

# **Bible Commentary on 1 John**

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# **Bible Commentary on 1 John**

by Jonathan Cooper

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The dates before each chapter reflect the date it was written, and the dates it was edited or expanded.

# Introduction

This is not your typical commentary, so I'd like to give a few words of explanation before you begin. As a child I was taught to read the Word of God on a daily basis. Our goal as a family was to read through the Bible once a year, and that is what we did. When I became an adult I kept reading the Bible from cover to cover.

One day, however, I realized that I wanted something more. Reading the Bible was good, but I wanted to actually *study* it. Could I explain what each verse meant? Did I really understand what each chapter was saying? I decided to start writing daily commentary instead of just reading the Word.

This commentary was put together to help me study the Bible. I have no plans to release it, for there are far better commentaries out there that were written by much wiser men. This document is simply a tool to help me understand what the Word of God has to say.

Jon Cooper  
4/14/2019

# Table of Contents

- Introduction.....4
- Introduction to 1 John.....7
- I John 1 .....7
- I John 2 ..... 11
- I John 3 .....27
- I John 4 ..... 38
- I John 5 .....46
- Appendix C: Divine Choice..... 56
- Appendix L: Catholicism.....67
  - Part 1: Doctrines of Salvation.....67
    - 1. Salvation by Works.....68
    - 2. Salvation by Sacraments.....71
    - 3. Salvation by the Catholic Church.....74
    - 4. Purification by Purgatory.....76
    - 5. Forgiveness by Indulgences.....78
    - 6. Forgiveness by Penance.....79
    - 7. The Catholic Defense.....81
    - 8. Conclusion.....85
  - Part 2: History.....86
    - Persecutions During The First Millennium.....86
    - Persecutions During 1000 - 1500.....88
    - Persecutions During 1500 - 1900.....98
    - Persecutions During the 20th Century.....113
  - In Conclusion.....117
    - The Spanish Inquisition.....118
- Appendix N: There Is No "Age of Accountability" .....126
  - The Weak Defense.....127
  - The Consequences of Bad Doctrine.....130
  - Everyone Is Held Accountable.....132
  - The Final Proof.....136
  - What The Bible Really Says.....139
- Appendix P: Textual Criticism.....146
  - The Received Text And The Critical Text Are Very Different..148

The Received Text: Handed Down Through Time.....	154
The Critical Text: From The Catholic Church.....	156
Did God Preserve His Word?.....	167
Two Different Philosophies.....	169
Hasn't The KJV Been Changed Countless Times?.....	170
Appendix 6: Unbiblical Church Practices.....	172
Church Buildings Are Unbiblical.....	176
Modern Church Services Are Unbiblical.....	182
It's A Bad Idea To Pay Pastors.....	187
Church Membership Is Unbiblical.....	192
Voting Is Unbiblical.....	200
Churches Must Not Avoid Politics.....	205
Families Should Worship Together.....	209
God Never Gave Pastors The Power To Marry People.....	212
Altar Calls Are Unbiblical.....	217
Modern Sermons Are Shallow.....	230
Churches Must Not Form Alliances With The Ungodly.....	240
The Importance Of Calling Out False Teachers By Name.....	246
What "Worship" Actually Means.....	254
Conclusion.....	256
Resource 1: Chapter Summary.....	265
1 John.....	265
Resource 3: The Teachings Of The Bible.....	269
1 John 1.....	269
1 John 2.....	275
1 John 3.....	288
1 John 4.....	301
1 John 5.....	309

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## Introduction to 1 John

Scholars believe that the book of 1 John was written around 90 AD (see Resource 2, "Timeline"). This means John wrote it about 60 years after the resurrection. It was the 24<sup>th</sup> book of the New Testament to come into existence.

3/30/2011, 9/26/2018, 7/13/2019

### I John 1

"1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; 2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) 3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." (I John 1)

Here we have another reminder that the testimonies we find the New Testament are *actual eyewitness accounts*. John wrote about the things that *he saw*. He knew Jesus personally! He touched Him, ate with Him, followed Him, and listened to Him. John was there in the garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36). He was there at the trial (John 18:15), at the crucifixion (John 19:26-27), at the empty tomb (John 20:4), and at the resurrection (John 20:19). He saw the Lord crucified and he saw Him alive again. John isn't relating something that happened to a

friend of a friend; instead he is talking about things that he saw *personally*. We can have confidence that these things are true because John is declaring things that he has "seen and heard".

"4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." (I John 1)

Since John is an eyewitness he can testify that the gospel and the accounts of the Messiah are true. Because those accounts are true we can know for sure that we truly are saved. Our sins have been forgiven, God's wrath against us has been satisfied, and we will inherit everlasting life and joy! That's why he is writing: so that we can know the truth and find great peace and joy in it.

"5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." (I John 1)

This is an important point, because it says that God does not and *cannot* sin. There is no darkness in Him at all! Other religions have very different views of God; Islam, for example, believes that Allah is capable of doing both good and evil. The Lord says otherwise: He is pure, holy, and incapable of evil. He will never go back on His word and He always keeps His promises.

"6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and



the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (I John 1)

You cannot walk with God and hold onto your sins; it's one or the other. There is no salvation apart from repentance! You must ask for forgiveness for your sins if you want to have fellowship with God. If you leave the darkness and walk in the light – that is, if you choose a path of holiness and righteousness as the Lord gives you grace – then you will have fellowship with God. However, if you choose to hold fast to your sins then you will *not* have fellowship with God. Many people claim that they can have it both ways, but that is a lie. John is quite straightforward about this: "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth". You simply *cannot* have fellowship with God if you're holding on to your sins and refuse to let go of them. If you want to walk with God and have a relationship with Him then you need to *repent* and pursue holiness. There simply is no other way!

This doesn't mean that we will never sin, as John goes on to say in future verses. But there is a big difference between holding onto your sins for dear life, and praying earnestly for the grace to "lay aside the sin that so easily besets us" (Heb 12:1).

"8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (I John 1)

This is the point exactly. If you claim that you are without sin and don't need a Savior then you cannot be saved. There are many sins in our life for we battle against the flesh, and we must learn to die to our sins (Romans 6:11). If we confess our sins then

the Lord will forgive us and "cleanse us from all unrighteousness". What we must *not* do is pretend that everything is fine and we have no sin at all. God requires us to confess and repent, for repentance leads to forgiveness and cleansing.

What we often forget is that *God* is the one who will cleanse us from our sins! It isn't our efforts that will change our heart, but His grace and mercy (Romans 8:29) – and this grace is obtained through repentance and confession. Ask, and ye shall receive.

Christianity is not a do-it-yourself religion. God saves us, God forgives us, God changes our heart, God brings us home, and God raises us from the dead. These things do not happen by our own efforts as we try really hard to be good people; instead they happen when we come to the Lord and seek His grace and mercy. They happen when we repent and ask for God's grace. They happen when we ask God to "cleanse us from all unrighteousness". What matters are not *our* efforts, but His grace. He alone can change our hearts.

"10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." (I John 1)

The Bible is very clear that *all* have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God! We are all born with a sin nature. (Catholicism teaches that Mary was born without sin, but as you can see from this verse that claim is a lie.) We are *not* basically good people; the Bible teaches that we are all evil and corrupt, dead in our trespasses and sins. There is no getting around this.

3/30/2011, 9/26/2018, 7/13/2019

## I John 2

"1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (I John 2)

I keep emphasizing this because in this day it's desperately needed. There is only one "propitiation for our sins" and that is Jesus Christ. There is no other way to be saved apart from His sinless life, His death, and His resurrection. There is no other way! He died in our place, taking upon Himself the punishment for our sins. When we are saved we take on His perfect righteousness. That is why our works cannot save us! We are dressed in *His* righteousness, not our own. Our righteousness is not good enough and will never be good enough. Only the perfect righteousness of Christ will work.

These days the idea that "Jesus saves" is seen as controversial, conservative, and extremist. Yet it is exactly what the Bible teaches and what it has always taught. There is no other way to be saved! In order to be saved your sins must be forgiven, and the only way that can happen is if someone else steps in and takes your punishment. The only person that can do that is someone who has never sinned and therefore has no sins of their own to suffer for. Jesus is the only person who has done all of this.

I read today that 25% of people who call themselves Christians do not believe that Jesus rose from the dead. This means that they are not Christians at all, because in order to be saved you must believe in the resurrection:

Romans 10:9: "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."

If you don't believe that God has raised Jesus up from the dead then *you are not saved*.

Now, does verse 2 mean that everyone is saved, since Jesus was offered "for the sins of the whole world"? No, it does not. Even Jesus said that few people will be saved and most will go on to destruction:

Matthew 7:13: "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:"

Over and over Jesus commanded people to repent, believe, and be saved. If His death automatically saved everyone then this wouldn't be necessary! The truth is only those who repent and believe in Him will be saved.

Jesus is our advocate with the Father. He is the one who grants forgiveness for our sins – not some priest. Our sins cannot be wiped away by doing good deeds. Forgiveness can only come through Jesus.

"3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him."  
(I John 2)

John isn't saying that you have to keep the law in order to

be saved. What he's saying is that if you're saved you will obey Christ. This is the *result* of being saved: you are a changed person with a new life. You have become someone different! The things that you do – your obedience to Christ – demonstrates that you truly are saved and you really are a Christian. The works don't make you a Christian; what they do is demonstrate what is inside you. They are the *result*, not the cause.

But they are important. If someone thinks they're saved but refuses to obey the Lord then they need to take a very close look at their salvation. John is very clear about this: if we say that we know Jesus but refuse to obey him then we are liars and the truth is not in us.

John is explaining how we can tell if our salvation is genuine. One way we can know that we are in Him is by the fact that we obey Jesus – not because we have to or because we're trying to earn something, but out of a sincere love for Him. That is one of the hallmarks of being a Christian. If that is missing then salvation is missing as well.

Notice that this passage *doesn't* say "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we went to the front of the church during an altar call and recited the sinner's prayer". Instead this passage teaches that the mark of a genuine Christian is *obedience to God's commands*. This is why I believe that altar calls are both unbiblical and dangerous. They give people a completely wrong impression about what it takes to get saved! In order to be saved you must repent of your sins, believe what the Bible has to say about Jesus, and then *obey the Lord*. There are many people who responded to an altar call but haven't done any of those things. They haven't repented of anything, they don't believe the Bible, and they openly defy God on a daily basis. *Those people aren't saved* – and yet the modern church has told them that they're fine. This is a great tragedy. (For more information on this topic see Appendix 6, "Unbiblical Church Practices", subsection "Altar Calls Are Unbiblical".)

"6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." (I John 2)

If you claim that you are a follower of Christ then *follow Christ!* Do the things that He did. Jesus always did the will of the Father (John 5:30), so that is what you should do as well. Jesus never sinned and was always obedient, so that is how we ought to be living. However, if you mock the Scriptures and live a life of sin and rebellion then you can't call yourself a follower of Christ because Christ never did any of those things.

"7 Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. 8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." (I John 2)

On the one hand, the commandment John is giving is not new at all, but is actually very old. The commandment (as we will see throughout this book) is very simple: we are to love God with all of our heart and soul and mind and strength, and we must love our neighbor as ourselves. That isn't anything new; in fact, it dates back to the Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 10:12, 19). It is very, very old.

The reason John calls it new in verse 8 (right after he pointed out how old it is) is because the situation is new. Before the world was lost in sin and darkness, but now the Messiah has come and sacrificed His life for our sins. The true light has come

and is shining in the world, and has ended the old covenant and began a new one. He has made all things new (Revelation 21:5). What was once old is now new again.

"9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. 10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. 11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes." (I John 2)

Here is another way to tell if our salvation is genuine: if we love our fellow believers then that's more evidence we are in the light. However, if we hate them or act against them then we are not in the light but are in the darkness. One of the fruits of the Spirit is love, and especially a love towards fellow Christians. If we find ourselves hating those who love the Lord then there is something very wrong with us!

Now, this doesn't mean that we won't be grieved by believers who are walking in sin or teaching heresy. It also doesn't mean that we can't rebuke those who are living in sin. What it *does* mean is that we should love one another and try to do what's best for them.

So, one piece of evidence is our obedience to Jesus out of a sincere love for Him. Another piece of evidence is our love for the family of God. This shouldn't come as a surprise! After all, Jesus did say that all the commandments of God could be summed up with "love God" and "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:36-40).

"12 I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake."  
(I John 2)

This is an interesting verse. I don't believe in the age of accountability because it leads to absurdities: it teaches that you start out saved, then as you get older you lose your salvation and have to get saved again. It says that if you die as a child you will be saved, but if that same child grows into adulthood and never gets saved then they will go to Hell. This implies that if you want to make sure your children go to Heaven then you should abort them before they're born, just to be safe – which is a horrible, ungodly, abominable idea.

Besides, the Bible does *not* teach an age of accountability. You will find no passages that say "You are saved when you are born, but after you turn 12 you will go to Hell if you don't give your life to Jesus." The Bible commands people everywhere to repent and believe, and it does not put age limits on it. I have heard many sermons on this topic, but in those sermons I never heard any Scriptures given that supports this "age of accountability" doctrine – and I'm convinced it's because there aren't any. People believe this doctrine because they want it to be true, not because it's what the Bible actually teaches.

So what *does* happen to children who die at a young age (or before they are born)? Are they saved or are they lost? How does it work?

The Bible doesn't spend a lot of time addressing this issue directly. The only verse that might apply is this one:

1 Corinthians 7:14: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy."



Does this mean that if one of the parents are saved then the children are saved, but if neither of them are saved then the children are lost? I don't know. However, what is clear from this verse is that there is such a thing as unclean children – which means that all children *are not saved*.

What we do know is that the only way you can escape being thrown into the Lake of Fire is if your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Revelation 20:15), and those names were written down before the foundation of the world (Revelation 17:8). Romans 9 tells us that salvation is a matter of divine choice: God chooses who is saved and who is not. We also know that salvation comes only through faith in Jesus, and yet the content of that faith has not always been the same. Genesis tells us that Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness – but he never believed in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus because none of that had been revealed in his day. The way you were saved in the Old Testament was by believing what God had revealed to you.

Is it possible for God to regenerate a heart before it's born? According to Luke 1:41 that's exactly what happened to John the Baptist. It is entirely possible (and I think likely) that children lost in miscarriages are in Heaven and will one day meet their parents. Another thing to consider is that there are many times when conception happens but the pregnancy ends long before the mother is aware anything is going on, which means she never knew she was pregnant at all. That means when she reaches Heaven she may find out that she has a *lot* more children than she ever knew about. (Life does begin at conception, after all – not at implantation or after birth, as so many now claim.) Yet another thing to consider is that most birth control works by killing the embryo after conception has happened, which means it's really killing a human being that has already been conceived. People who have used these types of birth control for years may

have killed *many* children. (I suspect that will make for some uncomfortable conversations when they reach Heaven and meet all their children that they killed.)

When the rapture happens will all children disappear? According to the Bible, those whose names are written in the Book of Life will disappear, and those whose names are not written in it will be left behind. (Whose names are written? Only God knows.)

It's very hard to say anything definitive on this topic because the Bible has very little to say about it. I don't know what happens to children when they die, and perhaps that is for the best. What I do know is that God will decide their fate – just as He decides the fate of every one of us. I also know that He is just and merciful and will always do what's right.

It's true that this verse says "your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake". Yet in the very next verse it says that these same little children have known the Father, which implies they have a relationship with God. This verse is talking about *believing* children, not children in general. (For more information on this topic see Appendix N, "There Is No Age Of Accountability".)

"13 I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father." (I John 2)

Why are these children saved and their sins forgiven? Because they have known the Father! These children are *believers*. The promises that God makes to them cannot be applied to all children throughout the world.

The fathers, young men, and little children that John speaks of in this verse all have one thing in common: they have

saving faith in Jesus Christ. That is how they have known the Father, and that is how they have overcome the world and the devil.

"14 I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." (I John 2)

What makes young men strong? The Word of God! If they study the Scriptures and memorize it and learn it, then it will dwell in them and give them the strength to recognize sin and false teachers and resist the devil. However, if they don't study the Bible then they will be unable to tell the good from the bad – and how can they fight against evil if they can't even recognize it? The fact that so many "Christians" claim you don't need Jesus in order to be saved shows how ignorant and foolish the church has become – and much of that is due to the fact they won't even *read* their Bibles, much less study them.

"15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (I John 2)

This is a very powerful passage that gets to the heart of what it means to be a Christian. Being in love with this world,

and its pleasures, and the material things of this life, is a sign that you are *not* saved. We can see this in verse 15: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." John is very clear about what this "love of the world" entails: "the lust of the flesh", "the lust of the eyes", and "the pride of life". *None* of these things come from God. The Christian's heart is fixed on the things of God; the pagan's heart has no love for the things of God and instead seeks after the carnal things of this life. The difference in focus is *enormous*.

This gives us three distinguishing characteristics of Christians: they obey Jesus out of a sincere love for Him, they love their fellow believers, and they have no love for the world or the things that it offers.

Of course, not everyone is happy with what John is saying here. Some people claim that you can be a Christian and be materialistic. Even though Jesus said that you *cannot* serve both God and mammon (Matthew 6:24), some people insist that you can spend your life trying to amass all the material things that people crave and still be a child of God. Or, to put it another way, they say there's no conflict between living a self-centered, materialistic life and serving God.

The problem with this view is that John is exceptionally clear: if any man loves the world, *the love of the Father is not in him*. John commands us *not* to love the world or the things that are in it. Our desires should be fixed on the Lord alone! Our time should be spent building *His* kingdom, not ours. Our heart should be fixed on Heaven and our joy should come from serving Him, not from getting the latest toys and gadgets.

We must understand that this world and the things that are in it are passing away. As 2 Peter 3:10 tells us, this world is going to be destroyed by fire and everything that's in it will be destroyed as well. God wants us to be in the world but not of the world. We are called to be different! We cannot let the desires of our flesh rule over us; instead we must die to them and live to

God. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth" (Colossians 3:5). Flee fleshly lusts and run from them. Don't embrace them; die to them!

This is not an easy thing to do (but it can be done through the grace of God). It's not easy to become uninterested in the things of this world and instead find our joy in Jesus. It's not easy to walk away from pride, money, and the pursuit of riches, and instead seek a deeper walk with the Lord. It's not easy to die to our own dreams and seek the Lord's will, nor is it easy to seek to glorify God instead of ourselves. We long to be big and important; we want to be successful and respected. But this desire is nothing more than the pride of life, which Christians are commanded to run from. God doesn't want us spending our lives glorifying ourselves! He commands us to spend all of eternity glorifying *Him* - the one who *alone* is worthy of all glory and honor and praise. He may choose to glorify us and lift us up, but if He does then let it be Him that does it and not ourselves.

"18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." (I John 2)

John is saying that we are living in the final days, and have been for a very long time now. He is *not* saying that the Antichrist who will reign over the world during the seven-year tribulation has already arrived, or that the end-times prophecies were symbolic or allegorical. He doesn't say "as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, he is here right now", or "the antichrist prophecies have been fulfilled". He is saying that the appearance of many people who oppose Christ is evidence that these are the final days.

The reason we know that the Antichrist himself has not

arrived yet is because the Bible has many specific prophecies about who he is and what he will do, which includes going into the temple and declaring himself to be God (Matthew 24:15), and being executed by Jesus Christ at His Second Coming (Revelation 19:20). None of these prophecies have been fulfilled yet.

"19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." (I John 2)

This is a critical verse! It answers a very common question: can you lose your salvation? There are a number of people who seem to start out life as solid believers, but as time goes on they reject the faith and walk away from God. This verse tells us that those people were never Christians at all. If they had been genuine Christians then they would have remained in the faith for their whole lives. The fact that they ultimately rejected it demonstrated their true nature all along – that they were actually unregenerate and were just fooling themselves. Time revealed their true nature.

Jesus spoke of this same idea in the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:24-30). At first both plants look alike, but the passage of time eventually makes their differences clear.

"20 But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." (I John 2)

This is yet another passage that teaches Catholicism is a lie. In spite of what the Catholic church may claim, we do *not*

need a special group of priests to interpret the Bible for us. We have an unction from the Holy One. Jesus Himself said that the Holy Spirit will guide us into the truth (John 16:13). The Bible is *not* a sealed book that can only be interpreted by a select few. It is open to all who believe! Those who seek understanding need only to ask God for wisdom and He will grant it (James 1:5). If we seek the truth we will find it, if we seek it with all our heart. (For more information see Appendix L, "Catholicism".)

"21 I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. 22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. 23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also." (I John 2)

This is a very important passage! The truth that John is speaking of is the truth that Jesus is the Messiah (or Christ). The whole point of the gospel is that Jesus is the sinless Lamb of God who shed His blood in order to pay the penalty that was due for our sins. Jesus satisfied the wrath of God on our behalf, taking upon Himself the punishment that we deserved. He, the divine and eternal Son of God, paid for our sins with His own blood. He died and then rose again on the third day.

Any person or group that rejects *any* of these teachings *is not saved* and is actually anti-Christ. If you reject that Jesus is the Messiah then you are lost. If you reject that Jesus became a man then you are lost. If you reject that Jesus is part of the eternal trinity then you are lost. If you reject that Jesus is sinless then you are lost. If you reject that Jesus died or rose again then you are lost. (Catholicism rejects the Bible's teaching that the death

of Jesus is what saves you, and teaches that you must add your own works to His sacrifice or else you will be lost. That is why they are anti-Christ and are not a Christian church. For more information about this see Appendix L, "Catholicism".)

If you have Jesus then you have the Father and you are saved. However, if you believe lies about Jesus then you do *not* have the Father and you are *not* saved. Jesus makes all the difference!

"24 Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. 25 And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life." (I John 2)

What is it that they heard from the beginning? It's the message of the gospel, which John and the other apostles consistently shared with people throughout the world. Their message never changed. If the gospel abides in us and we continue to hold on to it then we will be saved and inherit everlasting life. However, if we reject the gospel then that is evidence we were never saved at all but are still lost in our sins. (We aren't saved *because* we hold on; instead we hold on because we are saved.)

"26 These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you." (I John 2)

Do not be seduced by false teachings! Instead know the Word of God, believe it, and obey it. If you don't know the Scriptures then you will get into all kinds of trouble because you



will be unable to tell the truth apart from lies.

"27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." (I John 2)

This verse is saying that we don't need a special class of priests or clergy to interpret the Bible for us. We are fully capable of *reading it for ourselves* and gaining understanding! The idea that only a select few can do that job (and that common people should avoid the Bible and let their "betters" tell them what it means) is completely unbiblical.

In Christianity it has become very common for Christians to outsource the study of the Scriptures to others. Instead of reading it for themselves they just sit quietly in pews and believe whatever their pastor tells them. That is a terrible thing to do, because what the pastor is telling you may be very wrong! You need to know the Bible and compare *everything* that you hear to what the Bible says. Don't just believe your pastor, or elders, or Sunday School teacher, or the books you read; instead study the Scriptures yourself to see if what they are saying is true (Acts 17:11). When it comes to the Bible you should never trust anyone; instead always look into it for yourself.

This also applies to "scholars". Now, there are some scholars who are sincere followers of Christ and who do great work explaining what the Bible has to say. However, there are many who spend their lives teaching people that the Bible is a lie. They claim that the things written in the Bible are myths and falsehoods and cannot be trusted. They have many tricks that they use, but one of their favorites is to claim that the original

languages don't *really* say what they seem to say, and you should just take their word for it that they have been translated incorrectly. After all, they are experts in the original languages and you are not! Whatever you do, though, *don't believe them*. Look into the matter yourself. If you have doubts then get a Strongs concordance or a Hebrew/Greek lexicon and see if what they are saying is true. (These tools are very easy to use and require no specialized knowledge. They can actually be a lot of fun.) I also strongly recommend that you stick with the King James Bible and reject other translations. I do *not* believe that the KJV is an "inspired" translation, but it does happen to be the only modern Bible that's based on sound manuscripts that have not been tampered with. (For more information on this see Appendix P, "Textual Criticism".)

"28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."  
(I John 2)

Who is going to be ashamed before Jesus at His coming? Those Christians who have been living sinful, carnal lives, confident that He wasn't going to appear anytime soon. They will be caught completely off-guard when He comes back for His church at the rapture. At that moment they will realize what they've done and will be greatly ashamed. They will be caught red-handed, so to speak. John is warning us ahead of time to abide in Jesus and seek holiness, so that when He appears we will not be caught doing shameful and wicked things.

This is one of the reasons why it's so important to be watching for His return and aware of the many signs that point to the nearness of His coming! If you aren't watching then you will be caught by surprise when He returns, and that could get very

ugly (Luke 12:36-40, 45-47).

"29 If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." (I John 2)

I think this is an echo of what John said earlier: if we are in Christ then we will obey Him. If we are obeying Christ and following His commands then that's a very good sign that we really do belong to Him. People who repent of their sins, love Jesus, love their neighbor, and seek a life of holiness are people who are saved – so those who do righteousness are born of Him.

3/31/2011, 9/27/2018, 7/13/2019

## **I John 3**

"1 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." (I John 3)

Do we realize how amazing this is? We were dead in our trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1), the enemies of God (Romans 5:8, 10). The only thing we deserved was eternal damnation and fiery torment, because we were completely guilty and unable to save ourselves. We were without hope and God owed us absolutely nothing. The Lord would have been fully justified in casting all of us to Hell. That would have been a just sentence.

But what did God do? He did something astonishing: the perfect and righteous Son of God died in order to save the life of His *enemies!* He was innocent, and yet He died a terrible death of torture in order to forgive the sins of people who hated Him.

His life is worth infinitely more than all of our lives put together, but yet He willingly laid down His life in order to purchase our forgiveness and make us part of His family. That is astonishing love – it is love beyond measure and beyond understanding.

Why does the world hate us? Because the world hated Jesus. Since it did not recognize Him, it does not recognize us either and treats us as it treated Him.

"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." (I John 3)

This verse is a reference to the rapture. When He returns for the church we shall see Jesus in His true form and be transformed. That is the moment when the resurrection of the church will take place – when the mortal will put on immortality and we become incorruptible (1 Corinthians 15:52). Right now we don't really know what that's going to be like; all we know is that "we shall be like him".

There is another piece to that promise: when He returns "we shall see Him as He is". We will see Jesus in all of His glory, majesty, and power, and that will be a sight unlike anything else! *We will see Him* – the one who we've never seen, and yet still believe and trust and long for. Our faith will at last become sight.

We are already the sons of God, but we are still young. We have received a part of our inheritance (the Holy Spirit), but we're still corrupt and mortal. At the resurrection this will change and we will become incorruptible and immortal. Right now we cannot see Jesus at all, but when that day comes we will see Him as He is.

"3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (I John 3)

I keep seeing this idea all throughout the Bible: those who believe in Jesus and have this hope of everlasting life *will* seek holiness. What I see in many churches, though, is different. So many "Christians" tell me that it makes no difference how you live. Since all believers go to Heaven, we can be as sinful or corrupt as we please and it doesn't matter! The modern church simply doesn't see everlasting life as an incentive to be holy. Instead they interpret it as an invitation to be worldly, selfish, and sinful.

But that is *not* how it should be! I suspect that those who spent their time seeking after the lusts of the flesh will not be happy when Jesus returns at the rapture. In that day they will learn that their decision to be disobedient and self-centered was a disaster, and they will bitterly regret it. But when that day comes it will be too late to do anything about it.

The verse is clear that the hope of everlasting life should motivate us to *seek holiness* – to hate even the garment spotted with the flesh (Jude 1:23). Holiness and righteousness should be on our mind, not the latest fads or whatever material goods the world is trying to push. We are immortals who will see the destruction of this world and live beyond it. All of the things that pull us away from God and distract us will one day be destroyed; there is no profit in them. God commands us to seek holiness, love, and obedience, for things are the things that are worth seeking.

"4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." (I John 3)

Mormons teach that sins and transgressions are different. They claim that going against God's law isn't necessarily a sin. God does not agree with their theology! As you can see from this verse, He clearly teaches that *any* transgression of His law is a sin. In fact, the very *definition* of sin is to transgress God's law!

"5 And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin." (I John 3)

I saw a poll today that stated that half of all Christians believe that Jesus sinned. That tells me that half of all Christians are not actually saved! The Bible is crystal clear: "in him is no sin". Jesus never sinned! This is a cardinal doctrine of the faith and is repeated over and over in the Bible (for example, see John 8:46 and Hebrews 4:15). Besides, God cannot be tempted by evil (James 1:13). It was not even *possible* for Jesus to sin because it was not in His nature.

On top of that, the only way Jesus could save us was if He led a sinless life. Otherwise when He died He would have been suffering for His own sins, not ours! In order to be a sacrifice for sins *He had to be sinless and perfect* – and He was.

The idea that Christ sinned is an outrageous lie. It is a direct attack on the gospel itself and is very anti-Christ.

"6 Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. 7 Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. 8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of

the devil. 9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." (I John 3)

This is a very interesting passage, and we need to be careful with it. First of all, we need to keep in mind what John said earlier in the book:

"8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." (I John 1)

These verses cannot be ignored. We need to understand the context of what John has been talking about.

In chapter 1 John established that all men are sinners and must go to Jesus in order to obtain forgiveness for sin. John then explained the difference between those who are saved and those who are not. Genuine Christians don't behave the same way as unbelievers: there are distinct differences, and John talks about them in chapter 2. One of the hallmarks of being a Christian is that you obey Jesus out of a love for Him. As John said in chapter 2, those who don't do this do not know God:

"3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (I John 2)

In order to become saved we must ask Jesus for forgiveness, and when we do this He will change us. One of these changes is that we keep His commandments.

So what are we to make of "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not"? I think that John is building on what he has said before: people who are genuinely saved will obey Christ. This is not to say that they will never sin (which John addressed in chapter 1), but that they will spend their lives in the pursuit of righteousness. After all, look at what he says in the very next verse: he that doeth righteousness is righteous. John is repeating what he said before.

His point is this: people who continue to live in sin and who hate righteousness are of the devil. When you become saved Jesus start to change us, and He creates a heart that *hates* sin. People who are genuinely saved will act in righteous ways. They may be far from perfect (as we saw in the life of David, who murdered Uriah [2 Samuel 11:15]), and they may fall (as we saw with Peter, who denied Christ [Matthew 26:75]), but they seek forgiveness for their sin and want to be free from it. People who proudly live unrighteous, unholy, selfish, and ungodly lives have no reason to believe that they are genuine believers.

John is teaching us how to tell a genuine conversion from a phony one. If you are living a self-centered life, love your sins, and have no desire to obey God, then you do not know Jesus! You have *not* been changed and your conversion is phony. You may have had an "experience" but it wasn't real. Genuine Christians *pursue righteousness*. If you don't have that desire then you do not know God. As John points out, if you are sin then you're following the devil, and you cannot follow the devil and God at the same time! If you pursue sin then you are pursuing the devil. Real believers cannot lead lives of sin.

Jesus put it this way: you will know a tree by the fruit it bears (Matthew 7:16-20). If a tree bears evil fruit then you are



dealing with an evil tree.

"10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." (I John 3)

John's point is this: it's madness to think that a person is a Christian if they are living a desperately sinful life and get angry at the very *thought* of following God's commands. Such people are "the children of the devil". Despite what they claim they *do not know God*. The children of God are different: they hate sin and seek to lead righteous lives. (The reason they do this isn't because they have worked really hard to get there; no, the reason is because when they were saved God gave them a new heart and changed their desires.)

John is *not* saying that your works save you, nor is he saying that genuine Christians lead lives of sinless perfection. He is saying that the things you do reveal who you really are. If you lead a life of sin then you are of the devil, but if you lead a life of holiness then you are of God. It's not any more complicated than that.

"11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 12 Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. 13 Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." (I John 3)

Do you know how we can tell that Cain hated Abel?

Because he murdered him! Cain's actions demonstrated what was in his heart, and our actions do the same. If we say that we hate the faithful children of God then we are in trouble (Matthew 5:22). However, if we claim to love them and then spend our days persecuting and hurting them, our actions reveal that our words are a lie.

The truth is that people who are evil are going to hate people who are righteous, because the righteous acts of the saints condemn the wickedness of the wicked. Abel didn't have to go up to Cain and tell him that he was a bad person; Cain could see Abel's righteousness and it filled him with rage. The mere *existence* of Abel was all it took. When the world treats us the way Cain treated Abel, we need to remember that this isn't anything new or strange. This is how things have always been, and this is how Christ was treated. However, things won't always be this way. When the Lord returns He will establish an everlasting kingdom of righteousness (Daniel 2:44), and the wicked will never again gain control of the world.

"14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. 15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." (I John 3)

This is another recurring theme: we should love one another. If we love fellow believers then that's a sign our salvation is genuine. However, if we hate Christians then that's evidence we are not saved.

Verse 15 is not saying that murderers cannot be saved. If that was the case then Saul could never have become the apostle Paul, because he presided over the murder of Christians (Acts

8:1). What it is saying is that people who do not repent of their hatred and murder do not know God.

To put it another way: one of the evidences of genuine salvation is a heartfelt love of other believers. If that is missing then salvation is probably missing too.

"16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (I John 3)

As James 2:15-16 points out, the way we demonstrate our faith and love is by our actions. We can tell that Cain hated Abel because he killed him. We can tell that Jesus loves His children because He sacrificed His life and died for them. It isn't enough to just *say* that we love other Christians; we need to take action on their behalf! The Bible says that we are to love our wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it (Ephesians 5:25). This sacrificial love doesn't just extend to our spouse; here we can see that we are to love *all* Christians with that same kind of passion. Since Jesus died for us, we must be willing (if it comes down to it) to die for others. That is what genuine love looks like.

"17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? 18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." (I John 3)

This goes back to what John has been saying all along: our actions reveal who we really are. If we say that we love others

but we do nothing to help them then our love isn't real. If we say that we love God but we don't obey Him then our love is not real. If we say that we're saved but we continue in sin then our salvation was not real. Our actions don't save us, but they do reveal the truth. If our love is real then we will help those who need it. If we are truly saved then we will obey God. If we are genuine believers then we will hate sin and pursue righteousness. These things *always* come as a result of being saved and indwelt by the Spirit, and having these things is evidence that our faith is genuine.

