***THE PROMISE OF A GREAT NATION***, (Gen. 12:1,7; 13:15;

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15:4,18; 27:6-8,16,17,19,20; 21:12) 2] ***THE PROMISE OF A LAND***, (Gen. 12:1,7; 13:14,15; 15:18; 17:8) 3] ***THE PROMISE OF A SEED***. (Gen. 12:2,3; 17:7,8; 21:12; 22:18)

Some time elapsed and Abraham, at the age of eighty-six (Genesis 16:16), still childless and holding to the promise of an heir from God, found it difficult to wait upon God's promises to be realized. Sarah, Abraham's wife, gave him her handmaid, Hagar, to have his heir. (Genesis 16:1-16) God made it clear to Abraham, some thirteen years later, that the promised "***great nation***" was to be realized through Isaac, not Ishmael. (Genesis 17:19,21)

PURPOSE

The whole purpose of Romans 4:17,18 is to show with reference to Genesis 17:15-22 and 18:9-16, how Abraham's faith in the promise of the seed through Sarah, which seemed impossible in the natural course of things, corresponded in essence to one's faith "***in Him***" that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. (Vs. 24)

Throughout Romans 4, the apostle commends the faith of Abraham. We observe **when** Abraham was justified by faith, **why**, for the honor of Abraham, and as an **example** for us.

THE REASON FOR ABRAHAM'S HOPE IN THE PROMISE--HE BELIEVED IN GOD (Romans 4:17)

It is God Himself that faith fastens upon. Abraham focused on God because that is the source of His promises. It was God **who quickeneth the dead**. That is, even though it seemed incredible at the time, (Genesis 15:1-6) because the womb of Sarah was dead. Although Sarah was well past the age of childbearing, and in this sense both she and

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Abraham were dead --dead to the possibility of a natural birth, God *quicken*ed (or made alive) her body so that it conceived and the promised child was born. (Genesis 21:1-3) In other words, God promised Abraham that he should be *the father of many nations*, when he and his wife were now as good as dead. (Cf. Hebrews 11:11,12) God can give Abraham a child, even when he is old.

It is God that is sovereign, “**who calleth things which are not, as though they were.**” Reference is here made to the way God spoke of the fulfillment of the promise, which was then yet to be. Before Isaac was born, before a single nation from his seed existed, God said to Abraham, “*A father of many nations have I made thee.*” (Gen. 17:5) He thus speaks as if Abraham was *already* the father of nations. Not only that, but, God *called things which were not*, as though they were. He could do so because they were certain to be.

And to whom did God give this promise? A *believer* whose wife was barren. A *believer* who would (as it were) take the life of his son on mount Moriah.

“It is faith indeed to build upon the *all-sufficiency of God* for the accomplishment of that which is impossible to anything but that *all-sufficiency*.”²

HOW DID ABRAHAM BELIEVE AGAINST HOPE?--(Romans 4:18)

Abraham not only believed that God is, but that He would keep His promise. (Heb. 11:6)

Paul in these words was showing the quality of Abraham's faith, which consisted in this, that he truly believed God, even though God's words were contrary to all natural and human expectations.

² Matthew Henry Commentary, pg. 947

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“The existence of faith in God’s promise is completely clear only when God’s promise runs counter to human expectation and calculation. Whether one really relies on God’s word alone becomes manifest only where God’s word is not supported by any rational basis, but where, on the contrary, it is opposed to what one must consider probable on the basis of human reason.”³

Note that the promise of a son was tied to the promise that Abraham should be “*the father of many nations.*” It is also joined to what Paul calls “*the righteousness of faith.*” All of this, of course, involved Abraham’s special seed which is Christ. (Gal. 3:16)

It is easy to miss the chief points in Abraham’s faith. His faith was the result of two factors, namely, Abraham’s deep awareness of his and Sarah’s physical impotence, and the power of God to fulfill His promise to give them a son under such peculiar circumstances. If they had been blessed with normal bodies, having a son would have required neither a divine intervention, nor such faith as Abraham had. Millions of children are born apart from a special intervention of God, or special faith in the power of God.

It was not by accident that God made Abraham a promise of a son under the peculiar circumstances which have been noticed. Abraham well understood that the matter of having a son was entirely in the hands of God.

God did not present Himself to Abraham as his Sovereign who had the right to give commands, but as the Almighty who had power to “*give life to the dead.*” And upon the basis of this power He gave His promise.

In face of the calculations which appearances might induce, Abraham entertained hope because he believed, and the calculations of faith were with the omnipotence and faithfulness of God. Abraham believed confidently in the

3 Emil Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans* Philadelphia, Pa: The Westminster Press, 1959, p. 37

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assurance of hope lest the promises that he would be the father of many nations and his seed as the stars of heaven failed to be fulfilled.

CONCLUSION

Faith and hope go together, though they are separate. Man's highest welfare depends upon faith, which is the principle of a high and noble life. Hope looks forward to the future as well as upward to the unseen. Faith must have an object, and hope must have a ground.

Faith is in a person, hope has respect to the experience anticipated. If there be faith in a Being who has given definite promises, there will be hope in whatever is the matter of those promises. He who believes in God will hopefully expect the fulfillment of Divine assurances.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Eddie was born April 23, 1946 to Denver and Florence Cooper. Married Barbara Buckley of Parkersburg, West Virginia on September 2, 1966. Has two married sons: Jason and Martha, of Akron, Ohio and Scott and Leah, of Henderson, Tennessee.

A graduate of St. Marys High School, St. Marys, WV in 1964. A graduate of Ohio Valley College with an Associate of Science Degree in Bible in 1966, and a graduate of Abilene Christian University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Bible in 1969.

Eddie began preaching at the age of 16, (first sermon at Rosemar Road in Parkersburg, WV.) and has done full-time located work for 31 years.

Worked for congregations in Ohio--Veto, Chillicothe, Pennsville, Hanoverton and Sardis. In West Virginia: Oakwood Road in Fairmont and is currently working for the North End congregation since October 1, 1995. Has preached for the Lawn, Texas Church of Christ while at Abilene Christian.

Has served as counselor, teacher, director and board member of Northwestern Ohio Christian Youth Camp; teacher and board member of West Virginia Christian Youth Camp. Directed and taught in Training For Christian Service in Fairmont, WV. Has conducted Singing Schools in West Virginia and Ohio.

Has done radio and TV work and written articles for Teenage Christian, Bible Herald, Gospel Truths, Gospel Advocate, Therefore Stand, Christian Bible Teacher, West Virginia Christian, Upon The Rock, weekly articles for the Chillicothe Gazette, and is currently writing newspaper articles for the Parkersburg News / Sentinel.

SAVED IN HOPE

Terry G. Jones

TEXT: Romans 8:24-25

The Epistle of Paul to the Romans is a profound portion of Holy Scripture filled with lofty themes that challenge the mind and thrill the soul. Chapter eight emphasizes the idea of being in Christ. The first verse affirms that there is “no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” and the last verse assures us that absolutely nothing “shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Between the two, Paul announces that those in Christ enjoy the blessing of hope for their eternal soul.

Hope causes one to have a confident expectation of something that will take place in the future. Holmans Bible Dictionary says, “hope is the confidence that what God has done for us in the past guarantees our participation in what God will do in the future.” Everyone is aware that this life will end in death. Only the child of God has hope beyond the grave. Let us notice three things from our text concerning that hope.

PROMISE OF HOPE

There are a great many things that we hope for in this world but are often disappointed. How comforting it is to know that the salvation of our soul is backed by the promise of God. In Romans 8:24, Paul states very matter-of-factly, “For we are saved by hope.” Those who neglect the will of God and walk after the flesh can have no confidence, or comfort in view of eternity, but the Christian lives in hope. Let us make the following observations concerning this hope.

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Assurance From God. The Christian hope is founded upon the promise of God Himself. Concerning that, the Apostle Paul said that we are “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Titus 1:2). The Hebrew writer stated, “And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end” (Heb. 6:11). The Christian’s hope of eternal life is backed by the full assurance of God who gave His Son to die for our sins.

“My hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus’
blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean
on Jesus’ name.
On Christ, the Solid Rock, I stand; All other
ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand.

Abide In Hope. Having the assurance from God we can now abide in hope. Each day may be lived free from fear and dread of disaster and death. “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity” (1 Cor. 13:13). As long as we abide upon this earth, so does hope.

Abound In Hope. “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may *abound in hope*, through the power of the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 15:13). We do not just exist in hope. Rather, the Bible says that we may abound in hope.

Anchor Of Our Soul. “That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an *anchor of the soul*, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil” (Heb. 6:18-19). Hope is that which provides stability and steadfastness to our lives.

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Without it, we wander aimlessly and helplessly across life's stormy sea.

Answer Of Hope. “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15). Concerning that hope, Peter indicates that there will be those who observe the hope we possess and inquire about it. We must be ever ready to share that hope through the gospel.

PROPER HOPE

In our text, Paul goes on to say, “but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for” (Rom. 8:24 b)? Hope does not look to the past, or the present, but to the future. It is an anticipation of something to come. We hope for that which is yet to be.

Nature of Hope – Unseen. Paul stated that, “hope that is seen is not hope.” The word seen here refers to those things that we experience. For example, those who lived during the depression saw many hard times. That is, they experienced what it was like to be poor. Someone might say, “I’ve seen better days!”

We do not hope for those things that we have already experienced. We hope for those things that have not yet become a reality. When the Lord returns and we hear those words, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mt. 25:34), then our hope will become reality.

No Hope – Unsaved. It would seem very unlikely that one could have a proper appreciation of hope in Christ without considering the fact that those without Christ are without hope. “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, wven as others which have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13). Paul reminded the Ephesians that, in the past, they had been

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without hope. “That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ” (Eph. 2:12-13). Without Christ, we are unsaved and without hope for our eternal soul.

PATIENCE OF HOPE

In Romans 8:25 Paul says, “But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” By its very nature, hope requires patience. In the presence of hope, there is eagerness, desire, and anticipation of things to come. The child of God daily anticipates that time when “the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works” (Matt. 16:27). In the meantime, hope requires the following three things.

Waiting. Paul said, “then do we with patience wait for it.” Our hope is focused upon that great resurrection day when every grave shall be emptied (Jn. 5:28-29), we shall receive a new body (Phil. 3:21) and be ushered into heaven to be presented to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24). While we are “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23), there are many things that can discourage, disappoint and detour us from the path of righteousness. Paul experienced that discouragement and then concluded, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18). While we are waiting, we are reminded that “after this life with all its strife; heaven will surely be worth it all.”

Watching. While we are waiting, we must also be watching. After teaching the parable of the ten virgins, Jesus said, “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day

nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.” (Matt. 25:13). If we are not careful, we may be caught unprepared when the Lord returns (Rev. 2:3; 1 Pet. 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:5).

Working. Exercising the patience involved in hope not only requires waiting and watching, but also working. After Jesus stressed the importance of watching in the parable of the virgins, He emphasized the necessity of working in the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30). He rewarded those who diligently worked to multiply their talents, then condemned the one talent man, calling him a “wicked and slothful (lazy) servant” (26).

Paul said to the Corinthians, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). To the Thessalonians he associated working in love with our patience of hope. “Remembering without ceasing your work of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father” (1 Thess. 1:3).

As Christians, let us never lose sight of the hope of our salvation. Let us patiently wait for the Lord’s gloriously appearing, “to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven” (Col. 1:22-23).

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Terry G. Jones was born in Parkersburg, West Virginia and was raised in Toll Gate, West Virginia. He is the son of Glenn and Linda Jones. He married Melinda S. Hilvers on August 10, 1985. They now have two sons - Austin (Age 14) and Quintin (age 11).

SAVED IN HOPE

Terry is a 1986 graduate of East Tennessee School of Preaching in Knoxville, Tennessee. He received the A.A. and B.A. degrees from Ohio Valley College in 1996. He worked with the church in Mountain City, TN for 1986 to 1989. He then moved to Pennsboro, West Virginia where he has been preaching to the present.

He serves as secretary on the board of directors of West Virginia Christian Youth Camp and is on the faculty of West Virginia School of Preaching. In addition, he is a writer for West Virginia Christian. He has preached in gospel meetings and lectureships in West Virginia, Ohio, Tennessee, Indiana and Virginia. He also has made missionary trips to the countries of Moldovo and Ukraine.

STUDYING THE SCRIPTURES

Peter F. Allinder

“...that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope (Rom. 15:4b).”

INTRODUCTION:

I am always fascinated by the simplicity, logic and beauty of God’s wisdom. Regardless of the subject, young and old alike may find interesting and faith building studies within the simplest of thoughts. This study has been so for me.

Hope is commonly defined in its spiritual context as “confident expectation.” This being a reasonable definition, has often inspired teachers to contrast this meaning of the word with more common definitions used in everyday speech. Most likely we all have heard this done in a variety of ways. “I hope my children remain faithful to God.” We can easily understand the risks or reality of such a statement. We might define our common usage of the word hope as “a strong desire for something to be.” This is certainly similar in thought to “confident expectation” but it is not the same. The Hebrew writer makes the following statement. “Thus God, determined to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil (Heb. 6:17-19).” The unchangeable nature of God offers “the heirs of promise” “strong consolation” that God will not break His promise. So as we hope for the fulfillment of God’s promises we

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hope confidently, without doubt or worry, understanding that our hope is “both sure and steadfast.” God being always faithful.

This truth, coupled with the above definition of common hope, shows clearly why there is a difference between “Spiritual” or “Biblical” hope and “common” hope. If one places their hope in something promised by God, then, that hope is sure, or confidently expected, spiritual hope. If, on the other hand, one places hope on the promises of man, a fanciful desire or the unsure reality of tomorrow, etc. the hope is common or unsure. Even though there is a high probability that we will see tomorrow there remains the possibility that we will not. Therefore, in saying “I hope to see tomorrow” we understand that tomorrow may not be. Nothing is sure except that it has been promised by God. No hope can be confidently expected unless it is hope for the fulfillment of a promise of God.

With this thought in mind let us consider the meaning of our text along with some very practical aspects of Hope.

OUR PHYSICAL LIVES AND OUR SPIRITUAL LIVES:

“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul (Matt. 16:26)?” Considering this great question, we may notice a difficult problem in the lives of many men. When asked the question, few people would be willing to identify the necessary price. Yet it seems that in a practical way most men, perhaps subconsciously or unintentionally, do set a price for their soul, a price much less than the whole world.

Let us illustrate by envisioning the distinction between our everyday life or our “physical life” and what we might refer to as our “spiritual life”. One may think of it as worldly cares vs. spiritual cares. This distinction is not necessarily sinful. For many of us it is a simple case of

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immaturity. We often are unaware of any spiritual significance in a trip to the grocery store. This example of one's "physical life" in contrast to one's "spiritual life" is not intrinsically sinful. One going about his day with a blatant disregard for God's will, however, would be sinful. As a Christian matures the gap between these two lives should close. Through study, prayer, worship and diligence we will be more readily aware of the spiritual significance of this temporal life. The problems we face at home and work can be (need to be) brought into focus from a spiritual perspective. Problems we face with our families, in our marriages, with our health, life and death, all can be given meaning. Our earthly existence has meaning, real meaning, spiritual meaning.

Paul said "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope (Rom 15:4)". It is my conviction that Paul's instruction is that through study whether of the Old Testament, spoken of here, or of the New Testament, one finds the ability to persevere and obtain comfort which then provides one with the great peace of Hope.

The trials of life take on spiritual relevance. Whatever we must endure pales in comparison to what we have in store (Rom. 8:18). This thought is also taught in the fifth chapter of Romans where Paul describes the following progression: faith, tribulation, patience, experience and hope. "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in

our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Rom. 5:1-5).”

Hope affords a faithful Christian a look down the road with the mind's eye which gives significance to his Christian effort.

THE POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDY, FAITH AND HOPE:

We are well aware of the source of our faith. Nearly every child can quote Rom. 10:17. If we desire to increase our faith then we must increase our knowledge of God's word. We cannot have faith in something of which we know little or nothing. As we evaluate the evidence of God found in the scripture our faith develops and grows. The more we understand the stronger our faith.

The source of hope is very similar indeed, citing once again our text. “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope (Rom 15:4).” As understanding increases, faith increases, our confidence in God's promises increase and consequently does not our hope increase? This relationship is clearly expressed in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. “But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6).” One must not only have faith that God is but that He fulfills his promises. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1).” Our hope is founded on the absolute confidence we enjoy in God's ability and desire to fulfil his promises to mankind. It stands to reason that if our faith is weak our hope is imperfect. What effect does doubt have on our hope? If one is to doubt the resurrection, can he have hope in his own eternal life? The logic continues by demanding that as our faith increases so does our hope.

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Inspiration describes faith with such adjectives as little and great. What adjective best describes an increasing hope: great, strong, clear, bright? If one desires the blessing of a vivid hope one needs a great faith brought on by much study. Diligent study, then, produces greater faith and clearer hope.

THE MATURING OF HOPE:

Notice this great statement of hope made by the weary and imprisoned apostle Paul. "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day (II Tim 4: 6-8b)." There is neither doubt nor misunderstanding found in Paul's hope; it is pristine. Paul understands very well the spiritual significance of his life (Phil 1:19-24). These are not the words of a depressed old man. These are the words of a Christian who has lived a faithful life. A man of God who can see with the eye of hope so clearly that it makes his suffering insignificant.

Does a child hope? Can a child hope? Does a child have faith? Can a child have faith? The answer to these questions are relative to the understanding the child has. I believe it is possible for even a relatively small child to have some degree of faith and of hope. I see a great difference, however, in the hope in which the mind of Paul took comfort and the hope a child may appreciate. Paul's knowledge, understanding, tribulation, and experience gave him what seems to be hope of incredible clarity. Look deeply into the dim eyes of an experienced brother or sister. Then ask them about hope.

THE DESIRE OF JESUS TO COMFORT HIS DISCIPLES WITH HOPE — AN EXAMPLE:

Just before his trial and crucifixion Jesus comforted His closest followers: “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am there you may be also (John 14:1-3).” Each of us even today take comfort in the hope this promise offers. This hope is available to us through faith. Faith that Jesus is “the Christ the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16b)”. Only in knowing this to be truth can one confidently expect the fulfillment of God’s promises.

Christ made a great effort throughout His ministry to convince a stubborn people of this fact. After Jesus miraculously healed the lame man at Bethesda He was criticized sharply because the Jews were of the opinion that Jesus violated Sabbath law. In answering the Jews Jesus said something that angered them even more. He claimed to be the Son of God, making Himself equal with God. In His discourse with these angry Jews Jesus rebukes them for not believing in Him. “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me (Jn 5:39)... Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you – Moses, in whom you trust. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words (Jn 5:45-47)?” In this reading we can readily see the claim of Jesus, that His deity can be known by a study of the writings of Moses. “Faith comes by hearing... (Rom10;17a)”. For the Jew there was no excuse for their absence of faith.

STUDYING THE SCRIPTURES

After His resurrection Jesus was still making a plea to the Law and the Prophets as proof of His deity. “Then He said to them, O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His Glory? And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself (Luke 24:25-27).”

Diligent study of the scriptures, Old and New Testament alike, will provide mankind with the necessary data to know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. This faith, so very fundamental, was the substance of the Hope the disciples of Christ realized as they like us today envisioned the house of God and its many mansions.

CONCLUSION:

As we contemplate the difficulties of this life we can understand full well how truly short it is, how vain and how insignificant. Yet our problems, grief, pain, fear and depression are very real. Hope is able to comfort us in our most needful hour. It encourages us throughout our lives, a blessing only made sweeter by tribulation. And a blessing available only to the person who knows the confidence of faith, a confidence developed and maintained by our lifetime of diligent study.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Peter Allinder, married to Sarah Jane Miller. We have three children John(16), Rachel(13) and Hannah(12). We live in Point Pleasant West Virginia where I preach for the Sand Hill Road congregation.

Graduated from Saint Albans High School in 1981. Graduated from Marshall University with a Bachelors Degree in Accounting in 1985. Graduated from the West Virginia School of Preaching in 1997.

FAITH CHAPTER

Frank Higginbotham

Some chapters in the Bible are identified by their subject matter. We commonly refer to the resurrection chapter when we are discussing 1 Corinthians chapter fifteen. The love chapter is recognized as the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians. When we refer to the faith chapter everyone knows that we are thinking about the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. The subject of faith is so vital to the proper understanding of the whole Bible that it is important for us to understand this chapter. As we evaluate the book of Hebrews we will recognize that it provides teachings that key on the truths contained in chapter eleven. Early in the Hebrew letter we are impressed with the superiority of Christ over the angels. "Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?" (Heb 1:4,5). Next we note that Christ is superior to Moses. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house." (Heb 3:1-3). At this point the writer of the Hebrew letter reminds us that we must not turn from God or His plan in unbelief. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." (Heb 3:12). Further discussion helps us to realize that the new covenant is also superior to the old one. A number of arguments are

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then offered to make clear that God has given a new and better covenant by Jesus Christ. The thing which would deprive us of the advantages of the new covenant is a lack of faith. At this juncture the writer inserts the great truths of Hebrews eleven to show that it is possible for each of us to appropriate the blessings of the new covenant through faith. As evidence of this, reference is made to a number of great men and women of faith who were able to overcome. Now surrounded by this 'great cloud of witnesses' we can take courage and run with patience the race set before us. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb 12:1-2). A closer look at Hebrews eleven will show us what faith is, how it reacts in the lives of the godly and the ultimate victory that is ours if we do not make shipwreck of our faith.

Verse one gives us a look at the faith that pleases God. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Heb 11:1). That which gives substance upon which to build our lives is faith. Faith is not just a 'leap in the dark' as many affirm, but is a conviction of substance. Our faith is based on reliable testimony given to us by the Word of God. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom 10:17). Many things we know by the testimony of others who are reliable. Our belief that a man named George Washington lived and was our first president is based on reliable testimony given to us. None of us ever saw him or heard him speak. Yet we believe that he did exist. There is substance to our convictions. The evidence that we need to

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believe in the unseen is in the Word of God. We have never been to Heaven but we believe that it exists. The reality of Hell is impressed in our thinking because of the faith we have in God's holy book. This statement makes it clear how faith will affect the lives of godly men. For a definition of faith, consider the one offered by Thayer, the great Greek scholar. He stated that faith is a confident trust in God, conjoined with obedience. Any discussion of faith without the human response of obedience is vain. "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:20).

At this point it might be well to notice the different usages of the term 'faith' in the Bible. Sometimes we see faith referred to as "the faith". When this terminology is used, reference is to the body of teaching that relates to Christianity. Paul uses it this way several times in the Galatian letter. In Jude 3 we are urged to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. At the close of his life, Paul states that he had kept the faith. This means that he had been obedient to the faith and had faithfully defended it. A second use of the term 'faith' is with reference to our personal faith. Paul was convinced that Timothy had this personal faith based on the fact that his good mother and grandmother before him possessed it. "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also." (2 Tim 1:5). John wrote his letter to provide the evidence that was necessary to convince people that Christ is the Son of God. "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20:31). Jesus showed the importance of this personal faith in John 8: 24). "I said

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therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.” In Hebrews eleven the writer is making reference to this personal faith rather than the system of faith delivered by Christ. We cannot please God without this faith. “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Heb 11:6).

With this background, the faith chapter next gives a listing of great men and women of faith who serve as an example to us. This great cloud of witnesses make it perfectly clear that we can run the race set before us and win the prize. “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb 12:1,2). Consider the lessons we can learn by watching Abel faithfully offer his sacrifice to God. He pleased God by what he did. “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.” (Heb 11:4). Enoch because of this great trust in God, had this testimony that he pleased God. Noah’s example stands high in the list of the faithful as he trusted God enough that he took God as His word and prepared an ark for the saving of his family and himself. While others scoffed faithful Noah went about carefully noting and following each detail of God’s instruction. He did not attempt to improve God’s plan in any way. While many today laugh and make light of arguments based on this obedience of Noah and his following the pattern given by

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God, it is Noah who stands as a great example of the kind of faith that we must have to please God. Next in the list of greats is Abraham, the father of the faithful. Who could question the faith of Abraham and Sarah. When God gave instructions to leave their relatives and to go to a land that God would show them, they went out not even knowing where they were going. They trusted in God's promise that they would have a son even though it did not seem reasonable that this would happen. Paul discusses this in Romans chapter four. "(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform." (Rom 4:17-21). Many more great people stand out in regard to faith. There were so many that the Hebrew writer made this statement."And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:" (Heb 11:32). These examples serve to show that faith overcomes the world. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4).

A question which now comes to mind is in regard to how they demonstrated they had faith. James assures that the only real evidence that we have faith is seen in what we do. "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will

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show thee my faith by my works.” (James 2:18). One of the examples that was used in Hebrews eleven is also used by James. He explains that there is no conflict in faith and works. Faith only will not save and neither will works only. Frequently we are hearing today that there is a conflict between faith and works. It is said that works do not have anything at all to do with our salvation. It is then affirmed that if we do anything to obtain salvation that it would not be of grace. Grace in Bible teaching does not exclude works. Certainly works of merit are excluded by verses like Ephesians 2:8-9.”For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” However, works of God are not excluded. Even faith falls into this category. “Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” (John 6:29). When we do what God has commanded for us to do we have not earned our salvation but have only done what is expected of us. “So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.” (Luke 17:10). Though Abraham was justified by faith, he still had to show that faith by obedience. “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?” (James 2:21). It would be foolish to think since Abraham offered his son that he had earned his salvation. It would likewise be foolish to affirm that since we obey the Lord’s command to be baptized that we think we have earned salvation. Where are these fellows who think it would be possible to earn our salvation by just doing what the Lord commanded? We hear a great deal about them but they are hard to find! Perhaps it would help if some of those who are recently discovering the doctrine of grace in the Bible would read less from the Calvinists among us and more from the Word

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of God. New Testament writers saw no conflict in telling people to show their faith by their obedience to God's commands. The question, "what must I do to be saved" in the Bible was always answered by inspired men telling the person who asked the question, what they needed to do. They did not receive a lecture telling them that God has done it all and that if they did anything it would nullify the grace of God. Note carefully the example of the people on the day of Pentecost. "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:37-38). Some seem to think that there is a contradiction between Paul in Romans and the book of James. We are told that Paul teaches faith only and that James teaches works only. This has led some to even reject the book of James as being inspired. However, there is no conflict in the two books. Neither one teaches that salvation is by faith only or works only. Remember Paul hems the book of Romans in by a statement showing the necessity of obedience at the beginning and at the ending of the great book of faith. "By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:" (Rom 1:5). "But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:" (Rom 16:26).

Next note that the Hebrew writer makes clear the motivating force behind the action of these great examples of faith. Look at the list of motives given for the action of these men and women. Noah became an heir of the righteousness which is by faith. (Heb. 11:7). Abraham looked for a city which had foundation, whose builder and

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maker is God. (Heb.11:10). Many died in faith looking forward to the fulfillment of promises given. Heb. 11:13). They had a desire for a better country. (Heb. 11:16). Moses had respect unto the recompense of the reward. (Heb.11:26). Some looked for a better resurrection. (Heb. 11:35). These motives for them should also provide motives for us to live by faith. Paul stated it like this in 2 Timothy 4:6-8. "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." There is a price involved in being a Christian, but it is well worth the price. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Rom 8:18). These great men and women of faith went through all of the trials and formed the foundation which we enjoy today. "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." (Heb 11:40). Even prophets of old longed to see the fulfillment of their prophecies made in regard to us. "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified before hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." (1 Pet 1:9-12). We thank God for the

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part played in God's eternal plan of salvation by these giants of faith.

We now want to look at the overview of the great chapter of faith. It should be a chapter of instruction and of encouragement to the child of God today. We are impressed with the necessity and the reward from trusting in God. Even when it might not make sense to us to do so, God is always to be trusted. "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." (Prov 3:5). It is dangerous not to trust Him. We also see that obedience to the instructions of God is man's part in obtaining salvation. "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;" (Heb 5:7-9). Jesus said that those who do the will of the Father will enter into the kingdom. (Mt.7:21). We are greatly encouraged to learn that there have been others who have endured unto the end. If they can do it, we can do it. The great message of the book of Revelation is the same as the lesson of this chapter. We can overcome and obtain the reward in Heaven through our faith. Thank God for those who went before us.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Frank Higginbotham was born in New Martinsville, WV a son of A. G. (Bus) and Garnet Higginbotham on February 21, 1933. He was graduated from Magnolia High School in 1951 and received an Associate of Arts degree from Florida Christian College in Tampa, FL. His first sermon was preached on June 8, 1952. He has done located work at Columbia Street in Fairmont, Wellsburg, West Street in Weirton and is currently in the 36th year at

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Virginia Avenue in Chester, WV. He has spoken on several lectureships and conducts 8-10 meetings a year. The 15 minute per day radio program from WOHI in East Liverpool, OH sponsored by the church in Chester is in its 50th year. He has spoken on it for over 30 years. He is married to the former Rose King and they have two children, Janie Gallagher (wife of Brent Gallagher, preacher at Oakwood Road in Fairmont) and Steve Higginbotham (preacher at Glasgow, KY). They have 7 grandchildren.

FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE

Roger A. Rush

Faith is an essential element in our response to God. “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). Faith is defined in Scripture as “...the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Living faith is the operative agent in a man’s obedience to God. It is faith that produces action. Faith and works are inseparably linked. One is ineffective without the other (James 2:14-26).

Given the importance placed on faith in Scripture, it is imperative that we understand the meaning of faith. Faith is often seen as the proverbial “blind leap into the dark,” a crutch for weak individuals. But nothing could be further from the truth. Faith and superstition are often considered synonymous, but they are not.

A superstition is defined as “**1 a:** a belief or practice resulting from ignorance, fear of the unknown, trust in magic or chance, or a false conception of causation **b:** an irrational abject attitude of mind toward the supernatural, nature, or God resulting from superstition **2:** a notion maintained despite evidence to the contrary.”¹ Superstitions are unsupported by facts. They originate in ignorance.

As noted earlier, faith is often associated with superstitions. In fact, one of the definitions provided in **Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary** for faith is “firm belief in something for which there is no proof.” I suspect that to be the definition many people attach to “faith” in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Nothing, however, could be further from the truth.

¹ *Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, Tenth Edition, page 1183

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Faith, as that word is used in Scripture, is not belief without proof, but belief based on evidence. Peter admonished Christians to provide reasons for their faith, because our faith is reasonable (1 Peter 3:15). Since the beginning of recorded history there has never been a better explanation of origin than the one found in Genesis 1:1. God did it, and the available evidence lends credence to the claim. No evidence to the contrary has been forthcoming.

Regarding the identity of Jesus, one cannot improve upon Peter's assertion that He was the Son of God (Matthew 16:16). That such a man as Jesus lived is beyond dispute. That He has had a profound impact for good upon the world is undeniable. Some would say He was a good man, but not the Son of God. To which I would ask, "Would a good man allow others to think that he was something he was not?" Either Jesus was who the Scriptures revealed Him to be, the Son of God and Savior of the world, or He was a liar and an impostor. The evidence points to the former and denies the latter. The evidence supports our faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

Superstitions are beliefs without proof. Faith, as that word is used in relationship to Jesus Christ, is belief based upon evidence, and that faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). Faith is the result of knowledge, and superstition is the product of ignorance.

Let's look at what we believe (know) about Jesus. Faith in Christ is under assault. The critics are constantly seeking to undermine the foundations of our faith by denying the deity of Jesus.

An ABC special presentation by Peter Jennings on the search for Jesus (June 26, 2000), raised far more questions than answers. It was clear from the start that truth would take a back seat to error. The preponderance of material favored the views of liberal theologians. The influence of

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the Jesus Seminar (a group of anti-biblical intellectuals) was apparent from the start. Although there are many conservative theologians with outstanding credentials who uphold the historicity of the Biblical narrative, their voices were not heard. In typical fashion, under the guise of fair and objective investigation, a thoroughly one-sided presentation was made.

Throughout the program the reliability of the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) was called into question. Frequent references to contradictions were made. Accounts of events not found in John but in the Synoptics (Matthew, Mark, Luke) were immediately suspect. But, I can assure you, if the gospels provided identical narratives the charge of collusion would have been immediately leveled and their use as historical documents dismissed just as readily. The slight differences or discrepancies between the gospels are easily explained. And, they do not constitute contradictory testimony. The gospels provide complementary accounts of Jesus, not contradictory ones.

We must take into consideration both the purpose of the narrative and the audience to which it was originally addressed. Consider the following. Matthew was written primarily for Jewish readers, and thus emphasized Jesus as the Messiah (Matthew 1:18-25). Mark was designed for Gentile readers, and is briefer with fewer references to the Law. Luke wrote as an historian (Luke 1:1-4). From a strictly historical perspective, it would be impossible to improve upon his work. And, John specifically wrote to produce faith (John 20:30, 31). Though as historical reliable as the Synoptics, it was not John's intent to provide a strictly historical document.

It would be a mistake to conclude that any similarities between various accounts in the gospels constitutes differing records of the same historical events. Although similar in content, Matthew's account of the Sermon on the

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Mount (Matthew 5-7) and Luke's account of the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:17-49) are records of two different sermons presented on two different occasion at two different locations. It would not have been uncommon for Jesus to have preached similar sermons before different audiences. In fact preachers still do it all the time. These two sermons in no way provide contradictory material.

Jesus did some things more than once. John records the cleansing of the Temple early in the ministry of Jesus (John 2:13-17). The Synoptics record a similar event during the week of His crucifixion (Matthew 21:12-17; Mark 11:12-19; Luke 19:45-48). Given the lucrative nature of the practice, those driven from the Temple by Jesus would have quickly returned to their dishonest ways as soon as Jesus left Jerusalem. It is not surprising that He discovered them engaged in the same reprehensible conduct when He entered the city at the close of His ministry. Again, there is no contradiction, just additional historical information.

Inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16) does not negate an author's personality or individual background. Inspiration does insure accuracy. It is not surprising that Luke's gospel contains many medical terms not found in the other three, or that John, written after the Synoptics, would mention things not found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

The full picture of Jesus is seen by examining all four gospels. Each in itself provides only a partial view of Him. I can illustrate it this way. Suppose a photographer took a picture of the west side of a building. From that picture would you know how many entrances there were to the building? Of course not! Only upon seeing pictures of all four sides would it be possible to provide the correct answer. One perspective is incomplete. Though we would have an accurate picture of one side, it would still be an incomplete picture. In the same sense, one gospel presents

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an accurate but incomplete picture of Jesus. By looking at all four gospels we get a full and complete view of Him.

There is no reason to question the reliability of the gospels (or any book of the Bible). All four were written before the close of the first century by individuals in a far better position to know what actually happened than any modern day liberal theologian. An honest evaluation of the evidence will lead to faith. Those knowledgeable of the facts will be compelled to say of Jesus, as did Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16).

The deity of Christ is not the only aspect of our faith that is under attack. The credibility of the entire Bible is under assault. The Bible clearly claims to be of a divine origin (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20, 21). Often, those who assail the credibility of this claim have never read the book, or have read it, not with a desire to know God, but to find fault with His revelation. The evidence, however, supports our faith in the Sacred Text.