Do you love other believers? Do you obey God? Do you hate sin and pursue righteousness? Then those are powerful signs that your conversion is real. That is what John is talking about! The way you know you're saved is *not* by trying to remember the moment you were saved (which is what virtually all churches teach); it is by looking at the fruits of your life and seeing if they correspond to the fruits that come from salvation. If those fruits are missing then your conversion was not real, no matter how great an experience it may have been at the time.

"19 And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. 20 For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. 21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." (I John 3)

This is how we can know for sure if we're saved! This is how we can tell if our conversion was real. Even if our heart condemns us we can still know the truth. You see, the truth will drive the doubts away.

The world is always telling people to follow their heart. However, the Bible tells us that our heart is desperately wicked

and should not be trusted (Jeremiah 17:9). There are times when our heart will tell us that an action is wrong when it's really right, or that it is right when it's actually a terrible sin. Instead of trusting our heart we must trust the truth of the Scriptures. We need to build our lives on solid ground, and our heart *cannot* be our guide.

"22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." (1 John 3)

God does not hear the prayers of the wicked (Proverbs 15:29), but He does hear the prayers of the righteous. Since we are the children of God we will keep His commandments – not in order to earn our salvation (for that was accomplished by the sacrificial death of Christ), but out of a sincere love for God. Since we are saved (which can be seen by the fruits our life is bearing), God will hear our prayers.

Now, that doesn't mean God will always give us what we ask for. Paul prayed three times that his thorn in the flesh would be removed, and God said that His grace was sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). The Lord is going to answer our prayers according to His will, which should be very comforting to us. God knows far more than we do, and if He denies our request we know it is for the best.

"23 And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. 24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.

And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." (I John 3)

Our salvation begins when we have faith in Jesus. Specifically, this means that we believe what the Bible has to say about Jesus (that He is the divine and sinless Son of God, that He died for our sins and rose from the dead, and so forth), and that His death and resurrection *alone* are what accomplishes our salvation, and our works play no part whatsoever. We also need to repent of our sins and put ourselves under the authority of Christ, which means we obey His commands.

If we do not believe in Jesus then we are not saved. If we do believe in Jesus then we will obey His commands, because He has given us a heart that wants to do what's right and that hates sin. If we don't love one another then we are not saved. If we are saved then we will love one another because God has put that love in our heart. If we are keeping God's commandments out of love then that is strong evidence we are saved. Likewise, if our lives are bearing the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, and so forth) then that is strong evidence we have the Spirit. However, if we are only bearing evil fruits then we almost certainly lack the Spirit as well.

3/31/2011, 9/27/2018, 7/13/2019

## **I John 4**

"1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." (I John 4)

This is a call to discernment. Don't just believe everything you are told! Instead be like the Bereans and compare every

teaching to what the Scripture has to say (Acts 17:11). This is *vital*. God hasn't called us to be loyal to our denomination or to what our parents taught us; instead God commands us to be loyal to *Him and Him alone*. We must be constantly comparing what we hear to the Word so that we can tell if every teaching we hear is good or bad.

"2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: 3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."  
(I John 4)

This is one of the tests of authentic Christianity. Any group that denies Jesus Christ in any way (such as His claim to be the Messiah, or His resurrection, or His death, or His deity, or His humanity) is the spirit of antichrist and does not come from God. This would include Islam, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and many others.

Now, that is not the *only* test. In Galatians Paul made it clear that a gospel of salvation by works was not the truth, but a lie that had no power to save. But here John is focusing on those cults that deny the person of Jesus in some way. Those groups must be avoided and resisted.

"4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." (I John 4)

This is a very famous verse that we need to keep close to us. Greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world! This is something we must never forget. The world may seem overwhelming and powerful, and they may persecute us and bring great pain into our lives, but the One who is in us is much greater than all of the world put together. In the end the world will face the wrath of God and we will inherit everlasting life. The world is not going to win.

"5 They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. 6 We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." (I John 4)

Here John presents another simple but sobering test: those who refuse to hear the Word and reject it are not of God. This gives us quite a few ways to tell genuine believers from counterfeit ones. Genuine believers obey Jesus out of love, lead a righteous and holy life, love other believers, and listen to the Word and accept it. Those who reject the Word (and that would include a great many people that call themselves Christians) are not of God. You cannot claim to be of God and yet reject His words!

Any spirit or teaching that rejects the Word is the spirit of antichrist and should not be tolerated. Today churches are filled with people who say "The Bible has many false teachings", or "The apostles were wrong on some issues", or "Paul didn't know what he was talking about", or "God is wrong and I'm going to do things my way instead". All of that is the spirit of the antichrist! Those heresies are of the devil. If that is what you think of God's holy Word then you do not know God and your faith is a lie.



Many churches have realized that if they preach the gospel the world will not hear them, so they have decided to throw out the gospel and preach a message the world will accept. That may bring an audience into the building, but that act of sinful rebellion puts them on the side of the devil. If the world accepts your message (or you specifically preach a message the world will accept), you are doing something very wrong. God has not called you to make friends with the world; instead He has called you to obedience. Those who make friends with the world make an enemy of God (James 4:4).

"7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. 8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." (I John 4)

This goes back to what Jesus said was the second greatest commandment: to love one another (Matthew 22:39). John has brought this up multiple times because it is so important (and so absent in our day). People who are saved will have a genuine and heartfelt love for other Christians! Those who hate Christians, abuse them for their own ends, or take advantage of them for personal gain, do not know God.

"9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (I John 4)

Jesus is the grand demonstration of God's love. It's

astonishing to think that God sent Him to die for us *while we were His enemies* (Romans 5:10). We hated Him, and yet He loved us and gave His life so that we might be saved. We aren't saved because we love God; we are saved because God chose to love us first. We only love God because God raised us up while we were dead in our sins (Ephesians 2:1) and gave us a new heart! If God had not made the first move then we would still be lost.

"11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." (I John 4)

How different things would be if more people within the church acted this way! If only we all showed genuine love for each other. Instead I see a lot of indifference, cruelty, hatred, abuse, and neglect. It's a sad thing when your chances of being treated with kindness *increase* when the person you are dealing with doesn't go to church. Many churches have definitely failed when it comes to loving one another. In fact, far from showing love and kindness, some people within the church can barely tolerate one other. Too many churches are full of division, strife, and selfishness. That is not the way things should be.

"12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." (I John 4)

Jesus once told His disciple Philip that those who have seen Jesus have seen the Father (John 14:9), because Jesus is the perfect representation of the Father. However, no one has ever seen the Father because of His nature. At the same time, though, all genuine believers have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them –

and the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three beings that make up one God. This can be difficult to understand, but it is true.

"13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit."  
(I John 4)

All genuine believers have the Holy Spirit sealed within them (2 Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 4:30). Those who have the Spirit are saved, and those who lack the Spirit are not saved (Romans 8:9). That is how important this is! People who have the Spirit will bear the fruits of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, etc.), and that good fruit will testify to the reality of their salvation. People who bear evil fruit are revealing that they lack the Spirit, and therefore they lack salvation as well.

"14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." (I John 4)

Jesus never does His own will; instead He always does the will of the Father (John 5:30). The reason He came into this world and died for our sins is because it was the Father's will. It's true that Jesus loved us and died for us, but we must not forget that Jesus was acting in obedience – not just in the crucifixion, but in all the things that He did.

If even Jesus submitted Himself to the Father's will and acted in obedience to His commands, then how much more should we obey the Scriptures! We are definitely not somehow better than Jesus. If He submitted Himself then we must as well.

"15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."  
(I John 4)

This is more evidence of genuine salvation. True Christians believe that Jesus is the Son of God – fully God and fully man. All those who reject this *are not saved*. This is at the heart of the gospel! If Jesus was just a man and not God then there could be no salvation.

"16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. 17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world." (I John 4)

Do you see the tremendous importance of love? Since God is love, those who are His children will have great love for others. Since God is love (and demonstrated that love on the cross), His children will walk in love – and that means they will obey the commandments of God, because that is how we demonstrate our love for Jesus (John 14:15). Since our life is characterized by genuine love, we can have boldness in the coming judgment because that love is evidence our salvation is genuine.

While it is true that God is love, we must not make the mistake of thinking that God is *only* love. God has other attributes as well, such as justice. Since God is both a loving and a just God, He demonstrated His love by sending Jesus to die for our sins, and He satisfied His justice by pouring out His wrath upon Christ at the cross. If He had forgiven us without paying for

our sins then He would not have been just. His justice demanded a payment for sins.

"18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." (I John 4)

This goes along with what John said in the previous verse. We can have confidence in the day of judgment because we see the love of God in our life. That confidence should cast out all of our fears! How can we be afraid of the wrath of God if our sins are forgiven? If we are still afraid then we have not yet been made perfect in love.

"19 We love him, because he first loved us." (I John 4)

Stop and think about what this verse is saying. *God* is the one who decided to save us while we were still His enemies. *God* is the one who chose to love us while we had no love for God. Jesus came and died for those who were His enemies so that He might make them His beloved children (Romans 5:10). Our salvation is *His* doing, not ours! The only reason we have the power to love Him is because He loved us while we were still hopelessly lost and wicked. *God* is the author of our salvation. It was entirely His doing.

Many people today claim that we chose God – that our salvation was our doing and our choice, and we were the ones who made it happen. That teaching is very wrong! We are saved because God chose us. We love Him because He first loved us. If God had not chosen us before the foundation of the world

(Ephesians 1:4) then we would never have loved God or sought forgiveness for our sins. (For more information on this see Appendix C, "Divine Choice".)

"20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? 21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." (I John 4)

This goes back to what we saw earlier: Christians are commanded to love one another. In fact, one of the hallmarks of genuine Christianity is a deep love for other believers. As verse 20 points out, you cannot hate your brother and love God at the same time! If you despise your fellow Christian then you despise God as well.

If you really do love God then that will become evident by your love for His children. However, if you have no love for the brethren then that is evidence you have no love for God either.

4/1/2011, 9/28/2018, 7/13/2019

## **I John 5**

"1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him." (I John 5)

John is saying that all those who believe that Jesus is the Messiah (the Lamb of God who died for the sins of the world) are saved. All those who reject Jesus' claim to be the Messiah are not

saved. Now, in order for Jesus to be the Messiah He must also be God, and He must be man, and He had to die, and He had to rise again, and He had to be sinless, and He had to be born of a virgin. If you reject any of those individual claims then you are also denying His Messianic claim, and thus denying Him as well. It is an all-or-nothing deal. The same thing goes for trying to say that Jesus did die for our sins but we still have to earn our way to Heaven. That is saying we must atone for our sins, not Him, since His sacrifice was insufficient – and that is a denial as well.

So you must be careful. Not everyone that says "Lord, Lord" will enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 7:21).

If you love Jesus then you will love His children. If you hate His children then you hate Him as well.

"2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." (I John 5)

This is a common theme that we've seen throughout this book. It's a very important doctrine! We show our love for God by obeying His commandments. If we don't obey Him then we are proving that we have no love for Him. You cannot say "I love God" and "I refuse to obey You"; those two statements contradict each other. Genuine love for God always results in obedience.

Likewise, the way we show our love for other Christians is by obeying His commands! If we murder people and steal from them and lie to them and commit adultery with their wives then we are demonstrating hate, not love. The commandments of God show us how to love one another.

"4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. 5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (I John 5)

In Revelation (which was also written by John) you will see the phrase "to him that overcomes" appear several times (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26, etc). This verse tells us what John is talking about. The one that overcomes is the one that believes Jesus is the Son of God. God has promised many blessings to those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God. If we believe what the Bible has to say about Jesus then we have overcome the world and are born of God. (The way we demonstrate that belief is through our actions. If we only *say* that we believe and then continue to live in wickedness, we are proving that our supposed belief is just a lie.)

"6 This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." (I John 5)

I believe this is a reference to what John wrote in John 19:34, where he tells us that a soldier pierced the side of Christ and "forthwith came there out blood and water". This blood and water proves that Jesus actually did die. Since He died, that means our sins are paid for and we can have confidence in the day of judgment! The Lord was not just born as a baby in Bethlehem; He also died for our sins and was raised on the third day – and that makes all the difference in the world.



"7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." (I John 5)

Here we find the doctrine of the Trinity, which Mormons especially hate. It is taught throughout Scripture but here we find it stated in very plain and straightforward terms. There is only one God, and this God is composed of three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. There are not three separate Gods, but one God. How that is possible is a great mystery, and yet we know it's true. (It should probably not come as a surprise that we cannot fully comprehend the nature of an infinite and eternal God.)

For the record, modern Bible translations try to pretend that this verse doesn't belong in the Bible and should be removed. After studying the matter I believe they are *completely wrong*. This verse is found in Latin manuscripts in the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. It was quoted by Tertullian in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Cyprian of Carthage in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, Priscillian and Idacius Clarus and Athanasius in the 4<sup>th</sup> century – just to name a few very ancient sources. This verse is *not* a hoax, as some claim; it is real and it belongs in the Bible. Do not accept any Bibles that question this verse or try to remove it! (For more information on translation-related issues see Appendix P, "Textual Criticism".)

"8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." (I John 5)

This is a bit cryptic, isn't it? Verse 7 is easy to understand, but verse 8 is a bit trickier. I think this verse echoes what John

said in verse 6. Jesus did not just come by water; He came by water and blood, and the Spirit testifies that these things are true.

"9 If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. 10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." (I John 5)

Here John goes to great pains to make it clear that Jesus is God, a part of the Trinity. Jesus is fully man and fully God at the same time. The spirit of antichrist denies this, but the Bible affirms it. John repeats this to make sure that we have understood it, because it is one of the central claims of Christianity. In fact, it may be *the* central claim. Jesus was not just a man or a wise teacher; He was God Himself. If you deny this then you are calling God a liar and you are not saved.

"11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (I John 5)

It is not any more complicated than that. Those who have the Son and believe He is the Messiah have everlasting life and will never see death. We will live forever with Him! However, those who have rejected Jesus do not have the promise of everlasting life and will face everlasting torment.

This is more evidence that Jesus is the only way to be

saved. Verse 12 could not be more clear: the only way to gain eternal life is through the Son of God, Jesus the Messiah.

"13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." (I John 5)

John repeats that he is writing to believers, not to the lost. The reason that he wrote this letter is so that "ye may know that ye have eternal life". How do we know that we're saved? Well, John gives us a number of things to look for in our life – signs that will only appear in the lives of genuine believers. We can look at these things, see God's work in our life, and know that we're saved. This book should be a great comfort to us! If you want to know for sure whether you are saved then read 1 John carefully. The truth is *not* found by thinking back to a moment in the past and trying to reclaim it (as so many teach). No, the truth is found by *looking at your life*. If you believe in Jesus and are bearing the fruits of the Spirit then you are saved. However, if you have rejected Jesus or do not have the fruits of the Spirit then you are not saved. It is a very simple test.

"14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: 15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." (I John 5)

God does not hear the prayers of the wicked, but He does

hear the prayers of the righteous (Proverbs 15:29). Jesus told us to ask and it will be given to us, and seek and we will find (Matthew 7:7). The problem is that we don't really know what we should be praying for (Romans 8:26), and sometimes we pray for things that we should never be given. That is why God sometimes grants our requests and other times gives us the grace to endure the situation.

Some people claim that if you just have enough faith then God will give you whatever you desire. Paul had tremendous faith, but there was a time when he prayed for something and God said *no* (2 Corinthians 12:7-9). What we need to do is trust that when we pray, God will hear our prayer and do what is right.

"16 If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. 17 All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death." (I John 5)

There are some interesting concepts in this passage. Many churches teach that all sins are equal in the sight of God, but that is very wrong. It's true that all sins are worthy of death and eternal judgment (Romans 6:23), but God singles out some sins as especially abominable and wicked in His sight (Proverbs 6:16-19). In this passage we can see that there are some sins a Christian can commit that lead to their death, and there are others that don't. (Remember, John is writing this letter to *believers*, not unbelievers!) That clearly means some sins are worse than others.

For the unbeliever *all* sins lead to death. However, for Christians it's a little different. All unrighteousness is sin, but not all sins lead to death. There are some occasions when a Christian

does something so terrible that God actually kills them over it (Acts 5:1-10, 1 Corinthians 11:30). There are other times when God chastises them because of their sin but does not kill them. John is telling us that if we see a Christian sinning a sin that does not lead to death, we should take action to turn them from that sin and lead them back to righteousness. There are some sins we can save other believers from, but there are others we can't. Some problems are fixable and others are not.

Notice that prayer is a powerful tool to turn *other people* from sin! That is not a common prayer request, but John tells us it is a request God will answer.

"18 We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." (I John 5)

After reading this whole book it should be clear that John is talking about people who are leading a life of continual sin. There are some people who openly reject the commandments of God and live as they please. They love their sin and hate righteousness, and their wicked actions demonstrate that they are not saved.

John is not saying that Christians lead sinless lives. The reason we know this is because the verses *right before this one* tell us what to do if we see a fellow Christian caught up in sin! Clearly John believes that a believer is capable of sin. The difference is that people with genuine faith hate sin and fight it, while unbelievers love sin and hate righteousness.

"19 And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." (I John 5)

Have you ever wondered why we shouldn't love the world or the things in the world, but instead love God only (1 John 2:15)? This is why! The whole world lies in wickedness, and we are required to keep ourselves unspotted from the world (James 1:27). How can we avoid being contaminated by the evils of this world if we love the world?

"20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." (I John 5)

Why do we know God? Why do we believe in Jesus? Because God has given us an understanding! We love Him because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). We have faith because God raised us up. We were dead in our trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1), but God worked a miracle in us and changed us. Our understanding comes from *God*, not ourselves! We are saved by *His* choice, not ours.

There is only one way of salvation and that is through Jesus Christ. That is the truth! There is only one God. Those who believe in Jesus will have everlasting life, but those who reject Him and do not believe will face the eternal wrath of God.

"21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen." (I John 5)

There are many idols in this world. There are many things that we are told can save us: good deeds, or baptism, or church membership, or giving money to charity, or some other false god.

We *must* keep ourselves from all of those heresies, for they only lead to Hell. We must stick to the gospel of Jesus Christ because it alone has the power of salvation. There is no other sacrifice for our sins! You must keep yourselves from idols, or else you will be lost. Do not follow your heart; instead follow after Christ!

## Appendix C: Divine Choice

It's so easy to breeze right by a Bible verse without stopping to consider its implications. One rather striking example of this can be found in a remark that Jesus made about Sodom and Gomorrah. The Lord said something about these two cities that is extremely shocking – and yet for years I read right over the statement without stopping to consider its staggering implications.

In order to give a little context to the passage let's back up a bit. As most people know, Sodom and Gomorrah were two ancient cities that were so wicked that God decided to investigate them *in person*:

**Genesis 18:20:** "And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous;  
21 I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know."

Now, there were many times when God sent down judgments upon a person or a nation. In nearly all cases, though, God acted through an intermediary. Throughout the Old Testament God meted out judgment through angels, prophets, storms, plagues, and natural disasters. However, it is *very rare* for God to go down to Earth and do it *Himself*, in person. Aside from the Tower of Babel, the only other example of this that I can think of is the Second Coming, when the Lord will return to put an end to *the entire world itself*. What this means is that this kind of personal visit by God Himself is a Very Serious Matter. It is a sign that someone has crossed the line in a *big* way. If you are in so much trouble that God is coming to *personally* execute judgment against you, then that means your world is about to



end. It is simply not possible to get into more trouble than that.

As an aside, there are some commentators who claim that God didn't actually go Himself; instead He sent angels to investigate. However, that's not what Genesis 18:21 says. As best I can tell, at least one of the three men who visited Abraham on that fateful day was actually God Himself. If you read through Genesis 18 and pay close attention, you will notice that when one of the men speaks the Bible says that it was actually the Lord who was doing the talking. For example:

**Genesis 18:9:** "And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent.

10 And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him. ...

12 Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?

13 And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?

14 Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

15 Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh."

Do you see what happened? In verse 10 the man said "I will certainly return unto thee", and then in verse 14 we are told that it was "the LORD" who said "I will return." The man, then, must be the Lord! It's as simple as that.

But to continue the story: as we know, the Lord told Abraham that He was going to judge Sodom. When Abraham heard this he interceded on the city's behalf, and after a round of negotiations the Lord said that He would not destroy the city if He found 10 righteous people there:

**Genesis 18:32:** "And he said, Oh let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake."

As it turned out, though, Sodom didn't have 10 righteous people, so the Lord destroyed it:

**Genesis 19:24:** "Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven;  
25 And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground."

When it was all over the cities were utterly destroyed and everyone who lived in them perished. The cities were full of utterly wicked people and the Lord judged them, giving them exactly what they deserved.

This is all well-known and there is nothing new here. However, what *is* startling is what Jesus had to say about it. When Jesus was on Earth He performed a great many notable miracles. Some cities repented when they saw His works, but others did not. The cities that refused to repent, *even after seeing miracles performed by Jesus in person*, were singled out by Him for special condemnation:

**Matthew 11:23:** "And thou, Capernaum, which

art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day."

Do you see what this verse says? Jesus said that if the miracles that He performed in Capernaum had been done in Sodom, then the people in Sodom would have repented and the city would not have been destroyed. Stop and think about that for a minute! Do you see how shocking that is? It means that God knew exactly what the people of Sodom needed to see in order to repent, *and yet God did not save them*. God could have raised up a prophet, sent him to Sodom, and used him to do mighty works and save the city, but He didn't. God actually *knew* they would repent if "mighty works" were done in the city, *but yet He didn't send anyone to do those mighty works*. Instead of saving them He wiped them all out. God could have saved them, but instead God chose to kill them.

What makes this even more striking is that there is another very famous case in which an equally wicked city was on the verge of judgment, but instead of destroying them the Lord *did* send someone to save the city. That wicked city was Nineveh. As we all know, the Lord treated Nineveh *very* differently from the way He treated Sodom. Instead of going down to see the wickedness of the city and then destroying it, the Lord sent Jonah to preach a message of repentance:

**Jonah 1:2:** "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me."

One of the things that makes this story so famous is that *Jonah did not want to go*. He was *not* a willing participant in this missionary journey and he did everything possible to avoid going.

His reasoning was very clear:

**Jonah 4:2:** "And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil."

The whole reason Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh was because he knew that if he went and the city repented, the Lord would not destroy them – and Jonah desperately wanted to make sure that God killed everyone who lived in that city and sent them all straight to Hell. But the Lord forced Jonah to go. Let me emphasize that fact: Jonah only went because *the Lord forced him to go*. God actually held Jonah hostage in the belly of a fish until Jonah finally gave in. Jonah was not a willing participant in any of this, but the Lord forced him to go anyway because God was determined to save Nineveh – and Nineveh was indeed saved:

**Jonah 3:5:** "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

6 For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

7 And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water:

8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.

9 Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?"

As an aside, I have heard people say that God cannot use you unless you are 100% right with God. They claim that if you are backsliding or in sin then God can't do anything with your life; you must be a paragon of holiness before God can use you. I think Jonah conclusively proves that this is not true. After all, Jonah was *not* right with God. Jonah had a deep and abiding hatred toward the people of Nineveh, and he had a heartfelt desire to see them all burn in Hell. Jonah hated them so much that when they repented he got very angry. Yet the Lord *still* used Jonah to save them! The Lord used Jonah to save people *that Jonah hated with all his heart*. This proves that the Lord is the one who works through us. Any fruit that we bear is His doing, not ours. The Ninevites weren't saved because Jonah wanted to see them saved or because Jonah was a righteous man; they were saved because God decided to save them, and He saved them *in spite* of Jonah.

I say all of that to say this: God Himself said that both Sodom and Nineveh were exceedingly wicked cities. Jesus was clear that Sodom would have repented if someone was sent to Sodom to perform great miracles – but no one was sent, so Sodom was destroyed and its inhabitants perished. Abraham desperately wanted to save the city, and if the Lord had commanded him to go he would have gone – but the Lord gave no such command. Yet in the case of Nineveh, the Lord *did* send someone (even though that person did not want to go!) and the city *did* repent and was saved. As you can see, *the Lord did not*

*treat Nineveh the way He treated Sodom.* He saved one city and He destroyed the other.

Now, there is nothing evil about this. Sodom really did deserve to be destroyed, and the Lord was absolutely justified in destroying it. The Lord is under no obligation to save anyone, and no one deserves mercy. Yet it is impossible to escape the fact that God chose to save Nineveh (a city that *Jesus Himself* said would have repented) and He chose to destroy Sodom. In other words, *this is a clear case of God deciding to save one person and destroy someone else.* God chose *not* to save someone who could have been saved. Both cities needed salvation, but God only helped one of them. Nineveh would have been destroyed if God hadn't sent Jonah, but God *did* send Jonah – in fact, God actually forced Jonah to go against his will. That is something He did *not* do with Sodom. There were two cities that could have been saved, but God only chose to save one of them. He let all the inhabitants of the other city go straight to Hell.

The case of Sodom vs Nineveh is a clear case of divine choice. It shows us that God actually does not save everyone. There are some people that God divinely chooses to save, and there are other people that God chooses *not* to save. Divine choice is a real thing. This idea may seem shocking to us, but it shouldn't. The apostle Paul lays out the case for it in unmistakable terms:

**Romans 9:14:** "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

...

18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

Notice how clearly Paul explains that God never promised to have mercy on everyone. Verse 18 is direct and to the point: God extends mercy to some people so that they *will* be saved, and God hardens others so that they *will not* be saved. You can go back and read those verses if you don't believe me – God is quite up-front about this. God chooses to save some people and He chooses to *not* save others.

Of course, a great many people absolutely hate the idea of divine choice. I have seen some people use this verse to argue against it:

**John 3:16:** "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Now, let me say that I completely agree with this verse. It is absolutely true that any and all who believe in Jesus will not perish but will have everlasting life. However, it is *also* clear that the people of Sodom would have repented and believed if the Lord had sent someone to demonstrate His power – but He didn't, even though He *did* send someone in the case of Nineveh. According to Jesus Himself the people of Sodom *would have believed* but God chose not to intervene on their behalf. Instead of sending someone to save them He sent them all to Hell.

Does God treat everyone the same? No – but then, God never promised that He would. God gives some people amazing talents while He gives others a life of disability and pain. Some people are given long lives while others die before they are even born. God moves miraculously to save some people while He hardens others and sends them to Hell. And make no mistake

about it – God *does* harden people's heart to make sure that they *will not* be saved. For example:

**Exodus 4:21:** "And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go."

**Exodus 7:3:** "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt."

Who hardened Pharaoh's heart? The Lord did. He said this not once, *but twice*. The reason Pharaoh did not let the Israelites go is because the Lord hardened his heart – and after the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he would not let Israel go, the Lord then destroyed him for not letting Israel go. Pharaoh's hardening led to the devastation of Egypt, the death of all the firstborn in the country, and the death of Pharaoh himself. And it all happened because *the Lord intervened and made it happen*.

People today don't like to hear this. They prefer a God that treats everyone the same. Many people say that God has given everyone a chance to be saved and it's up to us to take it. If some people aren't saved then it's their own fault because God did all He could to save them.

But that's not what the Bible says! Jesus clearly said that *Sodom would have repented*, but God chose to destroy them instead. Nineveh was on the same path to destruction but God *did* intervene to save them (over the strenuous objections of Jonah). Pharaoh might have let the Israelites go, but God hardened his heart so that he wouldn't. God chose to save some people and chose to *not* save others:



**Romans 9:18:** "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

Notice that verse 18 does *not* say "God has mercy on everyone, but some people are rebellious and don't listen." No, what the verse actually says is "God has mercy on some and God hardens others." It is frighteningly clear.

Why would God do such a thing? In order to demonstrate His power:

**Romans 9:22:** "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?"

What people do not realize is that God is glorified by those who are saved *and* by those who are damned, because both groups allow God to demonstrate His character. Those who are saved glorify God by giving Him an opportunity to demonstrate His mercy and love, while those who are damned demonstrate God's wrath and power – not to mention His justice.

The key to remember is that *everyone* deserves to spend an eternity in Hell. All have sinned, and the wages of sin is death. Hell is the just punishment for our immense crimes against God, and there is *no one* who deserves to be forgiven. No one can stand up and say "God owes me salvation" or "God owes me

mercy." It is a gift – and that means that God has the right to give it to some people and to withhold it from others. As Paul said:

**Ephesians 2:8:** "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:  
9 Not of works, lest any man should boast."

We are saved through faith, and that faith is *not of ourselves*. God gives us the faith we need in order to be saved. However, God does not give that faith to everyone. There is nothing unrighteous about this because no one deserves anything from God, and God has not promised to save everyone. Those who *are* saved are given a tremendous gift, because God has given them something that they did not deserve and could never earn. My salvation did not happen because I decided to accept God; it happened because God chose to bless me with saving faith. If God had decided to harden me (as He did to Pharaoh) then I would have been lost and there would have been nothing I could have done about it. My eternal fate – and the eternal fate of everyone – rests solely in the divine choice of God.

If this seems incredible to you, or if it seems like something God would never do, remember the cases of Sodom and Nineveh. One was saved and the other was lost, because God chose to have mercy on one city but withheld His mercy from the other.

# Appendix L: Catholicism

There are many Protestants today who view Catholicism with tremendous favor and respect, believing that it is simply another "flavor" of Christianity. The reality is that Catholicism is an entirely different religion. Its views on Jesus, salvation, and the Bible are deeply heretical. It is not merely a different way of doing things; its teachings are as foreign to Christianity as the teachings of Islam and Buddhism.

I would like to take some time and examine some of the heretical teachings of Catholicism. In order to accomplish this I have divided this paper into two parts. The first part focuses on what the Catholic church teaches about salvation, and the second part focuses on the history of the Catholic church. It is my hope that after reading this paper you will have a much better understanding of Catholicism and will see how different it really is from Biblical Christianity.

## Part 1: Doctrines of Salvation

This section is intended to cover what the Catholic Church teaches about salvation. I do not claim that all Catholics believe all of these points, but I *do* claim that they represent the official stance of Catholicism. There are many more points that I could have mentioned (mass, Mary, celibacy, statues, praying to the dead, etc.) but since space is limited I chose to focus on salvation.

# 1. Salvation by Works

The Catholic Church firmly *rejects* the idea of salvation by grace alone and believes in salvation by works. I first discovered this when reading the Council of Trent, a document prepared by a council held from 1545-1563 and reaffirmed by Vatican II in the 1960's. I quote:

SIXTH SESSION, CANONS CONCERNING JUSTIFICATION: "If anyone says that justifying faith is ***nothing else than confidence in divine mercy***, which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this confidence alone that justifies us, ***LET HIM BE ANATHEMA***" (Canons Concerning Justification, Canon 12).

SIXTH SESSION, CANONS CONCERNING JUSTIFICATION: "If anyone says that the justice received is not preserved and also not increased before God through good works, but that those works are merely the fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not the cause of its increase, ***LET HIM BE ANATHEMA***" (Canons Concerning Justification, Canon 24).

One could not ask for a clearer denial of salvation by grace alone<sup>1</sup>. The Catholic Church damns anyone who believes that salvation is "nothing else than confidence in divine mercy", and further damns anyone who believes that good works are merely the *fruit* of salvation instead of their *cause*<sup>2</sup>. Those who

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<sup>1</sup> Or salvation by faith alone, which is what "confidence in divine mercy" is.

<sup>2</sup> In the book of James the point is made that works are a sign of living faith. It does not make the point that works are the cause of that faith or that the works are required to preserve salvation.

think that believing in Jesus is all that it takes to be saved – that no good deeds on our part can add to or take away from our salvation – are condemned by the Catholic Church as heretics that are bound for hell<sup>3</sup>. This stands in stark contrast with the teachings of the Bible:

**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."

**Titus 3:5:** "***Not by works of righteousness*** which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;"

**Romans 3:28:** "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith ***without the deeds of the law.***"

There are many more Scriptures that I could quote, but the point is very clear. Those who believe that "man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law", as it says in Romans 3:28, are damned to eternal torment by the Catholic Church, which teaches that many good deeds are required in order to merit salvation<sup>4</sup>. However, this idea of "faith alone" is exactly what the Bible teaches! This should be enough to make it clear that the Catholic Church is not a Christian church, for God is very clear about what He thinks of salvation by works. Galatians 3:1-7 says this:

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<sup>3</sup> And such people were burned at the stake, by the thousands, for centuries during the Middle Ages. No apologies for this have ever been issued. (Part 2 of this document will discuss this in greater detail.)

<sup>4</sup> Deeds such as baptism, avoiding mortal sins, penance, the sacraments, and being a member of the Catholic Church.

**Galatians 3:1-7:** "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, ***Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*** Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that ***they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.***"

**Galatians 2:21:** "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for ***if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.***"

God condemns the Catholic idea that we are made perfect by "good deeds" in the strongest possible terms. This is more than a heresy; it is another gospel entirely. You cannot be saved by a works gospel. I have heard Catholics claim that they do believe in salvation by grace, but they go on to define grace as the ability to keep the law *so that they can perform all the good works that God requires them to do in order to become saved*<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> I don't have the space to get into it here, but Catholicism teaches that salvation is a process, not a one-time event. It is a process because it requires a lifetime of good works to achieve, followed by time spent in purgatory, where you spend a very long time suffering for your sins. Only after all this is one finally saved. The idea of "being saved" is a Protestant idea, and it is one that the Catholic church condemns.

This is a horrible perversion of the gospel. Anyone who believes that their good works are going to purchase them entrance into Heaven is not a Christian; he is another lost sinner on the road to Hell. Believing that your good works are going to purchase your salvation is *completely different* from believing that Christ's life and atoning death on the cross has already purchased your salvation.

## 2. Salvation by Sacraments

But the differences go even further. Catholicism teaches that baptism is required for salvation:

**SEVENTH SESSION, CANONS ON BAPTISM:** "If anyone says that baptism is optional, that is, *not necessary for salvation, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA*" (Council of Trent, Canons on Baptism, Canon 5).

"Baptism not only *purifies from all sins*<sup>6</sup>, but also makes the neophyte 'a new creature,' an adopted son of God, who has become a 'partaker of the divine nature,' member of Christ and co-heir with him, and a temple of the Holy Spirit." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 322, #1265)

"By Baptism *all sins are forgiven*, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment

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<sup>6</sup> Thus flatly contradicting the Bible: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (*not the putting away of the filth of the flesh*, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:" (1 Peter 3:21). Baptism is a "figure" (a symbol) – an act of obedience to God and a sign that we have been saved. The Bible denies that it "purifies us from all sins".

for sin." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 321, #1263. Also see pg. 257, #985)

And that the sacraments are required as well:

"The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are *necessary for salvation*."(1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 292, #1129)

"There are seven sacraments in the Church: Baptism, Confirmation or Chrismation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 289, #1113)

These statements make it clear that the Catholic Church does *not* believe that Christ's death on the cross was sufficient to save anyone; in order to be saved you have to add a great many things to Christ's death – things such as good works, baptism, sacraments, and so forth. Catholicism teaches that faith in Christ is not enough to be saved. The Bible, however, has a very different opinion:

**Romans 10:8-10:** "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."

**Acts 16:31:** "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and *thou shalt be saved*, and thy house."



**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."

The Bible clearly teaches that if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you *will* be saved. There is no "might be saved" or "could be saved" or "will be saved as long as you don't commit any mortal sins" – it's just a plain, firm statement that is repeated over and over in the Scriptures. Yet Catholicism teaches that it is a *sin* to believe that you have already been saved<sup>7</sup> – the sin of presumption! I quote here from the Catholic Encyclopedia:

"Presumption is here considered as a vice opposed to the theological virtue of hope. It may also be regarded as a product of pride. It may be defined as the condition of a soul which, because of a badly regulated reliance on God's mercy and power, ***hopes for salvation without doing anything to deserve it***<sup>8</sup>, or for pardon of his sins without repenting of them."

I can't imagine believing that you can possibly *deserve* to be saved! That, though, is what Catholicism is all about: building up enough credits with God in order to merit entrance to Heaven (in other words, "deserving it"). Yet the Bible is clear that you can *know* that you are saved. Salvation is a one-time event, not a process:

**1 John 5:13:** "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may ***know that ye have eternal life***, and

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<sup>7</sup> Remember, Catholicism teaches that salvation is a process, not a one-time event.

<sup>8</sup> In other words, having not yet lived a life of "good works".

that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

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

**John 5:24:** "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, ***hath everlasting life***, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

**John 6:47:** "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me ***hath everlasting life***."

**John 6:40:** "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and ***believeth on him***, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."

Notice how it says that we *have* eternal life. Salvation is not something that I am looking forward to earning at some future date, if I play all my cards right; it is something that I *already have* because Christ purchased it for me with His own blood. The Bible contradicts the Catholic idea that my salvation is a long process that requires good works on my part. That teaching is just not Biblical and is an entirely different gospel.

### **3. Salvation by the Catholic Church**

Despite what many people might tell you, Catholicism teaches that salvation can *only* be obtained through the Catholic Church. They claim that all non-Catholics will be damned to Hell

forever:

"The Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism explains: 'For it is through **Christ's Catholic Church alone**, which is the universal help toward salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained.'" (1994 Catholic Catechism, Pg. 215, #816)

"...all salvation comes from Christ the Head through the [Catholic] Church which is his Body: Basing itself on Scripture and Tradition, the Council teaches that **the Church**, a pilgrim now on earth, is **necessary for salvation...**" (1994 Catholic Catechism, Pg. 224, #846)

Nowhere in the Scripture can one find the idea that membership in *any* church is required for salvation. Salvation is accomplished by faith in Jesus Christ, not through church membership:

**Romans 10:13:** "For whosoever shall **call upon the name of the Lord** shall be saved."

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

This doctrine springs from the Catholic belief that that the sacraments are required for salvation. Since only the Catholic Church has the sacraments that they claim are necessary for salvation, you therefore cannot be saved apart from the Catholic Church. In order to be saved you must be a member of the Catholic Church, participate in the sacraments, be baptized into

the Catholic Church, avoid mortal sins, and suffer in purgatory. That is a very far cry from "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved".

#### 4. Purification by Purgatory

We are still not done. On top of all of this, Catholicism denies the idea that Christ suffered the punishment for our sins on the cross. It teaches that we must still suffer for them in a place called purgatory:

"All who die in God's grace and friendship<sup>9</sup>, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to **achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.**" (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 2658, #1030)

"The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect..." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 268-269, #1031)

"The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent<sup>10</sup>." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 268-269, #1031)

The concept of purgatory is found nowhere in the Bible and has zero Scriptural support, and yet it is taught as doctrine

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<sup>9</sup> Note that it says "all who die in God's grace" – meaning, of course, all those who die having led a life of good works.

<sup>10</sup> Meaning, of course, that the idea is found nowhere in the Bible. The Catholic Encyclopedia even comes out and says that this idea has no Scriptural basis.

by the Catholic Church. Purgatory is based on the idea that Christ did not suffer for my sins or purify me of them. I must still suffer for them before I can be made acceptable to God, and purgatory is where that happens. Catholicism teaches that Christ's death accomplished almost nothing: it doesn't save us (because without our good deeds we can never see Heaven), it doesn't guarantee us salvation (because one mortal sin would cause everything to be lost), and it doesn't even free us from the punishment of our sins (because we must still suffer for them in Purgatory).

Once again, the Bible is very clear about this:

**Romans 5:9:** "Much more then, being now *justified by his blood*, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

**Romans 3:24:** "Being *justified freely* by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:"

**1 Corinthians 6:11:** "And such were some of you: but ye are *washed*, but ye are *sanctified*, but ye are *justified* in the name of the Lord Jesus..."

**Hebrews 9:26:** "...but now once in the end of the world hath he (Jesus) appeared to *put away sin* by the sacrifice of himself."

**Romans 8:1:** "There is therefore now *no condemnation* to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

It couldn't be more clear: the Bible teaches that I *am*

washed, sanctified, and justified. Not "will be" but "am". Christ paid for it all; there is nothing left for me to do. As the old hymn said, "nothing in my hand I bring / simply to Thy cross I cling." Purgatory is yet another attempt at a works gospel: Catholicism teaches that / must earn my way to Heaven, / must deserve salvation, and / must take the punishment for my sins. However, Jesus Himself was clear that when we die we will go to be with Him – not go to suffer in a place called purgatory:

**Luke 23:43:** "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, *Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.*"

**Philippians 1:22:** "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and *to be with Christ*; which is far better:"

## 5. Forgiveness by Indulgences

Indulgences were one of the major causes of the Reformation. Martin Luther's attempt to rid the Catholic Church of indulgences failed, for they are still a part of official Catholic doctrine. They are defined in the dictionary as follows: "A partial remission of the temporal punishment, esp. purgatorial atonement, that is still due for a sin or sins after absolution." The Catholic Catechism explains them this way:

"Through indulgences the faithful can obtain the remission of temporal punishment resulting from sin for themselves and also for the souls in Purgatory." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 374, #1498)

"Since the faithful departed now being purified are also members of the same communion of saints, one way we can help them is to obtain indulgences for them, so that the temporal punishments due for their sins may be remitted." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 371-372, #1479)

The Catholic Church teaches that one can help the dead escape purgatory by obtaining indulgences from the Church! This is more salvation-by-works: not only can your good works help forgive your sins, but they can also help forgive the sins *of the dead*. This is very different from the simplicity of the gospel:

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

The Bible does *not* support the idea that you can purchase forgiveness for your sins by giving money to the church. It also does not teach that you can buy forgiveness *for people who have already died*. Both of those ideas are deeply heretical.

## 6. Forgiveness by Penance

The Catholic Church teaches that asking God to forgive our sins is not enough. If we want to be forgiven then we must also perform penance:

"Absolution takes away sin, but it does not remedy all the disorders sin has caused. Raised up from sin, ***the sinner must still recover his full spiritual health by doing something more to make amends*** for the sin: he must 'make satisfaction for' or 'expiate' his sins. This satisfaction is also called 'penance.'" (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 366, #1459)

"The Church also commends almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance undertaken ***on behalf of the dead:***" (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 269, #1032)

In other words, the sinner must "make amends" through penance if they wish to return to "full spiritual health". This is talking about restoring our relationship with *God*, not our relationship with other people. Simply asking God for forgiveness is *not enough!* This is another attempt at salvation-by-works: if you *really* want to be forgiven then you've got to do something to *earn* God's favor. You can even perform penance *for the dead* to earn God's favor for them!

This stands in stark contrast to the Word of God:

**Hebrews 10:17-18:** "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is ***no more offering for sin.***"

**Psalms 86:5:** "For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee."

Forgiveness is a free gift from God, purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ. It cannot be earned or deserved. If you are



trying to bribe God into forgiving your sins then you have very badly lost your way. Trying to earn forgiveness and trying to earn salvation are the same thing. Both of those roads lead straight to Hell.

## 7. The Catholic Defense

I have heard Catholics claim that they do not need Scripture to support their doctrines<sup>11</sup> because there are sources of doctrine outside the Bible. Catholicism teaches that the Pope and church tradition can also provide truth, and Catholics often base their doctrines on sources of truth outside the Bible. (The sinlessness of Mary, for instance, was made doctrine by a Papal decree).

However, God made it *very* clear that the Bible is all we need, and there is *no room to add to it*:

**2 Timothy 3:16-17:** "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God *may be perfect*, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

**Proverbs 30:5-6:** "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. *Add thou not unto his words*, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."

These verses sum it up well. They clearly state that that the Bible is given to us that we may be furnished unto *all* good

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<sup>11</sup> In other words, they admit that their doctrines have no Scriptural basis, which is my whole point!

works – not just some, but *all*. If the Bible is all-sufficient then we don't need the Book of Mormon or the decrees of the Pope to tell us what Christianity really is.

More than that, there is no evidence in Scripture to support the office of the Pope or papal infallibility. Catholicism bases its entire church on a single passage in Matthew 16. They claim that Jesus made Peter the first Pope:

**Matthew 16:18:** "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Catholicism claims that the rock Jesus was referring to was Peter, saying that the word "Peter" means "rock". This is actually *not* the case. "Peter" refers to a small pebble, which is very different from the massive foundation stone that Jesus was referring to. Jesus was actually drawing a contrast here! He was telling Peter that although Peter was just a small stone, Jesus was going to build His church upon a solid Rock. The Bible is quite clear that this rock is *Christ*:

**1 Corinthians 10:4:** "... for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and *that Rock was Christ.*"

**Ephesians 2:20:** "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being *the chief corner stone;*"

**Psalm 118:22:** "The stone which the builders refused is become the *head stone of the corner*."

**Acts 4:10-11:** "...by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth... This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become *the head of the corner*."

**1 Peter 2:7:** "... the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made *the head of the corner*,"<sup>12</sup>

**Psalm 18:31:** "For who is God save the LORD? or *who is a rock save our God?*"

**Deuteronomy 32:3-4:** "... I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. *He is the Rock*..."

Jesus is the Rock – not Peter! Nowhere does the Bible mention a Pope. Nowhere does Peter act like a Pope<sup>13</sup>. Nowhere does the Bible give the Pope the authority to issue infallible decrees that overrule the Bible<sup>14</sup>. It is also blasphemous to claim that the Pope is the head of *the church*<sup>15</sup>, because only Christ has that position:

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<sup>12</sup> Note that not even Peter claims that Peter was the rock!

<sup>13</sup> In fact, there is no evidence that Peter was ever in Rome at all; when Paul wrote his letter to the Romans he greeted many people that were in Rome, but Peter was not one of them.

<sup>14</sup> As happened when the Pope declared Mary to have been born without the inherited sin of Adam and lived an entirely sinless life, thus contradicting the Biblical doctrine that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

<sup>15</sup> As opposed to the head of "a church", for instance.

**Colossians 1:18:** "And *he (Christ) is the head of the body, the church*: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he (Christ) might have the preeminence."

**Ephesians 1:22:** "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him (*Christ*) *to be the head over all things* to the church,"

**Ephesians 4:15:** "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is *the head, even Christ*:"

Catholicism teaches that the Pope is the *supreme* pastor and teacher of *all* Christians:

"The Roman Pontiff... as *supreme* pastor and teacher of *all the faithful*..." (1994 Catholic Catechism, pg. 235, #891)

Yet the Bible says that the *Holy Spirit* is the "supreme pastor and teacher":

**John 14:26:** "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, *he shall teach you all things*, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

**John 16:13:** "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, *he will guide you into all truth*..."

Without a Pope, apostolic authority, and tradition, the Catholic Church has no way to support its many unbiblical

doctrines. If you have based your entire faith on the office of the Papacy, what is left when the Bible claims that *there is no such office* and that the many new unbiblical doctrines issued by the Pope are not worth the paper they are printed on?

## 8. Conclusion

By this point it should be obvious that the Catholic church is not a Christian church – and I haven't even touched on the subject of idolatry, the worship of Mary, or the many other pagan Catholic doctrines<sup>16</sup>. Catholic salvation is not salvation through faith alone; it is salvation by works. The gospel of salvation by works *is not capable of saving anyone*. It leads only to Hell.

I want to be very clear here: anyone who believes in Catholicism's official stance regarding the gospel is *not* a Christian, is *not* saved, and is going to spend eternity in Hell unless they repent and come to Christ. The Catholic church is a pagan cult that is full of "doctrines of devils"<sup>17</sup>, and it should not be considered another denomination of Christianity. It is as pagan and false as Islam or Buddhism.

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<sup>16</sup> For instance, the Pope (declared to be infallible on issues of morality and doctrine) has urged people to worship Mary as a co-redeemer with Christ and pray to her for forgiveness of sins. Worshiping anyone other than God cannot be called anything other than paganism.

<sup>17</sup> Catholicism forbids its priests from getting married. Forbidding people to marry is called a "doctrine of devils" in 1 Timothy 4:1-3. These are God's words, not mine.

## Part 2: History

It is commonly assumed by many that the Catholic church was the *only* church through the ages and that this did not change until the Reformation. However, this is *not* the case. As soon as Catholicism started to appear there have been those who opposed it and who believed in the gospel of salvation by faith alone. The Protestant church has always existed – and the Catholic church has always opposed it.

### Persecutions During The First Millennium

**Augustine** (354 – 430) has been called the founder of Roman Catholicism, for he was instrumental in establishing many key doctrines of the Catholic church. The Catholic church has acknowledged him to be one of their major teachers and has canonized him as a saint. Augustine taught that the entire Bible should be interpreted allegorically, and that:

"the Catholic Church, in its empirical form, was the kingdom of Christ, that the millennial kingdom had commenced with the appearing of Christ, and was therefore an accomplished fact."  
(Encyclopedia Britannica)

He is the father of amillennialism. He taught that the sacraments were an actual means of grace, that Mary was sinless, that infant baptism was necessary (and that infants who were not baptized were lost), that there was a purgatory, and that the church had authority *over* the Bible (as opposed to the church being *under* the authority of the Bible). The Catholic church began to rise in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. It claimed that it was the

only true church and that it had the power to *execute* those who disagreed with it.

Augustine laid the foundation for the persecution of Protestants, teaching that:

"It is, indeed, better that men should be brought to serve God by instruction than by fear of punishment, or pain. ***But because the former means are better, the latter must not therefore be neglected.*** Many must often be brought back to their Lord, like wicked servants, by the rod of temporal suffering, before they attain the highest grade of religious development."

**Leo the Great**, the first Pope, drew upon this teaching from Augustine and declared that death was the appropriate penalty for heresy.

While this was going on a group called the **Donatists** formed and opposed Augustine's teachings. They taught that the church should only be comprised of those who showed evidence of repentance and faith. Because the Donatists (also called Puritans for their belief that the church should be pure) refused to join the centralized church system and rejected Augustine's teachings, the Catholic church joined with the secular authorities of the day and *put many of the Donatist leaders to death* and forced the rest into exile. This pattern would be repeated many times during the next fifteen centuries.

It is commonly assumed that the Bible did not become available until the time of Gutenberg. This is not the case; there were a number of editions of the Bible available during the first millennium. A version in Old Latin was translated around 157 AD, and Coptic and Syriac versions were made around that same time. A Gothic and Ethiopian translation was done in the fourth

century. In the fifth century the Bible was translated into Roman, Indian, Persian, Armenian, Scythian, Samaritan, Egyptian, Georgian, and Armenian. In the sixth century the Gregorian translation was made. In the seventh century a German and Anglo-Saxon translation was made. The Persic translation was made in the eighth century, and the Bohemian and Slavonic versions were made in the ninth century. An Arabic translation was made in the tenth century.

In 660 AD a group called the **Paulicians** arose. This group had obtained a copy of the New Testament and sought to establish their faith strictly upon the teachings of the Bible. They rejected the teachings of Catholicism, and because of this they were hunted down by the Catholic church and executed (usually by being burned at the stake) *and their Bibles were burned*. This persecution caused them to flee their home of Greece and scatter all around the world. Wherever they went they were persecuted and executed by the Catholic church. The Catholics took great care to burn their Bibles, because their Bibles had given rise to their faith in "Christ alone".

## **Persecutions During 1000 - 1500**

By the time the year 1000 rolled around the Catholic church had become the dominant church of the day. The Pope had succeeded in controlling all of the churches in the Western world and had imposed his dogmas on everyone, including the kings of the world. Yet through all this time there were groups opposed to Catholicism – groups like the Albigenses and Waldensians that the Catholic church did its very best to hunt down and burn at the stake. These groups were hounded all over the world for a single reason: they would not accept the authority of the Catholic church or its Pope, and they sought to live solely by the Word of God.



During the reign of **Pope Benedict VII (1012-1024)**, a synod was held at Toulouse "to consider the most effectual method to rid the province of Albigenses; and though the whole sect was in 1022 said to have been burnt, yet the emigrants from Bulgaria, coming in colonies into France, kept the seed sown, the churches recruited..." (Orchard, p. 178). The Catholic church had done its best to burn alive every last member of this group of Christians, and yet they still continued to grow.

What was this hated group like? A Catholic inquisitor wrote:

"They had the Old and New Testament in the vulgar tongue; and they teach and learn so well, that he had seen and heard a country clown ***recount all Job, word for word***; and divers, who ***could perfectly deliver all the New Testament***; and that men and women, little and great, ***day and night, cease not to learn and teach***" (Orchard, p. 266).

An old manuscript outlining an 11<sup>th</sup> century Waldensian creed reads "In articles of faith, the authority of the Holy Scripture is the highest authority; and for that reason it is the standard of judging; so that whatever doth not agree with the word of God is deservedly to be rejected and avoided. The sacraments of the church of Christ are two, baptism and Lord's supper. That is the church of Christ which hears the pure doctrine of Christ, and observes the ordinances instituted by Him, in whatever place it exists" (Jones, *History of the Christian Church*, II, p. 56). For these beliefs the Catholic Church hunted them down, burned them alive, confiscated their goods, and burned their Bibles.

**Pope Honorius II (1124 – 1130)** stated this in his Decretals:

"And all heretics, of both sexes and of every name, we damn to perpetual infamy; we declare hostility against them; we account them accursed, and their goods confiscated; nor can they ever enjoy their property, or their children succeed to their inheritance; inasmuch as they grievously offend against the Eternal as well as the temporal king" (Wylie, *The Papacy*, 18988, p. 137).

What was their great heresy? It was rejecting the authority of the Catholic Church and refusing to bow down to the Pope. The persecution of the Albigenses began in the middle of the twelfth century, and a century later every one of them had been hunted down and executed. In 1146 a group of believers arose in the city of Cologne. They were labeled as heretics because they denied infant baptism, purgatory, the intercession of the saints, and other Catholic doctrines.

Around this time a group called the Waldensians arose. They translated the Bible into the common languages of the day (something the Catholic Church had strictly forbidden) and distributed it through the entire Western world. A 13<sup>th</sup> century Catholic Inquisitor by the name of Reinerius said this about the Waldensians:

"They can repeat by heart, in the vulgar tongue, ***the whole text of the New Testament and great part of the Old***; and, ***adhering to the text alone***, they reject decretals<sup>18</sup> and decrees with the sayings and expositions of the Saints" (Faber, p. 492).

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<sup>18</sup> Statements issued by the Pope, said to be binding on all Christians.

For this the Catholic Church did its very best to burn them all alive. **Lucius III (1181 – 1185)** issued in decree in 1181 saying:

"We declare all Puritans, Paterines, Poor of Lyons [Waldensians], &c. &c., to lie under a perpetual curse for teaching baptism and the Lord's Supper *otherwise than the church of Rome*" (Orchard, p. 194).

These Christians did not believe in transubstantiation, that the sacraments could save, or that baptism saved. Because of this they were labeled as heretics, hunted down, and burned at the stake.

**Celestine III (1191 – 1198)** ordered that those who believed in the Bible should be burned – *and their Bibles should be burned as well*:

"In 1193, the pope sent Guy and Reiner, two legates, into France, with instructions of the most sanguinary description. Instead of making converts of the heretics, their orders were to *burn their leaders*, confiscate their goods, and disperse their flocks" (Orchard, p. 204).

The **inquisition** formally began under **Pope Innocent III (1198 – 1216)**. By this point the persecution of those who rejected Catholicism had been going on for six hundred years, but Innocent III systematized it. He prohibited people from reading the Bible in their own language and ordered that heretics should be put to death. In the year 1215 Innocent III issued a statement that said this:

"that they shall be seized for trial and penalties, who engage in the translation of the sacred volumes, or who hold secret conventicles, or

who assume the office of preaching without the authority of their superiors; against whom process shall be commenced, without any permission of appeal" (P. P. Callender, *Illustration of Popery*, 1838, p. 387).

Innocent III ordered that the Waldensians should be searched for diligently and executed *because they read the Bible in the language of the day*. According to a Catholic inquisitor, the Waldensians held that:

"They despise the decretals and the sayings and expositions of holy men and ***cleave only to the text of Scripture***. ... They contend that ***the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles is sufficient to salvation*** without any Church statutes and ordinances, and affirm that the traditions of the Church are no better than the traditions of the Pharisees, insisting, moreover, that greater stress is laid on the observation of human tradition than on the keeping of the law of God." (Armitage, *A History of the Baptists*, I, p. 308).

The persecution of these people began in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and was still going on in the 17<sup>th</sup> century – *500 years later*.

What did the Catholic church do to these people for their rejection of its authority? One historian put it this way:

"Many of them were frozen to death, others were cast from high precipices and dashed to pieces. Some were driven into caverns, and by filling the mouths of their caves with fagots were suffocated. Others were hanged in cold blood, ripped open and disemboweled, pierced

with prongs, drowned, racked limb from limb till death relieved them; were stabbed, worried by dogs, burned, or crucified with their heads downward. Fox relates one case in which four hundred mothers who had taken refuge in the Cave of Castelluzzo, some 2000 feet above the valley, entered by a projected crag, were smothered with their infants in their arms. And all the time that this gentle blood was flowing, that sanctified beauty known as Innocent III, drank it in like nectar from Paradise. Of the Wandensians and other murdered sheep of Christ, he said: 'They are like Samson's foxes. They appear to be different, but their tails are tied together.' The blood-thirst of the Dominicans earned for them the stigma of 'Comini Canes,' or the 'Lord's Dogs'" (Armitage, *A History of the Baptists*, I, pp. 311-2).

All of this was done by the command of the Pope – a man that the Catholic church teaches is infallible in matters of doctrine and morality. This persecution continued unabated for *fifteen centuries*. Wherever Christianity went, the Catholic church tried its very best to stamp it out.

It is not possible to do anything other than mention a small sampling of cases; even a partial treatment of Catholicism's persecution of Christians would fill an entire book. Over its history it executed *millions* of people for rejecting Catholicism and believing in Christ alone. These heretics were sought in every nation on earth so that they might be burned alive *and that their Bibles might be destroyed*. This is not a matter of one or two isolated cases; this is a pattern that started with Augustine and continued for 1500 years.

To say that the Catholic church executed millions of people is not an exaggeration. One historian said this:

"In the year 1209, a formidable army of cross-bearers, of forty days' service, was put in motion, destined to destroy all heretics. ... The cruelties of these Crusaders appear to have had no parallel; in a few months there were sacrificed about **two hundred thousand lives**, and barbarities practiced, before unheard of, all which met the approbation of Innocent the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Two large cities, Beizers and Carcassone, were reduced to ashes, and thousands of others, driven from their burning houses, were wandering in the woods and mountains, sinking daily under the pressure of want" (Orchard, *Concise History of the Baptists*, p. 211).

The Spanish Inquisition alone, under the reign of Pope Paul IV (1555-59) is calculated to have claimed the lives of 150,000 people. Many of these died by unimaginable tortures (see Appendix A at the end of this paper). In the sixteenth century, as the Reformation began to get under way, it is estimated that 900,000 Protestants were martyred by the Catholic church. The Catholic church did its very best to completely wipe off the face of the earth entire groups of Christians: Waldensians, Albigenses, Lollards, and others – groups that had hundreds of thousands of followers – to the point of *sending out armies* to hunt them down and execute them. The Catholic church did succeed in completely destroying some of these groups. In 1847 John Dowling, in his book *History of Romanism*, estimated that the Catholic church slaughtered *50 million people* between 606 AD and 1850. Why were these people put to death? Because they refused to bow down to Rome and sought to live solely by the Word of God. (As you can see in the various quotes throughout this paper, the Catholic church actually admits that they murdered countless people for

the great "crime" of living by the teachings of the Bible – and they are not ashamed of it. In their eyes that is a crime worthy of death.)

Catholicism's hatred of the Bible through the centuries is legendary. I've already talked about how the Church confiscated people's copies of the Bible and burned them; this is a pattern that continued for centuries. **Pope Gregory IX (1227 – 1241)** prohibited people from owning Bibles and prohibited Bible translations from being made. The **Council of Toulouse (1129)** and the **Council of Tarragona (1234)** forbade people to possess *or read* translations of the Bible that were made in the common languages (the only languages that people could actually understand). Those who were found to possess Bibles (or even portions of them) were *executed* and their Bibles were burned.

I cannot possibly mention every Pope that stood up to oppose anyone who dared to reject official Catholic doctrine. **Alexander IV (1254 – 1261)** issued 38 bulls against "heretics". **Pope Urban IV (1261 – 1264)** issued an anathema against "heretics" and all who opposed the Inquisition as soon as he became a Pope. **Pope Clement IV (1265 – 1268)** enlarged the Inquisition and broadened its scope. **Pope Gregory X (1271 – 1276)** ordered that all copies of the Bible that were translated into the common tongues of the day to be brought to Bishops and burned. **Pope Nicholas IV (1288 – 1292)** ordered many punishments to be inflicted both on "heretics" and on those who helped them. **Pope Honorius IV (1285 – 1287)** enacted two laws against heretics and affirmed the prohibition on owning copies of the Bible. **Pope John XXI (1316 – 1334)** ordered the Inquisitors to hunt down and destroy the Waldensians, as did **Pope Clement VI (1342 – 1352)**. This went on, and on, and on, starting at the time of Augustine. Christians were already being persecuted when the Reformation broke out; once it began to spread the persecution only intensified.

For fifteen centuries the Catholic church executed

whoever it could find that rejected its authority, and burned any Bibles that were translated into the common languages of the day. All of this was ordered by men who claimed to be Christ's infallible and holy representative on earth (the Popes). For centuries before the Reformation the Catholic church never failed to persecute those it found that rejected its authority and believed in Christ alone.

As the Reformation began to get under way the **Council of Trent (1545 – 1564)** was held. The Council of Trent was reaffirmed by the Pope during Vatican II in the 1960's; it has not expired or been rescinded. I have already discussed some of the Council of Trent's teachings, but besides doctrinal matters *it also placed severe restrictions on owning Bibles:*

"Translations of the Old Testament may also be allowed, but only to learned and pious men, **at the discretion of the bishop**, provided they use them merely as elucidations of the vulgate versions, in order to understand the Holy Scriptures, and not as the sacred text itself. But translations of the New Testament, made by authors of the first class of this index, are allowed to no one, since little advantage, but much danger, generally arises from reading them. If notes accompany the versions which are allowed to be read, or are joined to the vulgate edition, they may be permitted to be read by the same persons as the version, after the suspected places have been purged by the theological faculty of some Catholic university, or by the general inquisitor. ..."

"Inasmuch as it is manifest from experience, that **if the Holy Bible translated into the vulgar tongue, be indiscriminately allowed to**



**any one, the temerity of men will cause more evil than good to arise from it**, it is, on that point, referred to the judgment of the bishops or inquisitors, who may, by the advice of the priest or confessor, permit the reading of the Bible, translated into the vulgar tongue by Catholic authors, to those persons whose faith and piety they apprehend will be augmented, and not injured by it; and this permission they must have in writing. But if any one shall have the presumption to read or possess it without such written permission, he shall not receive absolution until he have first delivered up such Bible to the ordinary. Booksellers, however, who shall sell, or otherwise dispose of Bibles in the vulgar tongue, to any person not having such permission, shall forfeit the value of the books, to be applied by the bishop to some pious use, and be subjected to such other penalties as the bishop shall judge proper, according to the quality of the offence. **But regulars shall neither read nor purchase such Bibles without a special license from their superiors.**

"Finally, it is enjoined on all the faithful, that no one presume to keep or read any book contrary to these rules, or prohibited by this index. But if **any one keep or read any books composed by heretics, or the writings of any author suspected of heresy, or false doctrine, he shall instantly incur the sentence of excommunication**; and those who read or keep works interdicted on another account, besides

the **mortal sin**<sup>19</sup> committed, shall be **severely punished** at the will of the bishops."

These rules were affixed to the Index of Prohibited Books and were constantly reaffirmed by popes in the **16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries**. These publications have never been rescinded. One person said this about it:

"It is true that the Council of Trent did not *absolutely* forbid the reading of the Scriptures. It did allow a few exceptions. The priests were allowed to read the Latin Bible. Bishops and inquisitors were allowed to grant license for certain faithful Catholics to read the Scriptures in Latin as long as these Scriptures were accompanied by Catholic notes and if it was believed that these people would not be "harmed" by such a reading. ***In practice, though, the proclamations of Trent forbade the reading of the Holy Scriptures to at least nine-tenths of the people.*** Rome's claim to possess authority to determine who can and cannot read the Bible is one of the most blasphemous claims ever made under this sun." (David Cloud, *Rome and the Bible*, p. 214).

## **Persecutions During 1500 - 1900**

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<sup>19</sup> Remember, the Catholic church teaches that mortal sins will condemn you to Hell forever. Essentially this states that if you, a "common person", dared to own a Bible then you were condemned to Hell forever. Let me repeat that: Catholicism actually taught that owning a Bible *would condemn you to Hell*. That is how much they hate the Word.

The Catholic church's attack on Christianity did not stop at the Council of Trent. Its power to inflict harm was greatly weakened after the Reformation, but its attitude and edicts did not change.

**Pope Julius III (1550 – 1555)** issued a series of bulls commanding the destruction of all heretical and Lutheran books. This included vernacular translations of the Bible. **Pope Paul IV (1555 – 1559)** prohibited the possession of Bible translations not permitted by the Inquisition. Those who were found to possess Bibles were executed. During his reign Inquisitors were dispatched from Rome to hunt down and destroy Waldensians. The Pope's Inquisitor-General, Cardinal Alexandrini, obtained a small army of soldiers to pursue the inhabitants of San Sexto, who had fled to avoid their tormentors:

"Tracking them to their hiding-places, in the thickets and the caves of the mountains, they slaughtered many of them; others, who escaped, were pursued with bloodhounds, as if they had been wild beasts. A group of the fugitives climbed to the Apennines, which was an almost inaccessible retreat high in the mountains, and the army was unable to dislodge them. An edict was then issued by the viceroy, who was intent upon the destruction of these separatist Christians, promising a free pardon to all bandits, outlaws, and other criminals who might be willing to undertake the task of scaling the mountains and attacking the strongholds of the Waldenses. In obedience to this summons, there assembled a mob of desperadoes, who were but too familiar with the secret paths of the Apennines. Threading their way through the woods, and clambering over the great rocks, these assassins rushed from every side on the

barricades on the summit, and butchering the poor Vaudois. Thus were the inhabitants of San Sesto exterminated, some dying by the sword ... while others were torn by bloodhounds or perished by famine" (Wylie, p. 116)

His persecution of Christians continued unabated:

"San Sisto was burnt; the women and children, subjected to every species of outrage, scattered through the mountains, where most of them were captured and sent to Cosenza ... Sentence of death was also pronounced against a hundred of the older women; the whole number of captives was reckoned at 1600, all of whom were condemned" (Lea, *The Inquisition in the Spanish Dependences*, 1908, p. 81-82).

"Some were thrown from the tops of towers, or precipitated over cliffs; others were torn with iron whips, and finally beaten to death with fiery brands; and others, smeared with pitch, were burned alive" (Wylie, *Histories of the Waldenses*, pp. 117-8).

"They were all shut up in one house as in a sheep-fold. The executioner went, and bringing out one of them, covered his face with a napkin, or *benda*, as we call it, led him out to a field near the house, and causing him to kneel down, cut his throat with a knife. Then, taking off the bloody napkin, he went and brought out another, whom he put to death after the same manner. In this way the whole number, amounting to eighty-eight men, were

butchered" (Wylie, p. 117).

There are so many accounts of Christians being executed by the Catholic church during the Reformation that I cannot possibly include even a small portion of them. Many of the means of execution were horrible beyond belief. All of this was done at the command of Popes.

**Pope Pius V (1566 – 1572)** ordered the complete extermination of the Huguenots (the French Protestants). Tens of thousands of Christians were executed on the bases of this command. The Pope wrote this in a papal bull dated March of 1568: "If the crusaders die in the expedition their blood will serve them as a second baptism, washing out all their sins, and they will go with the other martyrs straight to Paradise". Under **Pope Gregory XIII (1572 – 1585)** the Massacre of St. Bartholomew (1572) was carried out, in which tens of thousands of Huguenots were murdered. The news of this massacre was met with celebration by the Pope, who decided to issue a commemorative medal to mark the occasion:

"The pope and his Cardinals proceeded at once to the High Altar, after the dispatches from Paris had been read in Conclae, to offer thanks for 'the great blessing which Heaven vouchsafed to the Roman See and to all Christendom. Salvoes of artillery thundered at nightfall from the ramparts of St. Angelo; the streets were illuminated; and no victory ever achieved by the arms of the Pontificate elicited more tokens of festivity. The pope also, as if resolved that an indestructible edifice of the perversion of mortal feeling which Fanaticism necessarily generates should be transmitted to posterity, gave orders for the execution of a

commemorative medal" (Smedley, II, p. 35)

By 1582 the Bible had been spread so far and wide by the Reformation that all efforts to stamp it out had utterly failed. At this point the Catholic church issued its own English Bible – the **Rheims-Douay**. Even though the translation was very poor, no Catholic was allowed to read it without a license. Between 1582 and 1750 (a span of 168 years) the New Testament was reprinted only three times and the Old Testament was only printed once. The Catholic church did not approve of an Italian version until 1778, a German version until 1830, or a French version until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Council of Trent prohibited *anyone* from reading the Bible without a license. **Pope Clement VII (1592 – 1605)** forbade anyone from granting these licenses, thus prohibiting the common people from reading the Bible under any circumstances. He then sent "missionaries" to the valley of Piedmont *for the express purpose of destroying all Bibles in that area* and those who owned them. The Foxe's book of Martyrs records the activities of these Catholic "missionaries":

This was followed by a most cruel order, published on January 25, 1655, which decreed that every family of the reformed religion, of whatever rank, residing in Lucerne, St. Giovanni, Bibiana, Campiglione, St. Secondo, Lucernetta, La Torre, Fenile, or Bricheraiisso, should, within three days after the publication thereof, depart from their habitations to such places as were appointed by the duke, on pain of death and confiscation.