In addition to efforts to undermine the inspiration of Scripture, similar attacks have been leveled against faith in a Divine Being. If the Bible is not the Word of God, then the Creation account (Genesis 1, 2) must be nothing more than myth. If we can not have faith in the Biblical narrative, then we cannot have faith in the God of the Bible either.

There has been an ongoing effort for some time now to undermine the credibility of faith. Copernicus, the father of modern astronomy, demonstrated that our universe was heliocentric (sun centered). Earth (and man) was not the center of the universe. 500 years ago such a suggestion was blasphemous. People interpreted Copernicus's theory to mean that humankind had no "privileged central" place in the universe. Galileo, with his invention of the telescope, confirmed the Copernican theory. For his work Galileo was convicted as a heretic and sentenced to a life of

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imprisonment, but the sentence was commuted to house arrest and his books were officially banned.

Then, along came Charles Darwin and his theory of “natural selection.” Evolution removed God from the equation. Our universe, and life itself, could be explained by a single, simple “blind” mechanism which given sufficient time could explain the emergence of both matter and life.

With the birth of evolution, science had a mechanistic explanation for everything. This led the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche to declare in 1885 that “God is dead.” Bertrand Russell and Sigmund Freud embraced this philosophy. These men, and others, were convinced that science and philosophy could essentially be defined as the **triumph of mechanism over teleology** (design). They never dreamed that their mechanistic model would some day be overthrown. But, it has been. The modern secular view has been shattered, ironically, by science itself!

In what Brandon Carter called “the anthropic principle,” he argued that life had to be

“pre-planned” from the very origin of the cosmos. The philosophical notion of a “random universe” was not born out by the evidence. Patrick Glynn observes: “Modern thinkers assumed that science would reveal the universe to be ever more random and mechanical; instead it has discovered unexpected new layers of intricate order that bespeak an almost unimaginably vast master design.”²

As science progresses it is becoming more and more certain that time and chance cannot account for our universe or the existence of life. There are too many signs of design to attribute our origin to an accident. Like the Psalmist we should all exclaim, “I praise you because I am

2 *GOD The Evidence*, page 19

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fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well” (Psalm 139:14 NIV).

Over the past few months I have encountered a number of statements in the media from various sources belittling the concept of faith. Religion is portrayed as a crutch for weak-minded people. The existence of God, the deity of Jesus, and the inspiration of the Bible are all denied, and those who continue to believe are labeled as superstitious fools. There is nothing new about all of this. Faith is always under assault. The enemies of faith come and go with regularity, but one thing remains secure - FAITH. People, by and large, are still believers.

Yes, it's true, many never let their faith interfere with their lives. They live essentially like non-believers, but they continue to profess faith. And, in spite of being labeled superstitious, ignorant, gullible, etc., faith persists at every level of society. In fact, I can point to examples of individuals who set out to destroy faith in the Bible and the existence of God and ended up believers themselves. Truth has nothing to fear from careful investigation, and faith rests on an unshakable foundation of truth.

It is sometimes argued that faith and science are mutually exclusive, yet science has done much to validate faith. Patrick Glynn, at one time an avowed atheist himself, after examining several scientific discoveries made in the past three decades came to the conclusion that life could not possibly have come about accidentally. In his book, **God the Evidence: The Reconciliation of Faith and Reason**, he makes a strong case for faith on the basis of scientific evidence.

Can we prove the existence of God to the satisfaction of unbelievers? Of course not! No amount of evidence is sufficient to convince someone of something he does not wish to believe. Can we reach those with open minds and honest hearts? Absolutely! Faith is reasonable (1 Peter

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3:15). With the Psalmist we can confidently assert: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard” (Psalm 19:1-3 NIV). Faith is not foolish. It rests on a solid foundation.

William James, noted American psychologist and philosopher, wrote nearly 100 years ago, “There can be no doubt that as a matter of fact a religious life, exclusively pursued, does tend to make the person exceptional and eccentric.” He went on to say that these were individuals “for whom religion exists not as a dull habit but as an acute fever.” He argued that religious leaders were especially subject to abnormal psychological behavior. At the heart of his argument was the belief that a devout religious faith was abnormal. **It isn’t so!** The devout tend to be happier, healthier, and more fulfilled than any other segment of society.

Whenever someone wishes to attack religious faith, they argue that religion has been the chief cause of wars, death, misery and suffering in our world. They often point to the Crusades, the conflict in the Balkans, the animosity between Jews and Arabs, or the bloodshed between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland as proof of their assertions. **It isn’t so!** Those who do this fail to recognize that these things have come about, not as a result of following the Bible, but because the Scriptures were ignored. Further, the critics disregard all the good that has come as a result of Christianity.

Some view religion merely as a crutch for weak-minded individuals. They argue that all religions are essentially alike. They discount the prospect of Divine revelation, and attribute belief to superstitions from our distant past. One religion is no better nor worse than

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another. All paths lead to the same destination. **It isn't so!** Christianity argues that there is one way to God, and that is through His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). And, He knew that most people would find His way too narrow. In the Sermon on the Mount He said: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13, 14).

We must not let unbelievers sow the seeds of doubt in our hearts. We must read and study our Bibles every day as we seek to grow in our knowledge of God and His word (2 Peter 3:18). The more we know of Him and His divine revelation, the more secure our faith will be!

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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Before coming to Sixth and Washington, he served the following congregations: Hundred church of Christ, Hundred, WV; Little Hocking church of Christ, Little Hocking, OH; and the Lower Paw Paw church of Christ, near Lower Salem, Ohio.

THE SURE WORD OF PROPHECY

2 Pet 1:12-21

Emanuel Daugherty

The theme of the WVSOP Lectures this year is “Faith, Hope, and Love,” a much needed theme as we enter the 21st century.

The subject of my lecture is to exegete the text of 2 Peter 1:16-21 and develop and show the value of prophecy to today’s Bible students.

Peter sets out to remind his readers of the surety of their faith by citing as examples the Transfiguration of Christ, the Sure Word of Prophecy, and the Inspiration of the Scriptures. These are things on which they can rely and rest their hope.

SETTING THE CONTEXT IN OUTLINE FORM

- A. They Were Already Established in the Present Truth
 - 1. But Remembering and Recalling Was Needful
 - 2. A Recounting of the Transfiguration Experience
 - 3. Result: We Have The Word of Prophecy Made More Sure
 - 4. Conclusion For Readers: You Do Well To Take Heed of These Things
- B. Know This First
 - 1. No Prophecy Originated From the Prophets Themselves
 - 2. Holy Men Spoke By Inspiration of the Holy Spirit

REMEMBER WHAT YOU KNOW

The things of which Peter is writing are matters of knowledge. His readers not only knew these things but they were established in them. But Peter would not be negligent

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to remind them again and again. One of the greatest principle of learning is repetition. Three times Peter says he was calling things to their remembrance. John Milton Gregory says the seventh law of teaching is “review, review, review.”¹ What a mistake preachers and teachers of the Bible make when they presume that saints already “know” and fail to constantly remind them regarding basic Bible doctrine. We are currently seeing this in the church on such matters as Bible authority, the role of women, errors in worship, the evils of denominationalism, errors concerning the Holy Spirit, etc.

The things of which Peter writes are a matter of knowledge. “Knowledge” is the key word of Peter’s second epistle. “Know,” “Knowing,” “Known,” and “Knowledge” are used 17 times (1:2, 3, 5,6, 8, 12, 14, 16, 20; 2:9, 20, 21 twice; 3:3, 17, 18). But people forget, some are not fully settled in the faith, children come along, new converts are added—reminders are necessary! The Lord wants us to know, to have full knowledge of the gospel. The preacher is to “Take heed unto himself, and to the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Tim 4:16). As long as Peter lived he would remind them; and in view of his impending death he would remind them, that they would “have these things always in remembrance.”

The recipients of Peter’s book not only knew but were established in the present truth. It is nothing short of amazing that brethren who are affected by the New Hermeneutic and other philosophies of men no longer believe that one can “know” and be “established” in the truth. They have given themselves over to subjectivism, basing their faith on feelings, intuition, promptings and leadings.

¹ John Milton Gregory, *Seven Laws of Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Company, 1993) 20

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On the other hand, true Christianity is based on revealed, inspired, objective faith. The true child of God does not say “I feel it,” but “I know it!” (John 8:31-32; Eph 5:17). In so doing, one is not guilty of cocky, intellectual snobbery, but merely practicing the faith that comes by hearing (1 John 2:3). Peter said his readers “knew,” were “established,” and were in “the present truth (i.e., the doctrine of Christ).” Men today must “know,” be “established,” and not be moved away from “the present truth” (2 John 9; Galatians 1:8-9; 1 Corinthians 15:1-3).

AN APOSTOLIC ACCOUNT OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

Peter said that “we (the apostles, ebd) did not follow cunningly devised fables...” when they preached and wrote of the Lord’s power and coming. They had not followed secondhand stories; things that “the church” made up some time after the apostles were dead. This was not an invention of an over active imagination. Fables, myths, and legends do not “stack up” when compared to the truth of God’s inspired word. But modern theologians say that the early Christians “invented” the gospel stories—the virgin birth, the miracles, resurrection and ascension. In recent years there have been some that have gone through the gospel accounts of the teaching of Christ and have concluded that “82% of the words attributed to Jesus in the gospels is not genuine,”² the rest is simply embellishments, myths and legends that arose after His death.

The power and calling of Christ is the issue at hand in Peter’s second epistle. (1) The scoffers would question his coming (3:3), (2) But the Lord is not slack concerning his

2 Wayne Jackson, *Christian Courier*, “The Jesus Seminar” June 1994, p.6; also the book by Robert Funk and Roy Hoover, *The Five Gospels, What Did Jesus Really Say?* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1993)

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promise (3:9), (3) the day of the Lord will come (3:10). Christ's power will be revealed at his coming (3:10; Matthew 25:31-46; 2 Thes 1:7-10). Peter proceeds to give a specific instance when he and James and John had beheld the majesty of the Lord.

All three—Peter, James, and John were eye witnesses and ear witnesses of the transfiguration—their eyes had seen the transfigured Moses, Elijah, and Christ. Their ears had heard God the Father when he spoke endorsing his Son over the other two honorable personages (see Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36). Peter says “we were eyewitnesses.. and this voice we ourselves heard.”

“The fact that the apostles had been eyewitnesses of the divine majesty is one reason Peter can speak with such certainty of the coming of Christ. They had been eyewitness of an event in which divine glory was evident, an event which foreshadowed the power and majesty of the second advent and which could be regarded as a pledge of the glory to be revealed at the second coming.”³

It was the apostles experiences in such events as the transfiguration, miracles, resurrection and ascension that caused them to carry the gospel into all the world at the risk of life and limb and to suffer hardships and a martyrs death. They did not give their very lives for embellished stories and legends that came through “cunningly devised fables.”

THE WORD OF PROPHECY MADE MORE SURE

Next, Peter says “we have also a more sure word of prophecy...” (KJV). The American Standard Version renders this phrase “We have the word of prophecy [*made*] more sure...” “More sure” is from the Greek “*bebaioteron*” and means “to make sure, to make firm, to make stable, to

³ Raymond Kelcy, *The Letters of Peter and Jude* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1987) 130

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make certain, to establish, to confirm.” Mark records that after the ascension of Christ, the apostles “...went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed. Amen” (Mark 16:20).

Some understand this to mean that the prophecies of the Old Testament are more convincing proof than the proclamation of the apostles. But Peter does not say “you have” but “we have” the word of prophecy made more sure. Peter is not referring to his readers but to himself and James and John, apostles who witnessed the Transfiguration and the effect it had upon them. The prophetic word of the Old Testament was made more sure to them by their experience on the holy mount. Seeing Jesus transfigured along with Moses and Elijah, and hearing the voice of God from heaven would be the most crowning of all evidence of the Deity of Christ. Thus the Transfiguration is a confirmation of the prophecies fulfilled in the advent of Christ. After seeing Christ’s majesty in the transfiguration the Old Testament prophecies were surer than ever to the apostles. They based nothing on shrewdly thought out stories of any kind. “The sights and sounds of “*the holy mount*” in connection with the Lord’s transfiguration make it plain that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and this is further (additional and conclusive) confirmation of the message of the Old Testament prophets.”⁴ The transfiguration, like all the miracles, wonders and signs, deepened the faith of Peter and the other apostles in the Deity of Christ by confirming what the Law and the Prophets and the Psalms said about Him.

4 Roy Deaver, “The Sure Word of God” in *The Epistles of Peter and Jude*, ed. Bill Jackson (Austin, TX: Southwest Publications, 1987), 235

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The blessed apostle Peter, with two other disciples of Christ the Lord, James and John, was up the mountain with the Lord himself and heard a voice coming down from heaven saying ‘This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him’ To remind us of this and draw it to our attention, the same apostle referred to it in his letter and went on to add that all this confirmed the message of the prophets. The voice echoed from heaven, and the prophetic word was thus made more certain.⁵

Peter counsels that his readers would do well to give heed to what he has to say, “as unto a light that shines in a dark place...” Thus the Old Testament prophets are compared to a shining light penetrating into a sin benighted world (Psa 119:105, 130). Jesus brought the ultimate light, for he himself is “the Light of the world” (John 8:12). Balaam prophesied of his coming with these words: “A star will come out of Jacob” (Numbers 24:17; cf. Rev 22:16). This world filled with false teachers is dim and murky and fraught with dangers to the soul. If we are going to make our passage through life safely we must have this divine and brightly shining lamp. With so many “change agents” at work in the church, elders, deacons, Bible teachers, preachers, yea all saints need to give earnest heed to apostolic counsel.[Men such as Max Lucado, Rubel Shelly, Jeff Walling, Joe Beam, James Woodroof, and the like have long since closed their ears to apostolic truth and have themselves become false teachers as has been documented by many sources.] “The shining light, the dawning of the day and the arising of the day star (Christ) all refer to the

5 [Augustine (354-430), *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, Vol XI, Gerald Bray, ed., Thomas C. Oden, gen. ed., (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000) 140]

diffusion of the gospel light into the denseness of worldly darkness, error, ignorance, and superstition”⁶

THE ORIGIN OF PROPHETIC TRUTH

“Knowing this first,” i.e., this is the first thing you must understand about the prophetic word, the Scriptures; “no prophecy is of private interpretation.” This phrase has spawned a great many theological discussions. There are several ideas put forth as to the meaning of this statement. We shall list a few.

(1) The theory of **Roman Catholicism** is that the Roman church gave us the Scriptures and the Scriptures cannot be properly understood apart from the explanation of the church.⁷

Because every part of Scripture was written by men inspired by the Holy Spirit and declared as such by the Church (note the capital “C”), the church is also to interpret it. God has promised to guide the Church into all the truth to the end of the world: therefore, we must submit to the judgment of the Church and not depend upon our own fallible and erroneous judgment.

This is a summary of the footnote in the Douay-Rheims (Catholic) Version of the Bible. The word “Church,” in Roman Catholic terminology, does not here have reference to the members of that organization, or even to the Priests and Bishops (as a full reading of the quote will show). It refers to “The Most Holy See”—the Pope himself! “Thus we are not to trust the meaning *we* would place on Scripture, for the divine task of ‘rightly dividing the world of truth’ is in the hands of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, and finally, in the hands of its head, the pope.”

6 Robert R. Taylor, *Studies in First and Second Peter* (Shreveport, LA: Lambert Bookhouse, Inc., 1981), 75

7 Bruce Oberst, *Letters From Peter* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1962) 155-156

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But the Bible gives no support to the idea that an individual must look to the church for official interpretation. The readers were expected to understand the things written by the apostles and other New Testament writers (Eph 3:4, 1 Jn 2:12-13).

(2) Another idea involves **Holy Spirit illumination**; i.e., no one has the ability by the own mental faculties to explain prophecy because it is not a matter of subjective interpretation. Hence, one must have the Holy Spirit's illumination; Divine help is needed. Those holding this position would interpret this statement as: "no prophecy of Scripture can be understood through one's own powers." [Some of these translations are: *Today's English Version*, *[Good News For Modern Man]*, *Contemporary English Version*, *An American Translation*, *Goodspeed The Twentieth Century New Testament*]

(3) Others, who believe miracles and the gift of prophecy continue today, say that their miraculous gift enables them to preach and provides their "doctrine," but the Bible is the "more sure word of prophecy," and thus, all their "doctrine" is to conform with the word of God because it is "more sure" than their private revelations. A very inconsistent theory at best! In actuality their prophetic revelations are from their own minds and are always going to be contradictory to what the Scriptures say and are in direct conflict with what Peter is saying in this text!⁸

(4) Peter... "is not saying that individuals may not read, understand and interpret the Scriptures as they read it., or that the common man must rely upon some 'official' interpretation from a pastor, conference, or the Pope."⁹

8 Heard on a radio broadcast, Sunday August 20, 2000

9 Bobby Liddell, "Reminders and the Source of Scriptures" in *Studies in 1, 2, Peter and Jude*, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, 1998), 215

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(5) “Private” refers to *one’s own, one’s self, personal*. “Interpretation” carries the idea of *origin*. Thus, the writing of scripture was not a result of the prophet’s own peculiar ideas, thoughts, theories, or personal explanations coming from his own mind. He did not dream them up, they are not his inventions in any way, shape, or form. Peter is speaking of the source of Scripture—“for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will...” (NASV).

This means that the prophets received their prophecies from God and transmitted what he wanted to say, not what they wanted. They were fully aware that the message had been given to them, and they made no attempt to put their own interpretation it. If they could not bring themselves to accept what the Spirit had said to them, then they kept their mouths shut, as Jonah did, for example when he refused to preach to Nineveh (Jonah 1:3), and Balaam also did when he was commanded to say what had been communicated to him.¹⁰

“In particular, Peter discusses how the prophetic message DID NOT COME (i.e., from their own minds, ebd), and then, how the prophetic message DID COME.”¹¹ The origin of Scripture is Peter’s point. If Scripture did not originate from the will of men, then how did it come? It came from **God!** “Men spake from God, being moved (carried, borne along) by the Holy Spirit.” This same word is used in the book of Acts to describe the wind billowing the sails of a ship, thus propelling it through the water (Acts 27:15). David said, “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me

10 Oecumenius, (circa 6th century), *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, N.T. Vol XI*, Gerald Bray, ed., gen. ed. Thomas C. Oden, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 141

11 Deaver, *ibid.* 239

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and his word was in my tongue” (2 Samuel 23:2). This is *inspiration*. Peter states what prophecy is not—“*cunningly devised fables*”; Paul states what it is—*God-breathed* “inspiration of God”— (2 Tim 3:16-17).

So-called prophecies from uninspired men are the result of “cunningly devised fables,” and the religious world is full the them—Premillennialists, Catholics, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, etcetera, etcetera! Add to this list the late Jean Dixon who annually predicted and prophesied world events and the prognostications of the long dead Nostradamus whose followers use the “Discovery Channel,” and other media outlets to speculate future events, just to name a few. The false prophets were often rebuked by the true prophets of God for their false teachings stemming from their own wicked and deceived imaginations (Jeremiah 23:16-22, 25-26 ASV).

How strongly were the prophets influenced by the Holy Spirit as they spoke? The apostle specifies that they “were moved” (*phero*) by its power.... “They were ‘borne along,’ or ‘impelled’ by the Holy Spirit in their speech—not expressing their own thoughts, but expressing the mind of God in words provided and ministered by Him”¹²

CONCLUSION

The Bible is the most thoroughly tested book ever written, yet it remains “the impregnable rock of Holy Scriptures” (William Gladstone). It is THE SURE WORD OF PROPHECY! Let us base our faith, hope, and love in the word of God!

12 W. E. Vine, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1966) Vol 3, 89

Biographical Sketch

Emanuel B. Daugherty was born in Philippi, WV on January 12, 1939 Emanuel graduated from Memphis School of Preaching in 1968 and Alabama Christian School of Religion in 1982. He has preached full time for the Alkire Road church of Christ, Grove City, OH and Dewey Avenue church of Christ in St. Marys, WV. Emanuel is currently Director of West Virginia School of Preaching in Moundsville, WV.

THE BLESSED HOPE

Will Montgomery

INTRODUCTION:

1.In (Titus 2:13). We read, “looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

2. My subject is the blessed hope.

A. The blessed hope we have in Christ is eternal life. (1 John 5:11) “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.”

B. We have a promise of eternal life. (Titus 1:2). “ In hope of eternal life, which God, that can not lie, promised before the world began; also in (1John 2:25) we read, “And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life.”

C. The Bible teaches us that salvation is in Christ with eternal glory. (2 Tim 2:10).

D. (Jude:21) Gives us a picture of **THE BLESSED HOPE**. “Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

E. Jude says we need to keep ourselves in the love of God.

F. In (1John 5:3). The writer tells us how to keep ourselves in the love of God. “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous. And Jesus said if you love me keep my commandments.” (John 14:15).

3. We must be obedient to the gospel and faithful unto death to inherit eternal life. (Mk16: 16). (Rev 2:10).

A. Remember the word’s of Paul in (2 Tim 4:6-8). For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

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Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

B. Look at some of the terms we have noticed already. BLESSED HOPE.

ETERNAL LIFE. CROWN OF LIFE. CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

C. We learn that at the Second Coming of Christ if we have been obedient to the gospel and faithful unto death we will receive a crown of life. Or eternal life.

1. My lesson the blessed hope has two parts.

A. SALVATION PRESENT.

B. SALVATION ETERNAL.

2. Salvation present.

A. Our blessed hope begins with obedience to the gospel of Christ. (Mk 16:16).

B. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. (Rom 1:16.)

C. The plan of salvation is set forth in the New Testament.

3. The plan of salvation.

A. Hear (Rom 10:17).

B. Believe (John 8:24)

C. Repent (Lk 13:3)

D. Confess Christ (Acts 8:37)

E. Be baptized (Acts 22:16)

F. Be faithful unto death (Rev 2:10)

G. WHICH ONE OF THESE CAN WE LEAVE OUT OR CHANGE?

H. NOT ONE AND BE PLEASING TO GOD.

When you take a phone number and change one number, will you get the party you are calling? The answer is no, why do people think they can change the plan of salvation and be saved and have the hope of eternal life?

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I. (Heb 5:8-9) “Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered;
And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

What did the verse say?

What did the verse not say?

It said He is the author of eternal salvation unto all that obey Him.

It did not say He is the author of eternal salvation unto all that disobey Him.

The problem we have is that men are trying to direct their own steps.

In Jer 10:23. “ O Lord I know that the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps.”

Prov 14:12.”There is a way, which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”

Matt15: 8-9. “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

Mk 7:8.”For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.” From these scriptures one very quickly sees that some are not satisfied with the word of God.

Men are teaching such doctrines today as: **Once saved always saved.**

The doctrine of once saved always saved or once in God’s grace always in God’s grace or as it is commonly stated you cannot fall from God’s grace.

The scriptures teach us that we can fall from grace. In Gal. 5:4. Paul said take heed lest ye fall. I Cor. 10:12.

We are taught in Rev 3:5 that our name can be taken out of the book of life.

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We learn in I John 1:7-9, If we walk in the light we have fellowship with Him.

What if we stop walking in the light?

In 2 Peter 1:5-11 we read, And beside all this, giving diligence, add to your faith virtue: and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

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

But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

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

For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

What if you do not do these things? You will fall.

Men also teach the doctrine of salvation by faith only.

One man said it is faith plus nothing.

Does that mean faith without repentance?

The Bible teaches that we are not saved by faith only.

Passages such as James 2:17-24 even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works show me the faith without thy works, and I will show you're my faith by me works.

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

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Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

One young man wrote on a piece of paper the plan of salvation he taught people.

It simply said **believe and confess, (He said that is all you have to do.)**

He used as his only two verses of scripture (Rom 10:9-10) That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation, ask the young man if you must repent? He said, “ Oh yes. So he had to add some verses to the plan of salvation he taught people. Baptism was not one of the verses he added. He said you should be baptized after you are saved. When I asked him to answer the following questions he would not because he could not.

Based on (Acts 22:16) And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

1. Question: Was Saul saved at some point before baptism?

2. Question: What point was it?

3. Question: Why did he still have sins in the room at a point before baptism.

4. Question: What was Saul told to do to have his sins washed away?

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5. One can quickly see why they do not answer these questions for they cannot answer them and hold to their false doctrine.

Another doctrine that men teach is that salvation comes by grace only.

We are saved by grace but not grace only.

We are saved by faith but not faith only.

The Bible teaches in (Eph 2:8-9) For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Where does faith come from? (Rom 10:17) So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

The bible teaches that we are not saved by our own works. (Eph 2:9)

If we are saved by grace only why aren't all men saved? Because the grace of God hath appeared to all men. (Titus 2: 11) God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. If we are saved by grace only then why aren't all men saved?

The answer is men are lost because they will not come to repentance, will not obey the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation. (Rom 1:16)

Another doctrine that is taught by men. The doctrine that you are not saved by works. True we are not saved by our own works. (Eph 2:9). Or does the works of the law save us. (That is the ten commandment law). (Gal 2:16). Remember (James 2:17) Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. And (James 2:24) Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

What kind of works must we work? Let Jesus answer this for us in (John 6:28-29) Then said they unto him, What shall we do, **that we might work the works of God?**

Jesus answered and said unto them, **This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.** When

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men throw all works out, they throw faith out. Belief (faith) is called a work of God. That is why James said faith without works is dead. Faith must be obedient. (James 2:18) Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

We have looked at salvation present what the Bible teaches and what men have taught.

None of these doctrines of men will lead you to the Blessed Hope of Titus 2:13.

2. SALVATION ETERNAL

WE HAVE A PROMISE OF ETERNAL LIFE. (Titus 2:1)

A. We must be obedient to the gospel in order to be forgiven of past sins (Acts 2:38).

B. The Lord adds us to his church the moment we have been baptized into Christ. (Acts 2:47).

C. Now we are in a position to be faithful to God, faithful unto death (Rev 2:10)

D. In (Acts 2:41) we read of three thousand people that were baptized and the next thing you read about them is found in (Acts 2:42). And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

E. It should not be the case that we baptize someone on Sunday and never see them again! We have an obligation to be faithful to the Lord.

F. It helps to understand that baptism puts us into a right relationship with the lord (Mk16:16). But faithfulness takes us to heaven in the end at the judgement (Rev 2:10) (Titus 2:13).

3. SOME THINGS WE NEED TO REMEMBER IN ORDER TO HAVE THAT BLESSED HOPE AT THE

**GLORIOUS APPEARING OF THE GREAT GOD
AND OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.**

1. Fight the good fight of faith lay hold on eternal life. (1Tim 6:12).
2. Worship God in spirit and in truth. (John 4:24).
3. Have the desire to know the word of God. Study. (2Tim2:15).
4. Be a peacemaker. (Matt 5:8).
5. Be a worker. (John 9:4).
6. Practice pure religion. (James 1:27).
7. Love the lost (Mark. 16:15-16).
8. Love the brethren. (Heb 13:1) (Gal 6:1-2).
9. Repent and pray for forgiveness when we fall short. (Acts 8:21-24)(LK 17:3).
10. Live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; (Titus 2:12).
11. Never forget the promise of (Col 1:5) For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;
Never forget (John 14:1-3) Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

Never forget (John 14:6) Jesus said I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

IF WE MISS HEAVEN

WE HAVE MISSED IT ALL (Titus 2:13)

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

Let us be obedient to the gospel and faithful unto death so heaven can be ours.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Will Montgomery was born in East Liverpool OH, January 11, 1947. He was baptized into Christ by Frank Higginbotham in Chester in 1972. He began his preaching career while a deacon at the Chester congregation. He began located work with the East Liverpool congregation in 1981 where he continues in his 19th year. He has a weekly radio program, has spoken on lectureships and conducts 2-6 Gospel Meetings per year. He is married to the former Anita Miller, they have one daughter Tracy who is married to John Knight, and two grandchildren.

PURIFYING LIFE

1 John 3:1-3

Andrew J. Robison IV

A particularly high quality of life is motivated by the hope peculiar to the Christian. Purity in spirit and in body results when a man created in the image of God realizes the special promise of redemption God has made. Man, separated from God by his own willful sin, is doomed to an eternity separated from his beloved Maker. But God extended the richness of His grace through Christ. God reached down and lifted man up. God, through the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, provided man with hope for salvation. Spiritually minded men see the hope and realize its significance. No longer are they bound without hope to an eternity in hell, away from all that is good in God—for only in God does anything good exist (James 1:17). No, now they hold on to the blessed hope of the very opposite—being with God, where all is good and no sin, no persecution, no unrighteousness, no uncleanness, no impurity, is ever allowed to enter (Revelation 21:27; 22:14,15). Being in that place is the hope peculiar to the dedicated follower of Christ, the child of God. Viewing such complete purity by the eye of faith is strong motivation for that child to begin the quest for purity even while bound to the sin-riddled earth in any crooked and perverse generation. Thus, inspired John so aptly notes: (1 John 3:3 KJV) “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” This is the text of our lesson.

Examining the text requires a full explanation of the terms within the biblical context. What, exactly, is the hope, as described by John in the surrounding verses of his first epistle? How is it described? And, how is the purity

pictured? What definition of it lies inherent within the text? Further, in the broad biblical context, what is in view with each of these terms as they are used in the whole of the New Testament? To such study we now turn.

HOPE

The hope John has in mind is, indeed, that biblical hope of the Christian for going to heaven. It is illuminated in the first two verses of this third chapter. (1 John 3:1-2 KJV) “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. {2} Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

To completely understand the hope for the future, man must first understand his present state. Separation from God is man’s present state—that is, without the grace offered through Christ. Nevertheless, the Father bestowed upon His crown of creation the opportunity to be brought near (cf. Ephesians 2:11-13). God adopted us lost sinners as His own special children, bestowing upon us all the blessings of family members, including an inheritance akin to His nature—incorruptible, undefiled, reserved in heaven (Ephesians 1:4, 5; 1 Peter 1:3,4). Therefore, John delights in announcing our status as “children of God” (3:1), and assuring our present regard from the Father as such. This is, indeed, a profound and merciful blessing. But, there is more.

If we know now that we are children of God, we can be certain of a further truth. There will come a time that we will be more fully enlightened with the knowledge of God. That time in which all the glory of heaven is revealed will open our eyes to the fullness of the Divine nature, since

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“we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” Whether the grammatical construction of the verses favors the pronoun he as referring to the Father or to the Son may be difficult to ascertain, but the end result is the same. Someday, our bodies will be changed from a corruptible one to an incorruptible one (1 Corinthians 15:35ff.). Someday, the righteous will be resurrected to eternal life (John 5:28,29). When Christ returns (this seems the most likely reference to which “when he is revealed” would naturally refer), our status as children of God is only enhanced and expanded. We then will get to see Him in the fullness of His glory. This is a blessing that goes beyond hope: We will not have to hope for this glorious vision, we will be there to view it, if you will, with our own new and incorruptible eyes. The apostle Paul aptly noted the motivation this hope provides, and the fulfillment it eventually brings: (Rom 8:24 KJV) “For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?”

PURITY

We are then left to define purity. God’s purity is bound up in His holiness. He is set apart from sinful man by a great chasm, because He is too pure to even look upon evil (Habakkuk 1:13). Holiness to the third power is ascribed to God by the creatures already viewing His glory, surrounding His throne (Revelation 4:8). God is untouched by anything wicked, unclean, or immoral. Any sin—which of necessity brings some degree of pain and consequential suffering—is wholly foreign to God’s very nature. Where there is wrong, it is not God who is there. This is why Christians hope to be with God in a blissful heaven. It is blissful because sin will not be there, and all the resultant suffering will, of necessity, be eliminated (Revelation 21:4).

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Thus, the task of the one who is now termed the child of God is to begin the quest—even while on sinful earth—for this purity. (1 John 3:3 KJV) “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” We do not partake of other men’s sins, but diligently strive to keep ourselves pure (1 Timothy 5:22). It is a measure of our faith, and our relationship to God, as John notes one verse previous to the beginning of chapter three: (1 John 2:29 KJV) “If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.”

To be sure, one who begins a life with Christ be being resurrected from the watery grave of baptism (Colossians 2:12), puts to death the old man of sin (Romans 6:3-6; Ephesians 4:17-24). Risen, thus, with Christ, he sets his affections on those things which are above in the pure presence of God, not on things below in the sinful world of man (Colossians 3:1-2). His life is hidden from the crooked generation, with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). Then, “when Christ, who is our life,” appears, he will “also appear with him in glory” (Colossians 3:4). That is to say, while he is now a child of God on earth, he seeks the ideal of the purity God designed and exemplifies. Then, when the full Divine nature is revealed, he will attain a more complete purity, being like Him, and seeing Him as He is (1 John 3:1-2).

The purity and the hope, then, are really bound together in one. We hope for heaven because God is pure. We aim to be pure because we hope for heaven. Were it not for the motivation of hope, I dare say few, if any, would bother themselves with the pursuance of purity. Were it not for purity existing in heaven, no one would hope to be in such a place. Hope is the motivation for a purifying life. Such a purifying life, made possible by the grace of God, is the only hope of sinful man. Paul notes the connection in another text: (Titus 2:11-14 KJV) “For the grace of God

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that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, {12} Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; {13} Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; {14} Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Redeemed by Christ, we have a clean slate, beginning a new life in purity. The grace of God, therefore, teaches us to continue to seek such purity. Why? So we can anxiously anticipate the return of the Savior. Should we not latch onto the offered salvation through humble obedience, we cannot look forward to such a day. Purifying the temporal life is the only way to attain a pure eternal one.

An early heresy that plagued the church challenged this whole idea. Gnosticism taught that the body, anything fleshly, is hopelessly evil. From there, two prongs of action were followed by different cultic believers. Some became ascetics, trying to beat their bodies into holy submission. Others gave up. Their philosophy became known as antinomianism. They were against the idea of any law. They gave themselves over to every pleasure of life with no restraint. They followed no moral guidelines. Purity of life was incomprehensible to them, and really unnecessary in their view. Since they believed the flesh was hopelessly evil, and the spirit was incorruptibly good, it mattered not whether they sinned in the flesh; their spirit, and thus, their relationship with their idea of God, remained untarnished. It is against such ridiculous tenets that John stresses the purity of life. We are able to purify ourselves! Further, we must, if we hope for spiritual salvation.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Andy Robison was raised attending the Hillview Terrace church of Christ in Moundsville, WV. He is a graduate of Ohio Valley College and Harding University, holding degrees in Bible and Vocal Music. Andy has worked with congregations in Pennsboro, WV, and Farmington, WV. For two years he taught Bible and directed the choruses at Jackson Christian School in Jackson, TN. He presently serves as associate preacher with the Camden Ave. church of Christ in Parkersburg, WV.

Andy is married to the former Marsha Giesler of Rolla, MO. They have a daughter, Hannah, born in 1992, and a son, Andrew, born in 1996.

THE ANCHOR OF THE SOUL

E. Russell King

When Paul wrote concerning what would abide throughout the Christian dispensation, “Faith,” “Hope,” and “Love” (1 Cor. 13:13), love being the greatest, it is hard to comprehend the greatness of love after applying ourselves to the study of “hope” (or “faith”) as the anchor of the soul. It is our purpose in this study, not to explore the greatness of “love,” or even the greatness of “hope,” but to explore the implications of this “hope” as being the anchor of the soul.