This order produced the greatest distress among the unhappy objects of it, as it was enforced with the greatest severity, in the depth

of a very severe winter, and the people were driven from their habitations at the time appointed, without even sufficient clothes to cover them: by which many perished in the mountains through the severity of the weather, or want of food. Those who remained behind after the publication of the decree, were murdered by the popish inhabitants, or shot by the troops, and the most horrible barbarities were perpetrated by these ruffians, encouraged by the Roman Catholic priests and monks... (Foxe, abridged, p. 163)

Nicholas Walsh was murdered while in the act of translating the first Irish New Testament. Others finished his work, and his translation was published in 1602. **Pope Paul V (1605 – 1621)** made it clear how he felt about all this in a papal bull:

"We excommunicate and anathematize, in the name of Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and by the authority of his blessed Apostles, Peter and Paul, and by our own, all Wickliffites, Hussites, Lutherans, Calvinists, Hugonots, Anabaptists, and all other Heretics, by whatsoever name they are called, and of whatsoever sect they be; and also, all Schismatics, and those who withdraw themselves, or recede obstinately from the obedience of the Bishop of Rome; as also their Adherents, Receivers, Favourers, and generally any defenders of them: together with all, who, without the authority of the apostolic see, shall knowingly read, keep, or print, any of their books which treat on religion, or by or for any

cause whatever, publicly or privately, on any pretense or color defend them" (Ouseley, *A Short Defense of the Old Religion*, 1821, p. 257)

The Pope made good on his word. During the next fifty years the Catholic church persuaded the governments of Europe to send out armies after groups such as the Waldensians and kill them. In 1655 the Marquis de Pianez led an army of 15,000 men out to hunt down and murder (in horrific ways) all the Waldensians in his land. A priest and a monk accompanied each party of soldiers to make sure that any copies of the Scriptures that were found were destroyed. One historian wrote this about the event:

"From the awful narration of Leger, we select only a few instances; but even these few, however mildly stated, grow, without our intending it, into a group of horrors. Little children were torn from the arms of their mothers, clasped by their tiny feet, and their heads dashed against the rocks; or were held between two soldiers and their quivering limbs torn up by main force. Their mangled bodies were then thrown on the highways or fields, to be devoured by beasts. The sick and the aged were burned alive in their dwellings. Some had their hands and arms and legs lopped off, and fire applied to the severed parts to staunch the bleeding and prolong their suffering. Some were flayed alive, some were roasted alive, some disemboweled; or tied to trees in their own orchards, and their hearts cut out. Some were horribly mutilated, and of others the brains were boiled and eaten by these cannibals. Some were fastened down into the furrows of their



own fields, and plowed into the soil as men plow manure into it. Others were buried alive. Fathers were marched to death with the heads of their sons suspended round their necks. Parents were compelled to look on while their children were first outraged, then massacred, before being themselves permitted to die" (Wylie, *History of the Waldenses*, pp. 143,44).

Why was all this done? Why were these people hunted down and murdered? *Because they believed that they were saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and refused to become Catholics.* Since they would not join the Catholic church, the Catholic church did everything it could to execute and torment these believers in the most horrible ways imaginable. All of these things were done by a church that claims *to this day* to be the only true church of Jesus Christ. These were not wild rampages or isolated events; this was a systematic effort to execute every last Protestant on the planet, and it lasted from 400 AD to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It only stopped with the Catholic church, by the mercy of God, lost all of its temporal power and became unable to continue killing every last non-Catholic they could find. They were not stopped because they had a change of heart; they were stopped because power was taken from them.

I could go on, with account after account like the one mentioned above. All of this is well-documented, and some of it was documented with *great pride* and glee by the Catholic authorities who carried it out. For example, during the reign of **Pope Innocent IX (1676 – 1689)** the entire nation of the Waldensians was forced from their dwellings in the mountains by an army of around 15,000 men; more than 10,000 were murdered.

In 1693 a Catholic cardinal named Pasquier Quesnel issued a document suggesting that, in his words, "the reading of

Holy Scripture is for all". He suggested that it might be a good thing for the common people to read the Bible. **Pope Clement XI (1700 – 1721)** disagreed with this in the strongest possible terms in a papal bull:

"The suffrages of the aforesaid cardinals ... **we declare, condemn,** and reprobate respectively, by this our constitution, **perpetually in force for ever,** all and singular, the propositions before inserted, as false, captious, ill-sounding, offensive to pious ears, scandalous, pernicious, rash, injurious to the church and its practice... whosoever shall teach, defend, publish, or treat, even in disputation, publicly or privately... shall be subject, 'ipso facto,' and without any other declaration, to ecclesiastical censures, and the other punishments decreed by law against the perpetrators of similar things." (Blakeney, *Popery and its Social Aspects*, pp. 76, 77)

**Pope Benedict XIV (1740 – 1758)** confirmed the Council of Trent's prohibitions against Bible translations. **Pope Pius VII (1800 – 1823)** *condemned* the Bible societies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – organizations that sought to give copies of the Scriptures to common people:

"We have been truly shocked at this most crafty device, **by which the very foundations of religion are undermined**...we have, with the utmost care and attention, deliberated upon the measures proper to be adopted by our pontifical authority, in order to remedy and abolish this pestilence as far as possible..." (Elliott, *Delineation of Roman Catholicism*, p. 20)

The Catholic church did *not* want people to own Bibles. The Pope was certain that Bible ownership would lead people away from Catholicism – and he was right. The teachings of the Catholic church are so blatantly unbiblical that anyone who reads the Bible can quickly see the Pope's many heresies. The Bible really *does* undermine the teachings of the *Catholic* religion.

One Catholic bishop wrote this in 1813. He perfectly illustrated what the Catholic church thinks about the Bible:

"The promiscuous reading of the Bible is not calculated, nor intended, by God, as the means of conveying religious instruction to the bulk of mankind: for the bulk of mankind cannot read at all; and we do not find any divine commandment as to their being obliged to study letters. ... In conclusion, then, by dearly beloved brethren, I am confident you will ***not encourage or countenance the distribution of Bibles*** or Testaments, among the very illiterate persons of your respective congregations, as proper initiatory books of instruction for them (Bishop Milner of Castabala, 1813: M'Gavin, *The Protestant*, p. 166)

**Pope Leo XII (1823 – 1829)** issued a bull in 1824 reaffirming the Council of Trent's prohibitions on Bible ownership and condemned the distribution of Bibles. As of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Catholic Church had not changed its mind on Bible ownership in the least. By this point they had lost much of their power to execute those who held Bibles, but they still condemned it as strongly as they ever had. The Catholic Church condemned Bible ownership with perfect, unwavering consistency for 1,200 years. Romans 10:17 states that "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God", but the Roman Catholic Church did its very best to destroy every copy of the Word of God

that they could find.

**Pope Pius VII (1829 – 1830)** condemned the Bible societies of his day that distributed Bibles to people (much like the Gideons do today). **Pope Gregory XVI (1831 – 1846)** ratified the Council of Trent's prohibitions on Bible ownership. The Catholic church's attitude toward those who possessed Bibles had not changed: in 1843 on the Portuguese island of Madeira, a woman was imprisoned and condemned to death for being a Protestant and rejecting various Catholic doctrines (idol worship and transubstantiation). She only escaped execution when Protestants from other countries intervened on her behalf. Episodes like this were common in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; there are many instances of people being imprisoned for merely owning a Bible or not being Catholic.

**Pope Pius IX (1846 – 1878)** issued a letter condemning "those insidious Bible Societies". Even at this late date, historians say that Bibles were so rare that many Catholics did not even know what a New Testament was. Students who went to papal seminaries did not even see Bibles during their stay at the seminary. The **Vatican I Council in 1870** reaffirmed the Council of Trent's decrees and prohibitions on Bible ownership – and its teachings on salvation. At the time of the American Civil War the Catholic church was *still* condemning ownership of the Bible and doing all that it could to stop those in its power from owning a copy of the Scriptures.

The Vatican I Council went further than this, declaring that all Popes were infallible and *could not be wrong*. The council issued this statement:

"We teach and declare that by the appointment of our Lord the Roman Church possesses a **superiority of ordinary power over all other churches**, and that this power of jurisdiction of the Roman pontiff, which is truly episcopal, is

immediate; to which all, of whatever rite and dignity, **both pastors and faithful, both individually and collectively, are bound**, by their duty of hierarchical subordination and true obedience, to submit not only in matters which belong to faith and morals, but also in those that appertain to the discipline and government of the Church throughout the world, so that the church of Christ may be one flock under **one supreme pastor** through the preservation of unity both of communion and of profession of the same faith with the Roman pontiff. **This is the teaching of Catholic truth, from which no one can deviate without loss of faith and salvation.**

"And since **by divine right of apostolic primacy the Roman pontiff is placed over the universal church**, we further teach and declare that he is the **supreme judge of the faithful**<sup>20</sup>, and that in all causes the decision of which belongs to the Church recourse may be had to his tribunal, and that **none may reopen the judgment of the apostolic see, that whose authority there is no greater, nor can any lawfully review its judgment.**

"If then, any shall say that the Roman pontiff has the office merely of inspection or direction, and not **full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the universal church, not only in things**

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<sup>20</sup> Notice that it does not say that *God* is the supreme judge of the faithful; it claims that the Pope is. God is not the head of the church; the Pope is. All Christians are not bound to God; they are bound to the Pope. It is not God who is said to have the greatest authority of anyone; no, it is the Pope. This is blatant paganism; it is very far removed from Christianity.

**which belong to faith and morals, but also in those which relate to the disciple and government of the Church spread throughout the world;** or assert that he possesses merely the principal part, and not the fullness of this supreme power; or that this power which he enjoys is not ordinary or immediate both over each and all the church and over each and all the pastors and the faithful; **let him be anathema**<sup>21</sup>.

"We teach and define that it is a dogma divinely revealed; that the Roman pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith and morals to be held by the universal Church, by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, **is possessed of that infallibility** with which the Divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be endowed for defining doctrine regarding faith or morals; and that therefore such definitions of the Roman pontiff are irreformable of themselves, and not from the

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<sup>21</sup> In other words, if you do not believe that the Pope is God Himself, or if you disagree with what the Catholic church teaches about the Pope, then you are condemned to spend eternity in Hell *no matter what your relationship with Jesus Christ is*. The Pope is said to have "supreme power", "whose authority there is none greater", and is "the supreme judge of the faithful". In the Catholic church, Jesus Christ doesn't amount to anything; the Pope is God, and if you do not believe that then you are lost forever.

In Rome, near the Vatican, is the church of 'Our Lady, the mother of grace.' In its porch is the inscription 'Let us come boldly unto the throne of Mary, that we may obtain mercy.' Not the throne of Christ but the throne of *Mary*. Christ has been dethroned and Mary has been given his place.

consent of the Church. But if any one – which may God avert – presume to contradict this our definition: **let him be anathema**<sup>22</sup>."

Interestingly enough, while the Vatican I Council was going on, at some point someone in the council wanted to refer to a Bible – but no one could find one. No one at the Council had a Bible – not the Pope, not any of the Cardinals, and not even the local Catholic church. In order to get a Bible they had to borrow one from a Protestant Chaplain at the Prussian Embassy.

Why did this happen? Because in 1870, when Rome was made the capitol city of Italy, the Pope decided to make sure that no Bibles were found in the city:

"a papal law required that copies of the Bible found in the possession of visitors be confiscated" (Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, VI, p. 727).

The Roman Catholic F. Curci stated this in 1879:

**"The New Testament is of all books that which is least studied and read amongst us, insomuch that the greater part of the laity, even such as are instructed and practicing believers, do not so much as know that such a book exists in the world, and the majority of the clergy themselves scarcely know more of it**

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<sup>22</sup> In other words, if you disagree with this doctrine then you are condemned to spend an eternity in Hell. It doesn't matter if you believe in Jesus or not; that one act of disagreement damns you to Hell forever. It is not enough to have faith in Christ and believe on His name; if you do not believe that the Pope is God then you are lost. The Catholic church gives the Pope powers and titles that only God possesses. They have overthrown God and put the Pope in His place.

than they are obliged to read in the Missal and Breviary" (Curci, *Avvert. Prelim. In N.T.*, cited in Littledale, *Plain Reasons*, p. 94).

In 1897 **Pope Leo XIII** issued a policy that said this:

"All versions of the vernacular, even by Catholics, are ***altogether prohibited***, unless approved by the Holy See, or published under the vigilant care of the Bishops, with annotations taken from the Fathers of the Church and learned Catholic writers" (Jacobus, *Roman Catholic and Protestant Bibles*, p. 237)

One might wonder: what was life like in Catholic countries at this time? This incident is said to have happened in Catholic-controlled Brazil:

"A traveler across Brazil in 1902, who inquired carefully into the subject, found in a thousand miles bishops and priests in plenty, ***but not a single copy of the Scriptures in any lay home***; nor had most of the residents ***ever heard*** of the Bible, though they were able, willing, and anxious to buy a copy when it was shown to them" (Jacobus, p. 235).

During 1902, public bonfires were made of Bibles in Austria, Fiji, Pernambuco, and Peru. The Archbishop of Sucre in Bolivia suggested that a man who was circulating copies of the Scriptures should be executed for it. Even though the 20<sup>th</sup> century had arrived, the Catholic church had not changed its attitude toward the Word of God. The only thing that stopped it from burning Bibles and executing Protestants was that it had lost its temporal power.



## Persecutions During the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

As can be seen, from 400 AD to 1900 AD the Catholic church was unwavering in its opposition to the Bible and to those who believed that they were saved "by faith alone". Pope Leo, the very first pope, declared that heretics should be executed, and in 1902 the Catholic church was still stating that those who distributed Bibles should be killed. In all those years nothing had changed. They had lost their power to murder Protestants and burn Bibles but, as can be seen by the statement of the Archbishop of Sucre in 1902, they had not lost their will – a satanic will that led to brutal and horrible deaths<sup>23</sup> for tens of millions of people. **No organization in the history of the world has persecuted Christians as long as the Roman Catholic Church.**<sup>24</sup> All of this stems from their belief that the Pope is God, that they alone are the only true church and the only way of salvation, and that all those who disagree with them should be converted by force – or executed.

The Catholic church has changed her tactics, **but she has changed none of her beliefs**<sup>25</sup>. Today the Catholic church allows

<sup>23</sup> The Catholic church bragged during the Spanish Inquisition that people actually died of fright just at being asked to appear before the Inquisition.

<sup>24</sup> Has the Catholic church ever apologized for the 50 million people that it brutally murdered? Not as far as I have been able to find. In fact, the Catholic church has even stated that the Inquisition "wasn't actually that bad". You can read Appendix A and decide this for yourself.

<sup>25</sup> The Vatican II council, held in the 1960's, reaffirmed the Council of Trent and various other Catholic doctrines. What Catholicism believed during the 15 centuries that it slaughtered Christians by the millions is still held as truth today. It still claims to be the one true church of Christ. It still claims to have authority to add its traditions and dogmas to the Word of God. It still claims sole authority to interpret the Word of God. It still claims to have an infallible Pope, who is the head of all churches. It still teaches that there is no salvation apart from the Catholic church.

Bible ownership, but it supports the Critical Text – a corrupted version, based on a manuscript taken from the Vatican Library, that is full of errors and does not deserve to be called the Word of God.<sup>26</sup> Catholicism still teaches that the Pope can overrule the Bible by its decrees. If the Pope rules that Mary was sinless then that means she was sinless, no matter what the Bible has to say about it. Catholicism teaches that the Bible is subjected to the whims of the Pope.

The Catholic Church teaches that only the Pope can interpret the Bible (a stance it has held since it was founded, and one it has never wavered upon) and believes that the Bible should be interpreted in light of what Catholicism teaches. If the Bible says that all have sinned but the Pope says that Mary never sinned, then the Bible must mean that all have sinned except for Mary. This is not letting the Bible speak for itself, nor is it comparing all doctrines to the Word of God; this is forcing the Bible to support whatever the Pope wants.

**In 1929 Pope Pius IX and Mussolini signed the Lateran Treaty.** This made the Roman Catholic Church the "sole religion" of Italy. The Italian government also paid to Rome 750 million lire in cash and 1 billion lire in state bonds. **The Roman Catholic Church, in return, used its authority to put Mussolini in power;** it required all Catholics to withdraw from participation in politics (many Catholics opposed the fascist Mussolini) and the Pope commanded Catholics to support Mussolini. Italian Catholics did so, which allowed Mussolini to be voted into power. The Cardinals in Rome hailed Mussolini as "that eminent statesmen

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<sup>26</sup> I have discussed this in more detail elsewhere. Basically, the Critical Text does not teach that the Bible is the Word of God; it teaches that the Bible has been lost and that all we can do is guess as to what it really said. It does not teach "Thus saith the Lord". Instead it teaches "Some manuscripts say this, but we may change our minds if we discover another manuscript" - thus reducing the Bible to a pile of guesswork that cannot be trusted.

[who rules Italy] by a decree of the Divine Providence." Both parties benefited: the Catholic church became the official religion of Italy, and Mussolini's Fascist party assumed political power. With this newfound power, criticism of the Catholic church became a crime and religious education became mandatory.

**In 1933 the Catholic church signed a concordant with Hitler.** As a result of this concordant the Catholic church received hundreds of millions of dollars. In return Pope Pius IX never excommunicated Hitler, who was a Catholic<sup>27</sup>, and never once protested the ongoing slaughter of 6 million Jews. The Catholic church persuaded German Catholics to back Hitler. Without their support it is unlikely that he would have been voted into power. Catholic leaders of the day spoke glowingly of Hitler and the Nazi movement. When Hitler came to power Cardinal Michael Faulhaber sent him this note of congratulations:

"What the old parliaments and parties failed to achieve in sixty years your broad statesman's vision has made a reality of world history in six months. This handclasp with the papacy, the greatest moral force in the history of the world, signifies a mighty deed full of immense blessing and an increase in German prestige East and West, in the sight of the entire world." (Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, p. 257)

Pulitzer-prize-winning journalist John Toland said this:

"The Vatican was so appreciative of being

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<sup>27</sup> It has often been said that Hitler was a Christian. That is not the case; Hitler was a Catholic. He was raised in a traditional Catholic family, regularly attended Mass, served as an altar boy, and attended school as a Benedictine monastery. Even after Hitler came to power he continued to attend Catholic worship services from time to time. Hitler himself insisted that he was a Catholic, and the Pope never disagreed with him.

recognized as a full partner that it asked God to bless the Reich. On a more practical level, it ordered German bishops to swear allegiance to the National Socialist regime. The new oath concluded with these significant words: 'In the performance of my spiritual office and in my solicitude for the welfare and the interest of the German Reich, I will endeavor to avoid all detrimental acts which might endanger it.'" (Toland, *Adolf Hitler*, pp. 431-32).

The Catholic church encouraged its members to vote for Hitler (even though at the time they knew who he was and his evil programs had already begun), and Catholics did so overwhelmingly. On Hitler's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday the Catholic church celebrated him and asked for God's blessing upon him. The Pope even personally congratulated him. When Hitler narrowly escaped assassination in 1939 the Catholic press in Germany almost unanimously declared it to be an act of special protection by God. Cardinal Faulhaber instructed that a special song be sang in Hitler's honor to thank God for his narrow escape. By this time Hitler had already invaded Poland, but rather than condemn him (something that never happened at any point while the Holocaust was going on) they congratulated him on his narrow brush with death. The Pope even encouraged all German Catholics to fight with Hitler!

Besides Hitler, Himmler was also a Catholic. He attended church regularly, took communion, confessed, and prayed. So was SS Colonel Rudolf Hoess, the commandant of Auschwitz. It is important to realize that, far from condemning the horrible atrocities that were going on in Nazi Germany, **the Catholic church actually helped bring them about**. The Pope did not condemn Hitler; he **encouraged** him and helped him rise to power. The Pope refused to command the Catholics serving in

the German army (a quarter of the SS officers were Catholics) to stop helping Hitler, stating that he did not want to give them a crisis of conscience. In fact, after the war, **the Catholic church aided Nazi war criminals in escaping** from Germany to South America. Far from trying to bring these monsters to justice, the Vatican issued them passports and helped them escape from the Allied forces that were trying to hunt them down. All of this is well-documented.

Why would the Roman Catholic Church side with the Fascists? The Catholic church sees itself (even today) as the kingdom of God on Earth; it believes that it has the authority to rule over the nations, and it seeks the exercise of political power – something that it has only recently lost. At the time it was clear that Communism was no friend of the Catholic church; its ruthless atheism was a severe threat. Yet, the capitalistic countries of the west were not an ally either; the Catholic church opposed the freedoms of conscience, religion, and of the press, and the Western democracies (all largely Protestant) held those freedoms dear. The only ally it saw was in Fascism – a group that was seemingly unstoppable at the time, and one that was more than willing to align with the Catholic church in exchange for support.

## **In Conclusion**

There is a great deal more I could say about Catholic doctrine, or Catholic history, or even on the Catholic church today. The Catholic church is an evil, satanic organization that has never passed up a chance to persecute Christians. Its power to inflict damage has waned over the years, but it is just as evil as it

has ever been and its intentions have not wavered.

For those who are interested in this subject, there are a great many good resources available. Entire books have been written about Catholic heresies and Catholic history. It is extremely clear that Catholicism is definitely *not* Christian. In fact, given all that it has done during the past 1500 years, it is impossible to name an organization that has exercised more pure evil over a longer period of time than the Catholic Church of Rome.

## **The Spanish Inquisition**

[The following description of the tortures of the Catholic inquisition in Germany in the 16th century is from J. Wylie's *History of Protestantism*, Book 15, Chapter 11.]

Turn we now to the town of Nuremberg, in Bavaria. The zeal with which Duke Albert, the sovereign of Bavaria, entered into the restoration of Roman Catholicism, we have already narrated. To further the movement, he provided every one of the chief towns of his dominions with a Holy Office, and the Inquisition of Nuremberg still remains an anomalous and horrible monument in the midst of a city where the memorials of an exquisite art, and the creations of an unrivalled genius, meet one at every step. We shall first describe the Chamber of Torture.

The house so called immediately adjoins the Imperial Castle, which from its lofty site looks down on the city, whose Gothic towers, sculptured fronts, and curiously ornamented gables are seen covering both banks of the Pegnitz, which rolls below. The house may have been the guard-room of the castle. It

derives its name, the Torture-chamber, not from the fact that the torture was here inflicted, but because into this one chamber has been collected a complete set of the instruments of torture gleaned from the various Inquisitions that formerly existed in Bavaria. A glance suffices to show the whole dreadful apparatus by which the adherents of Rome sought to maintain her dogmas. Placed next to the door, and greeting the sight as one enters, is a collection of hideous masks. These represent creatures monstrous of shape, and malignant and fiendish of nature, It is in beholding them that we begin to perceive how subtle was the genius that devised this system of coercion, and that it took the mind as well as the body of the victim into account. In gazing on them, one feels as if he had suddenly come into polluting and debasing society, and had sunk to the same moral level with the creatures here figured before him. He suffers a conscious abatement of dignity and fortitude. The persecutor had calculated, doubtless, that the effect produced upon the mind of his victim by these dreadful apparitions, would be that he would become morally relaxed, and less able to sustain his cause. Unless of strong mind, indeed, the unfortunate prisoner, on entering such a place, and seeing himself encompassed with such unearthly and hideous shapes, must have felt as if he were the vile heretic which the persecutor styled him, and as if already the infernal den had opened its portals, and sent forth its venomous swarms to bid him welcome. Yourself accursed, with accursed beings are you henceforth to dwell÷such was the silent language of these abhorred images.

We pass on into the chamber, where more dreadful sights meet our gaze. It is hung round and round with instruments of torture, so numerous that it would take a long while even to name them, and so diverse that it would take a much longer time to describe them. We must take them in groups, for it were hopeless to think of going over them one by one, and particularising the mode in which each operated, and the

ingenuity and art with which all of them have been adapted to their horrible end. There were instruments for compressing the fingers till the bones should be squeezed to splinters. There were instruments for probing below the finger-nails till an exquisite pain, like a burning fire, would run along the nerves. There were instruments for tearing out the tongue, for scooping out the eyes, for grubbing-up the ears. There were bunches of iron cords, with a spiked circle at the end of every whip, for tearing the flesh from the back till bone and sinew were laid bare. There were iron cases for the legs, which were tightened upon the limb placed in them by means of a screw, till flesh and bone were reduced to a jelly. There were cradles set full of sharp spikes, in which victims were laid and rolled from side to side, the wretched occupant being pierced at each movement of the machine with innumerable sharp points. There were iron ladles with long handles, for holding molten lead or boiling pitch, to be poured down the throat of the victim, and convert his body into a burning cauldron. There were frames with holes to admit the hands and feet, so contrived that the person put into them had his body bent into unnatural and painful positions, and the agony grew greater and greater by moments, and yet the man did not die. There were chestfuls of small but most ingeniously constructed instruments for pinching, probing, or tearing the more sensitive parts of the body, and continuing the pain up to the very verge where reason or life gives way. On the floor and walls of the apartment were other and larger instruments for the same fearful end—lacerating, mangling, and agonizing living men; but these we shall meet in other dungeons we are yet to visit.

The first impression on entering the chamber was one of bewildering horror; a confused procession of mangled, mutilated, agonising men, speechless in their great woe, the flesh peeled from off their livid sinews, the sockets where eyes had been, hollow and empty, seemed to pass before one. The most dreadful scenes which the great genius of Dante has



imagined, appeared tame in comparison with the spectral groups which this chamber summoned up. The first impulse was to escape, lest images of pain, memories of tormented men, who were made to die a hundred deaths in one, should take hold of one's mind, never again to be effaced from it.

The things we have been surveying are not the mere models of the instruments made use of in the Holy Office; they are the veritable instruments themselves. We see before us the actual implements by which hundreds and thousands of men and women, many of them saints and confessors of the Lord Jesus, were torn, and mangled, and slain. These terrible realities the men of the sixteenth century had to face and endure, or renounce the hope of the life eternal. Painful they were to flesh and blood ÷nay, not even endurable by flesh and blood unless sustained by the Spirit of the mighty God.

We leave the Torture-chamber to visit the Inquisition proper. We go eastward, about half a mile, keeping close to the northern wall of the city, till we come to an old tower, styled in the common parlance of Nuremberg the Max Tower. We pull the bell, the iron handle and chain of which are seen suspended beside the door-post. The cicerone appears, carrying a bunch of keys, a lantern, and some half-dozen candles. The lantern is to show us our way, and the candles are for the purpose of being lighted and stuck up at the turnings in the dark underground passages which we are about to traverse. Should mischance befall our lantern, these tapers, like beacon-lights in a narrow creek, will pilot us safely back into the day. The cicerone, selecting the largest from the bunch of keys, inserts it in the lock of the mossy portal before which we stand, bolt after bolt is turned, and the door, with hoarse heavy groan as it turns on its hinge, opens slowly to us. We begin to descend. We go down one flight of steps; we go down a second flight; we descend yet a third. And now we pause a moment. The darkness is intense, for here never came the faintest glimmer of day; but a gleam thrown

forward from the lantern showed us that we were arrived at the entrance of a horizontal, narrow passage. We could see, by the flickering of the light upon its sides and roof, that the corridor we were traversing was hewn out of the rock. We had gone only a few paces when we were brought up before a mossy door. As far as the dim light served us, we could see the door, old, powdery with dust, and partly worm-eaten.

Passing in, the corridor continued, and we went forward other three paces or so, when we found ourselves before a second door. We opened and shut it behind us as we did the first. Again we began to thread our way: a third door stopped us. We opened and closed it in like manner. Every step was carrying us deeper into the heart of the rock, and multiplying the barriers between us and the upper world. We were shut in with the thick darkness and the awful silence. We began to realize what must have been the feelings of some unhappy disciple of the Gospel, surprised by the familiars of the Holy Office, led through the midnight streets of Nuremberg, conducted to Max Tower, led down flight after flight of stairs, and along this horizontal shaft in the rock, and at every few paces a mossy door, with its locks and bolts, closing behind him! He must have felt how utterly he was beyond the reach of human pity and human aid. No cry, however piercing, could reach the ear of man through these roofs of rock.

He was entirely in the power of those who had brought him thither. At last we came to a side-door in the narrow passage. We halted, applied the key, and the door, with its ancient mold, creaking harshly as if moving on a hinge long disused, opened to let us in. We found ourselves in a rather roomy chamber, it might be about twelve feet square. This was the Chamber of Question. Along one side of the apartment ran a low platform. There sat of old the inquisitors, three in number: the first a divine, the second a casuist, and the third a civilian. The only occupant of that platform was the crucifix, or image of the Savior on the cross, which still remained. The six

candles that usually burned before the "holy Fathers" were, of course, extinguished, but our lantern supplied their place, and showed us the grim furnishings of the apartment. In the middle was the horizontal rack or bed of torture, on which the victim was stretched till bone started from bone, and his dislocated frame became the seat of agony, which was suspended only when it had reached a pitch that threatened death.

Leaning against the wall of the chamber was the upright rack, which is simpler, but as an instrument of torture not less effectual, than the horizontal one. There was the iron chain which wound over a pulley, and hauled up the victim to the vaulted roof; and there were the two great stone weights which, tied to his feet, and the iron cord let go, brought him down with a jerk that dislocated his limbs, while the spiky rollers, which he grazed in his descent, cut into and excoriated his back, leaving his body a bloody, dislocated mass.

Here, too, was the cradle of which we have made mention above, amply garnished within with cruel knobs, on which the sufferer, tied hand and foot, was thrown at every movement of the machine, to be bruised all over, and brought forth discolored, swollen, bleeding, but still living. All round, ready to hand, were hung the minor instruments of torture. There were screws and thumbkins for the fingers, spiked collars for the neck, iron boots for the legs, gags for the mouth, cloths to cover the face, and permit the slow percolation of water, drop by drop, down the throat of the person undergoing this form of torture. There were rollers set round with spikes, for bruising the arms and back; there were iron scourges, pincers, and tongs for tearing out the tongue, slitting the nose and ears, and otherwise disfiguring and mangling the body till it was horrible and horrifying to look upon it. There were other things of which an expert only could tell the name and the use. Had these instruments a tongue, and could the history of this chamber be written, how awful the tale!

We shall suppose that all this has been gone through; that the confessor has been stretched on the bed of torture; has been gashed, broken, mangled, and yet, by power given him from above, has not denied his Savior: he has been "tortured not accepting deliverance:" what further punishment has the Holy Office in reserve for those from whom its torments have failed to extort a recantation? These dreadful dungeons furnish us with the means of answering this question.

We return to the narrow passage, and go forward a little way. Every few paces there comes a door, originally strong and mossy, and garnished with great iron knobs but now old and moldy, and creaking when opened with a noise painfully loud in the deep stillness. The windings are numerous, but at every turning of the passage a lighted candle is placed, lest peradventure the way should be missed, and the road back to the living world be lost for ever. A few steps are taken downwards, very cautiously, for a lantern can barely show the ground. Here there is a vaulted chamber, entirely dug out of the living rock, except the roof, which is formed of hewn stone. It contains an iron image of the Virgin; and on the opposite wall, suspended by an iron hook, is a lamp, which when lighted shows the goodly proportions of "Our Lady." On the instant of touching a spring the image flings open its arms, which resemble the doors of a cupboard, and which are seen to be stuck full on the inside with poignards, each about a foot in length. Some of these knives are so placed as to enter the eyes of those whom the image enfolded in its embrace, others are set so as to penetrate the ears and brain, others to pierce the breast, and others again to gore the abdomen.

The person who had passed through the terrible ordeal of the Question-chamber, but had made no recantation, would be led along the tortuous passage by which we had come, and ushered into this vault, where the first object that would greet his eye, the pale light of the lamp falling on it, would be the iron Virgin.

He would be bidden to stand right in front of the image. The spring would be touched by the executioner ÷ the Virgin would fling open her arms, and the wretched victim would straightway be forced within them. Another spring was then touched ÷ the Virgin closed upon her victim; a strong wooden beam, fastened at one end to the wall by a movable joint, the other placed against the doors of the iron image, was worked by a screw, and as the beam was pushed out, the spiky arms of the Virgin slowly but irresistibly closed upon the man, cruelly goring him. When the dreadful business was ended, it needed not that the executioner should put himself to the trouble of making the Virgin unclasp the mangled carcass of her victim; provision had been made for its quick and secret disposal. At the touching of a third spring, the floor of the image would slide aside, and the body of the victim drop down the mouth of a perpendicular shaft in the rock. We look down this pit, and can see, at a great depth, the shimmer of water. A canal had been made to flow underneath the vault where stood the iron Virgin, and when she had done her work upon those who were delivered over to her tender mercies, she let them fall, with quick descent and sullen plunge, into the canal underneath, where they were floated to the Pegnitz, and from the Pegnitz to the Rhine, and by the Rhine to the ocean, there to sleep beside the dust of Huss and Jerome.

## Appendix N: There Is No "Age of Accountability"

One of the most common beliefs in the Church today is something called the "age of accountability". This doctrine teaches that God only holds you responsible for your sins once you are old enough to understand the gospel. If you die *before* you reach that age then you are automatically saved and go straight to Heaven; however, if you die *after* you reach that age then you had better be saved or else you will go straight to Hell. In other words, you only need to be a Christian if you die *after* you reach the age of accountability. Everyone else gets a free pass.