In a time when foundations were moving (as they were at the time of the writing of “Hebrews,” and as they are in our time), when doubt is intensified because of conflicting doctrines coupled with abiding stress, and when the signs of the time indicate the approach of even greater faith-shaking forces (such as the Hebrews Christians were facing — as was projected for that time by the Lord in Matthew chapters 10 and 24), there was (and is yet) an urgent need for the soul to be firmly anchored in a verifiable and unshakable hope.

Every book in the New Testament contributes in one form or another to the process of anchoring the souls of men and women through faith in things not seen (Heb. 11:1), things that are eternal (1 Cor. 3:18). For example, the writings of the apostle Peter anchor the souls of suffering Christians (with more severe sufferings to come) “...to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you “ (1 Peter 1:4). The writings of John in the Book of Revelation assured the beleaguered first century Christians of victory. The Book of Hebrews assured those Christians that the faith system, to which they had been led out of the Judaistic system and for

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which cause they were suffering, has irrefutable divine validation, and it is the culmination of God's "immutable counsel" (Heb. 6:13). Therefore, the exhortative conclusion of the Hebrews writer is: "*Do nor be carried about with various and strange doctrines*" (Heb. 13:9), a warning "badly needed by both Jews and Gentiles in the first century...much needed in our day."¹

In a time when the "faith system" (cf. Gal. 3:23) is doubted, ridiculed (rejected), and persecuted, then arises the need for a valid reaffirmation "*of the hope set before us...as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil*" (Heb. 6:18-19 -- NKJV). The Book of Hebrews, a one-of-a-kind in its beautiful and masterful format (not a "riddle" as some have suggested), does just that with argument after argument and colorful threads of thought interwoven from the beginning to the end, affirming and verifying the hope that is sure and steadfast, firmly anchoring the beleaguered soul like no other Book of the New Testament. "It is regrettable that many readers never go far enough into and through the sacrificial language to see that Hebrews is the greatest piece of literature found in the New Testament."² How spiritually poorer is the Christian who is unfamiliar with this unique Book!

Upon reading "Hebrews" one can get a little insight into what Paul (whom I believe to be the writer -- ERK) preached to convert and stabilize his Jewish audiences

1 Garland Elkins, "*Be Not Carried About With Divers and Strange Teachings*," IN: *Studies In Hebrews*, Edited by Dub McClish, The Second Annual Denton Lectures, November 13-17, 1983, Valid Publications:] p. 252ff

2 Jesus Christ Today, *A Commentary on the Book of Hebrews*, Neil R. Lightfoot, [Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1976] Preface

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when He “reasoned with them from the Scriptures” (cf. Acts 17:2-3). This epistle will stabilize a wavering faith, as it was intended to do, motivating one to a fidelity akin to the worthies of old described in chapter 11, averting the unbelief that destroyed the children of Israel as they journeyed in the wilderness (Heb. 3:17-19).

The arguments for the validity of the Christian’s hope begins with 1:1f, “*God...has in these last days spoken to us by {His} Son,...*”; ends with 13:20f, “*...the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead...make you complete...through Jesus Christ...*”; and centers with 6:17-20, “*Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed {it} by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it {is} impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before {us}. This {hope} we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence {behind} the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, {even} Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*” (NKJV) This latter passage (and its context, both near and remote) will serve as the basis of our study, “The Anchor Of The Soul.”

In order to more fully understand the author’s implications imbedded in his statement, “an anchor of the soul,” a number of facts need to be taken into consideration, e.g., the basic meaning and substance of “hope,” the time and circumstances of the “Hebrews” writing, the immutableness of this hope, and the divine assurance of this hope. We think all of this is stated or implied in the above text when considered in its context. That shall be the order of this study in an attempt to grasp the full implications of the phrase, “as an anchor of the soul” (6:19), the urgent need of every soul striving to have

residency in “... *the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God*” (11:10).

THE MEANING AND SUBSTANCE OF “HOPE”

It is not our purpose in this study to define and describe “hope” in detail beyond what is implied in our text and what is necessary to understand it as being the anchor of the soul. “Hope” in its noun form (as generally used in the New Testament) is defined as “favorable and confident expectation...It has to do with the unseen and the future” (Vine’s Expository Dict....p. 562), as is its total implication in Romans 8:24-25. However, as Vine points out, it refers at times to (1) “the ground upon which hope is based, Acts 16:19; Col. 1:27,” as well as (2) “the object upon which the hope is fixed, e.g., 1 Tim. 1:1.” “The ground upon which hope is based” is, in the main, the “anchor of the soul” of which the writer speaks, and which will be the emphasis in this study.

We have been disciplined by the more common usage of “hope” to understand it looks toward something that is desired, beyond present reach, and, in the worst case scenario, not attained. If that were the implication of hope in this text, then the writer could hardly speak of hope as a “strong consolation” that is “both sure and steadfast,” nor would the substance of the Hebrews epistle have “strengthened the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees” (12:12) or stop their drifting away from “the things we have heard” (2:1).

The hope that the Hebrews auditors laid hold of was the refuge to which they had fled, the “ground” upon which they could (did) obtain the blessing of the promise made to Abraham, which promise was confirmed with an oath (6:17). That refuge embodied all that they could possess presently, for all time and for eternity. It embodied all of that of which the law was a shadow (10:1-4), and which

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obtains substance through faith (11:1). The Hebrews writer said this hope was facilitated when “...*on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand {there is the} bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God*” (7:18-19). Hope here refers to “the ground” upon (or through) which “we draw near to God” in “full assurance of faith” (10:22), namely, the scheme of redemption through Jesus Christ and by which justification and sanctification is obtained (Rom. 5:1; 1 Cor. 6:11). That was for the Hebrews auditors (and is for us) a present possession, just as John wrote, “*And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life;...*” (1 John 5:11-12). This is a hope presently possessed, “...*the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers*” (Acts 26:6) — because of which Paul stood in judgment, as he said, “*For this hope’s sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews*” (Acts 26:7). The “hope of the promise” was that all nations should be blessed in Abraham’s seed, “who,” Paul said, “is Christ” (Gal. 3:16). The “twelve tribes” hoped to attain to this promise but didn’t because they rejected the Christ of promise, “*the hope of glory*” (Col. 1:27). That was the promise (the better hope – Heb. 7:19) confirmed by God with an oath, which, the Hebrews writer said, “...*we have as an anchor of the soul*” (6:17-19).

A SLIPPING ANCHOR

Beginning with Heb. 2:1, the “thread of thought” surfaces frequently, either specifically or by implication, that the Hebrews Christians’ anchor was slipping. They once were anchored firmly as is the indication of Heb. 10:32ff, where the writer asks them to “*recall the former days, which, after you were illuminated, you endured a*

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great struggle with sufferings...” At that time they were firmly anchored in the surety that the refuge to which they had “fled” would safely and successfully bring them to an “*enduring possession...in heaven*” (vs. 34). Then the writer exhorted, “*Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward*” (vs. 35). The Hebrews writer vividly portrays these Christians as being in the process of doing exactly what their forefathers did during the wilderness journey, who, through unbelief (disobedience, Heb. 4:11) failed to enter the promised land (Heb. 3:12-19) and thereby missed the promised rest (Heb. 4:1-11). Now, for some reason, these Christians were not as sure of or dedicated to their former cause (to Christ “the hope of glory” - Col. 1:27), as they once had been. Implications in this epistle (and elsewhere in the New Testament) suggest they were drawing back to their former discipline under the Judaistic system, refusing “*...Him who speaks...from heaven*” (Heb. 12:25), just as did Israel of old. The cause of this drawing back to perdition (Heb. 10:37-39) is due in part to a wavering conviction in the all-sufficiency of the gospel of Christ instigated in part by Judaizing teachers (cf. Acts 15:1; Gal. 2:1ff) and a misrepresentation of what Paul preached (cf. Acts 21:20-21), and due in part to the severe, relentless persecution (cf. 1 Thes. 2:14ff) that was causing them to become weary and discouraged (Heb. 12:3).

What severe consequences awaited the Hebrews Christians when they loosed their anchor in the refuge of promise (Heb. 6:11ff)! In the very beginning of this epistle the writer pointed out that what they were turning to (the Judaistic system) was soon to perish (Heb. 1:10-12; cf. Matt. 24:29). Later in the epistle (to encourage their endurance) he quoted Habakkuk 2:3-4 to emphasize that “*...He who is coming will come and will not tarry*” (Heb. 10:37), the “coming” of which Jesus spoke in Matthew 24:30 (cf. Matt. 26:64). In turning back to the law system

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(either in part or in whole) would be exchanging what is “*both sure and steadfast*” (Heb. 6:19) for what “*is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned*” (Heb. 6:7-8). As Jesus announced in Matthew 23:38, the “house” (temple), which was the symbol and heart of this rejected system (Heb. 7:18-19), had already been left desolate (Matt. 23:38) and destined to be “burned” (Matt. 24:2; cf. 1 Thes. 2:14-16). Furthermore, when the Hebrews Christians loosed their anchor in Christ then “*there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins*” (Heb.10:26), and that being true, it then becomes impossible “to renew them again to repentance” (Heb. 6:6). Jesus, the “promise” and “refuge” is the one and final provision for the removal of sin (Heb. 9:28).

A SURE AND STEADFAST ANCHOR

In spite of the “slipping away” tendency of the Hebrews Christians, the writer speaks in an encouragingly positive note, saying, “*But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you...*” (6:9-10) than suffering the fate of that which was destined to be “burned.” (6:8). The writer’s “confidence” was based upon his conviction that they would reevaluate their present tendency and recover their former conviction based in the fulfillment of God’s promise which was confirmed with an “oath” (6:13:18). This completed promise (Acts 13:32-34) ushered in a system far superior to that which was spoken through Moses from Mt. Sinai. So, it was the Hebrews writer’s intent, and the main thread of thought throughout the epistle, to give solid evidence that the “anchor of the soul” to which they had come, namely, “Christ the hope of glory,” is a valid and irrefutable hope — the only hope of glory — for every man of every age (cf. Heb. 9:15; 11:39-40)! Jehovah God, in accordance with His eternal purpose (Eph. 3:11), said through Isaiah, “*Behold, I lay in Zion a*

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chief cornerstone, elect, precious. And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame" (1 Pet. 2:6). Therefore, we confidently and assuredly sing, "*The Lord's our Rock, in Him we hide, A shelter in the time of storm. Secure whatever ill betide, A shelter in the time of storm.*"³ This is the "confidence" that the Hebrews Christians were exhorted to "not cast away" (Heb. 10:35). And argument after argument is given throughout the Hebrews epistle as to why they should not.

First, God has spoken in these last days "*by {His} Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things...*" (Heb. 1:1ff). All that God from before the foundation of the world conceived and purposed concerning man, his salvation and eternal blessings, He purposed and brought to completion in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3ff) --- Christ was the heir of it all. God exalted Him above the angels according to the Scripture (Heb. 1:4ff), and "put the world to come, of which we speak" (the age that "began when Jesus took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven"⁴) in subjection to Him. God gave through Him His final revelation which provided "so great a salvation" (Heb. 2:3) and the promised rest which was not attained through "Joshua" (Heb. 4:8). This revelation is sure, bearing the testimony of God "*both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will*" (Heb. 2:3ff). If the Hebrews Christians would neglect or abandon this "rock solid" revelation and return to the Judaistic system, they would be abandoning "the things which cannot be shaken" for "those things which are being shaken" (cf. Heb. 12:27). They are then in

3 Song: A Shelter In The Time of Storm, V.J. Charlesworth [*Sacred Selections for the Church*] No. 118.

4 Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary, Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1984] p.63

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a hopeless plight (Heb. 2:3; cf. 6:6; 10:26), having turned again to the bondage from which Christ had made them free (Heb. 2:14ff; cf. Gal. 5:1). So, the writer would make a final argument/plea: “*See that you do not refuse Him who speaks.*”(Heb. 12:25).

Secondly, Jesus “...has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses...” because He is “as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end” (Heb. 3:3ff). The contrast is this: Moses was faithful as a servant “in all His house” whereas Christ is “as a Son over His own house.” This put those Christians in a place of dignity, and for them to depart because of “an evil heart of unbelief” (Heb. 3:12) “would be insulting to God”⁵ and leave them with nothing but “a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation” (Heb. 10:27), partakers with those “whose end is to be burned” (Heb. 6:8). So, the writer would make a final argument/plea: “...let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith,...” (Heb. 12:1-2).

Thirdly, Jesus is “...a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens,...” (Heb. 4:14). In this argument, the writer “now contrasts Jesus with Aaron, the high priest,”⁶ showing His superiority because of having “passed through the heavens” (“become higher than the heavens” - Heb. 7:26) and there “to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb. 9:23), to become “a High Priest...fitting for us” (Heb. 7:26; 2:17-18; 4:14-16). As a “great High Priest...according to the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 6:20; 7:17), He functions not under “*the law of a*

5 F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to The Hebrews*, [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964]

6 Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary, Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1984] p. 123

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fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life” (Heb. 7:16). Sitting at the “right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,” Jesus is “*a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man*” (Heb. 8:1ff) in contrast to the Levitical priesthood which ministered in “the copy and shadow of the heavenly things” (Heb. 8:5 – ASV), i.e., the Jerusalem temple, its services, and its types, which were built and set in order by Moses. So, the writer makes a final argument/plea: “*But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God...for by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified*” (Heb. 10:12-14). If this one and final sacrifice is rejected or abandoned “*there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins*” (Heb. 10:26).

Fourthly, Jesus not only is in God’s presence as a Great High Priest, but He is there as our “forerunner” (Heb. 6:20). He is not there as one who has outrun the people of His house but as one who has gone before His people, the “Captain (“pioneer” - ASV) of their salvation” (Heb. 2:10), the “author (“pioneer”)⁷ of eternal salvation” (Heb. 5:9). So, the writer makes a final argument/plea for the Hebrews Christians to “*...run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author (“one who leads”) and finisher (“a completer, perfector”)⁸ of {our} faith...*” This admonition was given “so that they might all be encouraged by His greatness and stimulated by His example”⁹ to not “draw back to perdition,” but to “believe to the saving of the soul” (Heb. 10:39)

7 F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to The Hebrews*, [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1964] p. 105

8 R. Milligan, *The New Testament Commentary on Hebrews*, [Nashville, TN.: Gospel Advocate Co. {Reprint}, 1953] p. 343

9 Ibid, p.343

CONCLUSION

Now, perhaps, we can more fully appreciate the statement which leads into the text of our subject, *The Anchor Of The Soul*. The Hebrews writer said, Heb 6:9-12, “ *But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. 10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. 11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*” (NKJV). Our hope, Jesus Christ, is “sure and steadfast” — He is the surety of the “promise” and the “oath” that confirmed it. Accordingly, we have a “strong consolation” which prompts us to joyfully sing, *We have an anchor that keeps the soul Steadfast and sure while the billows roll, Fastened to the Rock which can not move, Grounded firm and deep in the Savior’s love!*¹⁰

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

E. Russell King preaches for the West Union Church. He also serves as an elder in this congregation. Previously, while supporting himself, he began preaching on Sunday appointments about 1950 and in 1951 began working with congregations on a regular basis, serving congregations in Wallace, WV, Smithfield, WV, Whitehall near Fairmont, WV and Mt Nebo near Fairmont, WV. He retired prematurely from Hope Gas, Inc. to work with the West Union congregation. He has held gospel meetings in West

10 Song: We have An Anchor, Priscilla J. Owens [*Sacred Selections for the Church*] No. 495.

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Virginia, Ohio, Maryland and South Carolina. Over a period of twenty-five years, he has served in different positions with Pleasant Acres Christian Haven, Inc. He and his wife Marian Rose (LeMasters) observed their 50th wedding anniversary on October 11, 1997. They have two children, Ronald E. King of Keyser, WV and Karen K. Tucker of Fairmont. They have six grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

WHY I BELIEVE THE BIBLE

Glenn A. Jobe

Introduction. I believe the Bible because it is the inspired revelation from the Creator of the universe to man (highest of creation besides angels). Notice the various components of this affirmation: (1) the Bible is inspired; (2) the Bible is revelation; (3) there is only one Creator; and (4) that Creator's greatest concern is man, His highest creation. Furthermore, not only do I believe that the Bible is that *one* inspired communication from God to man, but that assertion is provable. The honest seeker of truth can logically come to this conclusion without having to take a "leap in the dark"; that is to say, one is not obligated to arrive at conclusions in the absence of sufficient evidence.

This lecture assumes the existence of the Creator (God) and the existence of the universe. The doctrine of acosmism, which holds that the material universe as we perceive it does not actually exist but is merely an illusion, is denied.

When a person comes to the realization of God's existence through the things made in this physical universe (Rom. 1:19, 20), he is left with two options: He may either (1) refuse to retain that knowledge in his heart (Rom. 1:21, 28) or (2) may "seek God, if haply they [he] might feel after him ["grope for him" (NKJ; NASB)] and find him. . ." (Acts 17:27).

Our present study appeals to that individual who has come to know that God exists by way of the evidence from the material universe and now seeks to determine God's will for his life. How does he go about to discover God's revelation (communication) to him? Where does he begin his search? What questions does he ask? What should he expect to find?

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Though one could attempt to investigate all the evidences for the inspiration of the Bible, this lecture will consider only evidences that in and of themselves are necessary elements to Biblical inspiration. The Bible contain some elements, though sufficient to prove its inspiration, that are not particularly necessary. Bible miracles, predictive prophecy, and scientific foreknowledge fall into this category. Some elements may be necessary but by themselves do not prove that the Bible is inspired. And then some elements are both necessary and conclusive. Our study will investigate only necessary elements that may either be conclusive or inconclusive. These characteristics are *a priori* (before sense experience).

Thus, this study proposes to set forth matters that an honest inquirer of divine revelation would inherently know to be true even before he begins his investigation of any proposed communication from God. What are some of these things he would expect to find?

GOD HAS COMMUNICATED WITH MANKIND.

There are some things one can know before he has any kind of sense experience regarding this subject. These are *a priori* (made before any examination) considerations. For instance, I know that a watch must have a maker before I examine a particular watch or meet its maker.

In the same way, one can know that if God exists and created His highest creation, man, that He would seek to communicate with that creation in some way. It is unthinkable that the Creator would create man with the ability to communicate with Him and then never make any attempt to contact man.

Since the only form by which man can communicate with others is through language, God must communicate with man by way of words. The Bible affirms this truth: ***“God, who at various times and in various ways SPOKE***

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in time past to the fathers by the prophets, HAS in these last days SPOKEN to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds. . .” (Heb. 1:1-2).

Thus, one knows, before investigating any proposed communication from God, that the creator has somehow revealed Himself to man in words.

THE BIBLE IS WRITTEN REVELATION.

If you should learn that your rich uncle has recently died, what is your first question? Most likely you would want to know whether he left a will. What, then, would be your second question? Am I named in his will? The Bible reveals that someone has died, has left his will or testament, and you are included in that will.

Throughout history civilizations have left written records to benefit both their own time and future generations. Today, if I want to make sure that certain things are done in a particular way after my death, I will commit my desires to writing and make certain that written language expresses exactly the manner in which I want to be understood. In our country we have two very important documents that express the beliefs and goals of our forefathers: they are the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution. One branch of our federal government has the sole responsibility to see to it that another branch of government does not pass laws that violate the principles of the United States Constitution.

The Bible reveals that the God of heaven has established several covenants with men. God made a covenant with Abraham and its conditions are recorded in the book of Genesis. God made another covenant with Abraham’s descendants (the Israelites) and it is recorded (written) in the other four books of the Pentateuch. Consequently Moses wrote “all the words of the Lord”

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(Exod. 24:3-4) which included the Law (Deut. 31:9). The Ten Commandments were etched on stone and “written with the finger of God” (Exod. 31:18).

Finally, God has made a covenant with all people, both Jews and Gentiles, to replace the one he made only to the Israelites and this new covenant is forever preserved in the pages of the New Testament (see Heb. 9:15-17). In fact, the New Testament claims that the Old Testament was written (John 5:46-47; 10:33-36) and thus often appeals to what is written (as authoritative) from the Old Testament (*e.g.* John 2:17; 6:31; 10:34).

Why did God have His law and revelation of Himself to man put to writing? At least two reasons are here offered. First, if the words (truths) of God were manifested by historical acts alone and left unexplained, they could be misunderstood. Second, if God’s revelation were by speech only in the past and left unrecorded, it would soon be forgotten or confused.

In light of our present situation, if one can show that there are no miracles today, one must look for God’s words in permanent form. Words that are intended to be preserved are committed to writing. Thus, we know before we investigate any religion today that God has left His written Word. Holy written communication from God is Scripture.

THE BIBLE ADHERES TO THE LAWS OF THOUGHT AND RATIONALITY.

After one discovers a document that claims to come from God, one must ask whether it makes any sense and is consistent even with itself. Logically, one asks whether the document under consideration consistently adheres to the laws of thought and rationality. This is a necessary attribute but is not a sufficient attribute by itself.¹

1. For example, a book on mathematics could possess this attribute but would not be God’s inspired message.

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There are three laws of thought: (1) the Law of Identity, (2) the Law of Excluded Middle and (3) the Law of Contradiction.² For things, the Law of Identity asserts that “A is A” or “anything is itself” (and not something else; GAJ). For propositions the law states, “If a proposition is true, then it is true.” The Law of Excluded Middle asserts that for things, “Anything is either A or is not-A.” For propositions it says, “A proposition, such as P, is either true or false.” The Law of Contradiction asserts: (1) for things, “Nothing can be both A and not-A.” and (2) for propositions, “A proposition cannot be both true and false.” Without these three laws of thought communication is impossible.

Regarding the Law of Rationality, Ruby states,³

Every person who is interested in logical thinking accepts what we call the “law of rationality,” which may be stated as follows: *We ought to justify our conclusions by adequate evidence.*

The claim that the Bible consistently adheres to these laws is of no little significance for in doing so it demonstrates that it is epistemologically acceptable and sufficient. Not only does the Bible explicitly affirm the Law of Rationality (1 Thess. 5:21; Acts 17:11; 1 Pet. 3:15), but regarding truth, the Bible claims that: (1) It itself is truth (John 17:17; John 8:32); (2) Truth is objective and authoritative (Rom. 10:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; 2 John 9-11; 1 Cor. 4:6; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17); (3) Truth does not change to fit man (Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18, 19; 1 Cor. 4:6; Heb. 13:8); (4) Truth is absolute and attainable (John 17:17; Rom. 10:17; John 14:16); (5) Truth does not fear investigation but demands it (Acts 17:11; 1 Thess. 5:21; 2 Tim. 2:15; John

2.The following definitions for the Laws of thought are taken from Lionel Ruby, *Logic: An Introduction* (Chicago: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1950), pp. 255-60.

3.*Ibid.*, pp. 126-27.

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10:32-38; John 20:30, 31; (6) Truth is exclusive (John 17:17; Rom. 10:17; 1 Cor. 4:6) and (7) Truth is valuable (John 8:32).

When one says a proposed revelation from God “consistently adheres” to these laws, he means that said revelation does not just occasionally recognize the truth of these laws or appeals periodically to these laws for its own selfish purposes, but that it always and faithfully adheres to these laws without exception. A book that purports to come from God can never slip off into irrationality, for by mere chance alone, every person is rational at least some of the time.

THE BIBLE IS CONTINUOUSLY RELEVANT.

Another *a priori* consideration of any communication from God is that the message that God has left in writing must have abiding relevance; i.e. it must have meaningful application and understanding for all people for all time.⁴

As we observe man as he is, we realize that man has **three basic needs**: (1) the need to know who he (man) is and why he is here, (2) the need to love and be loved, and (3) the need to have something to look forward to. The Bible clearly satisfies each of these needs, for the Bible reveals that: (1) Man is created after God’s image (Gen. 1:26, 27) for the purpose to serve God (Eccl. 1:13), to labor to the glory of his Creator (Heb. 2:10), and live faithfully before the God in whom He trusts and loves (Eph. 1:3-5); (2) God loves mankind and requires love (John 3:16; 1 John 3:10-12); and, (3) Man has hope (Rom. 8:24) and lives with the great expectation to be with his fellow saints

4. The student is urged to consult N.B. Hardeman’s excellent sermon, “Is the Gospel, as God Gave It, Adapted to Man, as God Made Him?” in *Hardeman’s Tabernacle Sermons IV* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1938), pp. 60-70.

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now (Heb. 10:24-25) and with God in heaven hereafter (1 Pet. 1:3-5).

The Bible provides for man's **psychological** needs: (1) freedom from anxiety (Matt. 7:25-34), (2) freedom from fear (Heb. 13:5-6), (3) freedom from loneliness (Rom. 8:31), and (4) helps one endure suffering (Jas. 5:13).

The Bible is abidingly relevant **socially**: (1) In general principles of love and practicing the golden rule (Rom. 12:10ff.; Matt. 7:12), (2) in the home (Eph. 5:22-23; Eph. 6:1-4), (3) on the job (Eph. 6:5-9) (3) Christian to Christian relationships (Heb. 13:1), (4) with enemies (Rom. 12:20-21), (5) with the poor (Gal. 6:10); and (6) the civil state (Rom. 3:1-5; 1 Pet. 2:13-15).

The Bible is abidingly relevant **morally**: Morals as presented in the Scriptures (1) are revealed by God and are founded on His nature (Jer. 10:23; *e.g.* Tit. 1:2), (2) are based on love for God and one's fellow man (Matt. 22:34-40; 1 John 4:19), and (3) controls both soul and body (1 Cor. 6:12-20).

The Bible is abidingly relevant **spiritually**: (1) reveals God's nature (*e.g.* Isa. 6:3; 1 John 4:8), (2) shows that mankind is lost in sin (Rom. 3:23) and (3) makes known the way back to God (John 14:6; Rom. 8:1).

Thus the abiding relevance of the Bible is both necessary and sufficient. No other source can so guide and encourage men and women (Jer. 10:23).

THE BIBLE IS COSMOLOGICALLY ACCURATE.

Cosmology is the science that deals with the study of the universe as a whole. It includes the totality of everything in this vast system of things.

To assert that the Bible is accurate cosmologically is to say that the Bible discusses/reveals errorlessly the universe exactly as it is and how man relates to the universe as a

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whole. Though not sufficient in and of itself, the Bible must possess this attribute if it is to be taken seriously as God's revelation of Himself to man.

False religious systems, whether based upon false gods or false revelations of the one true God, do not offer an accurate view of the universe. Jeremiah 10:11-13 addresses the error of Judah who had not learned from the mistakes of her "sister" Israel (Jer. 3:6-8) and had gone after idols. She is a nation destined for destruction (Jer. 10:1-22). In contrast to these gods, "Jehovah is the true God; he is the living God, and everlasting King: . . ." (Jer. 10:10). In the verses that follow, the prophet distinguishes the one true God of heaven:

Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, these shall perish from the earth, and from under the heavens. He hath made the earth by his powers, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding hath he stretched out the heavens: when he uttereth his voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth: he maketh lightnings for the rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasuries.

Thus, Jeremiah contrasts the one true God with those of the heathen: (1) Their gods are non-living--God is alive; (2) Their gods are temporal--God is eternal; (3) Their gods are provincial--God is sovereign over all.

The Bible explicitly teaches that: (1) the cosmos came by guidance (Gen. 2:4; Psa. 24:1-2; Jer. 31:35; Amos 4:13); (2) an organic whole requires a control (a genius of the whole) and interacting parts (*e.g.* human body, head controls lower parts; see Psa. 8:3-8); and (3) the nature of the whole was created by Divine power (Psa. 33:9; Isa. 45:12).

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As one examines the world on which he lives, he discovers that the Bible is always accurate whenever it touches upon scientific fact. On the third day of creation, “. . . God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so” (Gen. 1:9). The Hebrew word “place” might also be translated “bed.” Oceanographers have only recently revealed that all the oceans are actually joined and constitute one bed.⁵

Isaiah 40:22 declares, “ *It is He who sits above the circle of the earth. . .*” Only recent investigation has revealed that the earth is circular. Compare this statement with the beliefs of the ancient Egyptians (by whom Moses was “learned in their ways, Acts 7:22) who believed the world was flat and supported by five pillars. The Greeks believed that Atlas supported the earth on his shoulders. Hindu legend had the earth resting on a large elephant standing on a gigantic turtle, which was swimming a cosmic sea. However, Job 26:7 states that God “hangeth the earth upon (or over; ASV footnote) nothing.” The water cycle is accurately described in Amos 5:8 and Ecclesiastes 1:7.

The Bible is also accurate when it comes the subject of man. The Bible affirms that: (1) Man can know of God through God’s physical creation (Rom. 1:18-20); (2) Man is created by God and after God’s image (Gen. 1:26, 27); (3) An organism’s life is found in its blood (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11, 14; cf. 1 Pet. 2:19); (4) God made from one blood every nation of men on the earth (Acts 17:26); (5) Man can spread communicable diseases (such as leprosy; Lev.

5. John C. Whitcomb, Jr. and Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood* (Phillipsburg, NJ: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, pp. 229-230).

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13:45-46); and (6) Man's life is not the sum total of the things he possesses (Luke 12:15).

Conclusion. This paper does not purport to discuss or even list all of the proofs for the inspiration of the Bible. However, this paper has listed some of the characteristics that any communication from the God who created the universe must have. If any proposed communication has at least these characteristics herein discussed, it is God's inspired message to man. Thus, the Bible contains necessary properties that the honest seeker may find in order that he may know that the Bible is God's inspired word.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Glenn A. Jobe is a native of Chicago, IL and has been preaching for the same congregation now located in Schaumburg, IL (a northwestern suburb of Chicago) for the past 23 years. He received his B.A. degree from David Lipscomb College and his M.Th from Harding Graduate School of Religion. He is married to the former Shirley Stracener of Memphis, TN. They have three children: Robert (Bert) - 23 years old, Rachel - 20 years old and Scott - 13 years old. He speaks on a number of lectureships each year, has done 7 years of radio work and 12 years of local cable live call-in programming.

FAITH AND WORKS

Dan Kessinger

SAVED BY TRUE FAITH

But without faith {it is} impossible to please {Him}, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and {that} He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Heb. 11:6)

Christians are believers; they are designated such because this one aspect so fully defines us. We could be called “hearers,” but there are many who hear and do not obey. (James 1:22) God could call us the confessors as well, but some who confess Christ fail to live for him. Christians are likewise the people who have repented and been baptized according to Acts 2:38, but if these acts are not based on faith, they are vain. Moreover, some baptized people return to the world.

But “believers” speaks accurately of the saved. If one is not living faithfully he is not a believer. If he has refused to obey God in any of the areas we have just discussed, how can he claim true belief and trust in God? Moreover, faith is by far the most continuing process, it defines us in the here and now, now just in a decision we once made. The believers are those who trust and obey.

How might we build a faith pleasing to God? There are some kinds of faith which may be the beginning point of service to God, but being incomplete they turn out to be a vain faith, a non-saving faith. There is a faith that knows the truth, but does not act. There is a faith which knows the consequences but does not trust God. Both of these examples of incomplete faith help us to understand how important real, biblical faith is. Faith that is of value is a

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definite choice with regard to our beliefs and actions, not just a mental decision.

As we gain knowledge and experience, we also gain the ability to more realistically analyze; we begin to see the holes and weak spots in our shield of faith. It seems the longer we live and grow the more we discover how diaphanous and delicate it is. We begin to realize how weak is even the greatest faith. Jesus frequently chastised the great group who followed him for weak or little faith. If the apostle Peter frequently had “little faith,” (Matthew 14:31) what must be true of one such as I?

When we thus reflect upon faith as it measures up to that of our Lord, we may reach despair, for a lack of faith will cause us to lose our souls. If the apostles’ faith were little, my own is almost non-existent! How may I then be saved? The answer lies in the nature of faith itself. Perhaps we are given such a clear picture of the mistakes and flawed faith of these men in order to give us assurance that God is here to help those who believe.

We read of one in Mark 9:24 whose plaintive cry was “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” Many of us have little difficulty identifying with this father. He wanted desperately to believe as he should, but he admitted his doubt. His faith was “little,” but we wonder, how little faith is too little for God to bless us?

There are two sensible and Biblical answers to the question, “how little faith is too little?” Let me answer first, then elaborate. Faith that sees itself as large is too small, and faith that refuses to seek is too small. Since faith’s focus is upon the Father and not upon the seeker, it is possible for an all powerful God to bless and even save his imperfect disciples. In fact, there are no perfect disciples, there are only ones with flaws. (I Cor. 10:12). This does not excuse bad behavior (Rom. 6:1-2). Faith demands a particular lifestyle and those who refuse to live in a faithful

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manner are lacking in faith. but one thing that will kill our little faith is if we become convinced in the power and size of our faith rather than in the goodness and mercy of the object of our faith. Remember, the focus of faith is God, not the believer. The maker of the universe can work with and even save through little faith.

Just as a self satisfied faith is too small, a faith that refuses to seek is too small. The father of Mark 9 may have seen the flaws in his faith, he certainly was acquainted with doubts and fears, but he was there, wasn't he? He brought his son to the master, knowing that his faith was not what it should be, but he seeking Jesus anyway.

There are many who have a measure of belief in the Lord today, but have refused thus far to place their lives in His hands by obedience to Him and His gospel. Their faith is too small. There are many whose doubts in the Lord may even parallel those surely held by this grieving father. God does not require perfect mature faith of his disciples, but one must at the least begin to follow him. God challenges us to be men and women of faith, a walk not by sight. We must trust God, not without evidence but because he has shown himself to be trustworthy. We indeed believe many things which we cannot see, both events of the past and future. But we believe because we trust the voice who has spoken these words of faith to us. He has proved himself.

PARTNERSHIP OF FAITH AND OBEDIENCE

The great Faith chapter of the Bible, Heb. 11 proves that all service is acceptable only it stems from faith. Heb. 11 does show us that faith always motivates obedience, but it really helps us to emphasize that all must be done through faith. One may not be saved today by doing as any of these did in their lives, because these actions are no longer the actions of faith. Building an ark was an act of faith because God demanded it of Noah, but he has not

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asked it of you. Likewise the actions of all the heroes of faith were the right actions because they were the result of faith.

A careful reading of Hebrews 4:2 clearly indicates there were more than one essential element in salvation. In this case, one essential element did not save, until all those elements were present. Is the gospel an essential element for salvation? According to Rom. 1:16, the gospel is absolute; no one will be saved without it according to Rom. 10:14. But having only one essential element, that is hearing the gospel, is characterized as that which “did not profit” in Heb. 4:2. Why did this essential element profit no one? Because another essential element was lacking.

This verse illustrates to us the need for all essential elements to be in place before the desired effect becomes reality. When the scriptures state unequivocally that one must obey based on faith, Calvinist hearts are generally not open to receive that information. Why not? Because they have already decided obedience is non-essential, a doctrine unknown to the world until a few centuries ago. Thus, this unproved, unprovable, and false leg of argumentation is held tenaciously in spite of the facts.

Most Calvinists, good folks all, see every Bible verse commanding faith or promising to the faithful as proof that faith is all God requires. But if He stated in only one N.T. verse another essential element, would we not be obligated to that condition as well? But He has given us literally hundreds of verses proving our obligation in other areas than faith alone. If God had chosen to say faith alone is not enough, how could He have stated it more effectively than He did in James 2:17-20? If God required other essential elements including baptism, how could He have stated it more effectively than in Mark 16:16?