Now, the exact age at which God starts holding people accountable is a matter of debate. Most people claim that it is different for each person, and that some people (such as the insane or mentally handicapped) never reach that age at all.

I've attended Baptist churches for a number of years now, and during that time I've heard numerous sermons about this belief. However, one thing I've noticed is that in all the sermons I've heard about the age of accountability, not a single one of them tried to defend this belief with the Bible. *Not a single one.* To me this immediately raised red flags. If this teaching is true then there must be some support for it in the Scriptures, and in that case why not show the proof? Why not proudly display the evidence for all the world to see? After all, pastors use the Bible to defend their beliefs all the time. Why is this topic any different?

I've encountered the same thing when talking to church members about this teaching. No one has ever told me that they began believing this doctrine because they ran across it in the Bible. In every case people believed it simply because they could not believe that God would send a child to Hell. That idea was so

horrifying that the "age of accountability" doctrine *had* to be true. Whether it was *actually* true or not wasn't important. People had an emotional need for it to be true, and so they held on to it. They could not defend it or point to any Bible verses that taught it, but they still believed it all the same.

Now, I am *not* saying that no one in all of history has ever tried to defend this teaching with the Bible. What I *am* saying is that most people believe in this idea for purely emotional reasons. The reason this belief is so widely held is because *people desperately want it to be true*.

The question is, are they right? Is the age of accountability something real, or is it just a myth? Let's take a look and see.

## **The Weak Defense**

If you research this belief you'll quickly discover that very few people try to defend it by quoting Bible verses. Instead theologians will tell you that it's "obviously" not in the character of God to send children to Hell. They'll say that God would never dream of holding people responsible for their sins when they had no idea that they were sinning. They will also say that God would never require faith from someone who was mentally incapable of understanding what faith is.

Interestingly, even though theologians claim that all of these things are "obviously" true, they don't use Bible verses to defend these "obvious" beliefs. If it's not in the character of God to send children to Hell then it should be easy to provide a few Bible verses to back that statement up – but no supporting statements are offered. If God doesn't hold people responsible for sinning out of ignorance then it should be a simple matter for them to show us where the Bible says that – but they don't. If

God doesn't hold mentally challenged people responsible for their lives then it should be easy to show where the Bible teaches that. If these things really are obvious then this should be a simple task – *but it's not*.

In fact, so far I have only found two Bible verses that have been used to support the age of accountability. The first one is this one:

**2 Samuel 12:23:** "But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

This is by far the most commonly quoted verse. If you go up to a pastor and say "Where can I find the age of accountability taught in the Bible?" this is the verse you will be given. In order to understand why, let's back up and take a look at the context. David had committed adultery with Bathsheba, and as a result she got pregnant. Some time after this David sought forgiveness for what he had done. God forgave him, but there were still consequences:

**2 Samuel 12:13:** "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

14 Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die."

In other words, as a consequence of what David had done, God decided to kill his child. David begged God to spare his son, but God did not and the child died. That is when David said what was quoted in verse 23 – he was telling his servants that his



son was dead and there was nothing he could do about it. "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

So what does that phrase mean? Those who teach the age of accountability say that this verse proves their case. In other words, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" is translated to mean "since the child died before he was old enough to believe in God, he is saved and is in Heaven. However, if he had grown up to be a teenager then he would have had to believe in God or else he would wind up in Hell." When you put it like that it seems ridiculous, but that is what people claim the verse means.

Personally, I think they are vastly overstating what David actually said. If "I shall go to him" means "one day I'll die", and if "he shall not return to me" means "he won't come back to life", then what David is saying is "one day I'll die too, but my son won't come back to life." Did David believe that he would see his son in Heaven? Perhaps, but at the very least it's unclear – and David was definitely *not* trying to make a blanket statement that applied to all children that were ever born. What I do know is that David did *not* say "It's fine that my son is dead because all children go to Heaven. God doesn't hold children responsible for their sins." In fact, David doesn't say anything remotely like that.

There is one other verse that could be used to defend this doctrine. It is this one:

**1 John 2:12:** "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake."

At first glance that verse looks quite definitive. I could see how people could use this verse to argue that God doesn't hold a child's sins against him. However, before jumping to conclusions, take a look at what the very next verse has to say:

**I John 2:13:** "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father."

John says that these children have "known the Father." Isn't it quite possible that the reason their sins are forgiven is *because* they have known the Father? In other words, these children are saved not by an age of accountability but *by their relationship with the Father and their faith in Him.*

## **The Consequences of Bad Doctrine**

You might be thinking "So what? Why does it matter?" One reason it matters is because the age of accountability has some really terrible consequences. For example, it teaches that you can lose your salvation. It says that everyone is born saved, but after your brain develops to a certain point you lose that salvation and you must start believing in God. If you die *before* that happens you will go to Heaven, but if you die *afterward* you will go to Hell.

To see what that means, let's say that a child that doesn't believe in Jesus gets hit by a car and dies. This doctrine teaches that if the child is a 12-year-old who had *not* reached the age of accountability, then he would automatically go to Heaven. However, if the car accident happened one year later when the child *had* reached the age of accountability, then he would go to Hell. By virtue of getting *one year older* he lost his ticket to Heaven and was condemned to an eternity of torment.

That seems like a meaningless hypothetical situation, but it's not. You see, there have been more than 50 million abortions

since Roe vs. Wade. If the age of accountability is true then every single one of those aborted babies have gone to Heaven. However, if those babies had *not* been aborted and had been allowed to grow into adulthood, there's a very real chance that many of them would never have accepted Christ. So, then, the age of accountability teaches that being aborted *actually saved them all from Hell*. It means that Roe vs Wade is the greatest evangelic tool that the world has ever seen. It has saved *tens of millions* of people from the fires of Hell and is vastly more effective than any missionary agency in the world.

It is a terrible thing to say, but it is the truth: the age of accountability teaches that aborting your children sends them straight to Heaven. Now, most people are horrified at the thought of murdering their children in order to save their souls, and they should be. It is a horrifying idea and is deeply wrong. *But that is exactly what the age of accountability teaches*. It could not be more clear: if children are born saved but lose their salvation when they reach adulthood, then aborting them before they are born guarantees that they will reach Heaven.

Another way to put this is that the age of accountability encourages people to murder their children – and people have started figuring this out. I read in the news just the other day of a mother who was worried that the Tribulation was about to begin, so she tried to murder her preteen children so that they would be saved. The whole reason she did this was because she thought that all children went straight to Heaven, so killing them would save their souls. Now, what she tried to do was *wrong* and was a terrible sin, but it's the logical consequence of the age of accountability.

Surely you can see that any doctrine that encourages parents to murder their own children is a demonic one. The Bible is clear that God *hates* people who murder children. It upsets Him *tremendously*. Jesus famously said that when it comes to child abuse, it would be better if the abuser had never been

born. One of the reasons God sent the Israelites into exile at Babylon is because they were offering their children as human sacrifices to pagan gods. They were murdering their children and God *did not like it*. Yet despite this, I'm still supposed to believe that thanks to the age of accountability, this act that God so despises actually *guarantees* salvation, and that abortion has actually saved millions of souls? I don't think so. Murder is *not* one of the paths to salvation.

## Everyone Is Held Accountable

If that is really the case then where does the Bible teach these things? I've heard people say "Well, God doesn't hold you accountable if you didn't know your actions were sinful." That sounds like a nice idea, but it's not true. Take a look at this:

**Leviticus 5:15:** "If a soul commit a trespass, and sin through ignorance, in the holy things of the Lord; then he shall bring for his trespass unto the Lord a ram without blemish out of the flocks, with thy estimation by shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for a trespass offering;

16 And he shall make amends for the harm that he hath done in the holy thing, and shall add the fifth part thereto, and give it unto the priest: and the priest shall make an atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and it shall be forgiven him.

Notice that God does *not* say "If a soul sins in ignorance,

he gets a free pass because he didn't know any better." If that were truly the case then the smart thing to do would be to gather up all the Bibles in the world and burn them. Then *everyone* would be ignorant about God's will and so God would give everyone a free pass! If God overlooks ignorant sins then sending out missionaries is a horrible crime, because it educates the ignorant. God would have given those poor natives a free pass, but now that we've told them the truth they are in trouble. (Do you see how ridiculous that line of thinking is? Do you see how it leads straight to madness?)

As you can see, *God required payment even for sins done in ignorance. Those sins were not automatically forgiven and covered.* God instituted a special sacrifice so that the person who sinned in ignorance could ask for forgiveness. God *still* held him accountable for what he had done (even though he didn't realize he was sinning!) and God still required him to seek forgiveness. So, then, it *doesn't matter* if we know that we are sinning or not. A sin is still a sin. God still holds it against us, and we must still seek forgiveness for it.

In fact, the Bible is quite clear:

**Romans 6:23:** "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

If you'll notice, that verse does not have any conditions attached to it. It doesn't say "The wages of sin is death *if* you knew that you were sinning, *if* you have reached adulthood, *if* you are mentally competent, and *if* you are capable of understanding the gospel." Nor does it say "The wages of sin is death for some people, but not for children, or the insane, or the unborn, or those who have never heard about Jesus." It doesn't say *any* of those things. Instead it is clear, direct, and to the point: the wages of sin is death. *Period.* It is death *for everybody*

because everybody has sinned:

**Romans 3:23:** "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

Notice how clear this verse is! It says that all have sinned. It doesn't say "All *adults* have sinned", or "all those who have reached the age of accountability have sinned, but children are innocent and aren't held responsible." People desperately wish that it said that, but it doesn't. There are no exclusions based on age or mental capacity. The Bible really does teach that *everyone* is a sinner, right down to the youngest child. It carves out no exceptions, nor does it teach that God somehow excuses sins that are done in ignorance. The wages of *all* sin – even ignorant sin – is death, no matter how old you are.

You might say "Well, but that doesn't apply to infants. They're innocent." The problem with that idea is that the Bible explicitly says that even the *unborn* are sinners:

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

The psalmist is not saying that he was born of adultery; he is saying that he was a sinner *from conception*. None of us start out innocent. We are not born good people who then somehow fall into sin. We are sinners from the very first moment that our life begins – and life begins at the moment of conception, *not* when we are born. (Incidentally, if life didn't start at conception then it would be impossible to be a sinner at that stage. After all, you can't possibly be a sinner if you're not alive and don't even exist! Sinning is only possible when there is personhood – and that means that life must start at conception.)

Just in case we missed the point, God repeats this idea a few chapters later:

**Psalm 58:3:** "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."

When are the wicked "estranged"? Is it once they reach the age of accountability? No, it is *from the womb*. When do they become evil? Is it when they become teenagers? No, it is *as soon as they are born*. This idea that children are innocent and are incapable of being evil is not Biblical. Psalm 58:3 really does say that the wicked were evil *as babies*.

That is already more than most people can take, but there's more. Does God say that children are not held responsible for the things that they do? No, He doesn't:

**Proverbs 20:11:** "Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right."

Notice how this verse doesn't say "Sure, children misbehave, but it's not a big deal because they're young and haven't reached the age of accountability yet." Instead it says that even children are known for being good or being bad. They are capable of good *and* evil. This idea that children are innocent and sinless is simply not Biblical.

As if all that was not enough, we then come to this:

**1 Corinthians 7:14:** "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy."

This verse says something rather startling. Paul is

examining the situation where one person in a marriage is saved and the other is not. Should they get a divorce? Paul says that there are some cases where they should not get a divorce, and he goes on to discuss them. One case he lists is verse 14, where the couple has children. Since one of the parents is saved, the children are holy. This is important because if neither of the parents were saved the children *would be unclean*.

You can go back and reread the verse if you don't believe me. Notice how Paul divides children into two camps: those who are holy *and those who are not*. This would have been an outstanding time for Paul to say "All children are holy and righteous in the sight of God", but he doesn't say that. Paul actually talks about children *that are not saved!*

## The Final Proof

Now, you might be thinking "Surely there's some other explanation for all this! Maybe these verses are meant to be taken in some symbolic way. Surely God considers *all* children to be holy and righteous." There is actually a passage we can look at to find this out once and for all. In the Old Testament there was a time when God was determined to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. When Abraham found out about this he pleaded with God on behalf of Sodom and asked Him not to destroy it. Abraham finally ended his negotiations with this plea:

**Genesis 18:32:** "And he said, Oh let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake."



Do you know what happened? God couldn't find ten righteous people, so he destroyed the cities:

**Genesis 19:24:** "Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven;  
25 And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground."

The reason I bring this up is because there must have been at least ten children in those cities. In fact, there were probably *thousands* of children. *Yet God did not find ten righteous people!* If all children are innocent and holy in God's sight then God should have spared Sodom and Gomorrah – but that's not what happened. In fact, the only people God rescued were Lot, his wife, and his two daughters. How many children from those cities did God rescue? *Zero*.

If all children are innocent and holy in God's sight then this would have been a fantastic place to make that point – but it did not happen. If God does not hold children accountable for their sins then Romans 3 or I Corinthians 7 would have been a great place to mention that – but it wasn't mentioned.

Nor is this the only place in the Bible where God decided to *not* rescue the children. When God commanded the Israelites to utterly annihilate the city of Jericho, how many of Jericho's children did he save? *Not a single one of them:*

**Joshua 6:16:** "And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city.  
17 And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the Lord: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in

the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.

18 And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.

19 But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the Lord: they shall come into the treasury of the Lord.

20 So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.

21 And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword."

Notice that God actually spared the life of *Rahab the harlot*, but had all the children killed. Nor did God spare any of the children of Amalek:

**I Samuel 15:2:** "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt.

3 Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."

If children truly are innocent in God's sight then God could have spared Amek's children – *but He didn't*. Nor did He spare the children of the Canaanites or the children of Sodom. The only person He spared was Rahab the harlot. *Everyone else died*.

If you've never heard any of this before then these passages are probably shocking. We tend to have our own ideas about what is right and wrong and what is fair and unfair. When God comes along and says that He sees things differently we can become pretty upset, because we want to believe that God thinks the way *we* think. The truth is that God's ways are very different from ours:

**Isaiah 55:9:** "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

So what is the answer? If the age of accountability is not true then what *is* true? What does the Bible actually say?

## **What The Bible Really Says**

Well, let's start in the book of Luke. There was a time when the disciples went to the Lord and were very excited because they had cast out demons. Jesus corrected them and said that wasn't worth getting excited about. Instead they should be rejoicing about something that mattered a great deal more:

**Luke 10:20:** "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."

Now, at first that seems like a strange thing to say. Who cares if your names are written in Heaven? What difference does that make? Well, it actually makes a lot of difference:

**Revelation 20:12:** "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

Anyone whose name was *not* found written in the Lamb's Book of Life was cast into the Lake of Fire, where they would be tormented day and night, forever and ever. However, all those whose names *were* written would be saved and given eternal life. In other words, whether you ended up in Heaven or Hell is completely determined by whether your name is written in that Book. That is why the Lord said that the disciples should rejoice because their name was written in it, since that meant they had eternal life to look forward to.

So, then, that brings up a question: when is your name written down in that all-important Book? Is it when you become saved? Actually, no. All of the names in that Book were written in it *when God created the world*:

**Revelation 17:8:** "The beast that thou sawest

was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is."

In other words, the Book of Life was completed when God created the world. If you are saved then that means your name was written there long before you were born. In fact, you were saved *because* your name was written there. The whole reason you came to faith in Christ *is because your name was written in the Lamb's Book of Life*. That is why God gave you saving faith. You did not choose God; instead He chose you. The matter was decided a very, very long time ago.

This is another truth that is very unpopular, but it is true all the same. As was discussed in the previous chapter, people do *not* come to God and get saved. Instead, God comes to people *and saves them*. From our perspective it looks like we are coming to God, but in reality God is saving us.

Paul expounded upon this idea in Romans:

**Romans 9:11:** "(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)

12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.

13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

In the Old Testament God said that He loved Jacob and hated Esau. Yes, believe it or not, God actually hated Esau. God didn't hate Esau's sin; what He hated was *Esau himself*. We like to say that "God hates sin but loves the sinner," but in this case it

was *the sinner* that God hated.

What is striking about this is that God hated Esau *before he was even born*. He didn't hate Esau because of anything that he had done, because he hadn't done anything yet. This wasn't a case where Jacob was a good boy and Esau was a bad one, so God came to like Jacob and dislike Esau. No, what happened was that before either of them were born God chose to love one of them and hate the other – *and there was nothing either of them could do about it*. God extended His mercy to Jacob and He withheld it from Esau simply to prove that people are saved based on God's divine choice.

I realize that this seems grossly unfair – and that is the very next point that Paul brings up:

**Romans 9:14:** "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

These verses are probably some of the most unpopular verses in the Bible. Make no mistake: God saves some people and does not save others based on *His divine choice*. He chooses to have mercy on some people and He chooses to withhold His mercy from others. As verse 16 says, God doesn't make this decision based on how good you are or who your father was or how much you want it. God is the one who makes the call and He does so based solely on His own will – and He made the decision long before you were born.

This brings up another point: if God chooses to save some people but not others then why does God hold people

accountable? After all, it's not their fault, is it? Paul had this to say about that:

**Romans 9:18:** "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?

20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?

21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"

In other words, God is in charge. He is the one who created the universe and He is the one who formed the human race. God does not owe us anything, including salvation and mercy. All of us have sinned and all of us deserve death. If God chooses to have mercy on some but not others then who are we to tell God that He has no right to do that? As verse 21 says, doesn't the potter have the right to do as he wishes with the clay? If he wants to rescue some pots and leave the others broken then isn't that his business?

What does all that have to do with children? Simply this: although we are saved by repentance and faith in Jesus, the reason that we have faith is because God chose to write our name down in the Book of Life when He created the world. *God chose us*, and because of that we are saved. Theologians call this "irresistible grace", and it is very unpopular – but it is exactly what the Bible teaches.

Whether or not children are saved depends entirely upon whether their names are written in the Book of Life. If they *are* written in it then they will believe and inherit eternal life, and if

they are not then they won't. The Bible makes no exceptions; this policy holds true for everyone.

You might wonder, how can an unborn baby possibly have saving faith? That whole idea seems ridiculous – but that is exactly what we find in the Bible. Take a look at what happened when Mary visited Elizabeth while Mary was still pregnant with Jesus:

**Luke 1:41:** "And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:

42 And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

43 And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

44 For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy."

Why did the unborn John the Baptist leap for joy? Because Mary was carrying the unborn Jesus, and John the Baptist rejoiced in that. Even though John *hadn't even been born yet*, he recognized who Jesus was. John the Baptist had saving faith *before* he was born – and the reason he had it is because God gave it to him. God is fully capable of giving saving faith to people of all ages.

The bottom line is that if God chooses to have mercy on a person then *they will be saved*, no matter what the person's age or circumstances. If God chooses to withhold His mercy then they will be lost.

Can we know for sure if a child is saved? Well, let me ask you a question: can you know for sure if an *adult* is saved? Remember, the wicked disciple Judas fooled everyone. When



Jesus said "One of you will betray me", no one said "Oh, I bet it's Judas! He's got those shifty eyes." The other disciples had no idea who the traitor might be. *Judas fooled the eleven people on Earth who were the closest to Jesus.* If you can't tell if other adults are saved then why would you think that children would be any different?

At the end of the day it has to be enough to know that the matter is in God's hands. He is the one who makes the call, and He is perfect, holy, loving, and just. God will save all those whom He chooses to save – and that applies to both children and adults.

# Appendix P: Textual Criticism

Anyone who walks into a Christian bookstore looking for a Bible will discover that there are a *lot* of different translations available. This can be very intimidating, especially if you're a new Christian and don't know very much about the Bible. Are all translations basically the same, or are some better than others? Given the number of different versions that are out there, how can you possibly tell which ones are good and which ones should be avoided? Is there any way to find out that doesn't involve going to seminary and learning Hebrew and Greek?

Most people don't spend a lot of time thinking about this; after all, it's a difficult subject and is rarely discussed in churches. It has taken me a great deal of study over the course of several years in order to reach my own conclusion. (This chapter is distilled from over 600 pages of research material that I've compiled – and that doesn't count the books that I've purchased about this subject.) This is a very difficult topic, but it's an important one. After all, God expects us to live our lives by His Word. It is therefore *very* important to make sure that the Bible we are reading is an accurate representation of what God has said. If our translation of the Bible is wrong then we are in a lot of trouble.

One fact that complicates the matter is that the Bible was not written in English. The original manuscripts contain a variety of languages, with the Old Testament being predominately Hebrew and the New Testament being predominately Greek. Before we can understand the Scriptures they have to be translated, and translating ancient languages is very difficult.

When people walk into a Christian bookstore and look at the different versions of the Bible, they generally assume that the different versions represent different translations of the same manuscript. In other words, they think that different translators took the same ancient manuscript and translated it in different

ways. However, that is *not* the case. There are actually *two* groups of manuscripts, not one, and some Bible versions are based on one while others are based on the other. What you are seeing is not different translations of the *same* document, but translations of *different documents*.

You see, there are two different manuscript families: the Received Text (which is sometimes called the Textus Receptus) and the Critical Text (which is sometimes called the Westcott-Hort text). Some translations are based on one while other translations are based on the other. Here is how it breaks down:

**Bible Translations based on the Received Text:** King James Version (KJV), Geneva Bible, Great Bible, Matthew's Bible, Coverdale Bible, Tyndale Bible

**Bible Translations based on the Critical Text:** Everything else. (CEV, ESV, GW, GNT, HCSB, ISV, JBP, NAB, NASB, NCV, NET, NIV, NJB, NLT, NKJV (New King James Version), NRSV, REB, TNIV, TM)

One thing you may not have realized is that the New KJV is *not* an updated version of the KJV. It is actually a new translation of the Bible that is based on an entirely different manuscript – the same manuscript that the NIV is based on. (Yes, I know you were told that the NKJV was just an updated version of the KJV, but you were lied to.)

The reason the KJV is different from the NIV is because they are translations of *different things*. Basically, all versions of the Bible released before the 19<sup>th</sup> century were based on the Received Text, while all versions since then (NIV, ESV, etc.) are based on the Critical Text.

This raises some important questions. Just what are the differences between the Received Text and the Critical Text? Are there any differences that matter, or are they basically the same? Are there any reasons to trust one manuscript family over the

other? Where did these manuscripts come from and what are their histories?

These are important questions, and I will try to answer them.

## **The Received Text And The Critical Text Are Very Different**

The first point I'd like to make is that the Received Text and the Critical Text are different, and they are different in ways that affect the meaning of the text. Take the New Testament, for instance: the differences between the two manuscript families affect 7% of its content. The Critical Text deletes 9,970 Greek words out of 140,521, which amounts to almost 34 pages – roughly the combined lengths of Jude and Revelation<sup>28</sup>. This is not a minor difference! The Critical Text (which is the basis for all translations of the Bible since the 19<sup>th</sup> century) eliminates 45 entire verses and 185 partial verses, along with individual words *all throughout the text*. The Critical Text either omits or flags as unreliable these verses:

- Matthew 12:47: "Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee."
- Matthew 17:21: "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."
- Matthew 18:11: "For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost."
- Matthew 21:44: "And whosoever shall fall on this stone

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<sup>28</sup> Thomas Strouse, *Review of "From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man"*, November 2000.

shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

- Matthew 23:14: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation."
- Mark 7:16: "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear."
- Mark 9:44: "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."
- Mark 9:46: "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."
- Mark 11:26: "But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses."
- Mark 15:28: "And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors."
- Mark 16:9-20 (This is the entire ending of the book of Mark, including the Great Commission!)
- Luke 17:36: "Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left."
- Luke 22:43-4: "And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."
- Luke 23:17: "(For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.)"
- John 5:4: "For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had."
- John 7:53-8:11 (This is the story of the woman taken in

adultery)

- Acts 8:37: "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."
- Acts 15:34: "Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still."
- Acts 24:7: "But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands,"
- Acts 28:29: "And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves."
- Romans 16:24: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."
- 1 John 5:7: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."

These verses are all in the Received Text, but they are not in the Critical Text. Bibles based on the Critical Text either question these verses by adding a footnote saying they are not reliable, or eliminate them altogether. For example, try looking up Acts 8:37 in your NIV Bible. It's not there, is it? But it *is* in the KJV.

The differences go beyond missing verses or passages; there are also many places where the individual verses are different in some way. I have given a few examples of this below, to illustrate the fact that the differences between the Received Text and the Critical Text are not trivial. In these examples I am using the KJV to illustrate the Received Text and the NIV to illustrate the Critical Text. Keep in mind that these differences are **not** due to different ways of translating the same manuscript; it is due to the fact that *the two versions are based on different*

*manuscripts.*

### **Colossians 2:18**

KJV: "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,"

NIV: "Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions."

KJV says "hath not seen" while NIV says "has seen". One is opposite the other.

### **Luke 2:14**

KJV: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

NIV: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

KJV says God's good will is toward men; NIV says it is toward men on whom His favor rests. These are not the same.

### **Mark 9:24**

KJV: "And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

NIV: "Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!""

KJV says that the father called Jesus Lord; the NIV does not.

### **Romans 14:10**

KJV: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."

NIV: "You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat."

KJV says that we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ, thus identifying Christ as God and saying that we will stand before Him to be judged. The NIV only identifies it as being God's judgment seat and removes the reference to Christ as God.

### **Ephesians 3:9**

KJV: "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:"

NIV: "and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things."

The KJV says that God created all things by Jesus Christ; the NIV does not specifically single out Jesus Christ as the Creator.

### **Fasting**

The NIV removes almost every reference to fasting in the New Testament, including the only verse in the New Testament that gives a reason for fasting. The verses that are altered are: Matthew 17:21, Mark 9:29, Acts 10:30, 1 Corinthians 7:5, 2



Corinthians 6:5, 2 Corinthians 11:27.

### **Matthew 5:22**

KJV: "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."

NIV: "But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell."

The KJV says angry without a cause; the NIV just says angry. This entirely changes the meaning of what Christ said.

As you can see in just this handful of examples (and there are many more!), the Received Text and the Critical Text are not "basically the same". In fact, this is what one group of translators had to say about it:

"The King James Version has grave defects. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the development of Biblical studies and the discovery of many manuscripts more ancient than those upon which the King James Version was based, made it manifest that these defects are so many and so serious as to call for revision of the English translation." (Preface to the Revised Standard Version)

For the record, I *do not* agree with this translator; I think

the Critical Text is the one that has the grave defects. The reason I used this quote is because I wanted to show you that the people who created the Critical Text did so because they rejected the Received Text and wanted something *different*. There are serious differences between the two – which means that translations based on the Critical Text (such as the NIV or even the NKJV) are different *in important ways* from translations based on the Received Text (such as the KJV or the Geneva Bible).

Given that the two texts are different, the question becomes this: which text is better? Where did the Received Text and the Critical Text come from? Are there any reasons to trust one over the other?

## **The Received Text: Handed Down Through Time**

The Received Text (or Textus Receptus, as it is usually called) has a very simple origin: it is the version of the Bible that has been copied and recopied throughout the centuries and handed down through time. It is based on the idea that God has divinely preserved His Word and that the Bible has not become corrupted or lost. This is important, because the Critical Text is based on the idea that the Bible *has* been lost and needs to be reconstructed by scholars. (I will get to that in the next section.)

Back in the 16<sup>th</sup> century there were multiple copies of the Greek New Testament available. Erasmus (one of the most eminent scholars of that period) collected these copies and divided them into two groups: those that were the generally accepted (or "generally received") texts which were held and used by the Greek churches, and those that were based on manuscripts provided by the Catholic Church. Erasmus created what we now call the Received Text by using the manuscripts that had been passed down through time and held by the Greek

churches. He ignored the manuscripts that the Catholic Church possessed because he believed they had been corrupted. (The manuscripts that were held by the Catholic Church were later used as the basis for the Critical Text.) After spending many years gathering his source material and separating the manuscripts, he compiled his Greek New Testament in a relatively short amount of time (less than a year).

The Greek texts that Erasmus based his New Testament upon were *not* ancient manuscripts, but were copies that had been copied from other copies down through the centuries. (There are some surviving manuscript fragments that are very old indeed, but no complete manuscripts exist.) This copying process was incredibly exacting. Some of the rules that were used by the ancient scribes are:

- Each column must have no less than 48 and no more than 60 lines. The entire copy must first be lined.
- No word or letter could be written from memory. The scribe must have an authentic copy before him, and he must read and pronounce each word aloud before writing it.
- Revisions must be made within 30 days after the work was finished; otherwise it was worthless. If three mistakes were found on any page then the entire manuscript was condemned.
- Every word and every letter was counted. If a letter was omitted, an extra letter inserted, or if one letter touched another, the manuscript was condemned and destroyed.
- Copies were made from older copies, but in the process the older copies would wear out from use, which led to their demise. This is why there are no ancient copies of the manuscripts that Erasmus used: they had disintegrated long ago from being copied. There are some examples of very ancient manuscripts that are nearly

complete, like the Latin Vulgate, but the reason they survived is because people believed they had been corrupted and refused to use them as source material. In short, the manuscripts that were seen as trustworthy were worn out and lost, while the ones viewed as corrupted survived because no one used them.

In summary, the Received Text is based on the idea that the manuscripts that had been handed down through the centuries were still accurate, had not been corrupted, and could be trusted. People held to this view because they believed that God had divinely preserved His Word through time; they did not believe it had become lost or corrupted.

There are a number of translations that are based on the Received Text. The most famous one is the King James Bible (but *not* the New King James Bible). Other translations based upon it include the Geneva Bible and the Tyndale Bible.

## **The Critical Text: From The Catholic Church**

The Critical Text is based upon the idea that the Bible has been corrupted over time and we can never really know exactly what it said. Instead, the best we can do is try to reconstruct the Bible through the guesswork of scholars, using manuscripts provided by the Catholic Church. Proponents of this view *do not* believe that God preserved His Word. It should be noted that the Critical Text forms the basis of *all translations of the Bible since the 19<sup>th</sup> century* (NIV, ESV, NAS, etc.).

The founding principle of the Critical Text is the idea that the text of the Bible has been lost and the best we can do is come up with an approximation of what the Bible might have said. Lest you think I am exaggerating, here are a few quotes

from supporters of the Critical Text:

"The ultimate text, if there ever was one that deserves to be so called, is for ever irrecoverable." (F. C. Conybeare, *History of New Testament Criticism*, 1910, p. 129)

"We do not know the original form of the gospels, and it is quite likely that we never shall." (Kirsopp Lake, *Family 13, The Ferrar Group*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1941, p. vii)

"It is generally recognized that the original text of the Bible cannot be recovered." (R. M. Grant, "The Bible of Theophilus of Antioch," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 66, 1947, p. 173)

"In general, the whole thing is limited to probability judgments; the original text of the New Testament, according to its nature, must be and remains a hypothesis" (H. Greeven, *Der Urtext des Neuen Testaments*, 1960, p. 20, cited from Edward Hills, *The King James Version Defended*, p. 67)

"The primary goal of New Testament textual study remains the recovery of what the New Testament writers wrote. We have already suggested that to achieve this goal is well nigh impossible. Therefore we must be content with what Reinhold Niebuhr and others have called, in other contexts, an 'impossible impossibility'" (R. M. Grant, *A Historical Introduction to the New Testament*, 1963, p. 51)

"...every textual critic knows that this similarity of text indicates, rather, that we have made little progress in textual theory since Westcott-Hort; that we simply do not know how to make a definitive determination as to what the best text is; that we do not have a clear picture of the transmission and alteration of the text in the first few centuries; and, accordingly, that the Westcott-Hort kind of text has maintained its dominant position largely by default" (Eldon J. Epp, "The Twentieth Century Interlude in New Testament Textual Criticism," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 43, pp. 390-391)

I'm going to repeat this one more time: the basic idea behind the Critical Text is that the original text of the Bible has been lost, and the best we can do is make educated guesses about it. Note how the people quoted (all *supporters* of the Critical Text) talk about "probability judgments" and the "recovery" of the New Testament. While the Received Text is based on the idea that God *has* preserved His Word; the Critical Text is based on the idea that God *has not* preserved His word.

The Critical Text is also called the Westcott-Hort Text because of the two primary men behind it, Brooke Foss Westcott (1825-1901) and Fenton John Anthony Hort (1828–1892). Both of these men denied the infallibility of the Scriptures, believed that the Bible was mostly myth and not literal history, and claimed that Christ's death did not atone for our sins. There are many quotes from them that I could give, but I think these are enough to illustrate what they thought about the Bible:

"...the popular doctrine of substitution is an immoral and material counterfeit." (Hort to Westcott, 1860, cited in *Life of Hort*, Vol. I, p.

430)

"No one now, I suppose, holds that the first three chapters of Genesis give literal history – I could never understand how any one reading them with open eyes could think they did..." (Westcott, writing to the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1890, cited in *Life and Letters of Brooke Foss Westcott*, Vol. II, p. 69)

"I am inclined to think that no such state as 'Eden' (I mean the popular notion) ever existed, and that Adam's fall in no degree differed from the fall of each of his descendants..." (Westcott, *Life and Letters of Brooke Foss Westcott*, Vol. I, p. 78)

As you can see, not only did these men reject the idea that Christ died in our place to save us from our sins, but they condemned that very idea as being *immoral*. These two men were *not* Christians and held a very low view of Scripture.

These men based their Critical Text on two major manuscripts that came from the Catholic Church (the Sinaiticus and Vaticanus), along with a handful of Egyptian manuscripts. Some of these documents were known to Erasmus when he assembled the Received Text, but like many of his contemporaries Erasmus rejected them because he thought they were corrupt.

The Vaticanus codex (also known also as Codex B) comes from the Vatican Library. Its history dates back to 1475, when it first appeared in the Vatican Library catalog. It is thought to date back to 4<sup>th</sup> century Egypt. The Sinaiticus codex (known also as Codex Aleph) was discovered by Constantine Tischendorf at Saint Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai; he found the first part of it in 1844 and the second in 1859. Tischendorf found them in a

wastebasket, where they had been placed with a lot of other papers that were about to be used to light a stove. (In other words, he found Codex Aleph in the garbage; it had literally been thrown away and was about to be burned.) These two documents form the majority of the differences between the Received Text and the Critical Text. When you see a footnote in your Bible that says "Some ancient manuscripts do not have this verse", it is referring to Codex Aleph and Codex B.

There are a couple points about these ancient manuscripts that should be mentioned. First, all of these documents are thought to have come from ancient Egypt, which was a hotbed of ancient heresies. If you were looking for accurate, faithful copies of the Scriptures it would be hard to pick a worse spot to look than ancient Egypt. At that time the people there had not only rejected orthodox Christianity, but they also thought nothing about modifying the text of the Bible itself. Dr. Edward Hills said this about the subject:

"For all these documents come from Egypt, and Egypt during the early Christian centuries was a land in which heresies were rampant. So much so that, as Bauer (1934) and van Unnik (1958) have pointed out, later Egyptian Christians seem to have been ashamed of the heretical past of their country and to have drawn a veil of silence across it. This seems to be why so little is known of the history of early Egyptian Christianity. In view, therefore, of the heretical character of the early Egyptian Church, it is not surprising that the papyri, B, Aleph, and other manuscripts which hail from Egypt are liberally sprinkled with heretical readings" (*The King James Version Defended*, p. 134)

Second, these documents do not agree among



themselves. There are 3,036 differences *in just the Gospels*, not counting minor errors such as spelling (Herman Hoskier, *Codex B and its Allies*, vol. II, p. 1). Not only do these documents have serious disagreements with the Received Text, but they also have serious disagreements with each other!

Incidentally, this is why the supporters of the Critical Text talk about "probability judgments". Since their two favorite manuscripts do not agree with each other, it is up to each scholar to decide for himself which version of a passage he likes the best.

Third, given that both Codex Aleph and Codex B were found in the possession of the Catholic Church, and that a manuscript very similar to it (the Latin Vulgate) has their official approval, we should take a moment to discuss how the Catholic Church views the Bible. The Catholic Church does not believe that the Bible is authoritative in and of itself; instead it teaches that the Scriptures derive their authority from the Catholic Church and that *only Catholicism* has the power to decide what is canon and what is not. Catholic fathers like Origen (185 AD – 254 AD), Eusebius (270 AD – 340 AD), and Jerome (340 AD – 420 AD) did not see a need to preserve the original Scriptures. Eusebius modified the text at will (not translated it, but *actually changed it*) and Jerome continued his efforts by preserving as canon the changes that Eusebius had made. Jerome's version became the official version of the Catholic Church, and the Council of Trent declared that it was the only authoritative version of the Scriptures – even though churches outside the Catholic Church would have nothing to do with it.

On top of all this, there is an even larger issue: given the way the Catholic Church spent *fifteen centuries* hunting down and killing people for the "crime" of believing that you are saved by grace through faith apart from works, why on earth would any Protestant believe what they have to say about the Bible? Not only has the Catholic Church preached a false gospel for more than a thousand years, but they have aggressively persecuted

those who rejected Catholicism. As we discussed earlier in this book, over the course of its history the Catholic Church has murdered an estimated *50 million people*. Given the sheer number of people they have killed over the past 1500 years, it is quite possible that the Catholic Church is the worst enemy that Christianity has ever had. Why would any Protestant believe what they have to say about the text of the Bible?

It should also be noted that the Catholic Church has *vigorously* opposed Bible ownership. In fact, for more than a *thousand years* the Catholic Church ruthlessly hunted down and executed people for the crime of having a copy of the Bible. **Pope Gregory IX (1227 – 1241)** prohibited people from owning Bibles and prohibited Bible translations from being made. The **Council of Toulouse (1129)** and the **Council of Tarragona (1234)** prohibited people from possessing *or reading* translations of the Bible that were made in the common languages (the only languages that people could actually understand). Those who were found to possess Bibles (or portions thereof) were executed and their Bibles were burned. **Pope Gregory X (1271 – 1276)** ordered that all copies of the Bible that had been translated into the common tongues be brought to Bishops and burned. **Pope Julius III (1550 – 1555)** issued a series of bulls commanding the destruction of all heretical and Lutheran books. This included vernacular translations of the Bible. **Pope Paul IV (1555 – 1559)** prohibited the possession of Bible translations not permitted by the Inquisition. Those who were found to possess Bibles were executed.

The Council of Trent prohibited *anyone* from reading the Bible without a license. **Pope Clement VII (1592 – 1605)** forbade anyone from granting these licenses, thus prohibiting the common people from reading the Bible under any circumstances. He then sent "missionaries" to the valley of Piedmont *for the express purpose of destroying all Bibles in that area* and those who owned them. Nicholas Walsh was murdered while in the act

of translating the first Irish New Testament. **Pope Benedict XIV (1740 – 1758)** confirmed the Council of Trent's prohibitions against Bible translations. **Pope Pius VII (1800 – 1823)** *condemned* the Bible societies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – and on and on it goes.

Given that the Catholic Church has a history of both modifying the text of the Bible *and executing people who dared to own a copy of it*, why would anyone believe that the manuscripts they provided can be trusted? The Catholic Church has done its very best to stamp out Bible ownership entirely. They have killed millions of people because they rejected salvation by works. When they come forward and claim that certain words and verses ought to be deleted from the Bible based on manuscripts *that they have provided*, why would anyone believe them?

All of this is on top of the fact that Codex Aleph and Codex B are quite different and contradict each other in many places. Since the two manuscripts are so inconsistent, Westcott and Hort developed something called Textual Criticism in order to reconcile the problems. (This, incidentally, is where the name "Critical Text" came from). Some of its guiding principles are as follows:

- In matters of textual criticism, the Bible is to be treated just like any other book.

Westcott and Hort believed that there is no principle of divine inspiration and preservation. They did not believe that God had preserved His Word, or that there was anything particularly special about the Bible. They taught that it should be treated just like any other book. This is how they put it:

"The principles of criticism explained in the

foregoing section hold good for all ancient texts preserved in a plurality of documents. In dealing with the text of the New Testament no new principle whatever is needed or legitimate" (Westcott and Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, vol. 2, Introduction and Appendix, 1881).

The next time someone mentions "textual criticism", remember that one of its guiding principles is that *there is nothing special about the Bible*.

- Early Christians were not careful about the text of the New Testament and had no special interest in its exact preservation.

Westcott and Hort believed that Christians were careless when they copied the New Testament and didn't really care if their copies were accurate or not. That is completely wrong; as we mentioned earlier, the copies that were handed down through the centuries were made with great care.

However, this *was* true in ancient Egypt – *the very place where Westcott and Hort got the manuscripts they used to create their Greek New Testament!* They chose to reject manuscripts that had been carefully copied for centuries, and instead used manuscripts from a region that was known for both careless copying and tampering with the text!

- The Received Text that creates the foundation of the King James Bible is consistent because in the 4<sup>th</sup> century a group of editors got together and smoothed out any differences.

Westcott and Hort believed that the only reason the Received Text manuscripts are so uniform and free from contradiction (which should be a big point in their favor) is because someone got together and fixed all of the manuscripts. The problem with this theory is that there is no evidence such a council ever happened. One person put it this way:

"The weakness of Westcott and Hort's theory of a 4<sup>th</sup> century Syrian revision which resulted in the substitution of the majority text of the B Aleph text is that such a revision is unknown to history. The whole scheme rests upon a supposition for which there is no historical evidence, and consists largely in making dogmatic assertions based upon uncertainties" (Terence Brown, *What is Wrong with the Modern Versions of the Holy Scriptures?* Trinitarian Bible Society, Article No. 41)

- The traditional text (received text) did not exist prior to the middle of the third century.

Westcott and Hort believed that the Received Text was only invented in the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and did not exist before that. This is not true! Writings of the Church fathers that predate the 3<sup>rd</sup> century contain thousands of quotations from it. Let me repeat that, in case you missed it: when the early Church quoted from the Bible they quoted the *Received Text*. Their quotations do *not* match the Critical Text. That alone ought to tell you which version can be trusted and which one can't.

- Manuscripts that are characterized by contradictions

should be preferred over those that are not.

Westcott and Hort believed that manuscripts that were full of contradictions and problems were the best ones to use. They avoided clean manuscripts and preferred to work with texts that were full of problems and errors!

- Textual critics can use guesswork to determine the true correct reading.

Westcott and Hort believed that the true reading could be determined *by guesswork*. All a critic had to do was look at the different readings and picked the one they liked the best. Lest you think I am making this up, I checked the translator's notes at the back of my NIV Bible. This is what they had to say:

The Greek text used in translating the New Testament was an eclectic one. No other piece of ancient literature has such an abundance of manuscript witnesses as does the New Testament. Where existing manuscripts differ, the translators made their choice of readings according to accepted principles of New Testament textual criticism. Footnotes call attention to places where there was uncertainty about what the original text was.

The word "eclectic" means "selecting or choosing from various sources". The translators of the NIV actually come right out and admit that the NIV is based on manuscripts that contradict each other. In order to arrive at a final reading the translators used the rules of *textual criticism* – the very rules that we just discussed! A group of translators picked the reading they

happened to like the best and just went with it – and that is the foundation for *every single modern translation of the Bible*. The only translations of the Bible that are *not* based on textual criticism are ones that predate the 19<sup>th</sup> century, like the King James Bible and the Geneva Bible.

## **Did God Preserve His Word?**

This issue really comes down to just one point: either God *did* preserve His Word, or He did not. If He did then we can know with certainty what God has revealed to mankind. We can live with confidence because we know that the words written in the Bible truly are the actual words of God. We can trust it with our lives because it contains exactly what God has said.

However, if God did *not* preserve His Word then that means His Word has been lost. It means that the Bible *might* contain God's revelation, but then again it might not. The Bible might have critical omissions or errors. Important things might have been lost. All we can do is trust scholars to make their best guesses and then hope that those guesses are right. It means that we have to trust a document that *isn't trustworthy*.

Sure, you can argue that the original autographs are inspired and infallible and perfect in every way, but if God didn't preserve them in that state then that makes no difference. The Bible's inspiration only matters *if the original text has been preserved*. If it hasn't then the best we can do is make guesses about what God might have said. It means that the eternal, all-powerful God revealed His Word to mankind, commanded us to base our very souls on it, and then allowed it to be lost and corrupted. Let me repeat that: it means that *God willingly died for our sins but couldn't be bothered to keep His Word from being lost*. If that is true then the salvation of your soul depends upon a

document that can't be trusted and that might be wrong in critical ways.

It's worth noting that God promised repeatedly that He would preserve His words – not His thoughts or ideas, but His *words*. Take a look for yourself:

**Matthew 5:18:** "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

**Matthew 24:35:** "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

**Isaiah 40:8:** "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

God could not be more clear: "my words shall not pass away." He didn't say that His basic thoughts or ideas would be preserved; He said that His *words* would be preserved. That is a very important promise.

Incidentally, it is useless to say "Well, God preserved His Word in Heaven, but it's been corrupted and lost on Earth". You see, God gave His Word to *mankind*. If His Word has been lost on Earth then it can no longer accomplish its purpose. A Word that has been preserved in Heaven but lost on Earth is completely useless. After all, God gave it to us so that we might have hope:

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

If the Word has been lost then how can we have hope in it? How can we proclaim the gospel to the whole world (which is



what God commanded us to do) if the Bible has been corrupted and we no longer know what it says? If the Bible has not been preserved then it *cannot be trusted* – and if the Bible cannot be trusted then Christianity cannot be trusted either.

## Two Different Philosophies

Despite what you may think, this is not about the King James Bible or the NIV Bible. The real issue is the two different manuscript families and the philosophies that are behind them. The Received Text is based upon the idea that God has preserved His Word through the centuries and that we can trust the text that has been copied and recopied. It claims that the text of the Bible has not been lost but has been divinely preserved. The King James Bible, the Geneva Bible, and the Tyndale Bible are all based on this.

On the other hand, the Critical Text is based on the idea that the text of the Bible *has* been lost. It claims that the manuscripts we should trust the most are the ones that come from the Catholic Church – the very same church that spent more than *a thousand years* hunting down and murdering anyone who dared to own a copy of the Bible. It claims that while we can never really know what the Bible originally said, we can come up with an approximation by applying guesswork and the rules of textual criticism – rules made up by two men who believed that the Bible was largely myth and that Christ's death did not atone for our sins. The Critical Text is missing more than 30 pages of text from the New Testament, including individual words, verses, and entire passages. All modern translations are based on this foundation, including the ESV, the NIV, the NAS, the New KJV, the HCSB, and so forth.

Let me say this one more time: the real issue is *the*

*manuscripts that the translations are based on.* Some churches proudly proclaim that they are "KJV Only" churches and denounce all other translations as coming straight from Hell. Some claim that the KJV is a divinely inspired translation, while others bizarrely insist that the original manuscripts of the Bible were written in English and reject anyone who claims otherwise. All of that is utter nonsense. I use the KJV because it is based on the Received Text and because I trust the Received Text more than I trust the Critical Text. However, it is by no means the only translation that is founded upon the Received Text; other translations that use it include the Geneva Bible, the Great Bible, Matthew's Bible, the Coverdale Bible, and the Tyndale Bible. Even if you side with the Received Text, there is absolutely no reason to be "KJV Only". That is just going too far.

I have written this chapter for two reasons: first, so that you will understand why I use the KJV, and second, so that you will understand what the issues are surrounding the various translations of the Bible. When you select a translation you are also selecting a philosophy. I want to make sure you understand exactly what choice you are making – because you *are* making a choice, whether you realize it or not.

## **Hasn't The KJV Been Changed Countless Times?**

One common argument against the KJV is that it has been changed thousands of times. This argument is made so often that you would imagine it was true, but it's actually very misleading.

It *is* true that there have been corrections made for printing errors, typographical changes, and spelling updates. The punctuation has also been updated. However, these changes were quite minor and *do not affect the actual translation*. Changing a word because it is spelled differently now than it was

400 years ago is not a big deal. Likewise, there is no reason for anyone to panic just because the rules of punctuation have changed over the past four centuries.

Dr. Donald Waite of Bible for Today compared the 1611 KJV with the 1917 KJV. Out of 791,328 words, he found only 1,095 changes that affected the way that the verses sound. The vast majority of these changes were minor – "towards" was changed to "toward", "burnt" was changed to "burned", etc. There were only 136 substantial changes, most of which were printer's errors that were corrected within 28 years of the KJV's original publication. Some of these 136 changes are:

1 Samuel 16:12 -- "requite good" changed to "requite me good"

Esther 1:8 -- "for the king" changed to "for so the king"

Isaiah 47:6 -- "the" changed to "thy"

Isaiah 49:13 -- "God" changed to "Lord"

Isaiah 57:8 "made a" changed to "made thee a"

Ezekiel 3:11 -- "the people" changed to "the children of thy people"

Nahum 3:17 -- "the crowned" changed to "thy crowned"

Acts 8:32 -- "shearer" changed to "his shearer"

Acts 16:1 -- "which was a Jew" changed to "which was a Jewess"

1 Peter 2:5 -- "sacrifice" changed to "sacrifices"

Jude 1:25 -- "now and ever" changed to "both now and ever"

So no, the KJV has *not* been changed thousands of times. It is still the same as it was when it was released in 1611.

## Appendix 6: Unbiblical Church Practices

If you take a look at the many different denominations that exist today, you will find some pretty significant differences when it comes to the doctrines that they teach. However, one thing they all seem to have in common is the way they do church. There seems to be almost universal agreement that there's only one way to have a church service. It's true there are some differences from one church to another, but those differences are largely superficial. This is very unfortunate, because I think the way we've decided to "do church" is very unbiblical. Not only is it unbiblical, but it might be one of the worst possible ways that a church service could be conducted.

What I'd like to do is take a closer look at our church services and the many problems associated with them. I want to explore what the Bible actually has to say about "doing church" – and how completely different its teachings are from the way we do things. There's an enormous gap between the Biblical church and what we have today, and it doesn't seem like very many people have noticed.

Nearly all churches hold their primary (and most important) service on Sunday morning. People from all over the city drive to a building that's universally called "the church". They typically show up a few minutes before the service starts and take their seat. An usher at the door hands them a bulletin, which tells them exactly what's going to happen during the service. The reason the bulletin is so detailed is because the church staff has spent the entire week planning this service. They know exactly what songs are going to be sung, what prayers will be made, what the sermon is going to be about, and how long the service will last (usually within a few minutes).

The service starts out with singing, which is led by the song leader. (In many churches this is a full-time paid position.) At some point the announcements are made and the offering is collected. Someone reads some Scripture, someone leads the congregation in prayer, and then the pastor starts his sermon. He's been working on it all week so he knows exactly what he's going to say. Usually he's prepared a PowerPoint presentation to go along with it. Once his sermon is over it's pretty common to have an "altar call", where people are asked to go to the front of the church and pray what's called "the sinner's prayer". As soon as the service is over the congregation immediately goes home.

There may be some differences from church to church, but that's very close to how all mainline Protestant churches handle their services. It doesn't matter what your denomination is: the service is going to be handled more or less the same way. Some churches may have responsive readings while others don't, but the differences are minor. No one questions the way churches do things. This is the way things have always been done, and it's widely accepted – but I don't think it's right.

If you go to church on Sunday morning, are you going to have any opportunities to meaningfully interact with another human being? Probably not. After all, most people arrive shortly before the service starts and then go home the moment it ends. If you're lucky you might be able to have a short and fairly meaningless conversation with whoever is sitting behind you (probably along the lines of "Hello!"). However, you can go to church every Sunday morning for *years* and never learn anything significant about the people who have been sitting behind you. That's just how it is. If you want to get to know people you'll have to find some other way to do it, outside of the service. (Good luck with that. It won't be easy.)

Once the service starts, you're going to spend the entire time doing exactly what you're told. You will sing whatever songs you're told to sing, and pray whatever you're told to pray. You will

give when it's time to give. When the pastor starts his sermon you will listen to it quietly. The only time the congregation will speak is when the pastor tells them to repeat some phrase he has said, and then they will say exactly what the pastor told them to say. Your job in the service is to be completely passive. There's literally nothing for you to do but sit there until it's time to go home.

Is there something you wanted to sing? Sorry, the songs are all chosen in advance. You can always sing at home, in the shower. Do you have a prayer request? Sorry, there's no time for that in the Sunday morning service (or the Sunday evening service, if your church happens to have one of those). You'll have to pray at home. Are you struggling with something in your life? Sorry, the church service isn't the place to mention that. Do you have a question about the pastor's sermon? Sorry, you can't speak up and ask him – his sermon is timed, and he has to finish at a precise moment so everyone can go home. Did the pastor make a terrible mistake and say the wrong thing? Sorry, you can't correct him. You just have to let it go, even if it means people will be misled and go away believing the wrong thing. Does the pastor's sermon cover material you already know? Sorry about that. There's nothing you can do but sit there and hope that next week he has different material.

If you don't show up at church for a month, is that going to impact the service? Nope. You weren't allowed to contribute anything anyway (except for your money). The people who normally sit behind you might notice that your spot is empty, but your absence isn't going to change the service. If half the church stayed home (which is actually pretty normal), the service would still unfold exactly as planned. The same songs would be sung, the same prayers would be prayed, and the same sermon would be given. This is because the only people who are allowed to participate in the service is the church staff (who are often paid and in full-time positions). They pick all the songs, and all the

prayers, and the sermon topic. The reason you are coming is to watch a performance, not participate.

While you're there you're probably going to spend 30 minutes (or more) listening to a sermon. Was that sermon written with you in mind? Nope. Since the congregation has hundreds or even thousands of people in it, the pastor can't possibly write something that's directed at your needs. Instead he will pick a passage from the Bible and preach on it, and hope that somehow you will find something meaningful in it. Since he's preaching to a lot of people (many of whom may be Biblically illiterate), he can't go very deep. If you've been attending church for a while it's quite likely that you've either heard that message before or you're already familiar with the passage, which means the pastor may have nothing for you at all. Also, since the pastor knows that many of the people in his congregation might not be Christians, he's going to spend time explaining the gospel and asking people to come forward and "get saved". That's why some people try to sneak out at the end of the service – they don't want to hear the same altar call for the thousandth time.

Our church services are very strange. If you want to pray, you can do that – at home. If you want to sing, you can do that – at home. If you want to study the Bible and really dig into a passage, you can do that – at home. If you want to get to know people, you can do that – at home. If you're struggling with something, you can get help – by reaching out to someone *outside* of the service and making an appointment. (Some pastors charge for counseling, so keep that in mind.) If you have questions then you can always go home and try to look up the answers online.

Suppose that people *didn't* go to the church building on Sunday and instead remained at home and watched the service online. Would anything change? Well, from the *pastor's* perspective it would be terrible because his audience was gone.

It's very difficult to preach to an empty room! However, from the *congregation's* perspective it would largely be the same. It's true they would miss out on the 15 seconds they spend saying "Hello" to that person who has set behind them for the past five years, but other than that it's pretty much the same. They would still sing what they're told, pray whatever they're told, and listen to a sermon that wasn't written with them in mind. The congregation has no way of contributing if they show up, and they also have no way of contributing if they stay home.

Suppose that instead of watching a *live* sermon, they listen to a sermon that was recorded 10 years ago by someone a thousand miles away. Would anything change? Nope. They're still listening to a sermon that wasn't written with them in mind. They're still singing what they're told to sing and praying what they're told to pray. They're still not participating in any meaningful way. They're just passive participants, listening to a service that doesn't actually need them at all and which can go on just fine without them.

Many people never question this. After all, church services have always been this way! This is just how things are. However, the truth is that services have *not* always been this way. In fact, the services that we find in the New Testament are *completely different* from the way we do things today. Not only would the apostles not recognize our services, I suspect they would be very unhappy at what we've done. The modern church has picked what might be the worst possible way to "do church". Let's take a look at what the Bible has to say about the subject.

## **Church Buildings Are Unbiblical**

Have you ever noticed that when people mention the building in which services are held, they always call it "the



church"? This is universal across all denominations. If you talk to pastors about this they will eventually say that the church is really the people, and the building is just a building. The problem is that no one seems to actually believe that. In *practice* the church really is the building. (I know that's hard to believe, but by the time we reach the end of this discussion I think you'll see what I mean. Actions speak louder than words.)

If a pastor has founded a church in a new city and is meeting in a location that's not a church building, he will earnestly desire a building of his own. He will ask his congregation to make painful financial sacrifices in order to raise the enormous amounts of money that are required to purchase a building. Once he has that building, he will want to renovate it and expand it. There is no point at which the building is considered to be "large enough": it can always be bigger and pack in more people. That's why there are church buildings that can seat thousands upon thousands of people, and which have restaurants and movie theaters and art galleries and gymnasiums. Pastors universally want to have the biggest building they possibly can. That's what they dream about. Preaching to ten thousand people every Sunday morning would be a dream come true.

Is that how things were done in the New Testament? Nope. The Bible never says that Christians should invest millions of dollars in buildings and then hold their church services there. In fact, there are no cases anywhere in the New Testament where anyone even *considered* doing such a thing! Instead churches met in people's homes:

**1 Corinthians 16:19:** "The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house."

**Colossians 4:15:** "Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house."

**Philemon 1:2:** "And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house:"

But that was a foolish way of doing things, right? After all, the early church was poor and didn't have many options. They were also fiercely persecuted, so it would have been impossible for them to buy real-estate and construct a building! They did they best they could under the circumstances, but we live in different times. It is only right for Christians to build religious buildings wherever they can. That's how many people think – but does the Bible actually say that? The truth is, *it doesn't*.

If God wanted Christians to build church buildings He definitely could have told us. After all, in the Old Testament He commanded the Jews to build the temple. We tend to think that since God told the Jews to build the temple in the Old Testament, Christians should build religious buildings as well because God really likes buildings. The problem is there's no Scriptural support for that. God never said "Go into all the world and build million-dollar buildings". Instead the pattern we find in the New Testament is *people meeting in homes*. In fact, that's the *only* pattern we're given!

Church buildings are actually a terrible idea. First of all, church buildings make it impossible for the pastor to do his job. What do I mean by that? Well, I think that pastors would universally agree that they're shepherds, and their job is to take care of their sheep. It's pretty clear that shepherds should model themselves after the Good Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ. He had a lot to say about being a shepherd:

**John 10:11-14:** "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."

Jesus contrasted a good shepherd with a hireling. The good shepherd knows all of his sheep, and they know him. He cares for them and watches over them and protects them when they're in danger – even risking his own life when necessary. When one of his sheep gets in trouble, he immediately notices and goes after him:

**Luke 15:4:** "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost."

Suppose that your church is meeting in someone's house, and is composed of 15 people. Can the shepherd get to know everyone? Of course! In that sort of setting everyone could learn about everyone else, and form a very close bond. Would the shepherd notice if something happened to someone? Absolutely – it would be immediately obvious.

But that's not the way modern churches are, is it? If your

church has hundreds of members then it's possible the pastor may recognize you, but that's probably going to be the extent of your interaction with him. He's not going to know much about you at all, and if you're in trouble he's not going to be aware of it. If your church has thousands or tens of thousands of members then it's quite possible he will never notice you're there at all. In a case like that, if you get in trouble you'll need to fill out a form and file it with the right person and schedule an appointment to meet with a counselor, and possibly pay a counseling fee. That means if you're a lost sheep, you will have to rescue yourself. No one is going to come looking for you because the congregation is very large, and you are too small to notice.

But house churches wouldn't have that problem, would they? Since they're small they can form a community. Since they're small, everyone can get to know everyone else. Since they're small they can become involved in one another's lives. Since they're meeting in a house it's impossible for them to grow very large – there simply isn't enough space. That forces them to remain small, *which is a good thing*.

Here's another way to look at it. The world outside the church understands that small classroom sizes are much better and more desirable than large ones. If you're a student who's trying to learn something, it's much better to be in a classroom with 30 other students than a classroom with 3000 other students. Education can be improved by reducing the ratio of students to teachers and allowing each teacher more time to work with students individually. If you are one student in a classroom with thousands of other students, it's going to be almost impossible to get much of the teacher's time – which means you're largely on your own. Large classroom sizes are very bad for students – and yet *that's precisely how our churches are designed*.

Why are they designed that way? Because the truth is the building is more important than the people. We may never say

that out loud, but that's what our *actions* are saying. After all, we ask people to make great sacrifices in order to raise huge sums of money to pay for the building – and once they enter that building their reward is to be put into an enormous group and then sit passively until the service is over and they can go home. For many congregations the upkeep on the building itself is a crippling expense. People have to pay for the building itself, and pay to maintain the building, and pay to maintain the parking lot. If they're not paying off the mortgage then they're raising money to build a new building (because building projects never end). Millions and millions of dollars are spent building very elaborate and expensive buildings that do a very poor job of serving the people.

In the Sunday morning service that's held in these large and elaborate buildings, which is the only service that most people attend, can people make prayer requests? Nope – you must do that elsewhere. Can they ask questions during the pastor's sermon? Nope – it doesn't work that way. If they want to pray or sing or study or get to know people or build relationships, they have to do it *outside the building*. The building doesn't seem to be there to serve them; instead they are there to serve the building. They would actually be much better off without it! Not only would it save them an enormous expense (which would free up money for things like missions), but it would force them to meet in small groups in people's homes.

No, I'm not suggesting that we take the Sunday morning experience and transplant that into people's homes. The building is only part of the problem. We also need to take a closer look at what we're actually doing in our services, which is what we'll discuss next.

## Modern Church Services Are Unbiblical

The early church did *not* conduct services the way that we do today. They had a very different approach:

**1 Corinthians 14:26-33:** "How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."

When the early church came together, everyone had a psalm to sing or something they wanted to say. Did Paul rebuke this? Nope. Instead he told them to conduct their services in an orderly manner. If people had something to say then let them say it, and let other people judge what was said. It was actually *good* for everyone to speak, one by one, so that everyone could learn and be comforted.

Did Paul say that all songs should be chosen by the song leader? Nope. In fact, the very position of "song leader" cannot be found in the New Testament! In order to find that position you need to go back to the sacrificial system. In the temple there

were priests who offered sacrifices and song leaders who led people in song – but the church wasn't designed to be like the temple. You won't find any passages in the New Testament where an apostle says "All songs must be chosen by the song leader, and everyone must do what he says. It's foolish and wrong for people to have their own songs."

Did Paul say that only seminary-trained pastors should speak in the service, and everyone else must remain silent? Nope. Instead he encourages *everyone* to speak so that everyone can learn. There's no passage anywhere in the Bible that says "If you aren't a pastor then you have no right to say anything. Let the pastor do all the preaching. Your job is to sit there silently." Paul seemed to think that everyone had something valuable to contribute and should be given an opportunity to say something. His only stipulation was that things should be done decently and in order.

Did Paul say that people should listen quietly to whatever the preacher said and accept it without question, because the pastor has attended seminary and you have no right to judge him? Nope. Instead Paul specifically stated that people *should* judge the message and comment on it. This means if the person who was speaking said something wrong, he could immediately be corrected.

Did Paul say that only one person is allowed to speak in a service? Nope. It may seem that "two or three" is a significant limitation, but you need to remember that New Testament churches met in very small groups in people's homes. Having three people teach in a setting where only 15 people were present is very different from having one person speak with three thousand are present (which is the situation we have today). Paul isn't saying that only the pastor has the right to speak. He's saying that things should be done in an orderly fashion.

We also need to remember that the early church met

*every day:*

**Acts 2:46:** "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,"

**Acts 5:42:** "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."

This doesn't mean that every day people drove across town and had a Sunday morning service. Instead people would gather to the home of their friend (who lived nearby). They would sing whatever songs they wanted to sing and pray whatever they wanted to pray. If they had something going on in their life they would talk about it. The group would study the Bible for a while and discuss it, asking whatever questions were necessary. The service had no predetermined length; it would last as long as it needed to. It might be only a few minutes long, or it might last all night and into the next morning:

**Acts 20:7:** "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight."

No one really cared how long or short the service was. There was no danger of running out of time. The people came together to worship God, and they were going to continue until they were done. They weren't interested in setting aside a fixed block of time on Sunday morning and then sticking to that schedule so they could get back home as soon as possible.

Since this was a small group, it was easy to get together



frequently. It's true that perhaps not everyone could gather every day, but they met so frequently that it wasn't a problem. Since the group was small, people could make prayer requests. Since the service wasn't timed, they had all the time they needed to sing and pray and teach and ask questions. The sermons could be as short or long as they needed to be. If multiple people had something to share or teach then they could do it.

This meant the order of the service wasn't determined in advance. Instead it reflected the needs of the people. If someone was struggling with a problem then the group could help them. Also, in a group that small there's no need to keep sermons simple and basic. Since everyone knows everyone else, the pastor can preach sermons that address people's specific needs and situations, instead of preaching a random passage and hoping that somehow works out. In a small group it becomes possible to address specific situations – especially if everyone has the freedom to speak up and contribute.

Since so few people are participating in the service, it makes a big difference if people stop coming for a few weeks because *those people are no longer there to make their contribution*. If half the people are missing the service is going to be *very* different – and not nearly as good.

A pastor of a large church can't possibly get involved in the lives of five thousand people. However, it *is* possible for a small group to gather in someone's home and get to know one another, and become involved in each other's lives. In a setting like that you could see enormous spiritual change because you would finally be able to address the problems that people were actually having. The pastor could focus his preaching on areas where it was actually needed. He wouldn't be preaching at random anymore.

Could you imagine if a pastor preached a sermon that addressed your situation specifically? That would be impossible in a large church, but not in a small house church. Which do you

think would be more helpful to the congregation: random sermons that may have nothing to do with what they're struggling with, or messages that were preached specifically with them in mind that give them the exact answers they're looking for? If the goal of the church is to have big buildings then we should probably keep doing what we're doing. However, if the goal of the church is to help people grow spiritually and make disciples then we need a better system. Do you *really* think you can help people by preaching passages at random, instead of finding out what's actually going on in their life and using the Bible to address that situation? There may be times when it makes sense to preach the same generic message to 5000 people. However, if your goal is truly to help people grow then you need to put all your effort into having your "classroom sizes" be as small as possible so you can work with people individually and address their specific needs. The world outside the church understands this. When is the church going to learn this lesson?

I realize that some churches have what they call "small groups". That is where people meet in small groups (usually in people's homes) in order to do the things that can't be done in the Sunday morning service (like make prayer requests and ask questions). Here's my question: if you already have small groups then *why do you have anything else?* If people are already meeting in small groups in people's homes then you don't need an expensive building, with all the upkeep and maintenance that it requires. People can sing and pray and preach *in the small group*. The only thing the building provides is a chance for thousands of people to sit passively in chairs while someone preaches a generic sermon at them, *and that's precisely what we need to get away from*. I am not at all opposed to small groups (provided they aren't just "the Sunday Morning service performed on a smaller scale in a house"). I simply find it foolish to spend all that time and money on a building that you don't need *because you already have small groups*.

## It's A Bad Idea To Pay Pastors

One of the biggest problems in many churches is that congregations pay their pastors a full-time salary – in spite of the fact it's a huge burden on the church and puts them in a difficult financial position. Now, I realize it's not a sin to give the pastor a salary. After all, the apostle Paul does say this:

**1 Corinthians 9:3-11:** "Mine answer to them that do examine me is this, Have we not power to eat and to drink? Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?"

That's a very strong statement! Paul makes it very clear that there's nothing wrong with paying people for the spiritual services they provide. However, did Paul accept a salary from any of the churches that he ministered to? No, he did not. Instead he provided for his own financial needs by being a tentmaker so he

wouldn't be a burden to the churches. He knew it would be hard for them to pay a salary and he didn't want to burden them with his expenses. Even though Paul had every right to ask churches to pay him in return for all he did for them, he refused to exercise that right:

**1 Corinthians 9:12:** "If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ."

Paul chose to pay his own way because he didn't want to hinder the gospel. Paul's life would have been a lot easier if he had taken money from the churches, and he had every right to take that money, but he refused to do it. The gospel was too important to him.

There are many churches in this country that are struggling financially. Do you know what their biggest expenses are? The building and the staff. If they didn't have a building (because they met in small groups in people's homes) and they didn't have to pay their staff, they would actually be fine. In fact, without those expenses they would have plenty of money to devote to missions – *which is one of the key tasks of the church*. It's an enormous financial burden for a church to pay multiple pastors, and a youth minister, and a song leader, and a secretary, and someone to clean the building, and someone to mow the lawn. That takes a lot of money that could be spent on *actually spreading the gospel*.