We are believers not because of what we think, but because of what our thoughts lead us to do. No husband can

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claim he loves his wife if he misuses and abuses her. No child can claim to be a faithful child if he refuses to obey his parents. No man can claim belief in God and His word who refuses to obey him. Believers trust and obey. But our religious neighbors still insist that obedience to God based on faith is “works salvation,” as though God is pleased when we resist his commands..Likewise, no one can claim to be pleasing to God if his actions are not of faith. We are obligated to obey, not because the law loves us, but because the lawgiver does! Though analysis of God’s laws is frequently helpful, we may not presume to know why God commanded all He did, or how each law works in His mind. But even then, can’t we still trust and obey? The real challenge is to walk in God’s law recognizing it is the right course because it is God’s law, focusing on the cause rather than the effect.

But men frequently take the easy way out, forgetting God in a nominal pursuit of His law. Thus the Ark (of the Covenant) was used as a talisman; the brazen serpent became Nehushtan the idol. In the same sense, circumcision never justified Abraham, God did. But Abraham had to be circumcised once God gave the law; if he had not been, he would not have trusted God. Paul proved God was Abraham’s savior before circumcision existed, thus the uncircumcised may be saved after it ceased to be. While laws do not save, God only saves those who obey his law. God’s grace is worlds apart from the cheap, irresponsible brand of Calvinists and Neo-Calvinists.

FAITH AND WORKS IN THE PLAN OF SALVATION¹

There are new voices in the Lord’s Church, not really

¹ From this point on, most of this lecture is derived from my book “*A Cloak of Malice.*”

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saying anything new or even unfamiliar. It is nothing more than old Calvinism, a theology desperately dependant on the use of spiritual blinders. Not only is the Calvinist able to ignore facts which clearly dispute his theology, he can blithely accept contradicting tenets. F.F. Bruce pointed out the reformers' theme was

sola gratia, sola fide, soli Deo gloria (by grace alone, through faith alone, to God alone be glory)²

If by faith alone, can salvation be by grace alone, and vice versa? "Alone" does not mean "mostly". Such a contradictory theme!

We are vexed when our denominational friends fail to see God's demands for obedience in securing salvation. What could be simpler than "baptism doth also now save us" (I Pet. 3:21)? But that unique Calvinistic tunnel vision prevents such truth from taking root. Strangely, they insist on repentance from dead works, confession of the name of Christ, and righteous living before God under pain of eternal damnation. Do they really believe in salvation by grace only? These believe the sinner must do **something** to be saved, but still insist on salvation by either grace or faith alone.

What does this discussion of Calvinism have to do with us? In spite of its obvious inconsistencies, Calvinism in churches of Christ is becoming more of a pattern and less of an aberration. After decades of debate, many are now confused about the process of salvation, whether by grace or by grace alone, whether by faith or faith alone. Pogo the 'Possum once lamented the littering of his beloved Okefenokee swamp by saying, "We has met the enemy, and he is us!"

2 F.F. Bruce, F.F. *Answers to Questions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), p. 51 Cited in Coffman, Deuteronomy p. 106.

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The words we use are significant and have real meanings. Temporary convenience cannot be the criteria for defining words, neither can any other subjective “standard”. For instance, the word “only” does not mean “marvelous” or “praiseworthy”, it means “nothing else” and not “mostly nothing else.” A sensible and objective definition of “only” precludes teaching salvation by anything only.

Some justify these varieties of Calvin’s theory by protesting that they also teach the need for obedience to the law of God, particularly baptism. But these contrary concepts are mutually exclusive, and we marvel at the ignored implications. Which doctrine will he retain when he finally sees the contradiction? And what of those who learn from him? Will they never logically proceed to “I have no obligations”, despite occasional reminders to the contrary? We wonder at the lack of scriptural authority. If “grace only” or “faith only” were an appropriate view of the magnificent salvation process, why does the Bible never use that phrase or anything like it? If these renegade statements are merely a fresh look and new verbiage while affirming the same old truth, why do our troublers seek fellowship with sectarians.

How important is salvation? It is grand; it is vast; it is awesome; it is the central theme of all Scripture. The Old Testament prophesied of coming salvation, which began to be fulfilled that day in Bethlehem. New Testament doctrine bases its authority for salvation on the cross. God was thinking about salvation in the church before the world was formed (Ep. 1:4), and even the name “Jesus” means “savior.”

Understanding the nature of sin may help us better understand the nature of the plan of salvation. We are lost because of violations of God’s code of conduct rather than any Divine whim of arbitrary damnation. We hear it said

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(and rightly so) that sin offends God, but one should understand that this is more than a mere “personal” offence to him. Though a wise person strives to avoid such offense for obvious reasons of self-preservation, there are also reasons why sin offends God. It is a violation of law, and it is wrong. “Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death.” (Jam 1:15) Sin separates us from God through actual acts of transgressions, not because of God’s vague preferences.

Likewise, salvation is not, as some would have us believe, a vague setting aside of God’s law. Men become sinners because God’s standards are violated; they also receive saving grace when they obey God’s standard. As surely as rules and love may (must) peacefully co-exist, standards and grace work together for the saving of mankind. If saving grace does not conform to standards, would God not have bent the rules to save his son’s life on the cross?

Most denominations resist any emphasis on a plan of salvation common to all believers, even as each sect has its own version. They seem convinced that God’s plan to save has little to do with commands or laws, and have trained themselves to be uncritical of anyone who “finds Jesus,” no matter how un-Biblically he found him. One says he found Jesus through faith alone while another finds him by grace alone, Jesus spoke to a third in a dream, but rode in the passenger seat of a fourth person’s car. A fifth prays the sinner’s prayer while number six prayed through at the Mourner’s Bench. Have they all found Jesus? Have any of them found him?

The confused religious world believes in God’s plan to save, but they also are convinced that such a plan is essentially limited to him and his actions; he has no real requirements, and certainly no pattern of obedience. These folks speak of many paths to one goal and call Jesus a

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“personal savior,” a relationship based on feeling saved rather than on Biblical criteria. Where is the verse that teaches salvation by “accepting Jesus as our personal savior” anyway? I always wondered what other kind of savior he could be, except a personal one! Tom T. Hall sounded like many of our religious neighbors, when he sang in the early 70’s

Me and Jesus got our own thing going
Me and Jesus got it all worked out
Me and Jesus got our own thing going
We don’t need nobody to tell us what it’s all about

Is it coincidental that “me” precedes “Jesus” in each line? In this view, the truth means much less than the way I feel, and facts are virtually meaningless. Don’t disturb me with evidence, we’ve got our own thing going!

Religions once disagreed on facts. They then agreed to disagree, so everyone could feel right whether he were or not. Today, they are moving toward a position which affirms that facts are meaningless as a concept, so being right or wrong makes no difference! But the Bible reveals that those who were following Jesus were one in the early church. There was one doctrine they followed, the doctrine of Christ. There was one church to which they belonged, the church He built. There were not various kinds of Christians, they were only Christians, and Christians only.

There was also but one plan of salvation rather than a series of individual and vague responses to the call to sinners. The Bible teaches us we must hear the word of God, believe it, repent, confess the name of Jesus, and be baptized. Those who do all these things are added to the Lord’s Church and forgiven of their sins, and they are all equally important. Though there are as many opinions on what to do to be saved as there are religious organizations, the only one worthwhile is the one taught in the New Testament.

ABSOLUTES

How specific and complete must our obedience to the gospel be? To many, obedience to the gospel is a vague generality, and so they don't understand controversies over seemingly small differences in the ways people say they were saved. Why all the fuss? Varying answers to the question "What must I do to be saved?" are small potatoes. After all, we serve a God who is neither petty nor small minded.

But he is still God. And his book, the Bible, teaches anything but a vague answer to the question "What must I do to be saved?" Servants of God must be equally specific. So why do so many religions give a muddy answer to such a clear question? The answer is that there are specific commands in the plan which are neither taught nor obeyed by these groups; they can't afford to be specific about God's commands. But he is still God. And since he is, we have neither the right nor option to disobey even one of his commands. If we had such a fictitious right, how would we go about choosing the commands we are free to disregard? The denominational world must be vague with the plan of salvation because their partial plans cannot stand Biblical scrutiny.

If the Bible reveals a specific and binding plan of salvation, what of those who do not obey it? Unless II Thess. 1:8 is incorrect, there is a punishment awaiting them. Therefore, if I love the souls of men, I may not extend Christian fellowship to those who have not obeyed the gospel. Extending vain fellowship is not a mark of Christian maturity, as some claim, but such fellowship serves to encourage a lost soul to never obey the gospel!

There are two distinct ways to eliminate the authority of a Bible imperative, or law. One may create his own authority and directly rule against the Bible command. This method is rather difficult to achieve and maintain, as it

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requires unquestioning loyalty from subjects who are forbidden to dispute higher religious authority. It is only after centuries of religious tradition (such as with the Catholic Church) or with cultic mental control that one may comfortably contradict Bible teaching.

The more immediately practical method of eroding the authority of a Bible law is to camouflage it; make it appear to disappear. For instance, the Baptists would never dream of convening to remove the command of baptism from the Bible. Instead they bring faith so sharply into focus that all other commands are blurred. Even though they don't really believe in salvation by faith only (they believe in repentance and confession before being saved and right living afterward), they teach it. It is as though the ink from Jno. 3:16 has bled through the pages of their Bibles and obliterated every verse commanding baptism!

This same re-focusing process is on display in various places around our brotherhood. According to Rubel Shelly, the seven "ones" of Eph. 4 are the only proper criteria for fellowship. While we admire the grandeur of this chapter and its appeal for unity, how does it rule out other Bible conditions of fellowship? Rather than an attempt to honor and clarify Eph. 4, this claim was a flagrant attempt to render other New Testament information invisible by the clever use of camaflogue.³

But why make such a generalization anyway? The only reason to blur the differences between Biblical baptism and the inventions of Sectarians is to create common ground for fellowship with them. In the process, the impact of the plan of salvation, so far as its being a dividing line between the lost and the saved, is ignored. Objectivity in salvation takes a beating. But it is the Bible, not the church of Christ sect,

3 Rubel Shelly, *I Just Want To Be A Christian* (Nashville TN: 20th Century Christian, 1984) pp 89-90

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which teaches objective standards, objective testimony, and objective judgment (Rev. 20:12).

The world rushed to embrace subjectivity for obvious reasons: it insulates error from criticism and excuses failure by refusing to define success. The religious world has also come to adore subjectivity for the same reasons, but with an unannounced subtlety of a clandestine affair. If the target is vague (or non-existent), bull's eyes are not difficult to come by.

Among other things, religious subjectivity lessons our basic responsibility: obedience to God. This accounts for the virtually universal rejection of baptism, since it is a highly objective command. But regarding faith, such claims may be heard on a daily basis. Of course, all God's commands have a level of objectivity, even faith (Jno. 6:28-29). Many claim a subjective, miraculously given faith saying, "I know in my heart that I have been saved." No one ever says "I believe in my heart I have been baptized." It is more than baptism which suffers, it is the entire notion of real, objective, demanding truth.

In stark contrast to society's moral subjectivity and the denominational world's vague plan of salvation, the Bible is unflinchingly clear, focused and consistent. There is one and only one gospel plan of salvation. Since it is one for all, it is objective, by which we mean that God's requirements do not change from person to person. If the Bible is true, everyone is saved in exactly the same way, not by finding his own path. "But God be thanked that {though} you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered." (Rom. 6:17)

They are hearing, believing, repenting, confessing, and being baptized. Some call these five steps, and others mock us for being "five steppers." It makes little difference whether we call them commands or steps, or even if we have no category name at all. It is more important that we

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understand each of these actions are supported by scriptural authority, required by God, and we cannot be saved until we thus obey him. If this renders us “five steppers” so be it. Is it better to be a “four stepper” when the Bible commands five?

If five specific commands put us in Christ, salvation must surely be objective, the same for all, a law. Since these five are so clearly commanded, they are difficult to assail individually. It is much easier (and often more effective) to sloganize and mock the concept of “five steps,” as though this were a human invention. According to this reasoning, Naaman should have been reluctant to dip in the Jordan, because Elisha was a “seven stepper.” Likewise, the Rich Young Ruler was right in failing to obey the five steps he was commanded (go, sell, give come, follow). And so we find ourselves again facing the question of obedience. We would mostly rather choose the terms of our own salvation than bend to God’s will. To suggest there is but one path to God sounds very narrow-minded to some, but that is the precise number of such plans revealed in God’s book, the Bible. If the plan of salvation is a law, it is the same for everyone. Jesus cannot be a personal savior to some people in some way and another savior with different rules for others. As much as we may prefer to think everyone who claims Jesus is saved, we have no right to thus misrepresent the plan of salvation. I have no options except to either accept or reject God’s plan.

OBEDIENCE WITHOUT FAITH?

Must we understand our obedience to the gospel? The old controversy which seemed to be settled did not go away, it only festered. Driven by a desperate headlong rush to court “other fellowships,” our compromisers fall all over themselves to wave magic wands over non-biblical baptisms. Even seemingly mainstream authors among us

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have propounded this view,⁴ telling us that one must only know he is being baptized to please God. This view is inclusive of those who believe God is pleased with their being baptized as a Christian work rather than as the response of a sinner to the gospel.

If they can dispense with the Bible's stated reasons for baptism, surely we can also ignore the deduced reason (to please God). We should then fellowship those baptized as infants, and if these compromisers can show one verse supporting their position, we will show two to support infant baptism. No such verses exist; this theory was cut from whole cloth.

Faith is the issue, not immersion. If the action alone saves, what about childhood dunkings? When I was a boy, we immersed one another in the creek, going as far as playing "baptism" replete with the proper wording. Were these good enough? When we were old enough to obey the gospel, why not just shake us in? In a mind boggling reversal of facts, those who dignify and recognize these baptisms accuse us of "sectarian baptism" when we refuse to play along. We believe and practice Biblical baptism for Biblical reasons; they accept any Baptism for reasons invented by councils, synods and conferences, and yet they scream "sectarian baptism"!

There is no way to legitimize an illegitimate baptism, and we stand amazed at those who are these playing games with the souls of men. But many are uncomfortable giving bad news, and feel it is judgmental to tell someone he is wrong. These contortions attempt to justify baptism that bears not even a nodding acquaintance with the New Testament, an attempt to save people without their knowing they were lost!

4 Jimmy Allen, *Rebaptism?* (West Monroe La: Howard Publishing Co., 1991)

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How can it be that one believes in salvation by faith and by works? Because the Bible teaches faithful obedience. If faith is missing, nothing can ever be right. Faith is central throughout our spiritual lives. If there is no belief, there is no blessing in hearing, we might as well had not heard at all. Likewise, no confession, repentance or baptism not motivated by faith is acceptable to God. It all revolves around faith. That's why Rom. 1:17 reads For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." How central and basic the issue of faith is, for it begins and ends with faith. Faith is that important.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Dan was born in Riverview Michigan, the son of Bob and Doris Kessinger. After brief boyhood stints in Kentucky, West Virginia, and Georgia, his family returned to West Virginia to stay in 1973. He and his wife, the former Mary Amy West have two boys, D.J., age six, and Thomas, 18 months.

Dan graduated from Walton High School in Roane County WV, and attended Ohio Valley College where he earned associate and bachelor degrees in Biblical Science.

Dan preached his first sermon in the Spring of 1982 at the Mt. Zion church of Christ in Walker WV. He has served congregations in Belle, Long Valley, Gandeeville, Proctor, and since February of 1994, the Dewey Ave. church of Christ in St. Marys.

In addition to his local work (including a weekly radio program), Dan conducts gospel meetings and appears on lecture programs each year. He is a frequent contributor to religious journals, and is the author of "A Cloak of Malice." He has worked with WV Christian Youth Camp since 1984, and West Virginia School of Preaching since 1995.

THE ATONING DEATH (EPHESIANS 2:11-13)

Brad Poe

Wherefore remember, that once ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision, in the flesh, made by hands; that ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ.

INTRODUCTION

Everything we receive in life comes in rationed amounts. From cashflow, to a 12oz. soft drink, to the daily energy reserve in our bodies, we only get a portion. We are time-bound, brain-bound and body-bound. Even with the help of technology, our capacity has its limits. A man can only learn so much, run so fast and jump so high.

Can limited creatures grasp a boundless God who supplies a bottomless cache of spiritual assets? That is the challenge of Ephesians. Not once but twice (1:17-23;3:14-21), Paul includes prayers in the text to this end: that the readers might be able to digest all that God has provided for them in Christ Jesus: that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints....(1:18).

Chapter 1 contains an itemized list of the blessings. The first article of chapter 2 explains the effect upon man, individually (1-10). The second article explains the effect upon man, corporately (11-22). My assignment is to give

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the sense of 2:11-13 which helps to clarify the atoning death as the means of Christian hope.

A PROFILE OF THE PRE-CHRISTIAN GENTILE PLIGHT

The transition word *Therefore* qualifies 2:11ff as a conclusion, linking our text to the material before it as a consequence. In this teaching unit, Paul will preach the inclusion of every Christian into the *household of God* (2:18). But before he can impress the Gentile with how near he is, he must first remind him of how far away he was. Here is a measurement of the gap between the pre-Christian Gentile and the community of God.

Regarding origin, the gap was covenantal. *Gentiles* is a translation of the word “nations”. Far from being generic, it is the official New Testament term for the non-Jewish world.¹ It identifies all clans whose ancestry did not trace back to one of the twelve tribes who made the pledge at Sinai (cf. Ex.24:1-8). The diversity inherent in the term was not merely genealogical but also in history, worldview, culture, etc.

Regarding perception, the gap was clear. *Circumcision* was the cutting away of the foreskin which originated as the sign of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen.15:1f), was integrated into the Law by the Passover (Ex.12:44) and became a Jewish title (cf. Ac.10:45; et. al.). By calling them *Uncircumcision*, Paul marks the anatomical difference, which argues the absoluteness of the difference. Unlike a trait such as skin color, in which variety occurs along a continuum, this distinction was “either/or”. A man could not be almost circumcised. Either the operation was performed, or it wasn't.

¹ *Theological Dictionary Of The New Testament* (Abridged), Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub.Co., 1985, p.201

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Regarding scope, the gap was comprehensive:

In reading *without Christ*, one might reply, “So were the Jews!”. True enough, the incarnation doesn’t occur in the Bible story until Matthew chapter 1. But Israel had the Christ as typified in the Law, stipulated in the promises and announced by the prophets.

The commonwealth of Israel means the theocracy which superintended the civil, judicial and religious affairs of the tribes.² Being of Israelite citizenship brought privileges. Since the Gentiles were *aliens* (NKJV) they did not, for example, have the advantage of living under the disciplinary influence of the Law codes.

The covenants of promise would include that of Abraham (Gen.22:15f), Isaac (26:24), Jacob (28:13f), the Hebrews (Ex.24:1f) and David (2Sam.7). An attentive student might say, “Didn’t the Gentiles figure into the promises?”. Of course they did: *And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed* (Gen.12:3). But the operative phrase is “in you”. What promises the Gentiles had were based upon Hebrew covenants, to which they were *strangers*. The Gentiles had no binding, legal treaty with God.

They were *without hope*. For the Jew, history had an orientation. Today may be bad, but tomorrow held the prophetic possibility of something good. The Jews were waiting for a new king, a splendid age and the ideal kingdom. For the Gentiles, history had no fixed points. They could not view tragedy within a redemptive context. Their past lacked meaning, their present lacked direction and their future lacked vision. Gentiles weren’t waiting on anything. Life carried no legitimate expectation of a favorable outcome.

² *Linguistic Key To The Greek New Testament*, Fritz Rienecker (Cleon Rogers, ed.), Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1976, p.526.

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The Gentiles had “gods” but they were *without God*. Where there is not God, there cannot be revelation. Soothsayers, conjurers and witches advised pagan kings, not devout prophets. There was no Scripture, no illumination, no “thus says the Lord”. “Spiritual guidance” meant necromancy, clairvoyance and divination.

PRESERVING THE PAST AS AN ANTITHETICAL MODEL

Concerning the disciple and history, in one setting, Paul wrote *Forget* (Phil.3:13). At our text, Paul pleads *Remember*. Does Paul have a purpose? What could be gained by this profile? Why would Paul, by the Spirit, put Gentile converts through a memory exercise of their previous, desperate condition?

Over the gates of an old Nazi concentration camp at Dachau, Germany is the warning attributed to George Santayana about the duty of man to history: “Those who do not remember the past are condemned to relive it.” The Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center of Central Florida in Orlando exists to educate new generations about Adolf Hitler’s regime. Their motto? “Preserving the past to protect the future”. Since mankind is inextricably attached to the Nazi atrocities, he can turn the awful, powerful events to his benefit by using it as an antithetical model.

Here is a healthy engagement with the pre-Christian past. A man cannot detach himself from it. But he can use its leverage to his spiritual advantage if he will employ it as an antithetical model---a prototype for how things pertaining to his soul ought not to be.

What we have identified is a simple technique. It works like this: in anticipation of radical change, you take a picture. Then, after the fix, you take another one. The intent is to document the change. To appreciate how good it looks

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now, you should have accurate documentation of how bad it looked then. Dentists, home-improvement companies and dietitians use this “before-after” approach to market their work. Paul and other writers used this teaching method often (cf. Rom. 7:5,6; Eph. 5:8; 1 Pet. 2:10; et. al).

Therefore, Paul has an agenda with this plea to remember. Two antithetical changes are listed in this text, and a third quickly follows in the context. Each set of contrasting pairs describes the whole change in the Gentile predicament.

First, notice the phrase which is the backbone of my assigned reading: *Once...but now*. This is a time-related expression---past, as opposed to present. Second, there is a distance-related expression: *far off...brought near*. Besides the template of an historical timeline, this allows the reader to appreciate the transformation using the language of the spiritual gap detailed above. Third, there is a quality-related expression: *two...but one* (2:15). Conspicuous proof for the celebrated change from “once far” to “now near” is the production of this one new, peaceful man out of two old, conflicting bodies.

In keeping with the program of this epistle, such a change can only be experienced *in Christ*, a phrase (or variation thereof) used about 30 times in Ephesians. And there are more results for the church which spring from this achievement to be named following my assigned text, such as belonging (2:19), stability (20) and growth (21). Yet, it is the reception due the Gentile converts into the community of God, on equal terms with the Jewish converts, which is the centerpiece of this whole section (cf. also 3:6).

(HOW SPECTACULAR IS THIS ACCOMPLISHMENT?)

My assignment is “The Atoning Death” which names the agent for this feat. But before we go there, I want to

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pause for a parenthetical remark. Are we as impressed as we should be so far? Is the closure of this gap from “far” to “near” a big accomplishment? Can we prove the creation of this *new man* to be something spectacular?

Consider the apparent incompatibility between any two groups in our generation, whether political (Republican/Democrat), racial (Black/White) or cultural (Native-born American/Cuban-American). Could any two groups boast greater diversity than the Jew and the Gentile? No; in scruples, diet, manners, culture, history, politics, ethnicity, worldview, the gap between these two human classes is widest. And this was by divine design (cf. Rom. 9-11). It was intentional, not incidental. God devised the gap by the tool of the Law, then closed it by the tool of the gospel. In doing so, He removed any excuse any disciple might make for why he can't get along with any brother in Christ.

The singularity of the body is a theme of verses 14-18, as the term *one* is repeated four times. But the obvious diversity is what makes this synergistic body (the church of Christ!) so spectacular. The gap is gone. We aren't there yet, but lest you still suppose that there is a disconnect between the doctrine of unity and the doctrine of the atoning death, listen to the lyric while the four living creatures and the 24 elders sing the new song to the Lamb: *For thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.* (Rev. 5:9)

In Christ, there is a real, biblical “unity in diversity” (cf. Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11)! Shame on the liberal theologians who peddle their cheap imitation of the real thing! But shame on us if we allow ourselves to be scared away from this beautiful apostolic creed!

THE ATONING DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST

Which carries me to my assignment. What could perform such a feat? Can we identify the agent which brought about the change? Where there is a spectacular result, there must be a spectacular implement. So it is here.

The means is named in the text: *by the blood of Christ*. (Also *His flesh* [2:15] and *the cross* [16]). The blood is a metonymical term for Jesus' violent death which was His substitutiary sacrifice. This is the atoning death.

How confused the fallen angels must have been. When they sinned, God cast them down immediately into *pits of darkness* (2Pet.2:4). Abel, though he sinned, was borne to a place of comfort (cf.Heb.11:4). How curious the righteous angels must have been. Could God pardon sin and be just? Their necks strained to see the next frame to be played in the scheme of redemption and, perhaps, explain the apparent discrepancy (cf.1Pet.1:12). Something was coming. Premonitions dot the landscape of Old Testament literature. Even when Jesus Christ appeared as God in the flesh, it was all still a mystery.

Then it happened. What must have seemed, in the eye of a casual observer, like an 18-hour chain of surprising, chaotic events, fell like dominoes — from the arrest in the olive grove, to the 6 trials, to the morning mob, the scourging, the march and the drop of the post into the hole dug for it. Although the Son of God hung awkwardly, impaled to a tree, from 9 til 3 that day, it was not helter skelter. Quite the contrary, it was all diagrammed by God. He initiated it, managed it and brought the whole affair to fruition (cf.Ac.2:23;4:28).

Sure the two must have been in shock when they unpinned Jesus' hands from the cross-piece, rolled His limp corpse in the linens and smeared spices to cast Him. Sure the disciples spent the next day in hiding while their Lord

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spent it in a crypt. Sure the women must have cried on their way to the site that first day of the week.

But then came the unexpected, favorable outcome. His frame reanimated, He appeared to the disciples and ascended to make atonement for sin with His blood. Only then, while mercy and justice first kissed, did angel and devil “get it”.³

In terms of instrumentality, hope for spiritual strangers is only in *the blood of Christ*. By appealing to “the blood”, Paul’s line of reasoning here is consistent, of course, with the rest of Scripture. Naming the agent reinforces this New Testament truth: it is not just that God made atonement for our sins to grant access, it is how He did it (cf. Mt.26:28; Jn.6:55,56; 19:34; Ac.20:28; Rom.5:9; Col.1:20; Heb.9:14; 1Pet.1:18; 1Jn.1:7; Rev.1:5; 5:9; 7:14; 12:11).

CONCLUSION

The atoning death is the lone means for hope but it is also the ideal model for it. How often God visited His people in crisis and assured them that He would intervene to orchestrate an unexpected, favorable outcome. He visited Noah, when his world was without hope and Sarah, when her womb was without it. He visited the Hebrew captives without hope in Egypt, and again in Babylon. He visited both David and Elijah when they were each without hope in a cave.

Joseph and Esther both clung to this promise of a happy, future result, in spite of their gloomy, present circumstance. It wasn’t because they were naive optimists who refused to face the reality of their respective dangers. It was because God made the promise and established a track record for keeping His word by engineering surprise, spectacular endings.

³ *The Scheme Of Redemption*, Robert Milligan, St.Louis: The Bethany Press, 1966, p.226f.

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According to the pattern, Jesus' body lie pale, mummified and still, while the disciples' faith lie in crisis. Yet His words, "I will rise again", suspended over the scene. Like He had in history before, yet to a greater degree, God intervened and contrived an unexpected, favorable outcome.

Through seasons of life, a Christian will ask himself, "How can God work out this trouble for my good?". God conceived the glorification of the Son, rescued the Christian from a damned spiritual state, and manufactured one body out of two hostile ones. The resurrection, conversion and the church---each made possible by His atoning death---are three reminders of God's ability to orchestrate unexpected, favorable outcomes, which should bring hope to fretful disciples (cf.Rom.8:18-39).

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

BRAD POE is a 1989 graduate of Ohio Valley College. He has been the minister at the Northridge Church of Christ in Dayton, Ohio since 1995. He and his wife Becky have two daughters, Sydney (9) and Lauren (6).

VICTORY OVER DEATH

Steve Stevens

INTRODUCTION

The theme of the 2:15 p.m. lecture all this week centers on hope. The text for our study today is 1Corinthians 15:21-58. Most of you are familiar with the great resurrection chapter of the Bible. This chapter of the Bible has provided instruction and comfort during many funeral services. The truths set forth in this text certainly apply to these circumstances in life.

However, the original intent of the apostolic penman was not to comfort, but to correct a false doctrine at the Corinthian congregation concerning the resurrection of the dead.

It is only by a proper understanding of the truth that any of us can have hope. Hope founded on the truth provides many things for Christians. We shall note some of them at the conclusion of this study.

I. DEATH WILL DIE! (1 Cor. 15: 21-34)

Death is a reality. It is a divine appointment (Heb. 9:27). Death came into the human family through sin (Gen. 3). When one reads Genesis chapter 5 he can not miss the repetitive lesson about mankind in the phrase “ and he died.”

The point of the apostle in verses 21-28 is that death has dominated the human family since its beginning through the penalty given to Adam and Eve. It has ruled as a tyrant over every succeeding generation without exception. Human efforts have increased the average life span over the last two hundred years, but death still conquers all of us.

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Please notice two very important words in verse 20, “But now.” There has been a change concerning this death. Someone has lived a human life without sin (Heb. 4:15). After dying in this life, he was raised from the dead never to die again. He is seated on the right hand throne of God in heaven (Acts 2:33) and has all authority in heaven and in earth (Mat. 28:18).

Christ is the first fruits of the dead. All who were familiar with the Old Testament scriptures would recognize the picture that Paul impresses upon the mind with these words. The point would be that as sure as the first fruits are the proof of the harvest to come, so surely the resurrection of Christ is the proof of our resurrection!

When shall this resurrection of the dead take place? Verse 23 clearly states “at his coming.” At his coming is when “the end” comes. Christ will reign to the end and then deliver the kingdom to God, the Father. He must reign until “all enemies” are put under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is DEATH.

The verb ‘destroyed’ in verse 26 does not mean that there will be no more dying. Adam Clarke comments, “death can only be destroyed and annihilated by a general resurrection; if there be no general resurrection it is most evident death will retain his empire.” The destruction of death assures the fact of the resurrection, which in turn proves also that after the resurrection there shall be no more physical dying.

To summarize thus far—death had its beginning through Adam when he sinned. It reigned over the human family until Christ conquered it in his own resurrection. Christ will destroy it at his second coming when he raises the dead from their graves. Death can not and will not win! The victory over death is a fact. The resurrection of the dead is a fact!

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The writer now turns his attention to how these facts relate to the Christian life in three areas.

One, is the obedience we render to the gospel. Every Christian obeys the form of doctrine (Rom. 6:17) which involves the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Paul's argument in verse 29 has to do with the resurrection and not baptism per se. It is not my appointed task at this hour to labor on the meaning of this verse. There are some 40 different views offered by commentators who generally agree that no one will ever know for certain what it means. Suffice it to say that in the context of this chapter it has something to do with the resurrection and the fact that people believed in it or else they would never obey the gospel which is founded on fact of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-8).

Two, the suffering Christians willingly endure. Verses 30-32 advance the argument that if there is no resurrection of the dead then why would Paul or any other Christian voluntarily submit to so many sufferings and persecutions even to the point of death if need be.

Three, the holiness of life each Christian is to exhibit. Paul admonishes the Corinthians to wake up and clean up in verses 33-34. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then it does not matter how you live. Eat, drink, and be merry; for tomorrow we die. Christians beware! False doctrines will affect how we think and in turn how we live. As R.C.H. Lenski says in his comments on this text, "whatever eats at the root damages or destroys the fruit."

II. DYNAMICS OF DEATH'S DYING. (1 Cor. 15:35-53)

"How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Paul answers his questions with an analogy that anyone who has ever planted a seed and observed it growing to fruition should understand. One should exercise

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caution not to press an analogy beyond its meaning. In keeping with that rule let us notice two points.

First, there is a dying and a decomposing of the seed when it is placed in the ground. Thus, it is with our physical bodies. They die and decay.

Secondly, from that dead and decaying seed there comes a new life and a new body far superior to the one planted in the ground. Paul firmly declares here that the resurrected body will have the body that God gives it so that it pleases him. Do not underestimate the power of God in this matter. God has made different kinds of flesh among his creatures here on the earth. Even among the heavenly bodies such as the sun, the moon, and the stars God has placed different degrees of glory.

Knowing from experiential observation that the all powerful God created such diversity and variety among his creatures, can we not trust him to provide us with a resurrection body that is incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and spiritual without our having to understand every minute detail?

Flesh and blood can not inherit the kingdom of God. A body which is perishable cannot inherit that which is not perishable. The body that succumbs to death (mortal) can not inherit immortality (the word literally means “not death”). Do not misunderstand that this is a resurrection of the body from the grave. Verses 42-44 make it clear that the “it” that was sown is the “it” that is raised but of a different nature.

What of the living when the Lord returns? Their bodies will be changed (v.52). If you are having trouble trying to see how a dead and decayed body can be raised a new spiritual body and still have a connection of some sort to the body in the grave, ponder this point. The bodies of those alive at the second coming of our Lord will be changed. Can you see how this living body can be

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transformed into a new immortal body and still have a connection to the old mortal body which it can no longer be? If you can fathom this, then hopefully it will not be too much of a stretch to put the resurrection in for those who have died.

When the great resurrection of the dead and the transformation of the living takes place then, “Death is swallowed up in victory” (v. 54).

III.. DEATH’S DEFEAT. (1 Cor. 15:55-58)

Death meets its defeat in a most orderly manner. The sting of death is sin. The strength of sin is the law. How great it is for all of us that Christ fulfilled the law (Mat. 5:17), and took it out of the way by nailing it to the cross (Col. 2:14). In so doing he conquered “the strength of sin.”

Having accomplished this feat, he also lived on the earth without sin (Heb.4:15), and then he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (Heb. 9:26). Making the remission of sins possible for all men Jesus removed the sting of death. Yes, man will still suffer death, but he will not stay dead!

With the second coming of Christ we will have “the victory” over death through him. That victory incorporates the defeat of Satan, sin, death, the grave, and *hades*. In the same order each of these entered our world Christ has defeated and will abolish them forever.

CONCLUSION

Based on the assured and guaranteed victory over death through Christ we need fear no enemy in this life. We can work for the Lord knowing that our labor is not in vain. What benefits can we gain from this knowledge?

First, CONFIDENCE! We do not need to fear living a Christian life and dying a faithful Christian’s death. Stand fast and stand firm!

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Secondly, CONSTRAINT! “Always abounding in the work of the Lord.” We are constrained to do the work of the Lord. We know he is coming again. We need to be involved in it and we should endeavor to increase our efforts as time rolls forward in this life. Tragically, for many, just the opposite is true. Much of their lives is spent pursuing worldly things, and all too often they can not wait to “retire” from the Lord’s service.

Thirdly, COMFORT! If we labor in the work of the Lord, then our labor is not in vain. Paul teaches in 1 Thessalonians 4:18 and 5:11 that our Lord’s return and our resurrection are doctrines with which we should comfort one another.