But suppose we did things the way we see in the New Testament. If people met in small groups in people's homes then there would be no need to pay for a building. We wouldn't need to hire maintenance people or someone to take care of the church grounds. The pastor's job would be *much* easier because

the group is small and everyone is contributing and speaking. There wouldn't be a need for him to spend 40 hours working on a sermon, because each time the church meets (which is very often) they would talk about whatever needed to be addressed that day, or the passage of Scripture they were all studying. Sermons wouldn't have to be a predetermined length, and all of the responsibility for teaching wouldn't fall on the pastor. Since everyone was helping one another, all the work wouldn't fall on the pastor – which means he would have time to work and provide for his family. As you can see, everything changes once you get rid of the church building and start meeting in small groups in people's homes. (The next time you're given a copy of your church's budget in a business meeting, look at all the money that's being spent on salaries and the church building. Now imagine if all that money was going to missions instead. Do you see what a huge difference that could make? Shouldn't we be doing everything possible to reduce our expenses so we can maximize our work in the mission field?)

There's another reason why it's not a good idea for churches to pay pastors, and that's because money is very corrupting. Pastors know that their salary depends on keeping their congregations happy. The congregation voted him into his position, and he knows they can vote him out just as easily if he upsets them. That means his job depends on not stirring things up. If he rebukes them or tells them something they don't want to hear, the congregation can easily get rid of him – and that means he won't be able to provide for his family or put food on the table. The moment you start paying your pastor you give him an *enormous* incentive to compromise. There are many pastors who avoid certain passages in the Bible because they know what would happen to them if they ever preached them. There are many pastors who refuse to teach what the Bible actually says because they know they would be fired if they spoke up. Pastors really do avoid teaching certain truths in order to keep their jobs!

That's how it works. (Have you ever noticed that when a pastor is preaching through a book of the Bible, he will skip right over the controversial verses and act like they're not there? That isn't an accident. I realize that your church and your pastor may not do that, but it's *very* common.)

Here's something to think about: what if pastors *weren't* paid? In that case they would be free to preach the truth. If the congregation got angry and voted him out, his livelihood wouldn't be in danger. He could just go find another church. It would be harder to pressure him to compromise because all of that leverage would be gone.

This means paying your church staff actually creates *two* problems: it puts an enormous financial burden on the congregation that in many cases they can't afford, and it puts pressure on the pastor to compromise the truth so he doesn't lose his job. (Are you starting to see the wisdom of meeting in small groups in people's homes? Do you see how many problems that could solve?)

There's actually a third problem as well. Pastors have been taught to look at their job as a career. They go to seminary and learn how to be pastor, and then find a small church somewhere to get started. After they've been there a few years they will find a position at a larger church somewhere else, where they will stay until a better position opens elsewhere. By hopping from church to church they can eventually navigate the system until they land a high-paying position at a really large church. If you play the game long enough you might even be able to get into a leadership position in the denomination itself. Pastors who know how to play their cards right could find themselves living in a large mansion and getting paid a salary that's many times more than what anyone in their congregation makes. Some pastors even get private jets, which are paid for by people in their congregations who do *not* have private jets (or a mansion).

I realize that pastors don't usually come forward and say these things out loud – but their actions speak volumes. Have you never noticed that nearly all pastors move to a different church after a few years? Have you never noticed that pastors usually leave a small church to go to a bigger one, and then move to an even larger one after that? I realize this isn't always the case, but *this is extremely common*. Don't you find it a bit suspicious that somehow it's "God's will" for pastors to leave a small struggling church and move to a bigger church where they will be paid a larger salary – and then a few years later it will be "God's will" for them to leave that church to go to a church that's even bigger, and which pays them even more?

I have to ask: is it *really* God's will for pastors to change churches every few years? I think the answer is very clearly *no*, because that entire concept has no Biblical support at all. Jesus said that being a shepherd means taking care of your sheep, getting to know your sheep, and watching over your sheep. The person who abandons the sheep in order to enrich his own life is called hireling, and Jesus has nothing good to say about hirelings. In His eyes they aren't shepherds at all. A person who would lay down his life for his sheep is *entirely different* from someone who abandons his sheep the moment a better job becomes available at a larger church!

If churches met in small groups in people's homes then this would become a non-issue. If you're meeting with a few friends in your own house then you become focused on *nurturing them*, not trying to use them as a springboard to find a more lucrative job somewhere else. That's especially true if you're not getting paid in the first place! You also won't be tempted to leave for a bigger church because the congregation is already limited by the capacity of your home.

For that matter, the whole process of acquiring a pastor doesn't make sense in the first place. Wouldn't it be much better to raise up people from within the small group to hold that job?

After all, that's exactly how the church obtains deacons and elders! There's no reason for a church to hire someone from the opposite end of the country. It makes far more sense to find someone *within the church* who is qualified and help them grow into the job. If you pay someone to leave their current church and start preaching at your church, do you know what's going to happen? They're eventually going to leave you and go somewhere else. After all, *that's how you got them in the first place!* Besides, it's much easier to have an impact on someone's life if you've been with them for 20 years and they've stood by you the entire time. Why would you value the input of a pastor who's only there because you're paying them, who left other people to be with you, and who will leave you once someone gives them a better offer? How invested do you think someone like that is going to be in your church – or your life? Is that really what you want?

## **Church Membership Is Unbiblical**

Let's suppose that you want to spend time with a group of people who are all Christians. Is that what you'll find when you attend a church service? Nope. Church services are open to everyone. Anyone can walk in – even people who aren't saved and who have never heard the gospel before. In fact, churches actually encourage this! They want as many people as possible to attend their services, and they *especially* want the unsaved to come. That's why they're always encouraging their members to invite people who don't know Jesus.

Pastors know that many of the people they are preaching to might not be saved. That's why services usually end with some sort of "altar call", in which people are asked to come to the front of the church and "give their life to Jesus". Some pastors



like to draw this part of the service out as long as possible. They think if they play enough songs and work hard enough, then maybe they can coax someone into coming down and "getting saved". This certainly does have an effect. Since you're telling Christians every single service that they need to come forward and get saved, some Christians start to question their salvation. This results in people who have been saved for years coming forward over and over again. Why? Because that's what their pastor is telling them to do. (Are there ever times when someone who is *not* saved comes forward? It is *extremely* rare.)

Pastors are preaching to a large group of people that they don't really know. Some of them might be saved and others are probably not. A few of them might know the Bible pretty well, but most of them probably don't. Since they are preaching to such a large mixed audience, they have to keep their sermons very simple and basic. After all, they can't assume that their congregation knows anything. They can't go into any depth, and there isn't enough time to get into anything that's complicated or advanced. The best they can do is preach simple sermons on basic topics. Once you've been at church for a few years you will probably have heard everything the pastor has to offer. For the rest of your life, all of his sermons are going to repeat stuff you've heard before. In fact, you may reach a point where if the pastor was sick one day you could get up and say whatever he was going to say, because you've heard it so many times before. You're not going to hear anything new because pastors have to stick to the basics. Going to the Sunday morning service is like attending first grade forever. There are other grades out there, but because of the mixed nature of the congregation you're not going to find them in the service.

Is that how the early church worked? Absolutely not. The New Testament makes it clear that the only people who are allowed to gather with the church were *saved people*. Those who were unsaved were *not allowed to come!* In fact, if a person was

living in sin and refused to repent then the Bible says he should be removed from the church entirely and not allowed to attend services anymore, because his sinful behavior might corrupt others:

**1 Corinthians 5:7-13:** "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."

When the church gathers together to worship God, no unrepentant people are supposed to be in their midst. The gathering was never supposed to be a mix of Christians, and non-Christians, and people living openly sinful lives, and people who hated God, and people who wandered into the wrong building. It was supposed to be *all dedicated Christians who were walking in God's ways*. Anyone who wasn't a Christian was excluded from the gathering. Anyone who was openly living in sin and refused

to repent had to be excluded until they repented.

Did Paul say that we should be *proud* that we have unrepentant sinners in our midst? Absolutely not. In fact, he actually rebuked the church for allowing that:

**1 Corinthians 5:1:** "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you."

Paul said that anyone within the church who was living a flagrant life of sin should be a cause for *mourning*, and the church should remove this person from their midst. Instead of doing that, though, the Corinthian church actually *boasted* about having a sinful person in their midst! Paul told them that was the wrong thing to do:

**1 Corinthians 5:6-7:** "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. . ."

Paul is pointing out that it's very dangerous to have unrepentant people in their midst, because their wickedness will spread to other people. If one person is allowed to get away with sin, then other people will start thinking that maybe sin isn't so bad. They will think that there are no consequences for sin, and they will be tempted to start doing the same thing.

Some people might argue that Paul is just saying they should have their membership privileges revoked but still allowed to attend. The problem with that argument is that the

early church had no concept of "church membership", the way that churches do today. They viewed all Christians as belonging to one church – the church of Jesus Christ. The only question was whether people should be allowed to gather with them in their homes and attend their services. Paul was clear that these gatherings should *only be for Christians*, and no one else. Not only was it bad for people to attend who were living in sin, it was actually dangerous for the entire church!

This approach has a lot of advantages. It means that the pastor wouldn't need to spend time asking people to come forward and be saved because everyone he is preaching to is already saved. It means that Christians wouldn't be told every single week that they needed to accept Christ, because the pastor who was talking to them would know that they had already done that. If people met in small groups in people's homes, the pastor would be able to craft sermons that specifically addressed the people he was talking to. He would finally be able to preach deep and meaningful sermons because he knew what knowledge everyone had and could build upon that knowledge. The pastor wouldn't have to waste time preaching sermons that people had already heard a dozen times before. If we did things the Biblical way there would finally be a gathering place *specifically for Christians*.

How did the New Testament church reach the lost? They went out into the world and found them. They preached the gospel directly to the lost, and in their gathering places. They *went out to them*. They searched for them and found them instead of sitting back and hoping the lost would wander into their church buildings! That is a much better system for everyone.

How did Christians in the New Testament become a member of the church? They did it by repenting of their sins and believing in Jesus. That's quite different from the way it's done today! The modern church believes that the church is *the*

*building*, and in order to become a member in good standing with that building you have to go through a rite of passage. That process may involve a class or something else, but you can only become part of the church once you've passed through this rite. However, *there's nothing Biblical about that at all*. The Bible is clear that once you're saved you are part of the church, *period*. It's true that the Bible commands Christians to distance themselves from people who claim to be believers but who are living in open sin, but the Bible *never* calls any building "the church" and it never says anything about what we call "church membership". (There's also the fact that church membership is pretty useless. You can attend services for years without ever being a member. A lack of membership doesn't stop you from attending any classes or services that the church has to offer, and it doesn't stop you from taking communion either. The only thing it actually does is stop you from holding a church office – and, honestly, the only offices that are usually available to people are working in the nursery and being an usher. If you're not interested in doing either of those things then there's no real reason to ever join. It's true that it stops you from voting on things, but we'll get into voting a bit later in this series.)

The very language that we use demonstrates how unbiblical our views of the church really are. If we truly believed that the church was *the people* then we would never call a building "the church", and we would never call the process of giving people voting privileges "church membership".

Is it a good idea for churches to make sure that people who want to start fellowshiping with them really are Christians? Absolutely. But somehow people forget that *there is only one church*, and that is the church that Christ founded by dying for our sins and rising on the third day. We become a member of that church when we repent of our sins and believe on Him.

Modern Christians have vastly overcomplicated "going to church". The truth is that you "go to church" when you meet

with other Christians, because *Christians are the church*. From a Biblical standpoint, "going to church" has nothing to do with going to a specific building! This is what Jesus said about it:

**Matthew 18:20:** "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

If two or three people are gathered together in the name of Jesus, then Jesus is with those people. They have "gone to church", even if they didn't drive across town and walk into a building.

Is it important for Christians to gather together in the name of Jesus? Absolutely. In fact, it is commanded:

**Hebrews 10:23-25:** "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

Are we supposed to assemble ourselves together in the name of Jesus? Absolutely! Does this verse say that we need a dedicated building in order to do that, and it only counts if we gather into that building? Nope. In fact, buildings aren't even mentioned! What *is* mentioned is the need to exhort one another. The verse has nothing to say about having a multi-million-dollar facility with a restaurant and a library and a basketball court, but it does say we need to provoke one another to good works.

Here's a question for you: if you attend a Sunday morning

service, can you provoke anyone to good works? Nope. Your job in the service is to sit there quietly along with everyone else, and then go home. Can you exhort anyone? Nope. Only the pastor is allowed to speak; everyone else must be silent. It may be true that *technically* a group of Christians have indeed gathered together into the same room, but that group has not been "assembled" in any meaningful way. The New Testament pictures the church as a dynamic body that's composed of many different parts, and each person has something valuable to contribute that the church needs. The modern church, however, is run by the paid staff, who (along with the deacons and elders) do everything while the congregation sits there passively and does nothing. Do you really think that's what the author of Hebrews had in mind when he told us to assemble ourselves together? Do you think he was hoping that we would gather together in a room, sit quietly for 90 minutes, and then go home without interacting with anyone else?

I realize it's possible to form relationships with other people who attend church. *But that must be done outside of the service.* It's possible to ask questions and get help and make prayer requests, *but that must be done outside of the service.* The reason people gather together on Sunday mornings is to attend that service, *but the service provides no opportunities for people to do anything!* If you want to provoke one another to good works and exhort one another, *which are some of the key reasons why we should assemble in the first place,* you have to do that outside of the service. Do you see the problem?

As if that wasn't bad enough, most people *only go to the Sunday morning service.* I realize that once a month the church might allow people to gather together and share a meal (which is a far cry from the early church, which ate together *daily*). There may also be the occasional church function. But the Sunday morning service is the primary way that the congregation interacts with each other, and it's specifically designed to *keep*

*the congregation from interacting with each other. (Allowing people sixty seconds during the service to turn to their neighbors and say "Hi" doesn't count as a meaningful interaction.)*

## **Voting Is Unbiblical**

It's really amazing how much of a gap there is between the way the Bible says the church should be run, and the way the church is actually run. For example, nearly everything in the modern church is decided by voting. Deacons are voted in. Elders are voted in. Pastors are voted in. Major decisions are voted in. Churches hold business meetings to vote on church expansion, or new church policies, or even solving plumbing problems. The local church is run by the congregation, and they make their will known by the process of voting.

This has some very important consequences. Since churches can vote pastors in, they can also vote them out. This means the pastor knows his job depends on keeping the congregation happy. He knows that if he tells them things they don't want to hear, or he rebukes them for a sin that's common in their midst, they might get angry with him and vote him out. If the pastor wants to keep his job then he'll have to please the congregation. That puts a lot of pressure on him to avoid talking about hard doctrines and unpleasant truths. This is why it's very rare for pastors to call out a church for the sin in their midst that needs to be dealt with, or to address the big issues that have been crippling the church. His job depends on keeping people happy, so that's what he is going to do. If the church happens to find a pastor that isn't willing to compromise what the Bible teaches, they will usually get rid of him in short order and replace him with someone else. That means churches will usually be run by pastors who aren't going to challenge them, or correct



them, or rebuke them.

Is that good for the church? Definitely not. Do you know what would happen if children had the power to veto their parents, and could always get their way and reject all instruction? They would grow up to be uncontrollable, spoiled brats. I think that's exactly why so many churches are spiritually dead. The Bible puts it this way:

**2 Timothy 4:2-3:** "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

Paul warned of a time when Christians would hate sound doctrine and would get rid of sound teachers so they could listen to lies that they found more enjoyable than the truth. That's exactly the situation we are in today! Why would people listen to someone who was going to rebuke them for their sin when they could vote him out and replace him with a pastor who would tell them what they wanted to hear? That is exactly what's going to happen if the sheep are given the ability to vote out their shepherd. It's inevitable.

Is that how the Bible says that churches should be organized? Does the Bible say that congregations should vote for their pastors? Actually, no. You won't find that teaching anywhere in the Bible. In fact, no church anywhere in the New Testament ever made *any* decision by voting! Now, that is *not* because people in ancient times didn't understand the concept of voting. Ancient Greece predated the New Testament by centuries, and it was a democracy. By the time the New

Testament was written the concept of voting was hundreds of years old.

Do you know how people in the Bible *did* make decisions? They cast lots (which means, essentially, they flipped a coin). That's how the disciples chose the replacement for the traitor Judas:

**Acts 1:23-26:** "And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."

If the modern church wanted to choose an apostle today and had two equally qualified candidates to choose from, it would never consider casting lots! Instead they would put it to a vote, and the most popular person would win. In the Bible, though, *no church ever does that*. Why? Because it's a bad idea. It's much wiser to cast lots:

**Proverbs 18:18:** "The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty."

Why does casting lots cause contentions to cease? Because everyone understands that it's fair. No one can accuse anyone of partiality or underhanded dealing. On top of that, the Bible says that God governs the outcome of casting lots:

**Proverbs 16:33:** "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD."

This doesn't mean that people in ancient times had some special mystical dice that they used to make decisions. The verse is saying that God controls everything – including the outcome of casting lots. When the disciples replaced Judas, they looked for candidates that matched the Biblical qualifications and found two who were equally qualified. Since either of them would work, they prayed that God would show them His will and then cast lots, trusting that the outcome of the lots would be the will of God. Why did they put that much faith in casting lots? Because of Proverbs 16:33. Do you see how different their thinking was from ours?

Notice that they didn't tell everyone to go home and pray, and then waited for someone to step forward and say "God spoke to me and told me that we should do X." After all, how could you ever prove that God really *did* speak to that person? Instead they cast lots, which settled the matter.

The point I'm trying to make is that what the Bible teaches is *completely different* from the way we do things in our churches. There's no Biblical support for church buildings, and no apostle ever suggested we needed them or should have them. There's no Biblical support for a church service that consists of the congregation being told exactly what to sing and what to pray, and then being preached at in silence for 30 minutes before being sent home. We may think that it makes sense for the congregation to sit passively and contribute nothing to the service while the paid staff does everything, but you won't find that model anywhere in the Bible. We may think it's natural to have 5000 people attend a single church service, which is held by a pastor who doesn't know the people who are attending his own church, but you won't find that in the Bible. We may think it makes sense for people who are in trouble to file a form and make an appointment and then pay for counseling services, but that's not how Jesus said churches should handle their lost

sheep. The truth is no New Testament church was ever operated the way that modern churches operate!

Did the early church vote on who should be pastors and elders and deacons? No. Did they have business meetings? No. Instead the Bible established a series of qualifications that must be met in order to take on certain roles within the church. People who didn't meet those qualifications were excluded from the position, and there was no restriction on how many pastors or deacons or elders there could be in a church. (The Bible never says there should be a "head pastor" or a "youth pastor". Those positions have been made up and have no Biblical support.) If for some reason there *was* a limit and you had more qualified people than you had open positions, then you could cast lots. No voting was needed.

What do you do if someone is living in open sin? You remove them from the congregation. What do you do if the pastor is wicked? In that case he is living in open sin, so he would be removed – without any need to vote him out. What do you do if the pastor is preaching heresy and false teaching? That would also be open sin, so he would be removed without any need to vote him out. What do you do if the pastor is not very good? You train him – and there's no reason why you can't have more than one pastor (especially if you aren't paying them a salary). What do you do if the pastor preaches something that's true but the congregation doesn't want to hear it? *You keep him*. If your church is organized along Biblical lines then there isn't a need to vote on anything. (You're not going to be voting on new air conditioners for the building if you don't have a building in the first place!) If your congregation finds a need to vote on things then there's probably something wrong with the way your local church is organized.

## Churches Must Not Avoid Politics

In this country churches are organized as non-profit corporations. (That's right: from a legal standpoint *they are a business.*) The advantage to this is that all contributions made to these churches are tax deductible. The disadvantage is that in order to maintain their non-profit status they have to abide by certain rules, and one of those rules is that they can't be political.

You may not realize this, but before modern times it was very common for churches to preach on political topics. This is because pastors understood that the Bible governs *all* aspects of life, including the government. The Bible really does have something to say about healthcare, and the economy, and laws, and regulations. It really does talk about how society should work, and what laws should exist, and what justice looks like. Pastors used to preach sermons on the government all the time. In fact, during the colonial era they even preached about the constitution that had been proposed by the founding fathers. They wanted to analyze it from a Biblical standpoint and see if it measured up to the standard defined in the Word of God.

Today churches avoid politics altogether. In fact, churches actually take great pride in having nothing to say about politics and not taking any stance on any political issue. However, *this is not an improvement!* Since pastors avoid the subject altogether, congregations often have no idea how to look at the government from a Biblical standpoint. They don't know how to think about a law from a Biblical standpoint. People have been taught that politics has nothing to do with Christianity, so when people think about political subjects they keep the Bible far away from their thinking. *This is very bad.*

Does God have anything to say about what's right and wrong? Of course. Does God define justice? Yes He does. Does God have anything to say to kings, or nations, or governments? Absolutely! Does the Bible tell us how nations should treat each

other? Yes it does. Can the Bible teach us the difference between a just law and an unjust one? Yes, it can. Are pastors going to bring any of this up? Absolutely not.

The truth is that Christianity applies to *all of life*. It's not something that we should just do on Sunday mornings and then put on the shelf for the rest of the week! Christianity should impact how we think about *all of our life* – including the way that the government operates. Pastors should teach people how to have a Biblical worldview, and that worldview should apply to *everything*. Instead of doing that, though, pastors ignore politics and pretend that God has no interest in the subject at all.

One reason they do that is because there are a lot of different views in a given congregation, and if they took a stand on something it might make people angry. (This goes back to the fact that churches are attended by saved people and lost people and people who claim to be saved but who are living in sin. If congregations removed the unrepentant sinners from their midst, which is what the Bible commands, then this wouldn't be a problem. Do you see how many problems we could fix if we did things God's way?) If pastors make their congregations angry then that could cost them their jobs. (Do you see how much trouble is caused by voting?) Since churches pay the pastor's salary that would impact their ability to feed their families. (Do you see how much trouble is caused when pastors depend on churches for money?) The other reason is that if a church starts preaching on politics then it might lose its tax-exempt status, and that could have a big impact on the amount of money it receives (and the money they have to pay in taxes). Churches need a lot of money in order to pay for their large building and their large staff. (Do you see how much trouble is caused by having church buildings?) In the end churches need money, and to get that money they're willing to make whatever compromises are necessary.

Do you think God is honored when churches refuse to

teach what the Bible has to say in order to get more money? I very seriously doubt it. I can't imagine a pastor standing before God and hearing Him say "I'm so glad you sold out the Bible in order to keep your tax-exempt status! That was definitely the right call. It's important to throw out whatever doctrines you need to in order to keep that money flowing." Yet that is *exactly* what churches do. Pastors know there would be serious consequences if they taught the full counsel of God, so they don't teach it. (How do we know that they don't teach it? Well, ask yourself this: how many political sermons have you heard in your life? If you've been attending the typical Protestant church, the answer is *zero*. So clearly they're avoiding the subject.) Churches know they might get in financial trouble if they taught how the Bible applies to politics and the government, so they don't go there. They avoid the subject entirely.

Would this be a problem in a small home church? Nope. That church wouldn't need a budget to operate, so it would be fine. Its pastor would already be working a full-time job to pay his salary, so his livelihood wouldn't be in danger. The money that the church received could go directly to outreach and mission work. It's true that people wouldn't be able to claim their offerings as a tax deduction, but I think God would rather have a faithful church than a rich one. How do we know that? Because that's exactly what Jesus Himself said to the church of Laodicea:

**Revelation 3:17-19:** "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou

mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."

That congregation was convinced that God approved of them because they were rich and prosperous. Was God impressed? Absolutely not! God saw that their spiritual condition was appalling and wretched, so He rebuked them and commanded them to repent. They may have had money, but they didn't have the things that really mattered. They weren't faithful in the sight of God. They weren't zealous for the truth or passionate about preaching the full counsel of God. In fact, verse 15 tells us they actually didn't care about the truth at all. They were indifferent – so God told them they made Him want to vomit.

If the government ever comes to a church and says "I will give you money as long as you avoid certain subjects", the answer of the church should *always* be a firm "No". It doesn't matter how small or harmless the compromise may seem. God requires us to preach and teach *everything!* This is how Jesus put it:

**Matthew 4:4:** "But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

There are no doctrines we are allowed to disavow in order to win the approval of others. God is never going to tell you "I'm so glad you sold out the truth in exchange for money. That was the right call." Do you honestly believe that the nation is better off when Christians have no idea how to apply Biblical principles to the operation of the government? That seems pretty unlikely to me!

I'm not saying that churches should endorse political



parties or specific candidates. What I *am* saying is that pastors ought to teach people how to think Biblically about *all* of life. Excluding politics from the discussion is very wrong.

## **Families Should Worship Together**

When it comes to church services, the modern church is eager to separate families from their children as much as possible. Churches that have Sunday School have special classes just for children (which are strictly divided by age). At the beginning of the Sunday morning service, children are dismissed to go attend a separate service that doesn't include their parents. Churches often hold events that are specifically targeted at children (once again, divided by age groups). They even have a youth pastor whose entire job is to minister to children.

Is any of this Biblical? Nope. You won't find any youth ministers in the New Testament. You also won't find any churches that sent children to a separate service so they could worship away from their parents. No apostle ever suggested that people should be divided up into groups based on their age, or that it was best for children to not worship alongside their parents. That's not how things were done in the New Testament!

You know what we *do* find? We find that children actually stayed right beside their parents. When Joshua read the Mosaic Law to the nation, the children weren't separated from their parents and sent to children's church:

**Joshua 8:34-35:** "And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all

the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them."

How much of the Law did Joshua read to the people – including to the children who were present? Every single word. Did he leave anything out? No. Did he leave the curses out? No. Did he leave the unpleasant parts out? No. Did he send the children off so that the adults could talk? No. The family stayed together.

Are there any passages in the Bible that suggest children would be better off if they were taken away from their parents and taught separately? No. Do you know who God has put in charge of teaching children? Their parents. God wants *their parents* to teach them His Law:

**Deuteronomy 6:6-9:** "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."

Who can teach children when they are sitting at the house, and lying down to sleep, and rising up? The parents. Does God ever suggest that parents should outsource that responsibility to pastors? Absolutely not. Parents need to take responsibility for their children and raise them up in the Lord. Parents should teach their children about God, and children should worship God alongside their parents.

But what about the topics that aren't necessarily appropriate for children? Here's the thing: those topics are almost *never* mentioned in churches. It's extremely rare for anything to come up that might be inappropriate for children – especially since Joshua didn't have any qualms about reading the entire Mosaic Law to little children! If there's a need to talk about something that might not be wise to share with children then it makes sense to remove them for that specific conversation, but that is a very rare case. Children should be with their parents as much as possible.

In a small group setting this makes a lot of sense, because you're talking about a group of maybe 15 people that's meeting in a home. The services that we find in the New Testament are interactive. People talk to one another, they expound on the Word of God, they share a meal, and they contribute to each other's lives. In a service like that children could learn from others and from their parents because the family unit isn't a passive participant anymore! How do you grow wise? By spending time with wise people – *not* by spending time with people who happen to be the same age that you are.

I'm not saying it's bad for children to have friends that are their own age. What I am saying is that it makes no sense to send children away when it's time for the Sunday morning service. You aren't showing up at church in order to be entertained, and you don't need age-appropriate entertainment for your children. There are simply no Biblical grounds for diving a church service into groups based on age. How can the young possibly learn from the life experiences of the elderly if they're kept in separate classes?

## God Never Gave Pastors The Power To Marry People

The procedure for getting married in our society is pretty well understood. First you have to go and get a marriage license, and then you have to find someone to perform the marriage. When it comes to performing the marriage ceremony people typically have two options: they can go down to the courthouse and get married by a justice of the peace, or they can find a pastor and have him do the job. This procedure is so commonplace that people don't even think twice about it. If you ask someone "Who married you?" they will typically give you the name of their pastor – because people believe that pastors have the ability to take two people and join them together in marriage.

But do they *really* have that ability? Stop and think about it. What gives pastors the ability to join people in holy matrimony? Who gave them that power? I'm being serious here. Where did this ability come from?

You can check the Bible, but you won't find it there. The Bible gives pastors many responsibilities: they are to preach the gospel, take care of their flocks, baptize people, and so forth, but the Bible *never* gives them the power to marry people. It's never even *mentioned!* Jesus Christ charged the church with going into all the world, making disciples, and baptizing people, but He *never* mentioned the idea that His church should be marrying people. He didn't even hint at it.

The apostles wrote a lot of letters to various churches and told them how to follow the Lord, but they never mentioned the idea that churches should be involved with marrying people. They talked about feeding the poor, healing the sick, making converts, and even church discipline, but they never mentioned churches holding marriage ceremonies – *not a single time*.

In fact, no church in the entire Bible ever performed a marriage! No disciple, apostle, or deacon ever performed a

wedding in the Bible. There are no cases where a pastor took two people and married them. *It never happened.*

What I'm trying to say is this: the idea that pastors have the ability to unite two people in marriage *doesn't come from the Bible*. There's absolutely nothing in the Bible that says pastors can do that, and there's nothing that says churches ought to be involved in performing marriages. *It's not there*. I understand that churches have decided to take that role upon themselves, but God didn't give them that responsibility.

That means pastors *do not* have the power to unite people in marriage. Pastors have no more power to marry people than insurance agents or electricians. I understand that people believe they need to find pastor in order to get married, but there's no Biblical basis for that. It may be traditional, but it's man's tradition – not God's.

So who *does* have the power to marry people? Well, according to Jesus Christ, only one person can do that:

**Matthew 19:4-6:** "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore **God hath joined together**, let not man put asunder."

Who has the power to take two people and joins them together in marriage? *God does*. Only the Lord has that power! No mortal being can unite people in marriage because God is the one who does the joining. How does it work? Well, it's pretty simple. Jesus said that a man leaves his parents and cleaves to his wife, and God unites them into one. That's literally what the

verse says. At that point they have been joined together. They are no longer two people; instead they are one flesh.

Here's what that means in practical terms. In the marriage ceremony, the marriage license itself means nothing. Regardless of whether or not it's required from a legal standpoint (which is a complex topic far beyond the scope of this discussion), that piece of paper carries no weight with God. Having a marriage license is *not* what makes you married, and *not* having one doesn't mean you *aren't* married. After all, Adam and Eve didn't have a marriage license but the Bible tells us they were husband and wife. There are many societies that never had marriage licenses or pastors to marry people, but that doesn't mean those societies didn't have marriage. To God a marriage license is just a meaningless piece of paper. It carries no weight with Him and has no authority.

Likewise, at the end of the ceremony, when the pastor says "I now pronounce you man and wife", his pronouncement means nothing. Saying those words does *not* make the couple married, and *not* saying those words doesn't leave them unmarried. What the pastor says is *utterly irrelevant!* The truth is *he should not be involved in this anyway.* God never told him to marry people, nor did the Lord give him permission to do that!

What unites people in marriage is when, as Jesus said in Matthew 19, the man takes the woman to be his wife, and the wife takes the man to be her husband, and the two make a lifelong covenant together in the sight of God. When the couple exchanges their vows and commits to being husband and wife, at that point they're married because *God* joins them together. You don't need a pastor to get married, and you don't need official recognition from the government. Marriages that don't involve pastors, churches, or governments are not somehow "fake". God never says you need a pastor or a license in order to have a binding marriage. The traditions of men aren't the same thing as the commandments of God! We should be looking to *the Bible* to

see how marriage works.

Does the marriage become official when it's consummated? Nope. That's *not* what makes two people a married couple! We know this because Adam and Eve were referred to as husband and wife long before they consummated their union. Take a look for yourself. This is Genesis 2:25:

**Genesis 2:25:** "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."

Eve is referred to as Adam's wife *immediately*, as soon as she was created and given to Adam. However, their relationship wasn't consummated until much later – after they sinned and were kicked out of the garden of Eden:

**Genesis 4:1:** "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord."

If that's not enough evidence for you, here's something else to consider. God has always been very clear that sex is only permissible *within* marriage. Sex within marriage is good, but sex outside of marriage is a serious sin. This means you have to *already be married* before you can have sex. Therefore the marriage must take place *first* – which means that the act of the physical union *cannot* be part of the marriage process!

Adam and Eve are a great example of how marriage works. God brought Eve to Adam, Adam accepted her as his wife, and they became a married couple. This is despite the fact there was no marriage license, and there was no pastor to pronounce them married. (I would like to add that witnesses are a very good idea because they will provide evidence that the marriage happened, and will hold the couple to the fact that they truly are married). All it took to marry them was their covenant to each

other, which was made in the sight of God. That was enough.

The reason this matters is because we've come to believe that people are united in marriage *by other people*, instead of by God. This leads to the idea that since the marriage was *created* by other people, it can also be dissolved by other people. Since the government grants the marriage, the government can grant the divorce.

But as we've seen, the government has absolutely *nothing to do* with uniting people in marriage! Likewise, pastors are *not* part of the process (no matter what they claim). God is the one who unites people in marriage, which means only God can dissolve the marriage. You can go down to the courthouse and get a divorce, but all the government can give you is a piece of paper that carries no weight in the sight of God. The courthouse isn't the one who married you in the first place; God was the one who did that. This means *God has to grant your divorce*. If He doesn't then *you don't have one*; in His sight you are still married to your original spouse.

Divorce is a very complex subject, and I don't have the time to cover it in detail here. There are definitely valid reasons to get a divorce, and in some cases it is absolutely the right thing to do and God definitely recognizes the divorce. The point I want to make is that God is the one who united you in marriage in the first place (not your pastor or the government), and only God can separate you. If you divorce your spouse for an unbiblical reason (which is too complicated a subject to get into here), then God doesn't recognize your divorce *and still considers you to be married to your original spouse*. Just because you consider yourself to be divorced does *not* necessarily mean that God agrees with you. If you didn't get divorced for a Biblical reason (for example, if you left your faithful wife and children in order to move in with another, younger woman who you thought was hotter) then God considers you to be having an affair and living in sin with someone you are *not* married to. That may seem like a



technical detail, but we must remember that when it comes time for us to die we will stand before God and be held accountable for the things we have done. Our actions really do have consequences.

## **Altar Calls Are Unbiblical**

Are altar calls Biblical? Now, I realize this might seem like a strange question to ask. After all, altar calls have become a staple of the modern church, to the point where it's hard to imagine a Sunday morning service that *doesn't* have an altar call. Who could possibly object to ending a sermon with an invitation to come forward and be saved? Isn't that just the natural thing to do?