“THANKS BE TO GOD WHICH GIVETH US THE VICTORY THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

BIOGRAPHY SKETCH

Steve Stevens is a native of West Virginia. He was baptized by his father, Earl, at Dewey Avenue in St. Marys, WV in January of 1967. He preached his first sermon at the Daybrook Church of Christ when he was nine years old. He began preaching, conducting gospel meetings, and directing VBS in June of 1970. His first located work was at the Norway Church of Christ outside of Fairmont, WV from 1975 to 1981. He moved to his present location in Hundred, WV April of 1981.

Steve is married to the former Karen Barnhart of New Freeport, PA and they have six children.

ENDURING TRIALS

Denver E. Cooper

1Thessalonians 1:1 tells us that Paul, Silas and Timothy were together and shared the sentiments, admonitions, warnings and expressions of comfort to the church at Thessalonica.

Paul says, “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God and our Father; knowing brethren your election of God. (1 Thess. 1:3,4).

THE LETTER

Believed to be the first or second letter written by Paul; written 5 or 6 years before Romans, Galatians and Corinthians, it stands alone as having come into existence before Paul’s third missionary journey. The letter seems to have been written just a short time (possibly six months) after the establishment of the church in Thessalonica as recorded in Acts 17.

THE CHURCH

Paul and Silas had a successful work in Philippi. It certainly must have been a great joy to them, having heeded immediately the call of the man of Macedonia to “come over....help us.”

As is often the case, trials and tribulations began with or soon after the establishment of the new congregation. Such is always of deep concern to the preacher responsible for the new work and accounts for the Apostle Paul penning this letter at this time.

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The city of Thessalonica was a great city located at a good harbor right at the head of the Aegean Sea. The original name for the city was Therma; situated on that part of the Macedonian shore known through the Roman period as the Thermaic Gulf. Cassander the son of Antipater rebuilt and enlarged Therma, and named it after his wife Thessalonica, the sister of Alexander the Great. The name ever since, under various slight modifications, has been continuous, and the city itself has never ceased to be eminent. Saloniki is still the most important city of that part of Greece, with a modern population over 400,000. Paul seems to have enjoyed engaging in much of his work in urban areas. Some believe that the strategy fits his desire and intention in reaching the empire through the city.

The Egnatian Highway, a link to Rome providing easy access to that part of Macedonia was doubtless travelled by the apostle Paul as he went into Philippi. One of the things which made spreading the gospel of Christ easier was the building of roads by the Roman Empire. Of course, it made travel much easier for those intent on persecuting Paul and other Christians.

Paul and Silas had endured great persecution at the hands of the magistrates and others while doing the ground work in Macedonia. This, of course, made him more sympathetic toward Christians who now were suffering from the same kind of unjust and oft times inhumane treatment. His trials at Philippi and else where were not the result of his own misbehavior, laziness or indifference toward his responsibilities. Brethren should be slow to charge preachers with wrong doing without knowing all of the facts. Some have been wronged simply because they preached the truth. Some preachers have been charged with “out of line” behavior when the difficulty was with the congregation or non-religious people. It often is not their fault, but the result of a firm stand for the gospel.

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Sometimes brethren compromise with the digressives or others upholding man-made doctrines. Then when the preacher points out the truth, he, the preacher, is blamed as being responsible for whatever problem may arise. Such ought not be the case. Brethren should stand squarely behind a faithful preacher. With the beatings and imprisonment in Philippi still fresh on their minds, Paul and Silas, released from prison and besought to leave the city, did so after visiting Lydia and comforting the brethren of the new congregation in Philippi.

In spite of the evil treatment at Philippi he “spoke boldly” at Thessalonica and **endured** much contention and furious opposition at the hands of the Thessalonians. The persecutors were the same as those who had crucified the Lord. Yea, even their own prophets. Jealous Jews couldn’t stand to see success. You will note that they went to the rabble rousers. They could get a mob together. Paul had preached only three sabbath days when both success and trouble began. He taught “fundamentals”. “Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ”. (Acts 17:3). Isn’t it strange that some brethren, including preachers, now believe that the gospel of Romans 1:16 is now obsolete and that a New Hermeneutic must be set in place? Anyway, the preaching netted some Jews, some Greek God-fearing proselytes and other Greeks and many women of high social rank. **Trials** of persecution did not deter these faithful men in their mission as they journeyed through the country.

THEIR WORK OF FAITH

One of the first observations of Paul regarding the Thessalonians was that they were consecrated. They were led by **faith**. Paul taught the Roman Christians that “whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed”. (Rom.

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10:11). “So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God”. (vs. 17).

The new church at Thessalonica didn't have much time to be seasoned and strengthened for things to come. However, their “work of faith” was evident. Paul never substitutes works for faith, but this passage shows that **faith** and **works** serve together. Whenever Paul mentions faith in the New Testament, it never means anything but obedient faith. It is never subjective faith.

There are many kinds of works mentioned in the New Testament such as:

1. The works of the flesh. (Gal. 5:19 - 21).
2. The works of men. (Mark 13:1).
3. The works of the Law of Moses. (Rom. 3:20).
4. The works of moral goodness. (Cornelius).
5. The works of human righteousness. (Rom. 10:3).
6. The works of the devil. (1 John 3:8; John 8:44).

There is, indeed, a difference in the kind of works mentioned by Paul and those mentioned by the writer of James 2:24.

LABOR OF LOVE

The labour of the Christians in Thessalonica was intensified because they loved to work for the Lord. Toil is always made easier by love. Love to God is expressed in obedience. (John 14:15,21,23). Love is expressed to our neighbor when we show interest in him rather than in ourselves when there is a reason to be of service. (Phil. 2:4). We work to support our families because we love them.

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Now, to the climax of the three phrases in 1 Thessalonians 1:3. It is Paul's remembrance of their "**patience of hope**". It is probably best stated as "**patient hope**" or "**enduring trials**". At the very beginning, brethren at Thessalonica had experienced "**temptations**" which were "common to man" (1Cor. 10:13). Yet, we hear nothing about their complaining. Paul did not complain about the little or no pay, "laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you we preached unto you the gospel of God". (2:9) The first thing in the heart of Paul and Silas was the good they could do in saving souls. That still ought to be the chief purpose of preaching.

While we have sometimes come to think of **trials, temptations or afflictions** as being all evil, the Bible does not so define them. Genesis 22:1 states, "that God did **tempt** Abraham". Did he try to get him to do evil? Certainly not! God does not **tempt** man with evil. (Jas 1:13,14). The meaning here is that God **proved** him. God put his faith to a **test**. Abraham's faith was on **trial**. He could, if the command was too hard, refuse to do as ordered, or he could **patiently endure** what must have been a terrible trip with his son to Mt. Moriah, determined to do what God demanded without whimpering. He did not even suggest that he might exchange Isaac or Ishmael. He successfully **endured**. He loved God and "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Heb. 11:10).

Words take on different meanings in different generations and cultures. We usually think of evil things when the terms **temptation** and **trial** are mentioned. However, the word **tempt** is used in two different ways in the scriptures.

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Jesus taught in the model prayer of Matthew 6:13 for disciples to pray, “lead us not into **temptation**”. Here it means **trials**. The earnest petition of every child of God recognizes that difficulties, sore **trials** and painful **burdens** constitute part and parcel of being a Christian. “Yea and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer **persecution.**” (2 Tim. 3:12). The petition in Matthew is an expression of our constant need of assistance through our heavy, bitter and inevitable **trials, testings** and **temptations**. Jesus left us a perfect example as he met the **temptations** of the devil in the wilderness. He repeatedly used the Word of God in overcoming the devil (Matt. 4: 1-11).

Another use of the term **trial** or **temptation** is found in James 1:13. “Let no man say when he is **tempted**, I am **tempted** of God; For God cannot be **tempted** with evil, neither **tempteth** he any man: But every man is **tempted, (tried, tested)** when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.” God, in other words, does not solicit man to do evil.

Jesus taught, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” (Matt.16:24). The **test** or **trial** of faith here is a voluntary one. It is a matter of choice as with Joshua. (Josh. 24:15). “Save yourselves from this untoward generation” was the instruction of Peter on Pentecost in Acts 2:40.

It may be a **trial** to some to begin to follow Jesus. Jesus has been over the road from earth to heaven and been “**tempted** in all points like as we are, yet without sin”. (Heb. 4:15)

“Let him deny himself” not seeking his own happiness as the supreme object or goal in life by being different from the world as Paul in Phil. 3:4,8

“And take up his cross”. Those condemned to be crucified were compelled to bear the cross on which they

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were to be crucified to the place of execution. Such made an addition to the

punishment; it was burdensome and disgraceful. "Take up his cross" is a figurative statement, denoting that we must **endure trial** or **testing**, if necessary, in following the Lord. In the booklet,

The Crossbearer, the author has presented the picture of a man dragging the cross behind him. He wants the benefits of the cross without the **endurance** required by the **testing** of Christ. Another is pictured sawing off a part of the cross to make it easier for him. He, too, wants the blessings without the **patient testing**. He wants to change the cross to fit himself, rather than change himself to fit the cross. Still another is pictured as bearing the cross and keeping pace with Jesus. He is the true cross bearer. He is **enduring the trials, temptations and burdens**.

Still another story is told of a little lady who is represented as a weary one who thought that her cross was heavier than those about her. She slept and dreamed of being in a field of crosses of all shapes and sizes. She found one that was a beauty, set in jewels and gold. "Surely this must be for me", she thought, and took it up only to find it too heavy. Still another she found with flowers entwined around in sculptured form. She lifted it, but piercing thorns which tore her flesh beneath the flowers forced her to put it down. As she went on she came to a plain cross, without jewels or gold; without carving, and only a few words of love inscribed upon it. She had found the one that was best for her.

God knows what cross we need and can bear. We do not know how heavy other folk's burdens are because we are blinded by so many worldly items.

"Blessed is the man that **endureth temptation: (trials-proving-testing)** for when he is **tried**, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that

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love him” (Jas.1:12). Jesus, “for the joy that was set before him **endured** the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that **endured** such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.” (Heb. 12:2,3).

TRIALS COMMON TO US ALL

1. Bitter, militant enemies of Christ and the gospel have been experienced by many. Paul now continued to be plagued by the Jews when he found the city set in an uproar. Unable to locate Paul, the house of Jason was assaulted. He and other brethren were brought before the rulers of the city, accused falsely and were required to post bond for their release. (Acts 17:5-9)

Do you suppose it might happen to some in our life time?

2. Teaching or Preaching the gospel often brings **trials**. Timothy was told, “Thou therefore **endure** hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” (2 Tim. 2:3). Preachers are often **tempted** to seek an easier road. They, of all people, must be willing as Paul, “to **endure** all things for the elects sake”. (2 Tim. 2:10). Some enemies are non-religious. Even the non-religious who are not in doctrinal agreement with each other will join hands to oppose the church and true gospel preachers. Some may even be hypocritical, compromising brethren.

3. False Teachers who oppose themselves often bring on heavy **burdens** for the faithful.

There are some “faithful men”. Some are not. Some of the greatest **tests** come from men who “loveth to have the preeminence” (3 Jn. 9), and those who “draw away disciples after them”. (Acts 20:30).

4. Wickedness. “Flee youthful lusts was Paul’s admonition to Timothy. (2 Tim. 2:22).

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“Resist the devil and he will flee from you”. (James 4:7). “Follow after righteousness.” Pursue it actively. **Endure** for the sake of walking with the Lord in order to go to heaven.

Paul uses three figures to teach **endurance**. (1) The soldier is used in Eph. 6:10-20 to point out the need to **endure** in our convictions, standing fast against evil ideas and thoughts which bring us into sin. (2) The athlete, who depicts the race, the need to set aside sin and “run with **patience (endurance)** the race”. (3) The husbandman in which Jesus taught the great responsibility God has given to us in life. (Mt. 21).

Timothy was to perpetuate the faith, overcome militant opponents and recover the fallen. Thessalonica must have done, or was doing this, for Paul to have had noble remembrances of them.

Jesus said, “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake; but he that shall **endure** unto the end, the same shall be saved. (Mk. 13:13).

May God help us to **endure** whatever **trials** lay ahead for us..

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Denver E. Cooper was born April 2, 1923 in Cairo, West Virginia to parents Jesse R. and Sarah B. Cooper. He was reared in Parkersburg, West Virginia where he graduated from high school in 1941. He attended Freed-Hardeman University beginning in the fall of 1941.

He was married to Florence E. Smith March 25, 1945. They reared 9 children, one of whom one was adopted. They are, Edward T.; Denver E., Jr.; Kelly R.; Timothy L.; Rebecca K.; Jesse L.; Prisca R., (deceased); Denise A. Conley and Martha Noland.

On September 21, 2000 Denver celebrated his 59th preaching anniversary. He has been located in Ironton, Ohio; Harrisville, Chester. Philippi, Weirton, (twice) West Va.; Timberville, Va. Since 1983 he has been working with Hillview Terrace church in Moundsville, West Va. He also serves on the faculty of West Virginia School of Preaching.

BY THIS SHALL ALL MEN KNOW

Mike Vestal

Unity, fellowship, oneness, love--these are words that describe our relationship in Christ Jesus with one another (Psa. 133:1; John 17:20-21; Eph. 4:3; 1 John 1:3, 7). The Lord is *in* us (Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27). He is *for* us (Rom. 8:31). And our great God promises to be *with* us (Matt. 28:18-20). What a relationship we are privileged to have with God and with His children! (Rom. 8:16-17). Satan loves to see division, disturbance, disruption and detachment in the church (2 Cor. 2:11; 1 Thess. 2:18). In a world full of wickedness and distorted views of love, how the body of Christ needs to show what love and togetherness truly mean! People desperately need to see what Christianity is all about. If the love of Christ is not seen in those who belong to Him, it will not be seen at all. Paul instructed the Colossians, "above all things, put on love, which is the bond of perfectness" (Col. 3:14). He spoke of the comfort that would be theirs by having their hearts "knit together in love" (Col. 2:2).

God is light (1 John 1:5). God is holy (Rev. 4:8). And God is love (1 John 4:8). Christians must reflect these characteristics in their own lives if the Lord is to be glorified and precious souls are to be brought to Him. How do we measure up? John 13:34-35 is a passage rich with insight concerning love as the badge of discipleship. Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another." This passage reveals four matters about love that must ever be kept in mind if we are to glorify our God and reach out to the lost.

LOVE IS A DOCTRINAL MATTER

The fact love is *commanded* makes it a serious doctrinal matter. It is not optional but obligatory. There is no genuine discipleship without following the Master. Continuing in God's word is an *inward* view of discipleship (John 8:31-32). Bearing fruit to God's glory, both in character and in service (Gal. 5:22-23; 5:6, 13), is an *upward* view of discipleship (John 15:7-8). And our Lord in John 13:34-35 makes it clear that loving one another is an *outward* view of discipleship. We are not following our Lord as we ought when we fail to show Him in an inward, upward and outward way.

Such love is a "command" (John 15:17) or "commandment" (John 15:12; 1 John 3:23). It is part of the message Christians have heard from the beginning (1 John 3:11; 2 John 5). We have been "taught of God" to love one another (1 Thess. 4:9). "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14). God's love is a compelling reason to love one another. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11). "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God" (1 John 4:7).

Doctrinal correctness, without obedience to this command, amounts to just going through the motions (Eph. 4:15; 1 Tim. 1:5). Sadly, it is possible for one to be as straight as a gun barrel, but just as empty. Further, *talent and ability*, apart from compliance with this command, amount to nothing (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1-3). As essential as these things are to being Christians, it is a proper love for God and for others that causes us to love and respect His authoritative will and to utilize our talents to His glory (cf. Ps. 119:97; 1 Cor. 4:6; 1 Cor. 4:1-2; Phil. 1:21).

Not only is love commanded, but it is described a "new" commandment. The Old Testament, in passages

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such as Leviticus 19:18 and Deuteronomy 6:5, spoke of the necessity of loving our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus spoke of love for God and loving neighbor as we love ourselves as the great commandment (Matt. 22:36-40). How then is the Lord's command in John 13:34-35 "new"?

It is worthwhile to note that there are two Greek words for "new." One has reference to *new in time* while the other has reference to *new in quality (fresh)*. Christ's command is new in the sense of quality or freshness. This love for one another is based upon a new standard, "as I have loved you." Oh, the beauty and challenge of such a love! Our love for one another is not silly, gullible or soft on sin any more than the Lord's love for us is. John 13:34-35 is a simple enough statement for a toddler to memorize, yet so profound that even the most mature of Christians will at times be humbled at how poorly comprehended and applied it has been to their lives. We are to love one another "as" or "because" Jesus loved us. The Lord gave us a command, but He also gave the *extent* and *reason* behind it!

LOVE IS A FUNCTIONAL MATTER

Love is functional in that it is *active*. This involves action and attitude. Love must not only have an *object*, but it must have an *objective* as well. It must not only have *degree*, but it must have *direction* too. By its very nature, love is expressive and functional. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth" (1 John 3:18). 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 deals both with what love will and will not do. "Dysfunction" is a buzzword of the day. We have dysfunctional individuals. We have dysfunctional families. And yes, we tragically have too many dysfunctional churches! (Cf. Rev. 2:1-7; 3:1-6, 14-22).

True love functions in an active, orderly and timely way, and this has always been so. John 13:34-35 indicates

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that love is to function toward one another, cause others to know that Christians are His disciples, and to cause the Lord's people to be motivated by God's love for us. "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" (1 Pet. 1:22). The word "fervently" in this verse means "stretched out." It is a love that requires effort and energy.

1 Peter 4:8 says, "above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covereth a multitude of sins." This verse speaks of constant and intense action, and again by no means indicates that love sugar-coats sin (cf. Psa. 32:1; Luke 17:3-4; 1 Cor. 13:6). Real love however refuses to gossip or to slander. It promotes biblical peace and harmony (cf. 1 Thess. 5:14-15). It takes into consideration those who are weak (Rom. 14:1; 15:1-2).

A group of players playing the same sport do not necessarily constitute a team (in the best sense of the word). And the same point is applicable in the spiritual realm. If God's people do not work and function together in love, teamwork is definitely hindered, regardless of the great talents and abilities some might possess. Christians are members of the same family and partakers of a heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1; 1 Tim. 3:15). Love is a matter of the heart. When the heart is right, things just look better. And the people of God should have the same type of heart. Our hearts should be pure (Matt. 5:8), meek (Matt. 11:28-30), contrite (Acts 2:37), tender (Eph. 4:32), good and honest (Luke 8:15) and assured (1 John 3:19).

Understanding the individual nature of Christianity does **not** mean that our functioning together as one is unnecessary or undesirable (Phil. 1:27; 1 Pet. 3:8; 1 Cor. 12:13-27). "Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be

perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10).

LOVE IS A RELATIONAL MATTER

This is so because love is *reciprocal* -- we are to love one another. Three times John 13:34-35 mentions that we are to “love one another.” The fellowship of love should not be a one-way street. “If there is therefore any exhortation in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (Phil. 2:1-2). We have so much in common as Christians due to our Lord. We truly are related by blood (Acts 20:28; Eph. 1:7). Yet often our relationship with one another as Christians leaves much to be desired. An old poem well illustrates this thought when it says, “To dwell above with saints we love, Oh, that will be grace and glory. But to dwell below with saints I know, Well, that’s another story!”

God gave us people to love and things to use, but Satan wants us to start loving things and using people! We must not love money (1 Tim. 6:10), or this will rob us of our love for God and one another (Matt. 6:24). We must not love the world (1 John 2:15-17). We must not love self and pleasure more than the Lord and each other (2 Tim. 3:2, 4). We must not love the praise of men more than the glory of God (John 12:42-43). Nor should we love preeminence (3 John 9).

The relationship members of the body of Christ share transcends racial differences (Acts 17:26; Gal. 3:28), economic differences (Jas. 2:1-13) and differences in individual opinions and tastes (Rom. 14:19; 15:1-2). It transcends the “respect of persons” that often characterizes those in the world (Acts 10:34-36).

BY THIS SHALL ALL MEN KNOW

The various “one another” passages of the New Testament are probably the clearest teaching regarding the relational aspect of Christianity. We are to love one another (John 13:34-35; 1 Pet. 1:22). We are to be hospitable to one another (1 Pet. 4:9; Rom. 12:13). Christians should pray for one another, and as necessary, confess faults one to another (Jas. 5:16; Acts 8:18-24). The people of God must be considerate of one another (Heb. 10:24). We are instructed to serve one another (Gal. 5:13). The followers of the Lord will encourage one another (Heb. 3:13) and comfort one another (1 Thess. 4:18).

These are things that not just anyone can do and do well. They come as a result of having a relationship. Faithful Christians will know and love God (Jer. 9:23-24; John 17:3; Phil. 3:10). They will know and love God’s word (Jer. 15:16; Matt. 4:4; 2 Tim. 2:15). Faithful Christians know and love God’s people (Heb. 13:1; 1 Pet. 2:17). It is freely admitted that often it is easier to love God and His word than it is to love one another. But it is also to be admitted that we *cannot* truly love our God without also loving our brethren (1 John 4:19-21).

LOVE IS A MOTIVATIONAL MATTER

This is so because love is to be *reflective*. It is the distinguishing trait by which we are to be known. “Let all things be done with love” (1 Cor. 16:14). Love is to be without any hypocrisy (Rom. 12:9). Love shows our *oneness* with the Lord, that we truly are His disciples. Further, such love is powerful in its *influence*. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). The love we *share* in Christ must be *shown* to others. When members of the body of Christ are spiritually lacking, there is a likely a love problem behind it.

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Our motive in loving is to love “as” or “because” Christ loved us. Indeed, the “love of Christ constraineth us” (2 Cor. 5:14). The Lord loves us with a *selfless* love (Eph. 5:25). When Jesus left glory to come to earth to die for our sins, it was not a matter of what was best for Him, but for us (Mark 10:45; Phil. 2:9-11). His love for the church was *sacrificial* in nature. He “gave Himself up” (Eph. 5:25). And we are encouraged to do the same (Luke 9:23; 2 Cor. 12:15). Christ’s love is a *sanctifying* love (Eph. 5:26-27). Sanctifying love sets apart, encourages, enriches and fulfills. Is this how the love of Christ impacts us in treating one another? The Lord’s love for His own is a *supreme* love (Eph. 5:28-31). Do *we* reflect this love before others? (Mark 12:30; Jas. 2:8).

John 13:34-35 does not teach that we are to love people of the world less, so much as it does that we are to love one another as Christians more (cf. Matt. 5:43-48; Gal. 6:10). God loves all, but He has a special love for His children. And Christians should have a special love for one another. We should do all the good we can, by all the means we can, in all the ways we can, in all the places we can, to all the people we can, at all the times we can, as long as we ever can.

CONCLUSION

Love *is* a matter of *doctrine, function, relationship and motivation*. When love for one another is properly understood and applied, our *oneness* with the Lord will be obvious, and our *influence* on the world will be great. Say Christian friend, does this sound like you and me?

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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THE LOVE CHAPTER

Mike Vestal

There is probably no passage of Scripture which demands more self-examination than 1 Corinthians 13. Without love we turn to anger, hostility and resentment. Some become self-destructive, while others think of people as something to be used, abused and discarded. One thing is sure. Without love, any hope of deep and lasting relationships deteriorates (cf. Rom. 14:7-8; Matt. 22:36-40). Scripture abounds with teaching to the effect that we are to love. We are to put on love (Col. 3:14). We are to follow after and to abound in it (1 Cor. 14:1; Phil. 1:9). God's people are to continue and to be ever increasing in love (Heb. 13:1; 1 Thess. 3:12). Our love is to be fervent and consistent (1 Pet. 4:8; Phil. 2:2). Christians should provoke one another to love (Heb. 10:24). We should always love sincerely (2 Cor. 8:8; 1 Tim. 1:5).

But for all the talk we hear about love, the fact is, people are too often unloving. Even Christians struggle with this. Why? It may be because our stubborn and selfish wills lead us to sin and keep us from experiencing God's will in our lives (John 14:15). It may be due to past hurts and difficulties. Ours is a day when far too many people have been rejected, ignored or abused by others. Many have trouble loving because often human conditions are set. "I'll love you if . . ."

How people need to better grasp the love of God! (Eph. 3:17-19). God's love is *eternal* (Jer. 31:3; 1 Cor. 13:8). It is *personal* (1 John 3:1-2). It is *unusual* in that it is unselfish and requires no response to function (1 John 4:9-10). God's love is *practical* (1 John 3:17-18). It is *sacrificial* (John 15:13; Eph. 5:25) and *unconditional* (1 John 4:7-8; Rom. 5:1-11).

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1 Corinthians 13, the great love chapter, forever reminds us that love is to be the mainspring or motive for all that we say, do and think. The Corinthians' concern over spiritual gifts resulted in their becoming unloving in their attitudes toward one another - they were missing out on "the more excellent way" of love (1 Cor. 12:31; cf. 4:6-7, 18; 8:1). 1 Corinthians 12:31 says, "But desire earnestly the greater gifts. And moreover a most excellent way show I unto you." Notice what this verse has to say about love as it actually introduces the great love chapter. First, its *excellence* - "most excellent way" - Its way is to be a continuing lifestyle because of its superiority. Second, its *emphasis* - "most excellent" (ASV) - This shows that the importance of love cannot be exaggerated. Third, its *evidence* - "and I show unto you" - The way of love is to be seen, understood and evident to all.

1 Corinthians 13 breaks down into three distinct sections. In short, the first paragraph says that God's love is necessary for all we say and do. Without it, life is meaningless (vv. 1-3). The second paragraph tells us what love does and does not do (vv. 4-7). Love impacts behavior! The third paragraph reminds us that love is essential because it lasts (vv. 8-13). So the chapter deals with the *necessity*, *character* and *permanence* of love. It is love that puts quality into service (vv. 1-3), depth into character (vv. 4-7), and eternal bliss into life (vv. 8-13). Let's consider three components of love from 1 Corinthians 13.

LOVE - ITS NECESSITY (1-3)

In considering the first three verses, three times Paul mentions "but have not love." One may have great gifts (even miraculous ones in the early church) and do marvelous things, but if love is not present, there is no real

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profit to be found. Divine arithmetic is saying that “life minus love = ZERO.”

Without God’s love, our personal communication is ineffective (vs. 1). Linguistic ability is a wonderful and marvelous talent, but God’s love is the best language of all; it communicates when mere eloquence cannot. Even the ability to speak in tongues loses its power without love. “Tongues” refer to known languages never studied before by its speakers. Such speech was a product of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:6, 8; Acts 10:44-46; 11:15-17). The word “interpretation” in 1 Corinthians 12:10 is the normal word for translating actual languages, not ecstatic utterances. Without love, real communication doesn’t take place. It is just “sounding brass” or a “clanging cymbal” - reverberating, constant and powerful noise.

Without God’s love, our spiritual understanding is incomplete (vs. 2). Understanding and knowledge of God’s will are wonderful things, especially when our time is one when far too many are ignorant of even the most basic biblical truth (Hosea 4:6; Amos 8:11-12; 2 Tim. 2:15). The point of this verse is that knowledge (whether miraculous, as in the case of the Corinthians or “natural” as in our day) can be comprehensive yet deficient. The terms “prophecy,” “mysteries,” and “faith so as to move mountains” all firm up the point to the Corinthians. God does not want us ignorant; neither does He honor knowledge without love! (1 Cor. 8:1). It doesn’t matter if one is a celebrated preacher, scholar, elder, missionary or “theologian.” Without love, it amounts to nothing. We all must continue to grow and to learn, but in the process we must also learn more of God’s love (1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18).

Without love, our sacrificial giving is insufficient (vs. 3). Love involves self-sacrifice, but not all self-sacrifice is love. What we do should always be the result of who and Whose we are (cf. 2 Cor. 8:5; 9:-7). Some give as a matter

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of *obligation* (there's no joy). Others give out of what could be termed *salve-ation* (in order to soothe a guilty conscience). Still others give out of *pacification* (to pacify God or get others "off their backs"). Some give out of *association* (they go along with peer pressure. "Everyone's doing it"). Others give out of *identification* (they seek recognition for their giving and sacrifice). As has well been said, "a person can give without loving, but no one can love without giving." Luke 21:1-4 and Matthew 6:1-8 are excellent passages to be studied in this regard.

LOVE - ITS CHARACTER (4-7)

After having just said that when love is absent, behavior ceases to truly be Christian, even when the action itself seems proper, Paul goes on to speak of the character of love. First, he tells what love *is* (patient and kind). Then he mentions some eight things love *won't do* in verses 4-6. Often it is easier to know what something is by understanding more fully what it isn't. Then in verse 7, he makes 4 statements about love as it relates to "all things." The changing circumstances and turbulent times of life must be borne with in love. All fifteen verbs in verses 4-7 are in present tense in Greek, and indicate a constant way of life. There is really little problem in understanding these verses; everything in the section is concrete and applicable. The problem is consistently living in such a manner! (Jas. 1:22).

Love is patient or long-suffering (vs. 4). The word is used some twenty-five times in the New Testament with reference to longsuffering with people. It literally means "taking a long time to boil." Too many Christians have short fuses and lightning-quick tempers! (Cf. 2 Cor. 6:6; Eph. 4:2; Gal. 5:22; 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Tim. 4:2).

Love is kind (vs. 4). Longsuffering endures the wrongs of others victoriously while kindness returns the wrong

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with good. One is concerned with “taking” (passive) while the other is concerned with “giving” (active). The basic meaning of the word is “useful, serviceable, adapted to its purpose.” Kindness may also mean “excellent or valuable.” God is kind (Rom. 2:4; Tit. 3:4; Luke 6:35). Kindness shows compassion for the needs of others (Psa. 103:13-14). It desires to forgive (Eph. 4:32). Kindness causes us to do good even to enemies (Luke 6:27-38). Kindness causes us to seek to relieve the burden of others (cf. Matt. 11:28-30; Gal. 6:1-2).

Love envieth not (vs. 4). The root word for envieth in Greek means “to seethe” or “to boil.” It is a desire, passion or zeal that can be either base or noble. It is sometimes used by Paul in a positive sense (cf. 1 Cor. 12:31; 14:1, 39; 2 Cor. 11:2; for distinction, see Gal. 4:17-18). The word in verse four implies covetousness and jealousy. Matthew 27:18 says that for envy Jesus was delivered up to be put to death. Galatians 5:16, 20 speak of envy as a work of the flesh. James 3:14-16 lists envy as part of the wisdom **not** from above. When we sinfully boil with jealousy, it shows our love is lacking (Prov. 14:30; 27:4).

Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up (vs. 4). Love does not parade itself in a bragging way. It does not boast of its real or pretended accomplishments in order to obtain admiration or applause. It is interesting that jealousy is wanting what others have, while bragging is trying to make others jealous of what you have. Some of the Corinthians had evidently become spiritual show-offs (cf. 1 Cor. 4:7; 14:26). God forbid that we boast, except in His greatness and goodness (Psa. 34:2; 44:8; 1 Cor. 1:31). Are **YOU** always the topic of your conversations? Jesus said, “I have not spoken of myself” (John 12:49). How many of us can say that? We don’t have to try to impress people with plaques, trophies, awards, degrees, etc. Everything we are

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and have that is good comes from God, and to Him belongs the glory! (John 3:30; Jas. 1:17).

Love does not behave itself unseemly or rudely (vs. 5).

This statement is eminently practical, because in ill-mannered, rude behavior one is in essence saying, “I don’t love you, because I could care less what affects you.” The idea behind the word “unseemly” is “shapeless” or “unformed.” It has to do with that which is indecent, improper and lacking in decorum (cf. Rom. 1:27; 1 Cor. 12:23). A person who loves with the love of God never is without plan or scheme. There is plenty of shape and form to what they say and do. How we need more Christian gentlemen and ladies!

Love seeketh not its own (vs. 5). Love does not insist on its own way (RSV). It does not act with selfish motives (cf. 1 Cor. 10:24, 33). It is wrong to see only what affects us individually. Selfish people often are enthusiastic only about their own lives and projects (Phil. 2:3-4). Small children tend to build their world around the word “mine.” And adults (even Christians) can suffer from the same problem.

Love is not provoked (vs. 5). A violent temper is often the sign of a loveless heart (cf. Acts 15:39; 17:16; Heb. 10:24). With this verb the list begins to speak of how one responds to evil in others, since the first five negatives basically deal with evil within ourselves. Love is not easily angered, irritated or stirred up (Psa. 7:11; John 2:13-17; Eph. 4:26-31). One may say, “I lose my temper, but it’s all over in a minute.” So is an atomic bomb, but its damage is felt for long after.

Love taketh not account of evil (vs. 5). As with the KJV (“thinketh no evil”), this phrase could be taken in the sense of, “love does not devise evil against someone else.” More likely, as with the ASV and most other translations, the expression refers to evil done by another person to us or

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others. Love is not always looking to keep score, or to settle scores, or to get ahead. Love does not keep books on the evil done against us.

Love rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth (vs. 6). Love and truth are soul mates (cf. Eph. 4:15). Truth stimulates love to rejoice, while sin and deception will cause genuine joy to disappear. Real love seeks to avoid sin, **ALL** sin; love has no joy at all in sin. Love cares about the means as well as the end (Gal. 5:6). Love rejoices. Do our personalities show the joy that comes out of truth? (1 John 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:8; Phil. 4:4). Love rejoices “with the truth.” Truth can be taken as the truth of God’s word as well as incorporating the idea of truthfulness (honesty and integrity). Love tells the truth, even when it hurts (cf. 2 Sam. 12). Love tells the truth, because truth in many places is hurting! Love tells the truth clearly and without maliciously destroying someone else (Eph. 4:29).

Four times in verse seven the text refers to “all things.” This comes quite close to meaning “in everything” or “always.” One translation says “there is nothing love cannot face.” Notice love and its relation to “all things.”

Love beareth all things (vs. 7). The word “bear” basically means “to cover with silence” or “to suppress” (cf. 1 Cor. 9:12; 1 Thess. 3:1, 5). This does **NOT** mean that we are to condone sinful behavior, but it means that love does not look for skeletons in someone else’s closet in order to scandalize them. This love puts up with minor points of irritation, tolerates inconveniences and weaknesses, and does so with a spirit of kindness, support and protection. It looks for virtues, not for vices.

Love believeth all things (vs. 7). Love wants to believe the best. Instead of being suspicious and eager to denounce others, love joyfully and obediently trusts that all will work out to God’s glory (Rom. 8:28). We tend to make people

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better when we believe in them. Do we often tend to think the worst?

Love hopeth all things (vs. 7). We have hope (expectation and anticipation) because of God and His promises (Rom. 5:1-5; 8:24-25; Heb. 6:18-19). “For in thee, O Jehovah, do I hope” (Psa. 38:15). “My hope is in thee” (Psa. 39:7). Sometimes the culprit who pulls the plug on our hope is us. Our hope, like love itself, is more than a feeling. It is based upon the person and promises of God (1 Pet. 1:3-4).

Love endureth all things (vs. 7). When our lives seem to be a “mess” with problems, we may find remarkable opportunities to minister. The term “endureth” has reference to patience with circumstances. It means “to bear up under” or “to persevere” (cf. Jas. 1:12). And the whole idea of “endurance” smacks of pressure and unpleasantry. We may want to say, “It’s just not feasible,” or “It’s not fun,” or even, “It’s not fair.” But love endures patiently (cf. 1 Pet. 2:18-21).

LOVE - ITS PERMANENCE (8-13)

The last six verses of the great love chapter can be summed up by saying, “love lasts.” Love does **NOT** fail, although we may fail to be loving. With the completion of God’s final revelation in Jesus Christ (the New Testament), miraculous gifts like tongues, knowledge and prophecy would cease or be done away (13:8-10). The gifts the Corinthians had come to value so greatly would not last forever. They needed to “follow after love” (1 Cor. 14:1).

“But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love” (vs. 13). Faith, hope and love have so much in common. Nothing so characterizes what is really important in life as faith, hope and love (Rom. 5:1-5; Col. 1:4-5; Eph. 1:15-18; 1 Thess. 1:3). All are the result of what God can do when we yield to Him. All three also

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describe the maturity and development God desires in each of us. It would be impossible to find three better words to describe what Christianity is to be all about.

How is love greater? Without the love of God, we would have no faith or hope. Love is the primary motive for the obedience of faith and the service of hope (John 14:15; 1 John 5:2-3). Faith will one day become sight, and hope will one day become reality, but love will last! Love will never go out of style, but will be present throughout eternity.

CONCLUSION

How we need to nurture and grow the love 1 Corinthians 13 speaks about more in our lives. If to have seen Jesus was to have seen the Father (John 14:8-9), to see us should be to see Jesus (Col. 1:27). Do we resemble Him in our love? May the beauty and love of Jesus be seen more in us!

WHY I BELIEVE IN JESUS

Jody L. Apple

Introduction

The Importance of Faith

The significance of “faith statements” is sometimes lost in the course of everyday conversation. Like it or not, “faith statements” are tacit appeals to persuade and encourage the listener to believe as we do. In addition to bearing “witness” of “our” faith — in the Biblical sense of providing testimony, persuasion and proof — they also serve as an implicit, and sometimes explicit, entreaty to listeners to assimilate the evidence and draw identical conclusions, thus coming to the same faith. Since our “faith statements” are really presenting a case for the forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation, it is paramount that they reflect a Biblical faith, rather than one that is purely personal.

Biblical faith is objective, not subjective and purely personal. To have the faith that pleases God we must follow a divinely ordained standard. This obligates us to demonstrate that what we claim to believe (our “faith statements”) is really subject to cognition and is, in fact, the truth. Not everyone subscribes to this concept of objective faith. According to popular dictionary definitions, faith is “firm belief in something for which there is no proof” (WNCD) or “Belief that does not rest on logical proof or material evidence.” (AHD) These definitions allow for subjectivity of faith. They would allow individual circumstances to determine “truth” (e.g., existentialism, situation ethics). They would allow each man to serve as

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his own judge (1 Cor 11:31), and thus to be right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25).

It is because God wants us to attain an objective, and not a subjective, faith — a faith that you and I can both come to independently, yet still have the same mind (cf. “one faith,” Ephesians 4:5; “one mind” Phil 2:2) — that the new testament places so much emphasis on evidence and reason. Consider these passages: (1) John 20:30-31 articulates the relationship which exists between evidence and conclusion in this way — specific evidence yields specific conclusions. (2) 1 Peter 3:15 indicates that we must always be “ready ... to give answer” when someone seeks “a reason concerning the hope that is in you.” “To give answer” is translated from the term *apologia*, which is “a reasoned statement or argument.” (JHT) “Reason” is rendered from *logos*, usually referring to “word” or “thought,” but frequently meaning “reason, the mental faculty of thinking, meditating, reasoning, calculating.” (JHT) This verse, then, affirms the necessity of both logic and apologetics. (3) Finally, both 1 John 4:1 and 1 Thessalonians 5:21 demand that we try (or “prove”) all teachings in order to determine what is and is not truth.

The relationship which exists between truth and faith is anything but subtle. Biblical faith is *always* based upon truth (see 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 2:18; 3:8; Titus 1:1). The very process of becoming a child of God involves *both* faith and truth. As part of that process we are “born of God,” which, according to 1 John 5:1 demands *faith*. But Peter, in 1 Peter 1:22-23, states that *truth* is involved in the process by which we are “begotten again ... through the word of God.” As that process is completed, we are said to obey the gospel (cf Rom 10:16 - KJV), the form of teaching presented to us during our conversion process (Rom 6:1-4, 14-17; 1 Cor 15:1-4). When we obey the gospel we are simultaneously

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obeying the truth (1 Peter 1:22) and *obeying the faith* (Rom 1:5; 16:26). Clearly our faith is truth based.

Central to our “faith statements” is the affirmation that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:16). Because there exists such an integral connection between faith and truth, our “faith statements” must also be “truth statements.” The scriptures place a premium on truth (Psa 119:160; Pr 23:23; Jn 17:17). We must not only obey truth initially to become a child of God, we must continue our new life in Christ by “walking” in truth (Ps 86:11; 2 Jn 4: 3 Jn 3,4). It is critical, therefore, that “faith statements” about Jesus are understood to be “truth statements” about Jesus.

Truth conforms with known facts and reality. In like manner, saving truth conforms to revealed facts (as well as to empirical data) and ultimate reality. We want to come to saving faith based upon that truth. As part of that process is it imperative that we be able to not only affirm that Jesus is the Son of God — we must be able to prove it. What follows is a discussion of how that saving faith is connected to the revealed truth about Jesus the Son of God.

Biblical faith is not secular faith¹

Bible faith is not at all like secular or popular notions of faith. Secular definitions, as previously noted, declare that faith is: (a) “Confident belief in the truth, value, or trustworthiness of a person, an idea, or a thing.” (AHD); (b) something “that does not rest on logical proof or material evidence” (MID); or (c) the “firm belief in something for which there is no proof” (WNCD).

There are at least four key elements that stand out in these definitions: (a) faith is based on confidence, (b) it makes no difference what you believe, (c) faith is personal

¹Some material in this section is from the author’s “Faith Must Be Connected” (The Good NewsPaper, 1998 Issue #2; see TheBible.net/articles)

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and subjective, and (d) faith needs no proof. Each of these elements is central to secular faith — and each is counter to the Biblical concept of faith.

(a) The idea of “confident belief,” while essential, is not sufficient. Having confidence in what we believe reflects our attitude and conviction, maybe even our sincerity, but it does not necessarily mean what we believe is true.

(b) The popular notion of faith does not focus on content, or *what* you believe. In fact, what you believe makes no difference in most cases. As long as you believe something, anything, you can claim to be a person of “faith.”

(c) Secular faith is intensely personal, and thus subjective. Every individual has the right to believe whatever he/she wants. There is a belief for everyone — resulting in as many “faiths” as there are people. The convenience of every person having their own personal (and subjective) faith is obvious: it defies critical evaluation. Faith is simply “what I believe.” It cannot be subjected to investigation of any kind.

(d) The popular notion of faith demands that we can have it without defending it. Since faith is personal and subjective, it cannot be judged in any way, so there is no need to defend it. This notion of faith defies truth, that which is based in fact and objective reality. Once faith has left the realm of critical investigation — no “reality check” allowed — it becomes exclusively personal. If I have faith, and you have faith, and neither can be judged as true or false, then all faith is assumed to be true. If I believe it, it must be true. This idea is so pervasive that even our comic strips declare that “...the very essence of faith is a belief in the existence of something that can’t be proven.”²

²See “Non Sequitur,” in the Philadelphia Inquirer, March 8, 1997

Bible faith is different

Unlike secular faith, Biblical faith is based upon evidence and reason. Consider the following passages which affirm this vital truth:

(a) “So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” (Romans 10:17)

Faith is based upon the message of God’s word. The word of God is demonstrated as true because of its consistency with a real world of facts, laws and other known truths.

(b) “Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name.” (John 20:30-31)

John’s divinely inspired purpose is to record the evidence (“signs”) designed to lead honest souls to the conclusion that Jesus is the Messiah. Here scripture declares that there is a connection between evidence and faith, and that evidence produces faith.

(c) “prove all things; hold fast that which is good;” (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

The term “test” is from the Greek word dokimazo. It means to examine something to determine whether or not it is genuine, and therefore of value. In this manner, Christians are to “test” all doctrine to make sure we follow only what is “good” (i.e., true or sound).

(d) “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1)

As in 1 Thessalonians 5:21, the term “test” (*try* in some versions) demands that we examine what others teach and what we, therefore, believe. First century Christians were not instructed to gullibly accept everything they heard. They were constantly cautioned to be wary of false

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prophets (literally - pseudoprophetes) who concocted their own teachings and attempted to convince others of their lies. Knowledgeable and faithful Christians were to put everything they heard to the “test.”

An excellent example of this is found in Acts 17:11, where we read: “Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of the mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so.”

Though the teacher was the inspired apostle Paul, the Thessalonians “examined” (“searched”- KJV, NKJV) the word of God to discover the truthfulness of the message. The term “examined” is from *anakrino* - to examine, judge, scrutinize, question for the purpose of determining excellence or defects in a person or thing (JHT). “It means to sift up and down, make careful and exact research as in legal processes as in Ac 4:9; 12:19, etc.” (RWP). The Bereans engaged in this process to determine “whether these things were so” (literally “if these things had it thus,” RWP). The phrase simply indicates that the Bereans were engaged in an investigative and critical effort to determine whether or not Paul’s teaching was true.

(e) *“And we have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God.” (John 6:69)*

Peter affirmed that he both believed and knew that Jesus was the Messiah. His belief was not a “leap of faith,” but was rather based upon evidence that lead him to “know” Jesus’ true identity.

(f) *“For which cause I suffer also these things: yet I am not ashamed; for I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day.” (2 Timothy 1:12)*

Like Peter, Paul affirmed that he had both knowledge and faith that God’s promises were certain. He was

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“persuaded” of such. The term *peitho* means to be induced by words (evidence) to believe or do something. Because of the close connection between the act of persuasion and the conviction which results from persuasion, the word is also translated as believe, trust, confidence or obey (cf. Mt 27:43; 28:14; Acts 5:36, 37, 40; et. al.).

From this brief overview we rightfully conclude that Scripture teaches Biblical faith must be *connected* to facts and evidence.

Bible faith is based on specific facts

Biblical faith is not grounded in just any evidence — it is grounded in *specific* evidence, facts, truths and principles (see discussion of Rom 10:17 above). The specificity of that evidence relates directly to God’s will to save man from sin (1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 2:1-2). God has revealed within the pages of His written word all of the evidence necessary to: (1) lead all men to faith in His Son, (2) prompt those who come to faith in Christ to obey His will, and (3) encourage them to remain faithful to the Lord as long as they live (cf 2 Peter 1:3).

Some of those specific facts are:

- the existence of God (Hebrews 11:6)
- the deity of Christ (John 1:1-3; 3:1ff; 8:24, 58)
- the saving power of the blood of Christ (Romans 5:9; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14)
- the certainty of the resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)
- the establishment and existence of Christ’s kingdom, the church (Isaiah 2:1ff; Micah 4:1-2; Daniel 2; Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2)
- the plan of salvation (Luke 1:67-80; Romans 1:1-5)
- the principles and practices of faithful Christian living (1 Corinthians 6:9ff; Colossians 3:1ff; Ephesians 5:1-11)

The Wrong Kind of Faith

As critical as faith is in God's scheme of redemption, it is possible to have faith that falls short of "saving faith." Because of the intricacies of faith generally, and Bible faith specifically, we must understand that faith exists in varying degrees quantitatively and qualitatively. Hence we find references to:

- vain faith (1 Cor 15:14)
- little faith (Mt 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; et. al.)
- great faith (Mt 8:10; 15:28, et. al)
- increasing faith (Lk 17:5; 2 Cor 10:15)
- growing faith (2 Th 1:3)
- no faith (Mk 4:40)
- weak faith (Rom 14:1)
- full of faith (Acts 6:5; 11:24)
- seed faith (Mt 17:20)
- a void/empty faith (Rom 4:14)
- saving faith (Eph 2:8-9; 2 Tim 3:15)
- joy of faith (Phil 1:25)
- serving faith (Phil 2:17)
- work of faith (1 Th 1:3; 2 Th 1:11)
- fighting faith (1 Tim 6:12)
- erring faith (1 Tim 6:10; 21)
- unfeigned faith (2 Tim 1:5)
- sound in faith (Titus 1:13; 2:2)
- rich in faith (James 2:5)
- dead faith (James 2:17, 26)
- and holy faith (Jude 20)

It is obvious, just from reading this list of the types of faith, that some are negative (vain faith, little faith, weak faith, etc.) and some are positive (great faith, increasing faith, full of faith, etc.). Furthermore, by examining the contexts in which these "faiths" are presented we learn that God wants us to pursue all of the positive aspects of *saving*

faith, as well as avoid all the negatives of the *false faiths* that will cause us to lose our soul.

This Biblical depiction of varying kinds of faith, some good and some bad, some acceptable and some not, confirms our earlier contention. Biblical faith must be based upon evidence and reason. Faith without regard to content not only cannot save — it condemns. If all kinds of faith could save, then God’s word would not present some “faiths” as potentially damning to one’s soul.

Our faith must be *in* what God wants us to believe, for the *reasons* He wants us to believe, and it must be *demonstrated* in such a way as to be part of saving faith. Saving faith is *connected*.

Why Not To Believe (Wrong Reasons for “Faith”)

In spite of Biblical mandates to the contrary, “faith” is often held for the wrong reason/s. There are reasons why we should not have faith — not that there are genuine reasons *against* believing, but in the sense of believing *for the wrong reason/s*.

We should not believe:

1. because we want to

Saving faith, though it must involve the will of man (Jn 7:17), is not accomplished simply because we have the will to believe something. A willingness to believe can lead to belief in almost anything.

2. because we have to

Though the *demand* for faith is definitely Biblical (Heb 11:6; Jn 8:24), we don’t want to come to faith simply because we “have” to. Faith is not “forced” in the sense that it occurs in violation of our will, conscience and intellect. Faith must develop as a natural consequence of our voluntary involvement and willingness to be guided by reason.

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3. because we know it is necessary

Faith, though necessary, is not sufficient. The demons believed, yet failed to render obedience to Christ (cf James 2:19). It is possible to want the right thing to be accomplished because we see the necessity of it, yet still go about it in the wrong way or for the wrong reason. Saul knew that a sacrifice had to be offered, but he was not qualified to offer it. Yet, rather than wait for Samuel, he felt “compelled” to do so. [See 1 Sam 13:12 - “I forced myself therefore” , KJV; “Therefore I felt compelled” NKJV]

4. because of others

Though our faith may come about through the influence of others, we must not believe just because others do. Timothy had faith due to the teaching of both his mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois (2 Tim 1:5), but ultimately his faith was due to the influence of the scriptures: “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.” (2 Timothy 3:15,) Parents, colleagues and friends may all lead us to salvation, but we can never be saved based on their influence alone. (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1)

5. because it is culturally/socially acceptable

With the advent of Constantine’s “edict of toleration,” Christianity became an accepted religion in the Roman empire. Within our own nation it has been acceptable to place “in God we trust” on our coins, assemble for worship as we see fit, and (within limits anyway) practice “freedom of religion” as our conscience dictates. But the social acceptability of our “faith” does not guarantee that is ordained of God — and it is certainly no guarantee that it is “saving faith.” Socially accepted faith varies from culture to culture, as well as over the course of time. It was once acceptable in Samaria to follow Jeroboam’s system of worship, but it was never right to do so (1 Kings 12:26-33).

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6. *because without it I risk losing salvation/I will be lost*

This reason, somewhat like numbers two and three before, is different in that it is slightly more specific. Faith is *necessary*. It is something we *must have*. And it is something, that by not having will cause us to be lost. The latter part of Mark 16:16 succinctly states “but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.” (cf. Jn 3:18) But even in light of its essentiality, it would be wrong to claim, or maintain, faith simply because we were afraid of losing our salvation.

7. because I just want to “cover the bases” (just in case)

Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), noted French mathematician, philosopher and originator of the concept known as “Pascal’s Wager,” suggested that we “bet” on spiritual things just in case they turn out to be correct. If we “bet” on God, and there is no God, then all we have done is placed a bad “bet,” a “bet” on something that didn’t exist. But if we failed to “bet” on God, and there really is a God, then we have missed out on spiritual blessings. Ancient Israel capitulated, in part anyway, to worshipping many “gods” in addition to the God of heaven (cf. Ex 15:11; 20:3; Deut 32:16-17; Josh 24:14-23; Judges 10:6; 2 Kgs 17:33; et. al.). But worshipping God at the same time as paying homage to false “gods,” does not constitute true worship of Jehovah. “Betting” on God without having a Biblical basis for faith may be a “wager,” but it is not the “sure thing” that Biblical faith is.

8. *because of intuition*

G.E. Moore (1873-1958), a noted English philosopher, was a proponent of intuitionism. Intuition is the (alleged) ability of knowing and sensing without reason, the ability to have immediate cognition. Jesus told his audience that God would draw people to him (cf. Jn 6:44), but it was not

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an intuitionist's "pull," that brought people to Jesus the Christ, or to God the Father — it was rational teaching subject to rational perception. The following verse, John 6:45, says: "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." Intuitionism is counter to hearing, learning and teaching, the very means used by God to come to faith (Rom 10:17). We may have a "gut feeling," a "hunch" or an "intuition" that leads us to "faith," but such notions are contrary to the reasons the word of God provides for faith.

9. because of emotion

God wants his servants to be emotional. He wants them to love truth (2 Th 2:10), hate sin (Deut 12:31; 16:22; Amos 6:8; Mal 2:16), be compassionate and merciful to others (Matt 6:14-15; 18:21-22, 23-35; Col 3:13; and to enjoy life (Phil 4:4ff; Jn 10:10). In brief, God wants us to "feel" as He does: He wants us to love what is good and hate what is bad. But it is possible to "feel" a certain way, and to be deceived by that feeling. Paul was convinced that he was "living right" while he was persecuting the church (Acts 23:1), but what he did was wrong. Though our faithful obedience should cause us to be filled with joy (cf. the eunuch, Acts 8:39), having a sensation of joy and happiness does not by itself prove "faith."

Yet, one of the most frequently appealed to "proofs" of "faith" offered by proponents of varying religions is quite often nothing more than an appeal to our emotions. The statement oft repeated — "I wouldn't trade the feeling I have for a stack of Bibles" — sounds, to some, like the sincere and dedicated disciple that Christ seeks to serve Him. But putting "feeling" first and facts second is contrary to the scriptures. God wants us to consider the facts (Jn 20:30-31), come to faith (Jn 20:30-31) and feel right in His sight (Acts 8:39; 16:34) — and in that order.

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McGarvey noted the following with reference to the reason behind the eunuch's joy³:

When Philip was caught away to other labors, the eunuch "went on his way rejoicing". So universally does joy pervade the hearts of those whose sins are forgiven, that many sectaries of modern times have mistaken it for the 'evidence' of pardon. The fallacy which they commit is to assume, without authority, that a real pardon from God is the only cause which can induce this feeling. Now, we know that joy must spring up in the heart, under the belief that pardon has been dispensed, however mistaken that belief may be. The convict awaiting execution would be just as happy if deceived by a counterfeit pardon, as if it were genuine. So with the penitent sinner. When his soul has been racked, for hours and days together, by the torture of an awakened conscience, it is likely, by the reaction of its own powers, or through exhaustion of the nervous system, to become calm. Now, if he has been taught that the supervening of this calm is an indication of pardon, immediately upon the consciousness of its presence there will spring up that joy which he alone feels who believes his sins are pardoned. Such individuals, however, generally have serious doubts, at times, whether they did not mistake the natural for the supernatural, and they seldom obtain more than a 'hope' that their sins were forgiven. The rejoicing of the eunuch was based upon far different and more solid ground. Taught by Philip, according to

3J. W. McGarvey, *Original Commentary on Acts*, (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, n.d.), pp. 111-112

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the commission, and according to the preaching of Peter, who had been Philip's own teacher, that the penitent believer was to be immersed for the remission of sins; realizing in his own consciousness, that he was a penitent believer; and having been pardoned was as solid as his confidence in the word of God and in his own consciousness. In neither of these could he well be mistaken, and, therefore, his joy was not alloyed by any harassing doubts.

Should true faith cause us to feel a certain way? Certainly. But it is possible to have positive emotions and feelings without having *saving faith*. God does not want us to believe because of feelings alone.

There are, no doubt, additional “wrong reasons” for coming to “faith” in Christ. The list cited, however, provides a sampling of the kind of insufficient “reasons” that are often given.

Toward a proper view of saving faith

Since the Lord's church began there have been attacks on it, its people and its Head. Atheists, agnostics, skeptics and pagans have leveled serious charges against Bible truths, and in response, those seeking to defend the word of truth have replied.

They have replied with critiques of the positions offered by the enemies of truth — and they have replied with reasons affirming why they believed. To be sure, our apologetic must do each of these things: (1) it must present a positive affirmation of faith in cogent, logical terms; and (2) it must anticipate and respond to critical attacks made against that affirmation. Most of the materials written in the field of apologetics and Christian evidences dutifully follow this approach.

But there might be a catch in our apologetics if we fail to deal with even more basic, and thus more crucial,

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matters. For example, within the discipline of Biblical hermeneutics, most texts written addressing the subject begin by plowing through numerous rules and corollaries that must be implemented as we interpret the sacred text. Well and good. But even more fundamental to these matters is the foundational issue, namely: “Is hermeneutics (or even, ala the skeptic, knowledge) possible?” It is inadequate to elucidate fully on the most basic, or even the most esoteric and scholarly, of hermeneutic methodology if this logically prior question is not addressed at some point. For this reason, in preparing for future work in the discipline of Biblical hermeneutics, sufficient time and effort must be spent in dealing with this preliminary issue.⁴

In like manner, as we address the issue of why we believe in Jesus, the predominant mode of demonstration often includes references to the following accounts of Biblical testimony: (1) Peter’s statement that Jesus was indeed the Christ, the Son of God (Mt 16:13ff); (2) Thomas’ declaration upon seeing the risen Christ, “My Lord and my God,” (John 20:25ff); (3) the witness of the soldier at the cross (Lk 23:47); (4) the witness of Moses (Deut 18:15; Acts 3:22; 7:37; Jn 5:46); (5) the witness of the prophets (Lk 24:25, 44); (6) the witness of John the baptizer (Jn 1:29-36; 5:32-33); (7) the witness of the Father (Jn 5:17ff, 36; Acts 2:32-33, 36); (8) the witness of the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:26; 15:26; 16:7ff; Acts 2:33); (9) Jesus’ own testimony (Jn 5:29-31); (10) the miracles of the Christ (Jn 5:36); (11) the statements of God the Father (Mt 3:17; 17:5; Jn 12:28; 2 Pet 1:17); (12) the anticipation of Abraham (Jn 8:56; Gal 3:9; Heb 11:13) and so forth.

All of these lines of testimony — there are many more to be sure — are sufficient to prove why we believe in

⁴Jody L. Apple, *Hermeneutical Agnosticism: A Critique of Subjectivism in Biblical Interpretation*, (Media, PA: New Testament Christian Press, 1985)

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Jesus, provided however, that they are presented within the framework of a systematic and logical approach which necessarily includes why this sort of faith system works in the first place. Most of our applications and appeals to scripture assume, practically anyway if not logically, that such can be done. But most of our practical use of these Scriptural appeals never entertain nor explicate this preliminary material.

These preliminary issues include, but are not limited to the following questions:

First, why does faith “work?” What is it about the system of saving faith described in the scriptures makes it work, makes it save. “Faith in faith” is inadequate to save; believing that we are saved simply because we believe does not explain the issue. There must be a way to know and understand that faith really does function in a Divinely ordained salvific system. Indeed, though beyond our present scope, such a way is possible to know and explain.⁵

Second, and most critical for the present study, how can we affirm faith in an historical figure long since departed from this earthly realm? Whereas the proceeding question is fundamental to any religious person’s declaration of “saved by faith” (regardless of whether or not that declaration is Biblically justified or not), the initial question is “easier” to explain within the realm of religious inquiry than this second question is to explain within the realm of critical historical inquiry.

Third, and even more fundamental than the previous question, “how can we know anything?”

These last two questions are substantially more crucial, and thus more difficult, to answer than the first. This is due to the sheer number of skeptics that would never entertain the answer to the question “how does faith save” without a

⁵See the series “Faith Must Be Connected” at www.TheBible.net/articles

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logically and chronologically prior answer to the question “how can you have faith in a 2000 year old historical figure?” Or, more fundamentally, “how can you know with certainty anything in history, either recent or ancient?” These questions, touching upon the interconnected fields of epistemology, logic, history, philosophy, and the philosophy of history, are, because of these multiple connections and the time required to answer them via correspondingly multiple lines of argumentation, more complicated than the prior question. But answer them we must if we are to fully defend the faith that says “I believe in Jesus.”

Our present focus is directed toward answering question number two. The first and last questions, though critical in their own respects, are only indirectly addressed in pursuit of the solutions to our primary goal.

The Problem

As we work toward an answer to the question “how can we believe in Jesus?” we will examine three different lines of argumentation that might be used to defend both the historicity of Jesus and the historical integrity of the Bible.

The lines of argumentation to be discussed are: (1) the convergence of evidence; (2) the witness of contemporary evidence and (3) the Biblical evidence argument.

I. The Convergence of Evidence

As we introduce our first line of reasoning, consider the following two examples of “history,” one seemingly ridiculous and the other quite weighty.

A silly case⁶

⁶The renditions presented here is the author’s summary. For fuller accounts of this story, see links at <http://breakthechain.tripod.com/exclusives/melgibson.html>;

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The story begins. It is presented by Paul Harvey during one of his “rest of the story” radio broadcasts.

A hard working man moves his family from New York to Australia to find work. His handsome son wants to become a trapeze artist or an actor. Working odd jobs, he was on his way home one night from a shipyard when he was attacked and robbed by five thugs. Not only did they rob him, they smashed his face in with boots and clubs and left him to die.

Found lying in the road by police, he was being taken to the morgue when someone heard him gasp. His eye socket was smashed. He was missing an eye. His skull, legs and arms were broken. His teeth were all gone and his nose was barely attached to his face. But he was alive.

After spending more than a year in the hospital, he was released, but no one would hire him, that is until he got work as a side show at a circus. He was the man who had no face. Years later, contemplating suicide, he passed by a church, went inside and was kneeling in a pew crying. A priest felt sorry for him and promised to help the lad, if only he would pledge to be a faithful Catholic.

Through a network of contacts, the priest was able to find one of the best plastic surgeons in the country to repair the young man’s face, and the young man dutifully kept his word to be faithful to God. He went on, of course, to become a famous actor. Who is he? Why, Mel Gibson, the inspiration for the movie “The Man Without a Face.”

A family member, in the sincerest and most awestruck fashion passed along this story to me and my wife. Only later did we learn the whole truth.

*1. The **real** facts*

a. Mel Gibson did move from the United States to Australia when he was young.

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b. He did star in and produce a movie called “The Man Without A Face.”

c. He was in a fight prior to a movie audition that left him with some cuts that required stitches.

d. As a result of his “rough appearance” from the fight, he auditioned for and was given the part he sought - his first “big break” in show business.

e. Paul Harvey did do a radio broadcast about the fight, his rough appearance and how he got his “break” in motion pictures.

2. *The fake facts*

a. Though he starred in and produced a movie called “The Man Without A Face,” Mel Gibson was not the subject of the film.

b. The movie was based on a novel by Isabelle Holland about a man who was horribly disfigured in an auto accident.

c. Mel Gibson was never beaten and left to die.

d. His eye socket, skull, arms and legs were not broken.

e. His eye was not left hanging out of the socket and his nose was not left dangling from his face.

f. He never was in a freak show at a circus.

g. He never met and received help from a friendly priest to correct his disfigurement.

h. Though he may have had plastic surgery at some point in his life, it wasn’t the lifesaving scenario told in the story.

The moral of the story is well stated in proverbs: “The simple believeth every word; But the prudent man looketh well to his going.” (Proverbs 14:15) This sort of story, known as an “urban legend,” can fool and deceive even the brightest and “best intentioned” of souls. They appeal to our sense of awe and wonder, and they always play on our emotions. They usually have a grain of truth at their core,

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but ultimately they have so much error and falsehood mixed together that it takes too much time to dig in and find out exactly which parts are true and which parts are false.

It's so much easier to just accept them or reject them as whole cloth. Searching for truth is hard work. It's always easier to believe a lie or half-truth. Sad to say, our attitude toward urban legends is often reflective of our attitude toward spiritual verities.

A serious case

Our next example of “history” is as heavy-handed and somber as our first was light and frivolous.

In recent years a number of hate groups have captivated national and international attention. They have done so in part because of the deplorable militancy and violence they have engaged in, and because of the repulsive teachings that they promote. Without exception, these hate mongers target specific religious, ethnic, cultural and national classes of people for their vehement doctrines and disgust.

It has been most embarrassing, for example, that there exists, no more than half a century after the end of World War II, a new generation of “neo-Nazis” that have resurrected the dreaded tenets of anti-Semitism. Many of the principles and beliefs they espouse are parallel if not identical to the propaganda promulgated during Hitler's reign. And, with the same degree of detestation, they have directed their abominable teachings toward the same classes of people as the Nazis a half-century ago.

As horrible and repulsive as the revival of Nazism is, there are other beliefs that are just as loathsome. Under the guise of history, there exists a growing number of radicals, who though they might not physically attack or verbally vilify targeted groups, will nonetheless deny — and vehemently so — that historical atrocities like the Jewish

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holocaust ever occurred. They “revise” history to disallow what might be otherwise known.

To be sure, we can equivocate regarding the intention of the term by saying that there have been numerous holocausts throughout history, and truth be told, that is a case easily made. The names of people and places like Khmer Rouge, Pol Pot, Katyn Forest, Idi Amin, Slobodan Milosevic, and even the Crusades, all might fall under the rubric of what might be intended in the term holocaust. But we cannot deny that in our temporal and cultural setting the most frequently intended association of the term entails the atrocities committed against the millions of souls in death camps administered during and by the Nazi regime of the 1930’s and 1940’s. Though numerous ethnic and religious groups were targeted, it is incontrovertible that the primary target of Hitler’s henchmen were people of Jewish heritage.

As mentioned, one of the principle tenets of historical revisionist groups is quite astounding: they deny that such atrocities ever occurred. Their denial, in addition to being startling and amazing, nonetheless provides an interesting test case that relates to our own question. We want to know whether or not compelling evidence exists that yields faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah - and in pursuing that goal, we must ask the questions: (1) are historical facts, persons, events subject to knowledge, and (2) how can we know such historical facts, persons, events, etc. are/were real?

It is easy enough to answer the first question “yes.” But providing the substantiation that lies behind that answer - which yields the answer to our second question — that one is not quite as easy. But it forms the crux of what is needed to answer the problem that the revisionists raise by denying the murder of millions of Jews, as well as answering our equally important (from the standpoint of

historicity and man's eternal destiny) question about the reality of the historical Jesus.⁷

Proving the reality of the Jewish holocaust

In an article in Sceptic magazine⁸ Michael Shermer addresses and replies to the revisionist attack on the history of World War II and refers to the methodology, in part at least, that leads to understanding how the past can be both known and understood.

Shermer builds on the work of William Whewell, a nineteenth century philosopher and educator, and author of several series of works on the history and methodology of the sciences. One of his better known works, *Philosophy of Inductive Sciences*, went through three editions. In volume two of his second edition Whewell observes the following:⁹

“Accordingly the cases in which inductions from classes of facts altogether different have thus *jumped together*, belong only to the best established theories which the history of science contains. And as I shall have occasion to refer to this peculiar feature in their evidence, I will take the liberty of describing it by a particular phrase; and will term it the *Consilience of Inductions*.”

Whewell's phrase “consilience of inductions”¹⁰ is significant. He maintains that there can be independent

7The quest for the “historical Jesus” has been the “rage” in scholarly and academic circles for at least the last century and a half.

8Michael Shermer, "Proving the Holocaust: The Refutation of Revisionism & the Restoration of History," Sceptic, Vol. 2, No. 4, June, 1994

9William Whewell, *The Philosophy Of The Inductive Sciences*, (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1967 - reprint of second edition, originally published in 1840), Vol. 2, p. 65

10Shermer uses and refers the term “convergence of evidence.”

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lines of evidence which simultaneously authenticate each other. His contention, developed and explicated primarily with regard to scientific achievements and theories, nonetheless has application beyond the realm of science. He states¹¹

We may best hope to understand the nature and conditions of real knowledge, by studying the nature and conditions of the most certain and stable positions of knowledge which we already possess: and we are most likely to learn the best methods of discovering truth by examining how truths, now universally recognized, have really been discovered.

In context, Whewell maintains that the means of attaining knowledge share a pattern across all disciplines: there exists a universal methodology of discovering and ascertaining truth in every discipline.

Similarly, Albright argues¹²

To the extent that the writer deals with historical problems he employs the same analytical and synthetic methods which have proved so successful elsewhere in reconstructing the historic past; as shown in Chapter II these methods are logically identical with the scientific methodology of the natural and social sciences. As a Christian theist, however, the writer presents a world-view which is not at all that of the logical empiricist,

11 William Whewell, *Selected Writings On The History of Science*, editor Yehuda Elkana (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. xvi (quoting from Whewell's *History of the Inductive Sciences*)

12 William Foxwell Albright, *From The Stone Age to Christianity*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1946), p vii

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but mediates between neo-orthodox and neo-Thomists, with important difference from both.

Again, he states¹³

The analysis must always follow the same logical sequence: induction, deduction, analogical reasoning. Since all language is rigidly bound by law — which operates as effectively when it originates in custom and imitation as when it arises from anatomical, physiological, or other, psychological, sources — linguistic phenomena are capable of as scientific treatment as are any data of biological origin. The methodological triad, observation, experiment, induction, on which natural science is based, operates in a corresponding way in linguistics.

and¹⁴

Innumerable efforts have been made to find a single key with which to unlock the mysteries of history. Some theorists have drawn on physics and mechanics, some on biology, some on geography, some on climatic change, others on racial, or physiological, or pathological, or economic, or societal, or psychological, or other decisive factors to explain the formation and differentiation of cultures.

Albright's interest is in historical, linguistic and archaeological studies. Whewell's is primarily in science. But the principles mentioned by both are pandemic, having equal application in all disciplines, even in our interest at present, philosophy of history and authenticating the testimony of the word of God.

13Albright, p. 15

14Albright, p. 70

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Shermer, taking his cue from Whewell's concept of the convergence of evidence, builds several multi-faceted lines of argumentation all pointing to the same conclusion: the Nazi holocaust was real. His lines of evidence are as follows:¹⁵

1. Written documents--hundreds of thousands of letters, memos, blueprints, orders, bills, speeches, articles, memoirs, and confessions.
2. Eyewitness testimony--accounts from survivors, Kapos, Sonderkommandos, SS guards, commandants, local townspeople, and even upper-echelon Nazis who did not deny the Holocaust.
3. Photographs--official military and press photographs, civilian photographs, secret photographs taken by survivors, aerial photographs, German and Allied film footage, etc.
4. The camps themselves--many concentration camps, work camps, and death camps are still extant in varying degrees of originality and reconstruction.
5. Negative evidence--if five to six million Jews were not killed, where did all those people go?

The five lines of reasoning Shermer introduces are supported by scores of references to historical evidence, documentation, photographs, films, diaries, personal testimonies and places, all of which cite thousands upon thousands of eyewitness and documentary evidence leading to the same conclusion — the holocaust really occurred.

¹⁵See Shermer's article cited above for the complete context.

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Unlike the urban legend we began with, this historical case study was significantly more important. Furthermore, the introduction of “convergence of evidence” has introduced a methodology that bodes well as it applies to our study of the historical Jesus.

Having introduced this concept, but without taking the time needed to develop it fully, let it simply be noted that multiple lines of evidence can also be assembled pointing to the conclusion that the Bible is a reliable historical witness and that Jesus was indeed an historical character. Those lines of evidence can be both broad and specific.

From a broad perspective those lines of testimony would include at least the following: (1) archaeological evidence; (2) textual and manuscript evidence of old and new testament versions, translations, etc. [written evidential records alone number in the thousands of documents]; (3) the Biblical record itself, (4) geological records, (5) arguments for the existence of God (see below), (6) arguments for the inspiration of the Bible (see below), (7) secular evidence, (8) historical records of contemporary old and new testament places, events and persons, and other lines of appropriate study.

From a specific perspective, those lines might incorporate numerous lines of evidence presented as a cohesive unit in one passage. For example, when we launch into a study of John 5 and 6, we encounter within its verses a Biblical example of convergence. Here Jesus proves who he is by an appeal to: (1) his relationship with His Father (vs. 17ff, esp vs 37): [a.] the Son does what He sees the Father do (5:19); [b.] whatever the Father does, the Son does (5:19); [c.] the Father shows Him all things He does (5:20); [d.] the Father raises the dead, so does the Son (5:21); [e.] the Father commits judgment to the Son (5:22); [f.] the Son should be honored as is the Father (5:23); [g.] as the Father has life in Himself, so the Son (5:26); [h.] the

Son seeks the will of the Father (5:30); [i.] seeing the Son is tantamount to seeing the Father (6:46); (2) by the testimony of John the immerser (5:31ff); (3) by His own works (5:36ff); (4) by the teaching of old testament scriptures (5:39ff) and (5) by the testimony of Moses (5:46-47). All of this, and more, validates the Bible's claim concerning the authenticity of the Christ.

When such a case is fully assembled, incorporating all the necessary broad and specific viewpoints, it would lead to the conclusion that the Biblical record is a reliable historical witness and that Jesus was really an historical character.

II. Contemporary Evidence Argument

Approaching our problem from the vantage point of contemporary evidence seems like an oxymoron in the making. How can we know anything in the past based upon what we know now? That seems to be a reasonable question - deserving, of course, of a reasoned response.

David Hume, in creating a system of thought to rid us of allusions to the supernatural, denied (in theory anyway) the concept of cause and effect. He opined that our witness of the same events following in specific sequence was nothing more than contiguous events occurring without a causal connection existing between them. Thus what appeared to be related was nothing but one event following another, following another, and so on.

He further argued, in his criticism of the miraculous, in this fashion: No one living today has seen a miracle. In addition, no one living today knows anyone who has seen a miracle. By establishing such a uniformitarian view, and extrapolating his observations into the past, Hume allowed that miracles never occurred.

There are several notions wrong with Hume's thinking. If, according to Hume, someone living in the tropics never

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observed snow, nor ever knew of anyone who ever observed snow during the immediate and past generations, then that person would never have reason to believe that snow existed. But we realize, hopefully, that it is possible to demonstrate the reality of snow without having experienced it ourselves or conversing with someone who has. We can read about it, see accounts of it in film or videotape coverage, or see photographs of snowy landscapes.

Furthermore, in his denial of miracles, Hume created a scenario whereby he was denying the past beyond a generation or two. What are the mechanics by which we determine that a person or an event has historical merit. How do we know, for example that any person living before our time, without our direct witness actually existed?

My paternal grandmother died approximately three years before I was born. Of course, I never physically saw her. But I have sufficient evidence to demand that she really lived. Testimony of her husband, whom I knew personally, and that of her five sons and one daughter, whom I also knew personally, as well as testimony of her friends, documentary evidence (photographs, court records, birth certificates, death certificates, marriage certificates, hospital records, etc.) all corroborate that she lived and walked on this earth.

As we move further back into history, the same principles apply. My father's grandfather, whom I never met has a historical record all his own, subject to evidentiary examination in much the same way relatives closer to me in time are to be studied. My grandfather knew him, so in that sense I was able to maintain a "connection" to my grandfather's grandfather.

The difficulty as we move further back in time, in some cases anyway, relates to the abundance of the

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evidence and the critical issue of judging that evidence to be substantive enough to warrant the conclusions we would like to reach. I know, because it is not possible to have occurred without this assumption, that my grandfather's great-great-great-grandfather on his paternal side must have existed, but I don't know (at this point anyway) who he was, what he was called, where he was from or any number of specific traits that would identify him as that particular character occupying a place in my family tree. But, should I engage in a study of such information, he could and would be conclusively be identified. There is a way to connect the past with present knowledge.

Hume's other argument, which in effect denied causality is also faulty. It seems that it is just as easy to assume a "disconnect" between historical accounts of record as it is with actions and reaction in our own time. There are, however, undeniable contemporaneous historical accounts that connect with the present.

Consider the following thoughts by Albright:¹⁶

Physical phenomena doubtless exist without the intervention of some person to observe them, but they are certainly not known to man unless man is present when they transpire and is able to recognize them as they transpire. Moreover, past physical phenomena cannot be directly known either, but require the intervention of some indirect instrumentality of cognition. Exactly the same is true in principle of history: current historical phenomena are known to those who are in a position to recognize or to comprehend them; the historical past can be known only through the intervention of an indirect instrumentality of cognition.

¹⁶Albright, p. 76

and¹⁷

The physical and material past of man can thus be recovered by substantially the same methods as are used in geology, palaeontology, palaeobotany, and related fields. From the epistemological point of view archaeological data are just as contemporary as are the facts gathered laboriously by astronomers through telescopes and spectrosopes, since the latter are also tangible records of events which transpired in the past — sometimes millions of light-years ago.

Albright's point is weighty. When a paleontologist examines evidence, fossils for example, he is examining them in the present. The object he presently holds in his hands has a connection to someone or something in the past. He knows, from earlier studies and investigations, that it is not evidence from the recent past, but rather from the early part of the eleventh century. He compares it with other evidence, both physical and documentary, and he begins to build a case for time, place, association and so forth. From an epistemological view point the data he studies is just as contemporary as the discovery made the day before of a new planet. It is in this way that the past "speaks" to us today. All such data, whether scientific, literary, or historic, are not known immediately, but rather "can be known only through the intervention of an indirect instrumentality of cognition." This places history on the same epistemological footing as science.

The emphasis here is on the understanding of past records in both history and science from a contemporary vantage point. Most evidence, regardless of the discipline,

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 76-77 (Note: Albright seems to operation under the assumption that millions of years of human history have transpired. That observation is without merit.)

is “past” evidence. It might be minutes, hours, days or years old. Regardless of its origination in time, it is contemporary from the standpoint of those who must assess it. Thus, we have an intimate connection with the past by means of this evidence.

For our study, the contemporary, yet still ancient, witness of history is most telling. Via archaeological digs, as well as the study and translation of ancient documents, the past remains alive in the present. Our assessment of this type of evidence provides a key connection with what has transpired in the past. Hume’s denial of cause-effect in the present, and his denial of the miraculous in the past, falls short of dealing with the witness of the past that shows up in our time on a regular basis. The proper assessment of this evidence yields the conclusion that we can know historical truth.

III. Biblical Evidence Argument

The Biblical evidence argument seems to be circular. We want to demonstrate that we can have faith and knowledge in Jesus as the Christ. Why, then, would we turn to the Bible, an obviously prejudicial witness, in order to build a case for the historicity of the Christ? In days gone by, one of the means of evidence considered in court was an oath offered by the accused. In support of his oath, others, including friends and family, would come forward with corroborating oaths affirming their faith and confidence in the accused. The substance of these oaths was such that a person could be freed based upon the weight of their combined testimony.

The weakness in such a system is obvious: What if the accused was lying? Every testament to his truthfulness by his collaborators would have been nothing more than testimony offered based upon the assumption he was telling the truth.

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In much the same way, why would we turn to the Bible in order to establish a case that Jesus was historical? It is obvious that the accounts of the life of Christ presented within the pages of the Bible assume that He really lived, taught and died. But is there any means of authenticating the Bible's claim?

If the propositions contained within the word of God were able to be validated outside of its own sphere, then perhaps the credibility of its own testimony could be substantiated. We do not want, though, "witnesses" for the "accused" who engage in nothing more than pledging by oath the veracity of Biblical witness. To do so is to fall into the same trap and circular reasoning as described above.

The argument defending Biblical witness and historicity is rather lengthy, but sufficient details can be presented here briefly so that we might be able to grab the gist of a much fuller and easily more extended argument.

A. God exists.

In order to defend the claims that the Bible makes, it is essential to start with the Bible's source — God. Is God real? Does He really exist? Without evidence to defend the existence of God, why believe in the Bible's claim to be His word? If there is no God, or if His existence is merely presumed, then we are left with nothing more than assuming that the Bible is what it claims to be as well.

Consider the following brief argument offered to prove the existence of God:¹⁸

Proposition 1: The world of nature is an actually existing world which includes within itself the real things and events we find by means of our experience. ...

¹⁸Samuel M. Thompson, *A Modern Philosophy of Religion* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1955), pp. 285-286

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Proposition 2: Any such world of actually existing things and events is a world which is neither self-existent by itself nor contains anything self-existent as a part of itself. ...

Proposition 3. The world of nature is a world which neither exists by itself nor contains anything self-existent as part of itself. ...

Proposition 4. Whatever neither exists by itself nor contains anything self-existent as a part of itself depends for its existence upon something which does exist in and of itself and does not in turn depend on anything else. ...

Proposition 5. Anything which depends for its existence on something which is self-existent depends for its existence upon a really existing God.

Proposition 6: Anything which is not self-existent depends for its existence upon a really existing God.

Proposition 7: The world of nature depends for its existence upon a really existing God.

This argumentation from contingency reasons from the obvious, a really existing world, to the conclusion that the existence of this dependent world must be due to something beyond its own existence, namely God. The argumentation, in principle and in practice, simply carries out that which is implicit in numerous Bible statements, only two of which are noted here:

“The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament showeth his handiwork.” Psalms 19:1

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“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness; because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse.” Romans 1:18-20

Rather than starting with the Bible, Thompson’s argument starts with the existence of a real world, something clearly known outside of the Bible’s teaching. One need not believe the Bible or even know that it exists in order to understand the argument. His conclusion demands that God really does exist. And, if God really exists and if his existence can be demonstrated (as shown here), then we have every good reason to investigate further by asking the question “Is the Bible His word?”

B. The Bible is the word of God.

This element, while key to our case, needs to be understood — once again — in light of our prior comments about circular reasoning. How can we incorporate argumentation that the Bible is the word of God without depending upon its own testimony?

The key as to how, and why, this argumentation functions properly is pivotal. Whereas the accused in courts of law would swear by oath and then present verification by means of the oaths of others, proving that the Bible is the word of God need not — indeed, must not — follow the same format.

The key distinction is seen in the difference that exists between “dependent” and “independent.” Additional oaths proclaiming the truthfulness of the accused are not “independent” testimony, but rather “dependent.” Their

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weight ultimately depends on the truthfulness of the accused. If he is lying, then a thousand additional oaths will not change that fact.

If, however, the oaths that are offered in collaboration with the accused's own testimony are independent, then each oath offered simply reconfirms what the first independent oath confirms. Independent testimony is witness that can stand alone. If someone is charged with a crime and the accused simply states "I didn't do it. I was somewhere else at the time," then dependent testimony states: "I know him. I trust him. I believe he is telling the truth." Independent testimony, on the other hand, says: "I know him. I trust him. I can prove that he was with me at the time in question, and neither of us were at the scene of the crime." If that claim can be verified, then it stands as independent testimony.

The key, then, to demonstrating that the Bible is the word of God is not just an examination of its own claims, but rather showing how those claims coincide with independently verifiable evidence that coheres with those claims.

With that in mind, consider the following brief overview of the mechanics needed to argue successfully that the Bible is the word of God.¹⁹

- (1) If the Bible exists, then either God authored the Bible or God did not author the Bible.
- (2) The Bible exists.
- (3) Therefore, either God authored the Bible or God did not author the Bible.
- (4) If God did not author the Bible, then either uninspired bad men wrote the Bible or uninspired good men wrote the Bible.
- (5) Uninspired bad men did not write the Bible.
- (6) Uninspired good men did not write the Bible.

¹⁹See the full discussion in Apple, pp. 125ff

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(7) Therefore, neither uninspired bad men wrote the Bible nor uninspired good men wrote the Bible.

(8) Therefore, it is false to say that the Bible was written by either uninspired bad men or uninspired good men.

(9) It is not the case, therefore, that the Bible was not authored by God

(10) God, therefore, authored the Bible.

The crucial elements in the above argumentation are propositions five and six. Evidence must be presented that conclusively demonstrates that uninspired men, whether good or bad, could not possibly have written the Bible. That verification comes as a result of an examination of lines of evidence such as: (a) predictive prophecy and its fulfillment; (b) historical accuracy; (c) scientific foreknowledge; (d) the Bible's character; and so on.

The import of this evidence is ponderous. It provides the proof which manifests the Bible as an independently autopoietic (self authenticating) historical record.

Thus, knowing that God exists and the Bible is His word, we ask: What is the connection between the inspired word and the historicity of the Christ?

C. The Bible teaches historical data, relies upon historical data, and is, itself, historical data. It teaches that our faith in its accounts, without having the benefit of first hand/eyewitness testimony, is merited based upon its testimony and evidence.

This element of the line of argumentation is the last of the three aspects to be presented in this section. Because we can know that God exists, and because we can know that the Bible is the word of God, it is possible to know that the Bible is both authoritative and subject to human understanding. These two additional elements

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(argumentation not presented here²⁰), together with the proofs that God exists and that the Bible is the word of God, allow us to claim knowledge with reference to any Bible teaching.²¹

Because of this principal truth, we are able to affirm that the Bible teaches we can know things historically, specifically, the historicity of the Christ. Consider the following line of thought:

(1) The Bible teaches the essentiality of faith in God. (Heb 11:6)

(2) The Bible teaches the essentiality of faith in Christ. (Jn 8:24)

(3) The Bible teaches that faith can come by actual sight. Proof of this crucial element is seen by the following passages cited here in full (with brief remarks):

“They said therefore unto him, What then dost thou for a sign, that we may see, and believe thee? what workest thou?” (Jn 6:30) Jesus’ audience assumed that seeing would lead to believing (cf. Mk 15:32 where those who witnessed the crucifixion asked for Jesus to come down from the cross that they might see and believe).

“Jesus therefore said unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe.” (Jn 4:48) Jesus, in critical fashion, affirmed that they would not believe without seeing miracles. This is not to say that there is not a positive sense in which the witness of miracles is endorsed.

20Biblical authority can be demonstrated to be implicit within the nature of Biblical inspiration. In a similar vein, proof of the perspicuity of scripture (i.e., its clarity of thought and presentation) is inherent within both the nature of inspiration and authority.

21In arguing the case for Christianity, Thomas B. Warren included not only proofs for the existence of God and the Bible as the word of God, he also incorporated the element of “the Bible teaches X” where X represents any true Bible teaching.

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“This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed on him.” (Jn 2:11) The disciples saw and believed as a result.

“Many therefore of the Jews, who came to Mary and beheld that which he did, believed on him.” (Jn 11:45) Many of the Jews saw the miracles Jesus did and believed.

“because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.” (Jn 12:11) Some came to faith in Christ because they saw Lazarus who had been raised from the dead. Whether or not they had actually witnessed the resurrection firsthand, the possibility exists for seeing an effect — and not the cause — and yet still come to faith.

“The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” (Jn 20:25) Thomas knew that if he saw the resurrected Lord, he, too, would believe.

“Jesus saith unto him, Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: ...” (Jn 20:29a) Thomas did not believe because he did not see the resurrected Christ with the rest of the apostles, but when he did see him he did believe.

(4) The Bible teaches that it is possible to see evidence, and yet reject it and the conclusions associated with it.

“But I said unto you, that ye have seen me, and yet believe not.” (Jn 6:36) The meaning of this passage is clear. They actually saw Jesus, but still refused to believe His claims.

“But though he had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him:” (Jn 12:37) John 6:36 informs us that it is possible to see Christ, and yet not have faith. This passage goes a step farther: it is possible to see Christ perform miraculous signs and still not believe.

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“Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not.” (Mt 11:20) The inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida witnessed the miracles of Jesus, but did not come to saving faith in Christ. It is possible that they believed only nominally, but their lack of willingness to repent demands that faith, if they had any at all, was not anything more than that.

“And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead.” (Luke 16:31) Jesus taught that the rich man’s family would not be convinced if they witnessed a resurrection from the dead.

(5) Jesus knew that faith could come apart from sight.

“Jesus saith unto him, Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” (John 20:29) The first part of this verse declares Thomas’ faith because he saw. But the remainder of the passage clearly teaches that others could come to faith without benefit of sight.

“Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word;” (Jn 17:20) Jesus prayed to the heavenly Father for those, who though not seeing, would come to faith in Him because of the message of the apostles.

“And afterward he was manifested unto the eleven themselves as they sat at meat; and he upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them that had seen him after he was risen.” (Mark 16:14) Though the apostles came to faith after they actually witnessed the resurrected Christ, Jesus rebuked them because they did not believe the testimony of those who first saw him after he rose from the grave. In this sense Thomas also failed. The apostles told Thomas they saw Christ resurrected (Jn 20:25), but he did not believe their

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testimony, just as they failed to believe the testimony of others.

(6) The apostles knew that faith could come apart from sight.

“(for we walk by faith, not by sight);” (2 Cor 5:7) Paul confirmed this truth.

“And he that hath seen hath borne witness, and his witness is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye also may believe.” (Jn 19:35) John, the apostle and author of the book of John, taught that he was an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ. He asserted that his account was true and maintained that others could come to faith because of his testimony.

“That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ: and these things we write, that our joy may be made full.” (1 Jn 1:1-4) In his introduction to his first epistle, John again confirmed his eyewitness account and repeated his contention that those who believed his evidence could come into fellowship with himself, the Father and the Son based upon that testimony (implicitly affirming their faith).

“whom not having seen ye love; on whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory:” (1 Pet 1:8) Peter taught that early Christians could have a love for Christ, even though they did not see him, because of faith.

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“For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there was borne such a voice to him by the Majestic Glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: and this voice we ourselves heard borne out of heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount. And we have the word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts:” (2 Pet 1:16-19) In a lengthier account Peter again teaches that he was an eyewitness, and asserts that his testimony was sufficiently credible to allow faith in the hearts and minds of his hearers/readers.

(7) The most significant reason for the Bible’s emphasis upon faith, of course, is that it is required in order to obtain salvation, the forgiveness of sins. The significance of the Bible’s emphasis on man’s ability to come to faith without being an actual eyewitness of the people, places and events described in scripture is equally paramount: We are able to have such knowledge of history, in this case salvation history, that we can have the *same faith* as did those who were actually eyewitnesses. In fact the *only way* that faith without sight is possible is based upon the reliability and credibility of historical record.

Peter taught that the “proof (genuineness, KJV) of faith” could, and would, ultimately lead to “the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.” (cf 1 Pet 1:7-9). This was addressed to those who at that time “see Him not, yet believing” were able to rejoice (vs 8). Furthermore, in addressing his second letter to the Christians of the dispersion, Peter said that they “have obtained a like precious faith with us.” (2 Pet 1:1) Their faith was *isotimos*, “equally precious, equally honoured, to be esteemed equal

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to.” (JHT) It was not a faith like Peter’s, an eyewitness of the Christ, yet deficient in some way. It was faith equal to his faith (cf Jn 5:18 where the Jews perceived Jesus was making himself equal - *isos* - with God). Though our faith is based upon testimony, it does not come behind, in any way, the faith of those who actually saw the Christ (cf. Jn 20:29).

The historical record then: (a) is capable of producing faith without sight; and (b) is capable of producing a faith without sight *equal* to a faith with sight.

(8) The scriptures, and Jesus, teach that historical records can be regarded as a safe guide to knowledge of the past.

Jesus alluded to old testament places, persons and events frequently during the course of his life.

(a) In teaching the truth about marriage, divorce and remarriage, Jesus went back to “the beginning” (Mt 19), authenticating the account given in Genesis 2 of the origin of marriage and the home.

(b) In the very first verse of Matthew, the author assumes that both Abraham and David were “knowable” as real, historic figures. As the passage continues, Matthew makes reference to more than 40 historical characters by name, all with the implicit assumption that they were real (cf Lk 3 - Luke traces history back to Adam). Every listing of genealogies in the scriptural texts similarly assumes historical knowledge.

(c) Jesus relied on historical accounts and the reliability of historical texts when he repeatedly appealed to the old testament scriptures saying “it is written” (cf. Mt 4) or “you have heard” (cf. Mt 5-7).

(d) Jesus accepted the testimony of others through scripture and through contemporary witness. In Matthew 4:12 we learn that Jesus “heard” that John was in prison.

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Jesus did not have to actually see John imprisoned to know that's where he was.

(e) Jesus frequently alluded to the law, the prophets, the psalms, and specific authors and Bible characters by name (Abel - Mt 23:35; Lk 1:51; the law - Lk 24:44; the prophets Lk 24:25; 44; Moses - Lk 24:44; Isaiah - Mt 13:14; et. al.)

Our list of new testament references to old testament passages, people, places and events could easily expand to contain a large percentage of the new testament. It is plain that the new testament writers, readers, speakers and listeners, functioned under the assumption that the old testament records were historical and reliable.

Because there are self-referential passages in the new testament, it is easy to see how God intended for us to be able to view the new testament with the same high regard that Christians in the first century viewed the old testament. 2 Peter 3:16 refers to the writings of Paul as "scripture." Jude speaks of the finality of the faith (Jude 3), indicating that there was an understanding of the close of revelation (cf 1 Cor 13:8ff). In several passages, there is an understanding that the writings and the sermons of the apostles were inspired (1 Cor 2:9-13; Eph 3:1-6; 2 Tim 3:16-17; 1 The 2:13; et. al.) All this points to the conclusion that the new testament scriptures teach revelation was a safe historical guide.

Conclusion

The importance of demonstrating the existence of God, the inspiration of the Bible and the Bible's teaching concerning historicity is momentous. The lines of evidence examined here lead us to be able to truly say "I can know Jesus is the Christ." I can have faith in Him, even though I have never seen him.

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By knowing that contemporary witness and assessment of ancient evidence, both archaeological and literary, yields a present day connection with the past, I can know that the Bible, an ancient document, can be examined in light of its present existence in order to prove that it really is beyond human production, and is thus God-breathed.

By understanding the principles implicated in the consistent convergence of all evidence, I can know that all reality is consistent with the historical record that is the Bible, and that the Biblical historical record is consistent with all reality.

If I can know Nero was a bona fide person in history, then I can know that Jesus was. If I can have knowledge and confidence in the legitimacy of Plato's writings (far fewer in number than the new testament manuscripts), then I can know that the new testament record is reliable. If I can know all these things, then with Paul I can truly say and mean:

"... for I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day." 2 Timothy 1:12

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FAITH AND DOUBT

Charles J. Aebi

I am grateful to have the opportunity to think with you about the topic of Faith and Doubt as part of this great lectureship on Faith, Hope, and Love. Faith is a vital ingredient in life; without it we would have major problems. It's like calcium; one's diet must include calcium, or he will have big-time bone problems. Of course, calcium alone is not enough; neither is faith alone, but that doesn't diminish the importance of faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6).

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FAITH

What is faith? Referring to religious faith as opposed to secular faith (faith in facts of science, mathematics, etc.), the Bible uses the term *faith* in three ways: personal faith, objective faith, or miraculous faith. Objective faith is the system of faith, the gospel, while *personal faith* is one's own personal belief, as in Romans 14:23, where "faith" is set over against "doubt," or in Mark 16:16, where faith is called "belief" and is something we must each do to be saved. Faith is what you hold to be true because you have empirically proved it: you have seen it, heard it, smelled it, touched it, tasted it, or with some combination of your five senses demonstrated it to be true. A certain room has four walls. A podium is higher than the floor. Seats are higher than the floor. Fire burns. Water freezes below 32°F. Leaves fall off many trees in the fall. All these things you can prove empirically, that is, demonstrate them with your five senses. Therefore, you believe them; they are part of your personal or subjective faith, of what you hold to be true.

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But personal faith is also accepting as true what you can't empirically prove, but what you hold to be true because you have confidence in the one who says it. Hebrews 11:1 says that faith is the substance (ASV footnote: giving substance to) of things hoped for. We hope for heaven, but we can't see or touch or smell or taste it. Yet it takes on substance in our minds. The same passage says faith is the evidence (conviction, ASV) of things not seen. We believe that God and Christ exist, but we can't see them or touch them. Yet they also take on substance in our minds; we see them by the eye of faith. We have incontrovertible evidence that God exists, so although we may not prove Him by sight or taste or touch, we can prove His existence by His creation. "Nothing comes from nothing," so we know the creation came from a Creator, who has to be God.

Faith is not mysticism, believing one's fantasies true, or a mystical gift from God. The Calvinist or Augustinian idea of faith is that it is a quality imparted directly and secretly to you by God. They see it as a sort of miraculous injection of the Holy Spirit to remove what they call original sin. They think sin is a depravity inherited from Adam that prevents you from having faith until your sin is removed by the Holy Spirit in a miraculous religious experience. But if faith is what you hold to be true, you know it is not miraculous, for the other things you hold to be true are not arrived at by miracles. No, faith doesn't come to you that way. Faith comes by hearing God's word, according to Paul in Romans 10:17, and logic demands that faith is based on some kind of evidence.

Objective faith is the system of faith that is called the gospel. People use the word "faith" that way today when they talk about faith as an objective system like the Christian Faith, or the Buddhist Faith. That is the meaning of "faith" in Ephesians 4:5, which says there is only one

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faith, meaning the gospel, the Christian system of faith. Ideally, we should combine these two kinds of faith, making the objective faith (the gospel) our own personal faith as far as religious belief is concerned.

Sometimes people disregard the Biblical context and take a third kind of faith—*miraculous faith*—to mean simple belief or what we call subjective faith. For example, Jesus said in Mark 9:23 that all things are possible to him who believes. The context shows that Jesus meant with the right kind of faith, miracles were performed then by the Holy Spirit's power. This does not mean we can perform miracles; Jesus was talking about His own power. And when Paul said, “. . .if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains. . .” (1 Corinthians 13:2), he was talking about the miraculous kind of faith that he said in 12:9 was given by the Spirit, not about the kind of faith that comes by hearing God's word, nor the kind of faith that is the Christian system of faith.

Why do I need faith? What would life be like without faith? Hebrews 11:5-6 says that without faith in God, we could not please God and go to heaven. Enoch had enough faith to walk with God, so God took him to heaven, and anyone who goes to heaven must first please God by faith. Jesus said in John 8:24 that without faith in Him, we would die in our sins. Romans 5:1 indicates that without faith, we would not be justified and would have no peace with God. Mark 16:16 states that without faith, we would be condemned. Without faith we would be like agnostic Bertrand Russell who said that mankind was a mistake, that things would be much better if people did not exist. Without faith, we would be hopeless and might say with Solomon in Ecclesiastes that all life is meaningless vanity.

But with faith in God and Christ, we can please God, help men, and enjoy life here and hereafter. By faith we with Abel can be righteous and offer better worship to God

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(Hebrews 11:4). By faith we can, with Enoch, walk with God, please God, and go to heaven (Hebrews 11:5). By faith we can save our house as Noah built an ark to save his (Hebrews 11:7). By faith we can be pilgrims in this world as Abraham was in Canaan, and with Abraham we can by faith make any sacrifice God asks of us (Hebrews 11:8-10,17-18). By faith we can with Moses make the right choices (Hebrews 11:24-25). The faith these men had was not miraculous; it was holding what God told them to be true.

How can I get personal religious faith? The Bible says faith comes by hearing God's word taught and preached, and faith in turn leads to our calling on the name of the Lord in baptism and being saved (Romans 10:13-17). We can get faith by listening to preaching and teaching of God's word through Christ. The purpose of John's writing his gospel account is to produce faith, so we can strengthen our faith by reading the gospels (John 20:30-31). In other words, there is a direct link between objective and personal faith: objective faith produces personal faith. Two passages, Hebrews 5:14 and 2 Peter 1:5-7, also indicate that faith is strengthened by practicing righteousness.

Faith is a vital ingredient of the Christian life, but there is a difference between believing that God exists and in believing God. Hebrews 11:6 says one must believe that God exists; it also says one must believe God rewards diligent seekers. In other words, I not only have to believe in God; I have to believe God. I believe what God says. I hold it to be true that He says what He means and means what He says. Moreover, I believe he means what He says whether or not I understand why He says it. Take Abraham as an example: Abraham must not have known why God commanded him to offer Isaac as a burnt sacrifice, but he believed God and was ready to do God's command. He even theorized that God must be intending to resurrect

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Isaac after the sacrifice was over (Hebrews 11:17-18). Notice that when Hebrews 11 talks about Abraham's faith, it describes it as the motivating force for Abraham's works. "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go to a place. . . .By faith he became a sojournerBy faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac" (vv. 8, 9, 17). Abraham and all the others mentioned in Hebrews 11 are praised for their faith in action, not for intellectual acceptance without obedience as proof, and they acted or obeyed whether or not they understood the reason for God's instructions.

THE PROBLEM OF DOUBT

Doubt has been one of Satan's tools down through the ages. He used it effectively in Eden when he caused Eve to doubt that God meant what he said when he told them not to eat of the tree in the midst of the garden (Genesis 3:1-6). And ever since then the devil has been leading mankind to doubt — to doubt God's existence, to doubt whether God has spoken, to doubt that God means what He says, and to doubt God's motives. In Genesis 3:4-5 the devil not only cast doubt on God's having meant what He said, but also on His motives for saying it, implying that God just wanted to keep them in ignorance. Satan not only doubts God's motives; he also doubts the motives of the righteous — "Doth Job fear God for nought" (Job 1:9) argues that Job is righteous only because it earns him God's material blessings and protection. Truly, doubt is the devil's creed.

Doubt is defined as "to be uncertain in opinion or belief; be undecided; to be inclined to disbelief . . . a wavering of opinion or belief; lack of conviction; uncertainty; lack of trust or confidence"¹

¹ *Webster's New World Dictionary*

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Several Greek and Hebrew words are translated “doubt” and they have various shades of meaning. “Doubt” is used to mean uncertainty in Deuteronomy 28:66; to express sarcasm in Job 12:2; “without doubt” and “no doubt” are used to express certainty in Genesis 37:33 and Acts 28:4. Obviously, then, *doubt* is a problem of uncertainty or lack of faith. It is not total unbelief, but it is somewhere between belief and unbelief — it is in the New Testament associated with “little faith” (Matthew 14:31; 17:19-20; 21:21-22).

Doubt bears a resemblance to agnosticism, which says that it is impossible to know whether God exists, and a true agnostic doubts everything. In an old Western movie, the train stopped at a water tower, whose operator asked the brakeman, “What do you know for certain?” The brakeman, a true agnostic, said, “Nary a thing!” The world is full of agnostics, natural skeptics, who are always doubting everything and everyone. “To the pure all things are pure: but to them that are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure’ (Titus 1:15).

THE RELATIONSHIP OF FAITH AND DOUBT IN GOD’S PEOPLE

In John 10:24-26 (KJV), Jesus told some unbelieving Jews that they were doubting because they were not of His sheep. Doubt is to be expected in the world, and, expected or not, it is found sometimes in God’s people as well. Perhaps most of us has some doubt at times. If we understand doubt to be unbelief, it was found in the great Old Testament leader, Moses, who was accused of unbelief by God Himself in Numbers 20:12. A certain degree of unbelief was exhibited by Moses when he struck the rock instead of speaking to it, and, along with Aaron, took credit for bringing the water forth instead of sanctifying God before them.

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Doubt is implied in the question John the Baptizer sent from prison to Jesus in Matthew 11:3, “Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?” Jesus’ response was to tell John’s messengers to report to John what He was doing and saying, which amounted to assurance that Jesus was the Christ, but our Lord also had some words to say to the multitudes about John. John was no reed shaken in the wind; he was a true prophet, and much more. He was as great as anyone born, but he was not in the kingdom [for it had not yet been established].

Matthew 14:25-33 records an instance of Peter doubting and being accused by Jesus of having “little faith” and therefore being unable to walk on the water after he saw the wind and began to fear. “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” (14:31). This instance, like those of Matthew 17:19-20 and 21:21-22, is in the context of miracles and contrasts “doubt” with the miraculous kind of faith that was given by the Holy Spirit. We wonder how miraculous faith and personal faith were connected in these instances, one with Peter and one with nine of the other apostles; in both cases miracles failed because of “little faith.” Matthew 21:21-22 is in the context of Jesus’ miracle of withering the fig tree, but is addressed to all the disciples.

More surprising, perhaps, are the occasions on which disciples doubted the resurrected Christ. Not only were the men skeptical when told by the women about the empty tomb and the angel’s instructions about Jesus’ resurrection, but Thomas doubted the account of the ten other remaining apostles about having seen Jesus that Sunday evening. And after all this, the eleven apostles, including Thomas, “went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted” (Matthew 28:16-17).

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James 1:6-8 urges us to pray in faith and without doubting. “But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord; a doubleminded man, unstable in all his ways.” Our prayers and other acts of worship need to be done in faith, not in doubt. And yet there will be times when some Christians doubt; our attitude toward them should be one of mercy, according to Jude 22.

What can we learn from all this? (1) Sometimes a Christian may have doubts; this does not make him an atheist, but it signals a problem that he and fellow Christians should work out. (2) It is not so disastrous to have doubts if you know where to go to resolve them. John went to Jesus; he couldn't go in person, so he sent messengers, and he got his answer to resolve his doubts. (3) One can be spiritually strong in some ways, and yet have doubts. “Doubting Thomas” in John 11:16 stated himself as willing to go to Jerusalem and die with Jesus. (In verse 8 the disciples indicated that Jesus could expect to be killed if He went to Jerusalem). (4) From Moses' case we might learn that if our faith wavers at any time, it would be well to think before we act on any doubts that we have. (5) Since doubt is to some degree a lack of faith, and faith comes by hearing God's word, we need to spend more time studying the Scriptures. (6) Doubt is diminished not only by studying the Scriptures, but by practicing the principles therein to make our calling and election sure. (7) To worship in faith rather than in doubt, we would do well to prepare ourselves for worship by some quiet reading and meditation on God's word before going to worship; Psalm 1 encourages this. (8) Remember that doubt is not reserved for just the weakest of us, but has been the experience of some of the leaders of God's people. (9) Doubt is not encouraged, but is frowned upon by Jesus and by his

inspired spokesmen. It is nothing to be proud of, but something to be disposed of—replaced by solid faith in God and in His word.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Charles J. Aebi is a native of southwestern Pennsylvania. He was raised with a denominational background, but obeyed the gospel in 1949 and began preaching in 1952. He has a B.S. degree from Penn State, an M.A. from Abilene Christian, and a Ph.D. from Ohio University.

He has served as minister for churches in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Texas, and has preached and held workshops in several states and in foreign countries. He taught Bible for 34 years at Ohio Valley College, where he served for 15 years as academic dean and for 6 years as chairman of the Bible Department. He retired from Ohio Valley College in 1998. He now teaches part time at the West Virginia School of Preaching in Moundsville, WV.

Charles and his wife Imogene have four children and twelve grandchildren. Among their children and their spouses they count four teachers, two medical doctors, a preacher, a nurse, three deacons who all preach on occasion, and eight Bible class teachers. Charles currently is serving as minister for the Rosemar Road Church of Christ in Parkersburg, WV. ~ Address: Rt. 1, Box 237, Vincent OH 45784 ~ Phone: 740-678-2568 ~ E-mail: cjandi@juno.com

THE RESURRECTED REDEEMER

I COR. 15:1-20

Glenn I. Hitchcock

For 2000 years, people have believed in the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. The church was established in Jerusalem about fifty days after his death by crucifixion. On that eventful day the resurrection was proclaimed as fact. It was the main focus of its preaching. (Acts 2:22ff).

When the message was carried to foreign lands, the resurrection played a central part (for example, Acts 17:30-31). No doctrine of the Bible is better attested than the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Despite all of the evidence of the resurrection, doubters existed in the first century and doubters remain even today. Serious questions have been raised about the resurrection these days. Did it really happen as the apostles say it did? Is it really a fact of history? Consider the following example used to illustrate questions raised today. A recent gathering of scholars known as the "Jesus Seminar" gathered to discuss the resurrection. According to Steve Rabey these men met and tackled the resurrection in March, declaring that Jesus probably did not rise bodily from the dead, but that the "resurrection tradition" that developed in the first-century church was an effort to promote the vitality of Jesus' message.

The lesson text is an answer to the doubters of the resurrection. Let us notice the teaching of the Holy Spirit regarding the question of the resurrection:

THE DECLARATION, (I Cor. 15:1-4).

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also

ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

The declaration of good news via apostolic preaching was plain and precise. This message had, from the very first, been the message proclaimed. It was not Paul's unique message, for he preached the core and common Christian message. What a contrast to the preaching of among some of our own day!

The Corinthians received the gospel. The Corinthians were to stand in the gospel. They were saved. By this good news, but a condition was associated with their salvation: "*if ye keep in memory...*" It was apparent that some Christians did not hold to the form of doctrine taught them, (Rom. 6:17; I Cor. 15:12). Of a great truth, when Christians release themselves from the gospel they, by necessity remove themselves from salvation (I Cor. 15:2; 2 Tim. 2:10; I John 1:7-9).

In addition to the gospel being preached, the gospel was personified in one person's life—Jesus. Christ consented to die for our sins (Mt. 26:28; Rom. 3:25; 4:25; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 1:4 3:13; Eph 1:7 5:2; Heb 10:11-12; 1Pet. 2:24; 3:18; 1 John 2:2; Rev 1:5). This was a part of God's eternal purpose. This is good news (Eph. 3:8-11)! Christ was buried according to the Scriptures (Isa. 53:9; Mt 27:57-60; Mk 15:43-46; Lk. 23:50-53; John 19:38-42; Acts 13:29; Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12). Christ rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures (1Cor. 15:16-21; Mt. 20:19; 27:63-64; 28:1-6; Mk. 9:31; 10: 33-34; 16:2-7; Lk. 9:22 Lk.

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18:32-33; 24:5-7; John 2:19-21; 20:1-9; Acts 1:3 ;2:23-24,32;13:30 Acts 17:31; Heb. 13:20). These three facts of the gospel were all personified in the Savior for **OUR** sins. John recognized this great truth when he directed attention to Jesus as “...*The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world*” (John 1:29).

This message meant that the body that was buried was the one raised. The risen Christ was not a spiritual phantom. The tomb was really empty. To be sure, the body of the Risen Lord was changed. He wasn't resuscitated, only to die again. But it was His body. It was a bodily resurrection.

THE ATTESTATION, (I COR. 15: 5-10).

And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

There were at least fourteen groups who saw (*had objective evidence*) Jesus alive after his death; many of whom touched him, ate with him, and spoke with him. Though Paul may not have given the exact order of the witnesses to the resurrection, and though he did not include

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all of the witnesses, yet he lists a sufficient number to convince any reasonable person.

Christ appeared to Cephas (Peter). The only other reference to his resurrection appearance to Cephas is found in Luke 24:34. Luke records the two on the road to Emmaus to have said, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon."

The appearance to the Twelve is recorded in John 20:19-23 and Luke 24:34-43. When Jesus appeared to the Apostles on this occasion, both Judas and Thomas were absent. "Twelve" had become a formal name for the twelve Apostles which might be applied to them even when some of them were not present.

His appearance before five hundred brethren at once may be the one listed in Matthew 28:7: "And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you." Then (in verse 28) to the Apostles, Jesus said, "Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me." If there was doubt concerning these brethren and their competency, they were alive and available for questionings at the time of Paul's writings.

James, the Lord's brother, is under consideration. This appearance is not elsewhere recorded in the New Testament. Shortly after the Church of Christ was established, James is referred to as one of the important people in the church in Jerusalem (Gal. 1:19). Jesus' appearance to his brother is the best explanation of the change from unbelief to belief.

All of the Apostles were benefited by His appearance. The "all" of the text emphasizes the preceding reference (v-5) to the Twelve referred to an appearance at which only ten of them were present. This appearance refers when the eleven of the Apostles were gathered.

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Jesus also appeared to Paul. Paul was probably the last of the Apostles to witness the bodily resurrection of Jesus. He was not, as some might suggest, born too late to witness the resurrection. The word **HOSPEREI** introduces a comparison. Hence, the phrase cannot be understood to mean that he was literally born too late to see Jesus; rather, Paul is compared an **EKTROMA** (miscarriage). From a spiritual perspective, Paul was not born at the right time because he had not been a disciple during the lifetime of Jesus. He was a persecutor of the cause of Christ and did not always feel himself worthy to be called an apostle. He viewed himself as the chief of sinners (I Tim. 1:15).

To qualify as a witness, one must be in a position to know the facts, be in possession of a sound mind and be a person of integrity. Everyone given in Paul's list was in a position to know the facts. No character and competence was without question. They all attested to the fact of the resurrection.

THE ARGUMENTATION, (I Cor. 15: 11-19).

Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed. Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep

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in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

The apostles preached the *same message*: “The Resurrected Redeemer.” From the outset they preached a uniform doctrine of the resurrected Redeemer. They never doubted it (I Cor. 15:1-4). They all died believing the Holy Spirit’s message concerning the resurrection. They had no reason to die for a lie (John 8:32).

Consider the transformation that took place within the apostles within fifty days of the crucifixion. J. W. Shepard gives the following description of the disciples following the death of Jesus:

When Jesus was laid in the tomb, the disciples were overwhelmed with grief and loss. They had thought that it was He “who should have redeemed Israel.” They could not get away from the traditional conception of the Jews relative to the Messiah. The apostolic group fled and hid themselves, for the most part, at the hour of arrest in Gethsemane. They would soon disperse, and the interest created by the ministry of their Itinerate-Teacher was in a way to evaporate soon. . . . Soon the apostles would go back to their native places and resume their occupations. . . . Abject weakness now possessed and held the small band of followers who had been loyal to Him. The crucifixion had disillusioned them. To the world they now appeared the dupes of delusion.

Also worthy of notice is Peter. At the arrest, he was ready to die with Jesus. Later, in John 21, he was going back to fishing. Wayne Jackson wrote about this time in Peter’s life. He observed:

During the forty-day span between the Lord’s resurrection and ascension, the disciples had

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intermittent flashes of faith and despair. On one occasion Peter announced: “I go a fishing.” Kenneth Weust makes two points about this declaration. First “go” is from the Greek *hupago*, which hints at severing antecedent relationships (cf. Thayer, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 637). Second, “fishing” is a present tense form which suggests “to keep on fishing continually.” So Peter seems to be saying: “I am disillusioned. I am breaking with this movement and going back to my fishing vocation.”¹

What can account for the radical change in Peter just a few months later as recorded in Acts 4? In John, Peter is discouraged and ready to return to fishing full-time, however, in Acts 4, he is boldly defiant of the Jewish Council, in proclaiming Jesus. What can possibly explain the transformation that caused these defeated, frightened, disillusioned men, to assume the courage recorded in Acts? What can explain the courage of men to accept joyfully the beating recorded in Acts 5:40? What of the “lively (living) hope” of I Peter 1:3? The fact of the resurrection of Jesus is the only sensible and defensible conclusion.

The Corinthians preached a *slanted message*: “No resurrection of the dead.” As previously stated, they did not keep in memory the gospel of the resurrected Redeemer (I Cor. 15:2). In contrast to the lively hope of the Apostles, there were brethren in Corinth who slanted the facts of the gospel (I Cor. 15:12).

The Corinthians originated from a Greek thought world that stressed spiritual existence over physical, bodily existence. For some, the physical was a copy of the perfect spiritual. For others, the material body was evil. It imprisoned our spirits. The goal, then, was to be free from

¹ Weust, *The Practical Use of the Greek New Testament*, p. 46

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the body and be pure spirit. In its extreme form, this thought would lead to Gnosticism and threaten the foundations of the Gospel. It would later be argued that since the material world was evil, the god who created it was evil, or at least distant from the pure Spirit Being. It would be held that the Christ came from the pure Spirit Being to give us the secret knowledge to escape the material universe. Some believed that the Christ only appeared to be human but wasn't really a physical being. Others would believe that the Christ, a Spirit Being, entered Jesus, a physical being. The Corinthians hadn't gone that far, but they were on their way by denying the bodily resurrection from the dead. Some may have felt that they had already been spiritually raised and were already glorified. Paul seems to battle that position throughout this letter. What they may not have realized that this view was a deadly denial of the very Gospel that they had believed

Those who did not believe in the resurrection were called "Corinthian Sadducees" (Mt. 22:23-33; Acts 23:8). There was no support for their viewpoint. There is a very dangerous shift occurring among Christians today. It used to be that Christians debated about what they believed, and they did so with passion because they were convinced that it mattered. But I fear that the reason we don't debate beliefs today is because we are no longer sure it matters! The spirit of our age seems to be saying, "Don't tell me what you believe, tell me what you've experienced. Tell me how you feel." These Corinthian Christians had experienced some remarkable things and judging from this letter, felt very "spiritual." But they were ready to buy into a belief, a doctrine, that was utterly deadly, and this mattered to Paul. Two chapters earlier Paul stressed the importance of love but he did not do so at the expense of doctrine. He did not say that it didn't matter what you

believe as long as you love. Rather, he said that if you really believe you will love.

**THE SUBJECT MATTER
TO BE ARGUED BY APOSTLE:**

“If there is no resurrection—then what?”

The salient consequences of Paul’s argument are posited squarely before the slanted and slanderous views of his Corinthian brethren.

The first consequence: *Christ is not risen*, vs.13, 16. The universal negative of no resurrection can not be true if someone was raised from the dead. This universal negative stands alone in the corner of falsehood without any confirming evidence. This is in opposition to the eyewitness testimony of the company of competent witnesses of the Resurrected Redeemer.

Second consequence: *Gospel preaching is in vain* (fruitless, or void of effect) v. 14. The doctrine that there is no resurrection of the dead logically leads to the conclusion that gospel preaching is based on a delusion.

Third consequence: *Your faith is in vain* (futile) vs. 14, 17. Not only have preachers been deceived but their hearers also. The Christian system without the resurrection is no system at all.

Fourth consequence: *Gospel preachers are false witnesses of God*, v. 15. To be a false witness against God has always been a most serious charge (Ex. 20:16). To bear false witness against ones neighbor was sinful, but to bear false witness against God seems unimaginable! Paul pressed the argument to its logical consequences in order to show the Corinthian denial of the general resurrection was not an innocuous deviation from the revealed faith. Rather, it was a pernicious, damnable heresy that denied the very foundation facts on which the gospel rested.

Fifth consequence: *Your faith is void of results*, v. 17. What appears to be a duplication of what is stated in v. 14 is different on the basis of the change in wording from KENOS to MATAIOS. Both words are translated “vain.” The former word emphasized the absence of objective reality behind their faith. This verse emphasizes that their faith is void of results. That is, the faith which they had in Jesus produced absolutely no results for them. Theirs would be a faith without benefit.

Sixth consequence: *You are yet in your sins*, v. 17. Since Christ was raised for our justification, Rom. 4:25, to reject His resurrection is to reject the efficacy of His sacrifice. If there is no resurrection, there is also no redemption, no reconciliation with God, no justification and no salvation. If Christ is still dead, then mankind remains in need of a Savior from his sins.

Seventh consequence: *The dead is forever perished*, v. 18. If Christ is not raised, men are yet in their sins. Those who have died while yet in sin have perished. The “in Christ” phrase is common referring to Christians. In the context faithful Christians are under consideration as having no hope if Christ is not raised. Only the Christians have hope and is blessed beyond this life. But if Jesus is not raised even those holding to hope (faithful Christians) are rendered without eternal hope. The righteous and the wicked would forever perish together if the dead rise not. God doesn’t give His children stones for bread (Lk. 11:11)!

Eighth consequence: *If there is no hope in Christ beyond the grave, misery will attend all*, v. 19. The pitiable state of the Christian apart from the resurrection. If nothing exists for the Christian beyond the grave, he has sacrificed many bodily pleasures for no benefit. The sacrificing of the temporary joys which the pleasures of this world can give, the abuse to which the Christian is subjected by the world, and the martyr’s death are all for nought if the dead are not

raised. A man who puts everything he is or ever hopes to be on something which is not true is to be pitied.

THE AFFIRMATION, I Cor. 15: 20.

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

The positive affirmation of truth is: Christ is risen! After dying a voluntary, violent, and vicarious death God raised Him up victoriously (Rom. 1: 4) never to die again. Thomas Arnold correctly stated, "The resurrection is the best attested fact in history." Christianity is the only religion in the world that can point triumphantly to an empty tomb. Every other world religion has a dead leader. Christ's resurrection gives assurance to the Christian that he shall be resurrected also (Acts 17:31). It gives the Christian a positive attitude of victory and fills his life with joy.

The certainty of the dead to be raised is affirm in (I Cor. 15: 20-23). Paul argues for the bodily resurrection of all from the person of Christ (I Cor. 15: 20-28). The resurrection is necessary to fully reap the harvest of the dead (Lev. 23:9-14). The first fruits had to be presented before the harvest could begin, and its presentation was an earnest of the ingathering. On the very day after the Sabbath Christ was raised as the first fruits from the dead, and became the earnest of the general resurrection. The resurrection is the pledge and proof of the resurrection of all (Acts 17:30-31; John 5: 28-29).

CONCLUSION

No doubt the Corinthians would have recoiled in shock as they became cognizant of the logical consequences of this doctrine. Can the same be said of our generation?

THE RESURRECTED REDEEMER

Because He lives, we can face tomorrow. Because He is raised, our news is good. We can be born anew. We can be crucified with Christ, buried with Christ, and raised with Christ to a new life. Everything changes because Jesus was raised. The cross really can save us. Life has real meaning and meaning forever.

The church has a profound purpose in sharing what is truly “Good News.” The invitation of the good news is an invitation to nothing less than resurrection of eternal hope. Embrace the Resurrected Redeemer now.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Glenn Irving Hitchcock was born on September 18, 1953 in Newport News, Virginia. He is married to the former Mercedes Dowson of Byron, Georgia. They have been married for 27 years and have one daughter, Lauren Wenter.

THE RESURRECTED REDEEMER

Glenn preaches full-time for the Hampton church of Christ in Hampton, Virginia. He is a 1982 graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching and has been located in the state of Virginia since graduating. He is an adjunct professor at Norfolk State University School of Social Work.

Glenn has accomplished short-term missionary work in Bermuda, and South Africa. He has appeared on numerous lectureship programs across the country. He has preached over the radio and appeared on television programs. He enjoys campaign work and collecting old books written by our brethren. Brother Hitchcock has preached in gospel meetings throughout the United States, Okinawa and South Africa.

THE HOPE WHICH IS LAID UP FOR YOU IN HEAVEN (Colossians 1:3-14)

Tim Hatfield

Throughout the word of God we are given information about Heaven. It is a place prepared for God's people (Matthew 25:34). It is a place of rest from the burdens of this life (Hebrews 4:9-11). It is described as the joy of our Lord (Matthew 25:21). It is a place of perfection, where nothing that is defiled may enter (Revelation 21:26-27). It is the place where all the faithful will be able to be with the Lord forever (First Thessalonians 4:17). It is the hope which is laid up for us as Christians.

In Colossians 1:3-5, the Apostle Paul wrote these words, "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel". Paul was so thankful for the great reward that was awaiting these Christians. He wanted them to be looking forward to this great hope as well. As we think about these verses and the ones that follow there are three great truths about this hope that I would like to bring to our attention.

1. This Hope Comes From The Gospel (1:5-7). In verses five through seven we can see that the message of the gospel is a message of hope. The preaching of the gospel involves the giving of hope. We must understand that man without Christ is without hope. In Ephesians 2:12, we read, "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God

THE HOPE WHICH IS LAID UP FOR YOU IN HEAVEN

in the world". It is a terrible thing to be without hope. Sadly, most people do not realize that this is man's condition when he is outside of Christ.

However, the good news of the gospel is that there is hope. This hope is found in Jesus, the Savior of the world. Paul wrote to Timothy, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope". (First Timothy 1:1) Peter said it this way, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead". (First Peter 1:3) Because of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, you and I have hope. Because the Son of God offered himself as a once for all sacrifice, you and I can have hope. Because the promises of God's word are sure, you and I can have hope, and that hope is in Jesus.

A second thing for us to notice as we think about this hope coming from the gospel is that this message must go forth. Look at the first part of verse six, "Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world". The gospel had been preached in Colossae and throughout the world. The early Christians understood something that the church needs to know today, that every souls needs to hear the gospel. Without the preaching and teaching of the gospel man cannot be saved. This message of hope must go forth.

When this message does go forth it produces fruit. When men and women obey the gospel message, and they continue to follow the will of God their lives are changed. They begin to become more and more like Jesus. When a people turn to God and his will the fruits of righteousness will be seen throughout the land. We have many difficulties in our nation, and we continue to try to find the solutions for our troubles. I believe the answer is obedience to the gospel. When people turn away from selfishness and sin,

THE HOPE WHICH IS LAID UP FOR YOU IN HEAVEN

and see every person as a being made in the image of God, social difficulties will vanish away.

Another thing for us to notice is found in verse seven. Paul writes about the faithful service of Epaphras. From this I believe we can see that faithful messengers are needed. We need more and more men who will share this message of hope with our world. Men who will “preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” (Second Timothy 4:2) We need men who will share the message, and also live the message. It is a great honor, privilege and responsibility to preach the gospel, which gives such hope, to a world lost in sin.

2. This Hope Is For The Faithful In Christ (1:2, 4, 9-11). Notice to whom this letter is written, “To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse”. These people enjoyed the greatest blessing any person could ever hope for, they were in Christ. In Christ is where all spiritual blessings are found (Ephesians 1:3). They had come into Christ by being baptized into him (Galatians 3:27). This is exactly how man can come into Jesus today. This was their reason for hope.

Their hope was manifested in their faith and love. The only way to be counted as a true follower of Christ is to be a faithful servant. This means following his will. In John 14:15, Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” This is exactly what they were doing and Paul rejoiced to hear of their faithfulness in Christ Jesus. They also showed their faithfulness in their love for the saints. They understood that caring for one another was the same as caring for Christ himself.

In Colossians 1:9-11, we learn that the hope laid up in heaven leads to growth. It was Paul’s prayer that the church at Colossae grow and he knew that if they would hold to this hope they would grow in Christ. He desired that they

be filled with knowledge (II Peter 3:18). He wanted them to walk in a worthy manner (Ephesians 4:1). He encouraged them become more longsuffering, patient and joyful (James 1:2-4). Paul knew that all these attributes would help them to continue to be faithful to their Savior.

3. This Hope Is The Inheritance Of The Saints (1:12-14). Paul brings to our attention two reasons why we have the hope of heaven. First, we have been delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the Son. Satan no longer is ruling over our lives. He is not our master. Jesus has conquered Satan and all his allies. We are no longer in the darkness of sin, but rather in the light of righteousness. When we look at the Israelites coming out of Egypt we see a people who had been delivered from bondage. How happy these people must have been. When we see the children of God we see a people who have been delivered from spiritual bondage. This is why we can rejoice no matter what our physical circumstances may be.

The second reason we have such hope is because we have been redeemed. Jesus willingly gave himself to die in our place. In doing so, he redeemed us. In I Peter 1:18, 19, Peter tells us, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." We judge the value of something by the price that was paid for it. That should tell us something of the value of every Christian. Jesus, the one who has preeminence in all things, gave himself for each of us. Paul goes on to let us know that this redemption means that we have the forgiveness of our sins. There truly is power in the blood. Because of Jesus we know that our inheritance is the hope of heaven.

CONCLUSION

Paul wrote to his brethren at Colossae about the hope that was laid up for them in heaven. In the opening of this letter he informs them that this hope comes from the gospel, that it is for the faithful and that it is the inheritance of the saints. May God help each of us to keep striving for the hope which is laid up for us in heaven.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Tim Hatfield was born in Columbus, OH on September 7, 1964. He received his B.A. in Bible from Ohio Valley College, in 1986. He has served the churches of Christ, in Parkersburg, WV and Martin, TN. He is currently preaching for the Lord's church in New Philadelphia, OH. Tim is married to the former Tammy Bates of Coshocton, OH and they have three children, Jimmy, Jessie and Jennie.

COPING WITH DEATH

Glann M. Lee

The apostle Paul wrote:

“But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. ¹“ (1 Thess. 4:13-18 ASV).

The church at Thessalonica was apparently founded by Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-9). Because of bitter persecution, Paul had been forced to leave, going to Berea (Acts 17:10-12), some fifty miles away. The Jews followed Paul to Berea and stirred up the people causing him to flee to Athens (Acts 17:13-15). Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to help the young church (1 Thess. 3:1-5). When Timothy returned, he found that Paul had gone to Corinth, where he overtook him (Acts 18:1-6).

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Aside from the epistle of Acts 15:24-29, First Thessalonians is thought to be the first general epistle of the New Testament to have been written. It was written about 50 or 51 A.D. upon Timothy's return from Thessalonica and his having informed Paul of conditions at Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:6-10). The major purpose was to encourage the young church and to deal with their misunderstanding concerning the second coming of Christ.

From 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, it may be observed that God wants us to know: 1. Death is real, 2. Death is certain, 3. Death is uncertain, 4. Death will be abolished, 5. Grief is natural, 6. Christ is coming again, 7. The Christian has hope because of the resurrection, 8. The Christian has hope because of heaven and 9. Comfort comes from God and His word.

DEATH IS REAL

“But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep...” (v. 13 ASV).

Death is referred to as a sleep.

“So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep” (Job 14:12).

“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2).

“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed...” (1 Cor. 15:51).

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DEATH IS CERTAIN

“Concerning them that fall asleep” (v. 13 ASV).

“And he died” is said of seven patriarchs mentioned in Genesis 5: Adam (5:5), Seth (5:8), Enos (5:11), Mahalaleel (5:17), Jared (5:20), Methuselah (5:27), and Lamech (5:3). “And he died” is the lot of all.

With reference to the certainty of death, David said: “there is but a step between me and death” (1 Sam. 20:3).

Job declared: “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not” (Job 14:1-2).

The wise man of old declared: “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Eccl. 12:7).

The apostle Paul wrote: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor.15:22).

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27).

James wrote: “What is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14). “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:26).

DEATH IS UNCERTAIN

“that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord...” (v. 15 ASV).

Death may come unexpectedly as in the case of Uzzah (2 Sam. 6:6-8), the rich farmer (Luke 12:16-21), and Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11).

DEATH WILL BE ABOLISHED

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout...” (v. 16 ASV).

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“He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces...” (Isaiah 25:8).

“I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction...” (Hosea 13:14).

Christ “must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Cor.15:25-26). See also Rev. 20:11-15.

Christ has “the keys of hell and of death” (Rev.1:18).

GRIEF IS NATURAL

Grief is natural, but over the death of faithful Christians we are to “sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope...” (v. 13 ASV).

Jesus wept at the grave side of Lazarus (John 11:35), over the sins of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41), and in the Garden of Gethsemane (Hebrews 5:7).

“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints” (Psalm 116:15).

The righteous dead enjoy “pleasures for evermore” (Psalm 16:11).

The righteous dead “rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Rev. 14:13).

“God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Rev. 7:17).

CHRIST IS COMING AGAIN

“Them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him...” (v. 14 ASV). “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout...” (v. 16 ASV).

To his disciples Jesus said, “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2-3).

As the disciples gazed into heaven as Jesus ascended, “two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:10-11).

THE CHRISTIAN HAS HOPE BECAUSE OF THE RESURRECTION

“Sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope” (v. 13 ASV).

“the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air ...” (vv. 16-17 ASV).

“Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: 14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. 15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. 16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: 17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. 18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. 20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. 21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are

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Christ's at his coming. 24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. 27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him" (1 Cor.15:12-27).

THE CHRISTIAN HAS HOPE BECAUSE OF HEAVEN

"So shall we ever be with the Lord" (v. 17 ASV).

For the child of God, there is the assurance of heaven for the faithful. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people (John 14:1-6).

"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; 18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: 3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. 4 For we that are in this

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tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. 5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. 6 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: 7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) 8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. 9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. 11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences” (2 Cor.5:1-11).

COMFORT COMES FROM GOD AND HIS WORD

“We say unto you by the word of the Lord...” (v. 15 ASV). “Comfort one another with these words” (v. 18 ASV).

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

“Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved” (Psalm 55:22).

David’s plea to God was “Put thou my tears in thy bottle...” (Psalm 56:8).

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“This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me” (Psalm 119:50).

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort” (2 Cor.1:3).

Christians are admonished to trust God who “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Eph.3:20).

“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Pet. 5:7).

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“Experts on the grieving process have identified some of its key elements, or stages. Not everyone who is bereaved will experience the same things, they note. J. William Worden, author of several books on the subject, outlines what he sees as the key tasks for the grieving person:

- Accept the reality of the death.
- Experience the pain of grief.
- Adjust to life without the deceased.
- Memorialize the loved one in order to move on.”²

Balaam exclaimed: “Let me die the death of the righteous...” (Num. 23:10).

To the child of God the “valley of the shadow of death” comes out on the other side (Psalm 23:4).

To Christians the beloved old song, “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”, has great meaning.

2. *AARP Bulletin*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 41, No. 7, July-August 2000, page 11.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

A lecturer, writer, radio and television speaker, Glann M. Lee is in his fiftieth year of preaching the gospel, having preached his first sermon in 1950. He is as an elder of the Ft. Chiswell church of Christ, Max Meadows, VA where he has served as the local preacher since 1991. He and his wife, Craig Marie, are natives of Wayne County, TN. They are the parents of three daughters, and grand parents of three grandsons (one deceased) and two grand daughters (one deceased).He has spoken in gospel meetings, lectureships, and workshops in most of the states from Texas to the east coast and in some states west of Texas.

O HOW I LOVE THY LAW

Mike Vestal

“Oh how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day” (Psa. 119:97). Note three items about this precious verse. First, ***it is in first person***. The writer does not say that his view is shared by all, or even by the majority. But the idea of personally loving the word **is imperative**. “My soul hath observed thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly” (Psa. 119:167). Second, ***it is in present tense***. It is not, “Oh how I *used* to love thy law,” or “One day I *will* love they law.” His love is real and it is present tense! Third, ***it is constantly in his thoughts***. It is his “meditation all the day.” The Psalmist doesn’t say that Scripture will constantly be in his thoughts whenever he’s not so busy, whenever he feels better or whenever his circumstances change. Scripture is constantly part of him **NOW!** How about us?

We are instructed to search the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11). We are to study the word of God (2 Tim. 2:15). We are to delight in God’s word and to receive it with meekness (Psa. 1:2; Jas. 1:21). We are to obey it and teach it to others (Jas. 1:22; Mark 16:15-16). God’s word is profitable (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Do we ***truly*** love God’s law? It’s not unusual to hear of people speak of how many times they’ve been through the Bible. As wonderful as that is, it may be appropriate to ask, “How many times has the Bible been through **YOU?**” Luke 6:40 says, “Everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher” (NKJV). Can others tell we have been with Jesus because His word is such a part of our lives?

Two fundamental facts are essential. (1) Knowledge is *not* an end within itself (Jer. 9:23-24; Matt. 22:29; 2 Pet. 3:18). (2) Study without application = abortion! (Spiritually

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speaking, that is. Cf. Matt. 7:24-27). Three times in 2 Peter 1:12-15, Peter spoke to the brethren of the importance of their remembering God's word (vv. 12, 13, 15). It was Cicero who said, "Memory is the mother of all wisdom, the treasury and guardian of all things." We all are familiar with hymns like "Precious Memories" or popular songs like "The Way We Were." Memory underlies our ability to think rationally and to make decisions. Perhaps the best working definition of memory I ever heard came from a little girl who spoke of it as "that thing I forget with."

In Matthew 4:1-11, Jesus the *miracle worker* used *memory* in time of testing. What a profound lesson for us! Psalm 119:11 says, "Thy word have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." God's word is the **best possession**. Hiding it in our hearts is the **best place**. That we might not sin against God is the **best purpose**. Memorizing God's word is not dirty work! Too many are turned off when the subject of internalizing scripture comes up. What a shame!

Hear Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God." Did you catch the first part of that verse? The word of Christ is to dwell **richly in** us! For the most part, members of the churches of Christ are not a Bible memorizing (I am not speaking of "rote" memory--the mere regurgitation of information, but of making Scripture part of us--internalizing it), people any more. I once was told by one who should have known better, "Why memorize Scripture? I have a copy of the Bible and can find verses when I need 'em." **WRONG!**

It should not be anyone's purpose to show off their ability or to be a know it all or to replace the written word. Our purpose should be to do what Jesus did in Matthew 4, what the Psalmist spoke of in Psalm 119, verses 11 and 97,

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and to follow Paul's inspired admonition in Colossians 3:16. We need to see the need to lovingly internalize God's word (Psa. 119:130; John 6:63; Psa. 19:10; Jer. 15:16; 1 Pet. 2:2).

Internalizing Scripture all depends on I-C-E. It depends upon our ***interest***. It depends upon our ***commitment***. It depends upon our ***enthusiasm***. And those things are all about love. Consider these three questions about lovingly internalizing the word of God.

WHY INTERNALIZE SCRIPTURE?

Here are just a few of many excellent reasons for making Scripture a part of us.

1. God commanded it (Col. 3:16; Deut. 6:6; Heb. 8:10; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).
2. We love the word (Psa. 119:16, 97).
3. We cannot live without it (Matt. 4:4).
4. We must be ready to give an answer (1 Pet. 3:15).
5. It keeps us from sin and from becoming a casualty (Psa. 119:11; 1 Cor. 10:13; Eph. 6:10-24).
6. It prevents stunted growth (Amos 8:11-12; 1 Pet. 2:1-2; 2 Pet. 3:18).
7. We can make our calling and election sure (2 Pet. 1:10; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Jas. 1:21-25).
8. It will keep us from religious error (Matt. 22:29).
9. It can be a powerful influence for good (Matt. 5:13-16). Think of the impact of Christians like Johnny Ramsey, George Bailey, Guy N. Woods, Gus Nichols and countless others whose lives and sermons have been Christ-centered and Bible-filled.

10. It preserves the word (Matt. 24:35; Heb. 4:12). We tend to remember what we really love. In visiting nursing homes, I have often seen elderly people who could not remember some in their own family start to move their lips because they remembered “Jesus Loves Me” as we sang.

WHAT ARE SOME EXCUSES FOR NOT INTERNALIZING SCRIPTURE?

Probably the #1 excuse initially given is that we have a “bad” memory. It is true that certain people are endowed with extraordinary capabilities in the area of memory, but most authorities say that unless one’s mind is affected by illness, there is no such thing as a “bad” memory. Some may have to work their mental muscles more than others, but all can remember. In time, memory may prove to be less reliable, but it can be improved by discipline, exercise and utilization.

Internalizing God’s word involves 4 basic phases: (1) *learning*; (2) *retaining*; (3) *recalling*; (4) *appropriating or applying*. Memory is typically spoken of in three different ways, *short term*, *mid-term*, and *long-term*. Short term relates to the moment or impulse; then it’s gone. Mid-term memory may last a few hours or days before information is lost (like young people “cramming” for tests). Long term memory is characterized by legitimate detail, depth and vividness. Oh, how we should long to make Scripture part of us for the long term!

We need to understand that Satan is not going to sit still and allow us to draw closer to God without a fight. He works hard to make excuses sound legitimate. He might use the *pressure of time* (cf. Eph. 5:15-16). The devil might use the excuse of *busyness in making a living* (cf. Matt. 6:25-34). Perhaps Satan might use the tactic of *discouragement*

or making us feel incapable (cf. 1 Thess. 2:18; John 15:5; Phil. 4:13). We need to be aware of his strategies (2 Cor. 2:11). And we need to continue to show I-C-E (*interest, commitment and enthusiasm*) for getting into God's word.

WHAT ARE SOME STRATEGIES FOR INTERNALIZING SCRIPTURE?

There are no magic potions or tricks to it; it takes hard work! But what wonderful work it is. It all depends upon our ***I*nterest**, ***C*ommitment** and ***E*nthusiasm**. While there are no tricks, there are strategies. The following are some of the more basic.

Topical Association. I recall when I was younger marveling at preachers who had "topical index files" for many Bible subjects right in their brains. Members of the body of Christ can and should learn topically. Although it isn't the only way to internalize, it makes good sense to have a topical grasp of scriptures on themes like the deity of Jesus, salvation, the church, the end of time, etc.

Letter Association. A number of Bible passages, including Psalm 119 and Proverbs 31:10 ff, were acrostic in form (undoubtedly to help in internalizing them). The same principle can be used with great results today. "H-O-M-E-S" for the Great Lakes (Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior) and "Buy each a day good craw fish" for the flats on the treble clef in music.

Context. By noting the context, and biting off a little bit at a time, one can internalize Scripture. For example, memorizing the Sermon on the Mount is not such a daunting task when it's divided into sections (5:3-12, 13-16, 17-20, etc.). If people made it a point to internalize only one verse a week, that would be 52 verses learned each year. Think of how that could mount up in a lifetime!

Visual Aids. A dear brother in West Texas has internalized thousands of Scriptures by using flash cards

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while he was traveling with his job from place to place. There are other excellent visual aids published by a group known as *The Navigators*.

Recordings. Many people have the Bible on tape. What a great way to internalize God's word!

Singing. Set scripture to song. I will never forget hearing my little girl sing the books of the Old Testament when she was two years old! Mixing music with memory is a very helpful aid. Just ask our young people.

CONCLUSION

“I will delight myself in your statutes: I will not forget thy word” (Psa. 119:16). May we truly be able to say, “Oh how I love thy law!”