Altar calls have become a tradition – in fact, they have almost become a sacrament in our churches. Because of this we don't stop to think about what we're actually doing. We simply accept them and assume that altar calls must be a good idea – but I think it's time we took a Biblical look at what we're doing. We should always be willing to compare every aspect of our churches to what's revealed in the Word of God. There should be nothing that's "too important" to examine from a Biblical perspective. If altar calls are a solid Biblical practice then it should be a simple matter to demonstrate that from the Bible, right? But if the Bible *doesn't* support this practice then that should tell us something.

The first point I'd like to make is that there are no altar calls anywhere in the Bible. Altar calls are completely unknown in the Old Testament. In the New Testament no church is ever said to have used one, and they aren't mentioned in any of the letters to the churches. The disciples never used an altar call in any of their sermons, and even Jesus Himself never used altar calls.

Some people try very hard to find an altar call in the Bible, but it can't be done because *there aren't any*. People are so desperate to find an example of this practice that they claim Melchizedek's meeting with Abraham was an altar call:

**Genesis 14:18:** "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.

19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:

20 And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all."

Just take a look at that passage for yourself! Does Melchizedek ask his audience to come to the front of the church and pray the sinner's prayer so they can be saved from their sins? Absolutely not. This isn't even *remotely* an altar call! No one is urging sinners to repent of their sins and put their faith and trust in Christ – and yet people still claim that this is Biblical proof that altar calls are Scriptural. A simple reading of the passage demonstrates that this simply isn't true.

There are no altar calls anywhere in the Bible! It's not a Biblical practice, and there's no Scriptural support for that idea. Now, that doesn't mean that no one in the Bible preached the gospel, because they most certainly did. Many people preached repentance and urged sinners to turn away from their sins:

**Matthew 3:1-2:** "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

**Matthew 4:17:** "From that time Jesus began to

preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

**Acts 2:38:** "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."

There are many more examples that I could give, but I think you get the point. There's no shortage of preaching in the Bible! What we *don't* find are altar calls. Even when Jesus ministered to thousands of people for several days in a row, He never wrapped up by urging people to come to the front of the group to be saved. That simply never happened.

In our days that would be unthinkable, wouldn't it? If a modern church had a group of thousands of people, they would conclude the service by playing some sort of emotional hymn. The pastor would ask everyone to close their eyes, and urge the people to pray a certain prayer. The pastor would then say that if they prayed that prayer then they're saved. (Instead of praying that prayer in their seats while no one is looking, some pastors invite people to come to the front of the church to pray that prayer.) This practice is so common that it doesn't usually cross our minds that no one in the Bible ever did anything like this.

But the truth is the altar call is a modern phenomenon. It's entirely absent from the Bible, and the early church didn't practice it. The altar call was popularized by Charles Finney, who lived from 1792 to 1875. There were a few isolated cases where altar calls were used before then in some special circumstances, but Finney is the person who popularized it. That means *altar calls were unknown to the church before the 19<sup>th</sup> century*. They are something new! I'd also like to point out that while Finney was a well-known evangelist, he was far from orthodox. Finney rejected the doctrine of original sin and he didn't believe in the

imputed righteousness of Christ (which is the doctrine that when we're saved God gives us the perfect righteousness of Christ, and that's why we are justified in His sight). He also rejected the idea of Biblical regeneration – that people are made new creatures in Christ after they're saved.

Finney believed that in order to save people, all you had to do was put the right kind of emotional pressure on them and use the right kind of tricks, and you could drive them to the altar and get them to say that magical prayer. He also believed in the "prayer of faith", which to him meant that God was required to give you anything you prayed for. If you prayed that 100 souls would be saved by your preaching, then God was required to save 100 souls no matter what. (Needless to say, there are very serious theological problems with that idea.)

This was the mindset of the person who created the altar call, and this was the theology behind it. People today have accepted Finney's ideas regarding what it takes to get people saved – and that's unfortunate, because what the Bible teaches about salvation is radically different. The modern approach to salvation is extremely shallow and produces many false converts. The church isn't doing a very good job of explaining to people what salvation actually requires.

For example, take this account:

I recall a conversation in America in which a pastor's wife narrated to me her experience as a counselor. In counseling someone who came forward [to the altar] she discovered that this enquirer had no concept of repentance or faith. She endeavored therefore to explain the gospel in a simple manner. The leader of the meeting in the meantime began to be impatient and after about ten minutes could stand it no longer. Sweeping the woman counselor aside, he took

over as follows:

"You don't want to go to hell, do you?"

"No!"

"You want to go to heaven, don't you?"

"Yes, I do!"

"You believe that Christ died for sinners, don't you?"

"Yes, I do!"

"Then let's give thanks that he died for you and has given you salvation."

Then the leader prayed as follows: "Lord, I thank you for giving this soul eternal life. Thank you, Lord, Amen."

Then, turning to the person in question, he said, "Now you have eternal life and you can praise the Lord! Go and tell your friends that you have been saved!"

(*The Great Invitation*, Hulse, p109)

Was that person actually saved? I very seriously doubt it. He had no idea what faith was and he had no concept of repentance. On top of that, the prayer itself was prayed by *the leader*, not by the individual! The person never repented of his sins or gave his life to Jesus. I'd like to point out that even *demons* believe that Christ died for sinners, and demons would much rather go to Heaven than be cast into Hell! Demons, though, *are not saved*.

You see, being saved isn't just a matter of believing that Christ died for sinners. You also have to *repent*. You must go to Jesus and ask Him to forgive your sins. You must submit yourself to Christ, which means turning away from your sins and walking in God's ways. Salvation is far more than just a mental assertion of "Yes, Jesus died for sins"! In order to be saved you must *surrender to God*. You must stop your rebellion against God and give Him complete control over your life, your will, your

thoughts, your possessions, and your actions.

You also need to understand who Christ is and what He did. For example:

**Romans 10:9:** "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."

Notice that belief in the resurrection is part of the requirements for salvation! The verse also says that you *must* make Jesus your Lord. You *cannot* be saved by saying "Yes, Lord, I believe that you died for sinners and I want to go to Heaven, but I'm not going to obey you and I don't want you to tell me what to do. Just mind your own business and do whatever I tell you, and we'll get along fine." That is *not* salvation!

During altar calls churches tell people that if they come forward and pray a prayer, they will be saved – but that is not a true statement. *It's not the prayer that saves you!* The prayer of salvation is not a magical spell that saves people by the mere act of repeating the words. It takes more than that! Does the sinner actually understand the gospel? Are they repenting of their sins? Do they actually believe in the person and work of Christ? Are they abandoning their rebellion against God and submitting themselves to His authority? The answer to these questions is *extremely important*. The only thing that can save people is *faith in Christ*. If that is absent then the prayer won't do any good. We are saved by *faith*:

**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."

Notice that this passage *doesn't* say "You are saved by praying the sinner's prayer, regardless of what you believe or whether you've actually repented!" *But that is precisely how people treat the sinner's prayer.*

The great danger of altar calls is that they are extremely shallow. They don't get into any of these core issues about salvation. Instead they teach people that if they just say certain magical words then they can escape Hell. So what do people do? They come to the front of the church, they recite that prayer, and they go away believing they're saved. Doesn't that seem like a dangerous thing to be doing?

The church then makes things even worse by pronouncing that person to be saved right there on the spot. That is a terrible thing to do! How can you possibly know in that moment if that person was actually saved? Nowhere does the Bible say "If you go to the front of the church, recite a prayer, and feel good about yourself afterward, you are saved" – but that's how *countless* people verify their salvation. The Biblical way of making sure that you're saved is to examine your life for the fruits of the Holy Spirit. The book of 1 John has a whole list of tests that you can use to examine your life for evidence that you really have changed and you truly have become a new person. Do you love other Christians? Do you obey God? Have you confessed your sins? Are you growing in holiness? Have you abandoned your old wicked ways? Are you remaining in the faith?

The only way to tell if a person has been saved is to wait and see, and evaluate their lives against the objective criteria that the Bible has given us. The proof of their salvation can be found in the life that they lead. As Jesus said, a good tree bears good fruit and a bad tree bears bad fruit. Genuine conversions always result in a changed life, because we become a new creature in Christ:

**2 Corinthians 5:17:** "Therefore if any man be in

Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

If there is no change in that person's life and they continue living sin and depravity then they aren't a Christian. The prayer that they prayed was a waste of time, and responding to the altar call did nothing. Their conversion was phony. But you know something? *That's not something you can determine during the altar call!* Churches have absolutely no business pronouncing anyone saved on the spot.

If the prayer "didn't work", the problem isn't with Christ. Jesus is clear that He will reject no one:

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

The problem is with what churches are doing. It's true that if you put a lot of emotional pressure on people and use the right manipulative tactics, you might be able to get people to come to the front of the church and recite a prayer that you've told them to pray. *But that's very different from getting saved!* Reciting that prayer doesn't mean that the person understood or believed the gospel. It doesn't mean have any idea what Christ actually did for them on the cross. It doesn't mean they're sorry for their sins or are willing to turn away from them. It *especially* doesn't mean that the person is laying down their life and pledging to submit themselves to Christ.

It's that last point which is especially relevant in our modern age. Churches are filled with people who believe that Christ died for sinners, but who have absolutely no intention of obeying God. These people love their sins and don't have the slightest intention of turning away from them. They believe that



they can continue to live a life of open sin, and God will have to take whatever He can get. The idea that you must repent of your sins and live a holy life is completely foreign to them. They would never agree to such a thing because they love their sins too much.

These people *are not saved*. The apostle John makes this point very clear:

**I John 2:3-5:** "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him."

The modern church may call these people "carnal Christians" and say that they're just not very spiritual, but the Bible calls them what they are: *lost people*. In order to be saved you must accept Jesus as your Savior *and* your Lord. If you reject Him as Lord and insist that *you* will control your life, then you aren't saved at all.

But altar calls gloss over all these critically important issues. They don't give people a deep understanding of the gospel; instead they say "Pray this prayer and you'll go to Heaven". They don't test the person to see if he actually understands what he's doing or believes in the gospel; instead they use high-pressure tactics to get people to say a set of magical words. On top of all that, altar calls assure the person that they're saved right then and there – instead of applying the Biblical tests that separate true conversions from false ones. As a result, our churches are filled with people who may not understand the gospel at all, and who may not have actually repented, but who are nonetheless convinced that they're saved

because they once went to the front and recited a prayer. That is a very bad situation!

Here's something to think about: of all those people who come to the altar to "get saved", how many of them show any fruits of repentance?

**Matthew 3:7-8:** "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:"

When ten thousand people respond in one of the great evangelistic crusades, do we see the lives of those people transformed? How many of those people lead holy lives and display the fruits of the Spirit? You know the answer as well as I do: most of those people are never seen again. They go right back to their sinful lives.

There are some people in churches who come to the altar to "get saved" over, and over, and over again. The reason they do this is because they don't understand the gospel and they have no idea how to tell if they're actually saved or not. They think that being saved is some kind of warm feeling, and since they don't have that feeling anymore they must not be saved. So they go to the front of the church to try to get that feeling again, and then announce to the world that this time they've *really* been saved. That entire line of thinking is completely unbiblical, but that's the sort of mindset the church has been encouraging. The church has exchanged the Biblical understanding of the gospel for a shallow one that's designed to drive as many people as possible to the front of the church.

It may seem completely harmless to urge people to come to the front of the church to be saved – but is it? The church has

taught generations of people that coming to the front of the church and reciting a prayer is the same thing as getting saved. That is completely different from what the Bible has to say about the matter! In fact, I'm very concerned that we're actually inoculating people from the gospel. After all, once a person has gone to the front of the church and recited that prayer, they believe they're saved *because that's what pastors tell them*. Even if they're leading an incredibly wicked life that's utterly devoid of faith or godliness, it's impossible to tell that person "You need to repent and believe". Since they believe they're already saved, they won't listen to anything you have to say. They have been taught a false standard of faith, and that blocks the Biblical standard from ever reaching them.

Now, if a person is feeling conviction for their sins and wants to talk to the pastor about it, I think that's a good thing. A thorough conversation could do that person a lot of good and lead them to Christ – but that's not what altar calls are. I fear that our approach to salvation has *not* been saving people at all, but instead has been immunizing them against the gospel and setting them on the road to Hell. Are there people who have been saved through altar calls? Of course – but the number of people who respond and then are never seen again is far, *far* greater. Should we really be using a method that rarely works, that produces many false converts, and which has no Biblical support whatsoever? I don't think so.

You might wonder: if altar calls are not Biblical then what should churches be doing? It's an easy question to answer. We should preach the gospel:

**I Corinthians 1:18-24:** "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the

understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

Notice that Paul didn't say "If you want to get people saved, play a soft hymn and urge them to come to the front of the church to recite the following prayer. If people don't want to come forward then plant a few people in the audience and have them come to the front, to make it look like people are responding and put more emotional pressure on the reluctant ones. Tell people that all they have to do to get saved is recite a certain phrase. Avoid talking about the cost of following Christ, and make no mention of repentance or a changed life. Keep it simple: people just need to come to the front of the church and pray a prayer, and then they're done." Even though churches follow those instructions as if they were a sacrament from God, you will not find them *anywhere* in the Bible. Instead Paul was simple and to the point: *preach the cross*. Preach the full gospel of God, because *that's* the mechanism God will use to save people.

I find it fascinating that Christ routinely offended those who came to Him. For example, after attracting a very large crowd by miraculously feeding thousands of people with a very small meal, Jesus said this:

**John 6:51-53:** "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."

After Jesus preached that message, many of those who had been following Him left:

**John 6:64-66:** "But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."

If the modern church had been in that situation it would have reacted very differently. First of all, the church would have had an altar call to bring as many people to the front as possible. They would have told the crowd that they could avoid Hell simply by reciting a prayer. They definitely would have avoided discussing any doctrines that might offend people! Once they prayed that prayer and started attending church, they would preach messages that the new people would accept. After all, if you preach hard truths then there's a good chance the new people would leave, and who wants that? The modern church is extremely focused on numbers. The more people you can pack in the better – and the easiest way to do that is to water down the

truth and make it acceptable to everyone. So that's what churches do.

But that's not what Christ did! He knew that many of those who were following Him didn't actually believe in Him at all, so He deliberately preached something hard in order to get the false converts to leave. He only wanted *genuine* converts, not phonies. He used hard doctrine to separate the wheat from the chaff. The modern church would never dream of doing that today. What God wants us to do, and what the church is actually doing, are two very different things.

Altar calls are a great tool if your goal is to maximize the number of people in your pews. However, if you're trying to create genuine Christians who will stand the test of time then they're a terrible thing to use – *especially* when used in the careless way in which so many churches use them. As we can see, Christ took a radically different approach!

Do you want to save people? Then preach the gospel to them. Make sure that people understand it – *all* of it. Preach the hard truths. Tell them that genuine conversions result in a changed life which bears the fruits of the Spirit. Those who believe will come to Christ and truly be saved – and those who don't will be offended and driven away. Offending people may seem like a bad thing to do, but it's *far* better than making them think they're saved when they actually aren't. After all, it's *much* easier for someone who knows that they're lost to come to Jesus, than someone who's convinced they were saved at the altar when they really weren't.

## **Modern Sermons Are Shallow**

Sometimes when we're reading the Bible we come across passages that ought to startle us. The Bible says some pretty

amazing things if we'll take the time to stop and think about what it's saying. All too often we simply read right over a passage without giving it any thought.

For example, after Nehemiah finished rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem, he did something else of great importance: he teamed up with Ezra to read the entire Mosaic Law to the people. Just stop and think about that for a moment! Imagine reading the *entire* Mosaic Law at once. That's quite a task!

The reason he did that was because the people of Jerusalem weren't very familiar with it. The Jews had been committing all kinds of sins, and living lives that didn't please God. To solve that problem Nehemiah and Ezra taught the people what God's commandments actually were:

**Nehemiah 8:2:** "And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.

3 And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.

4 And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; ...

5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up:

6 And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

7 ... and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place.

8 So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading."

As you can see, the Levites put a lot of effort into this. They read the entire law of God, leaving nothing out. They read it distinctly so it could be understood. They also expounded upon the law so that people could understand what it actually meant. They wanted to make sure that everyone had heard the Mosaic Law and understood what it required.

Now, this was no small task. The Mosaic Law is much longer than just the 10 commandments; it contains a great many other rules as well. Anyone who has tried to read through Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy knows just how many commandments there actually are. While it's true that much of Leviticus deals primarily with priestly matters and regulations regarding sacrifices, there are *still* a lot of commandments in those four books.

The process of reading the Law would obviously have taken more than just a few minutes. We can see in Nehemiah 8:3 that Ezra read "from morning to midday". In other words, this process took *hours*. This wasn't a 30-minute sermon! I'd also like to point out that this was *not* light reading material: after all, it was an exposition on the Mosaic Law. It didn't have any funny stories and it was *not* entertaining. If you've ever read those four books of the Bible then you know exactly what I'm talking about. That material is difficult, hard to read, and at times hard to understand.

Yet how did the people respond? Well, we're told in Nehemiah 8:3 that even though this process took hours, all of the people listened attentively. In fact, they paid so much



attention that they became convicted of their sins and began to weep:

**Nehemiah 8:9:** "And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law."

Not only did people pay attention for *hours* as the Levites expounded upon the *entire* Mosaic Law to them, but they also applied it to their lives and realized that they fell short! The people were so overcome by the magnitude of their sin that they began to weep. That's how much of an impact this had on them!

Do you know what would happen if someone tried something like this today? Imagine for a moment a pastor telling his congregation that he was going to spend the next 4 hours preaching a sermon on the entire Mosaic Law. If any pastor was foolish enough to try something like that, he would probably find himself out of a job. The congregation would bounce him right out of the pulpit and into the parking lot, and his days at that church would be over. There would be a riot!

The reason the congregation would riot is because modern Christians tend to have incredibly short attention spans when it comes to spiritual issues. Yes, the congregation will sit there while the pastor preaches a 30-minute sermon, but the odds are good they're not going to pay much attention to what he's saying. Instead of taking notes you'll find people balancing their checkbooks or just sleeping through the message. There are a few people who will pay attention to it, but those are the exceptions. Many people will have already forgotten most of what he said by the time they get out to the parking lot. If the preacher dares to go over 30 minutes then people will start to

complain. Even going over the allotted time by seven minutes is enough to get people upset. However, if the pastor's sermon is short – say he only talks for 20 minutes instead of 30 – then there will be rejoicing. People love short sermons and dislike long ones. This is true no matter how good the sermon is or how relevant it may be to their lives.

Why is this? The answer is pretty clear: people have a very limited appetite for preaching. Interestingly, I've never heard anyone complain that a service had too much singing. It's common for people to sit through an hour-long musical presentation at church without making a single complaint – but if the pastor ever tried to preach for an hour there would be a lot of unhappiness. The reason for this is simple: people like to listen to music, and they don't like to listen to preaching.

Now, I don't think it's *just* a problem of attention spans. After all, the same people who complain if a sermon goes five minutes over its expected time are willing to stay up until two in the morning if the baseball game they're watching goes into nine extra innings. They'll gladly watch a three-hour-long movie, or spend six solid hours watching reruns of television shows they've seen a dozen times before. When it comes to something *they actually care about*, time is no object. People who would riot at the thought of a four-hour sermon have no problem spending four hours watching a football game. It's easy to understand why: they believe that football is fun and exciting, and they believe that sermons (even really good ones) are kind of boring. People want to limit their intake of sermons.

I understand that there are some terrible preachers out there. I've heard pastors preach long sermons when they had nothing to say, and it was pretty painful. If your point can be made in 10 minutes then make your point and stop. Don't stretch it out just to hear yourself talk.

But the problem that we have in our churches is not a dislike of *bad* sermons, but a dislike of sermons altogether. Many

people who go to church have very little interest in hearing the Word of God preached (which goes back to the fact that congregations are composed of a "mixed multitude" of saved people and unsaved people). This is in stark contrast to the people we find in the Bible, who *did* care and who *did* pay attention.

As we can see in the example of Nehemiah, the people stood there for *hours* and listened. They cared about what was being said so much that they were overcome by conviction. They took the message to heart. King Josiah had the same reaction when the Mosaic Law was read to him:

**2 Kings 22:8:** "And Hilkiyah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. . .

10 And Shaphan the scribe shewed the king, saying, Hilkiyah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king.

11 And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes.

12 And the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king's, saying,

13 Go ye, enquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us."

Here we have another instance where someone read the

entire Law! In this case the Mosaic Law was read to King Josiah. What was the king's reaction? The Bible says he was so overcome that he rent his clothes. Not only did he pay attention, but he understood what the Law meant. He knew that his nation had been disobedient and was in danger of facing the wrath of God. Conviction had set in and he knew the nation was in a lot of trouble.

I realize these are exceptional cases. The Israelites didn't have the entire Law read to them on a regular basis – but when it was read, they listened. Have you ever tried to read the entire Mosaic Law in one sitting? I can't imagine any congregation allowing their pastor to read the whole thing to them in a single service; they would revolt. It simply wouldn't be tolerated. By modern standards that would be seen as a terrible sermon: dry, boring, and lacking amusing anecdotes. But when Shaphan the scribe read it to King Josiah, it had such a huge impact on him that it changed the course of the nation.

Do you know why? It's because Josiah cared deeply about honoring God with his life, whereas many people in our churches primarily care about being entertained. That's why Josiah eagerly listened to an hours-long recitation of hundreds of commands. His goal in life was *not* the pursuit of entertainment, but the pursuit of God. That's what he was passionate about.

Many people in our congregations primarily want to be entertained. If a sermon is fun then they will listen to it for a short time, but it had better be short or they will lose interest. Many Christians are focused on the pursuit of pleasure instead of the pursuit of God. This is why they have no patience for long messages. They have *lots* of attention for things that they care about, but God had better keep His messages short and fun.

Did you know that Joshua also read the entire Mosaic Law to the people? In fact, when he read the Law there were children present (as we discussed earlier in this series):

**Joshua 8:34:** "And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law.

35 There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them."

These children weren't sent off to children's church to get a more entertaining message. No, they had to behave and listen while Joshua spent *hours* reading the Law to them. That's pretty remarkable, isn't it?

This wasn't just an Old Testament thing. The apostle Paul also preached rather long sermons:

**Acts 20:7:** "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight."

Incidentally, his sermon didn't stop at midnight. He actually kept preaching until the following morning:

**Acts 20:11:** "When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed."

Can you imagine what would happen if the apostle Paul came to one of our modern churches and tried to preach a sermon that lasted *until morning of the next day*? I suspect the congregation's reaction would *not* be pretty! Now, if people were

watching a baseball game and it didn't finish until after midnight, then people will stay up for that because it's baseball. But a *sermon* lasting that long is completely out of the question. Didn't Paul care about those poor people in the audience?

I'm not saying that all of Paul's sermons were this long, and I'm also not suggesting that short sermons are evil. There's nothing wrong with preaching short messages, and in many cases that is very appropriate. If what you want to say can be said in just a few words then do that and don't drag it out! There's also the fact that (as we discussed earlier in this series) these sermons were probably interactive. The Levites who read the entire Mosaic Law to the people expounded on it. Things back then weren't like they are today, where people had to sit in silence. People were allowed to ask questions and get clarification. My point is that some of the sermons we find in the Bible were very long, and in spite of their great length they powerfully impacted the people who heard them. Yet if that same message was preached today the church would never tolerate it because of its length! Something has changed, and it's not the Word of God.

Do you know why Paul was able to preach to that group for so long? It's because they had a genuine heart for God and cared about what the apostle was saying. Christians used to care deeply about the things of God. For example, a 13th century Catholic Inquisitor by the name of Reinerius said this about the Waldensians:

"They can repeat by heart, in the vulgar tongue, the whole text of the New Testament and great part of the Old: and, adhering to the text alone, they reject decretals and decrees with the sayings and expositions of the Saints" (Faber, p. 492).

These days many Christians haven't even bothered to *read* the entire Bible. Yet these 13<sup>th</sup> century Christians cared so much about the Word of God that they actually memorized *virtually the entire Book* – and this was during a time when owning a single page of the Bible could get them burned at the stake! Their passion for Bible study actually endangered their lives. Many of them were killed for it – and yet they weren't deterred. Even though owning a Bible was punishable by death, they still owned them, studied them, and memorized them. *That* is how much they cared!

Can you imagine these devoted Christians limiting sermons to 30 minutes and complaining if they went five minutes over? Can you imagine this group becoming irritated if the pastor spent a few minutes too long expounding on what the Word of God had to say? Of course not – it would be unthinkable to them. Things are different today, aren't they?

There is a preacher online who I enjoy listening to, who preaches sermons that are an hour and 45 minutes long. Since he has so much time he's able to go into incredible detail. What people don't realize is that if you only have 30 minutes to cover an entire passage then you're not going to be able to say very much about it. Imagine taking a 2-hour movie and cutting it down to half an hour. You're going to lose a lot when you do that! However, if you have more time then you can accomplish a lot more. Think of it this way: if you have to cover all 12 chapters of the book of Ecclesiastes in four 30-minute sessions then you are going to be extremely limited in how much you can bring out. More time would make a big difference – but Christians are unwilling to devote serious amounts of time to studying the Word of God. People claim that they simply don't have the time, but I find that hard to believe. According to Nielsen, the average American watches *34 hours* of television a week. Why is it out of the question to sacrifice ten of those minutes to give the preacher a little more time?

The real problem is that many people in our churches find the Word of God boring. They just don't really care about it, and they have no passion for spiritual things. They have lots of time for secular things that they find entertaining, but they have no interest in reading their Bibles, or studying them, or tolerating a sermon that's longer than a half-hour TV sitcom. People are passionate about things, but God is not on that list. People praise God with their lips during the Sunday morning service, but their hearts are far from Him. It's easy to see where their heart truly lies: just look at where they spend their time!

If only people cared as much about the Bible as our forefathers did, how different things would be! Maybe then people wouldn't go around thinking that the Sermon on the Mount was preached by Billy Graham.

## **Churches Must Not Form Alliances With The Ungodly**

In modern times it's common for Christian groups to join forces with non-Christian organizations in order to accomplish some social goal – be it protesting some injustice, or feeding the hungry, or whatever the hot topic of the day might be. Christians will join with Catholics, Muslims, Mormons, Jews, and whoever else they can find in order to accomplish their goals. The justification for this is that while we may have differences we can all agree on this one thing, so why not work together to accomplish it?

The answer is simple: it's because the Bible forbids it. Our generation has forgotten the principle of separation, and the consequences have been devastating. The church needs to learn that ecumenicism – the idea that we should all get along and work together no matter what we believe – doesn't come from God. In fact, God is so opposed to it that He promised to curse



those who are involved in such things.

I realize that's a strong statement, so let's look at the evidence. In 2 Chronicles 18 we can find the story of Jehoshaphat and Ahab. Jehoshaphat was a wise and godly king who the Lord gave great riches and honor. Ahab was an incredibly evil king who was married to the even-more-evil Jezebel. Despite their differences, Jehoshaphat thought it would be a good idea to join forces with Ahab and attack their common enemy:

**2 Chronicles 18:1-3:** "Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab. And after certain years he went down to Ahab to Samaria. And Ahab killed sheep and oxen for him in abundance, and for the people that he had with him, and persuaded him to go up with him to Ramothgilead. And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramothgilead? And he answered him, I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee in the war."

This is exactly the sort of thing that the modern church does. Jehoshaphat was good and Ahab was evil; Jehoshaphat worshiped the true God while Ahab worshiped pagan gods. Since they had a common enemy, Jehoshaphat thought it made sense for them to team up and work together. After all, the Syrians were dangerous and posed a threat to both kings. As the modern church would say, this is the Lord's battle, and if we can get unbelievers to join us in our fight then so much the better!

Except the battle did not go well. If you read chapter 18 you'll see that the prophet Micaiah warned against going to war at all, and prophesied that Ahab would be killed. Sure enough, Ahab actually was killed in that battle. When Jehoshaphat returned home, the prophet Jehu rebuked the king for joining

forces with Ahab:

**2 Chronicles 19:1-2:** "And Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem. And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord."

The Lord was *not at all* pleased that Jehoshaphat had made an alliance with Ahab. Even though they had a common enemy, Jehoshaphat was forbidden from joining forces with the wicked. The Lord didn't see it as two people attacking a common problem; He saw it as helping the ungodly and aiding those who hate the Lord. What the Lord focused on was the fact that *Jehoshaphat helped Ahab*, a king who hated God. What Jehoshaphat helped him do was beside the point. The Lord was upset that he had helped Ahab *at all*. Because of this, as the prophet Jehu said, "therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord."

Some may wonder, didn't the Lord command us to pray for our enemies and do good to them that hate us? Yes, He did. But the Lord did *not* command us to *join forces with them and help them accomplish their goals*. That is an entirely different matter! That's what Jehoshaphat did, and the Lord was very upset about it. The fact that the Syrians were evil and were also Jehoshaphat's enemy didn't matter to God at all.

Let's look at another case. After Ahab died another king arose named Ahaziah, who was also very wicked. Jehoshaphat thought it would be a good idea for the two of them to join forces and send some ships to Ophir to get gold (1 Kings 22:48). Once again we see a godly king teaming up with an evil king in order to accomplish something. Now, there was nothing wrong

with going to Ophir for gold; King Solomon also sent ships out looking for treasure and acquired great wealth. Jehoshaphat thought that if both kings teamed up then they could both be enriched.

However, the Lord was not pleased:

**2 Chronicles 20:35-37:** "And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly: And he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they made the ships in Eziongaber. Then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish."

What upset the Lord was *not* the purpose of the voyage. No, what really upset God was that Jehoshaphat had teamed up with the evil king Ahaziah. Because Jehoshaphat joined himself with a pagan king who hated God, the Lord destroyed the ships they had made. The Lord *hates* it when His people team up with His enemies in order to accomplish something. It doesn't matter if their stated goal is something that's actually good. *He hates it!* In fact, He hates it so much that He promises *wrath* on those who dare to do such things. In the example above, God was so upset at their partnership that He actually destroyed the ships.

This same principle is repeated in the New Testament:

**II Corinthians 6:14-17:** "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath

Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."

People commonly apply this to marriage, but *Paul was not talking about marriage*. Marriage isn't even mentioned anywhere in the chapter! What Paul is saying is that Christians should *not join forces with pagans*. As Paul points out, light has no communion with darkness and righteousness has no fellowship with unrighteousness. They are *different teams entirely* and they are not to be "yoked together".

How many times did the apostles join forces with pagans in order to accomplish societal goals? *Zero times*. How many times did the church in the New Testament join with idol-worshippers to stamp out poverty, feed the hungry, or pursue some other goal? *Zero times*. Instead Paul condemns this practice – just as the practice was condemned in the Old Testament. God wants His people to be *separate* from the world. He doesn't want them building alliances with the wicked; instead He wants His followers to "come out from among them, and be ye separate".

This principle of separation is no longer followed by the modern church. It has ignored the clear teaching of 2 Corinthians 6:14-17. In fact, the church thinks it's *great* when they can team up with God-hating organizations in order to get things done! What God has to say about it is entirely forgotten – but God doesn't mince words about this:

**2 John 1:10-11:** "If there come any unto you,

and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

How does God say we should treat those who preach a false gospel? Does He say that we should join forces with them and try to find areas of commonality so we can build agreements? Nope. What He actually says is that we shouldn't even receive them into our home. In fact, we *shouldn't even bid them "godspeed"!*

Now, when John says "receive him not into your house" he's not forbidding us from sharing the gospel with them. What he *is* forbidding is helping them in any way, either in deed (by giving them a place to stay so they can keep preaching a false gospel) or in word (by bidding them godspeed). John is clear that those who help them, even verbally, become a "partaker of his evil deeds".

Sadly, this is a sin that the modern church *loves* to commit. I once saw a case where a church learned that a mosque was undergoing renovations, so they invited the Muslims to *borrow their church building* so they could keep worshiping their false god. That's exactly the sort of thing that John was condemning – but instead of being dismayed, churches brag about this sinful behavior as a great example of "outreach" and "building bridges" and "true love". God, however, calls it *being a partaker of their evil deeds* and hates it with a passion.

"Come out from among them, and be ye separate", says the Lord. That is the commandment! God repeats it in Revelation and adds a threat:

**Revelation 18:4:** "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye

receive not of her plagues."

In this case the verse is talking about Babylon, the mother of harlots and abominations. God is commanding His people to come out of that wicked place and "be not partakers of her sins" – for those who *are* partakers of her sins will also partake of the plagues that God will send upon her. How do we become partakers of her sins? By joining forces with her and helping her in word or deed. We become partakers with the wicked when we refuse to separate ourselves from them.

The modern church has decided that it's not interested in separation, and instead eagerly tries to form alliances with as many God-hating organizations as it can possibly find. The church has no idea how much this angers God. The Lord didn't hesitate to discipline the righteous king Jehoshaphat when he committed this sin, and that is something we should take to heart.

## **The Importance Of Calling Out False Teachers By Name**

Here's a question for you: is it right or is it wrong to call out false teachers by name? In the world today there are many people who call themselves Christian pastors who teach dangerous, heretical doctrines. Some of these teachers reject the Bible outright and claim that we need to look elsewhere for the truth. Others teach things that are contrary to the Bible or twist the Scriptures to their own ends. For example, there are pastors who deny the virgin birth, the resurrection, the identity of Jesus as God, the reality of Hell, and that salvation comes only through Jesus – just to name a few common heresies! Such people abound in today's world and have led many astray.

The question is, what should be done about it? Some pastors teach that it's wrong to ever call anyone a false teacher.

They say that calling someone a false teacher is the same thing as judging them, and Christians "aren't supposed to judge people." In their opinion the best thing to do is ignore them entirely. At most they might address the false teaching, but they never address the false teacher.

Others say that we should live by Thumper's motto. The rabbit from Bambi famously said that "if you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all." I've heard people seriously suggest that this philosophy should guide everything we say. In other words, if we don't have anything nice to say about someone then it's best to keep silent. Calling someone a false teacher isn't nice, so we shouldn't say it. I'd like to point out that failing to deal with a situation is no different from ignoring it. The results are the same.

All of this brings up a question: what did people do about this problem in the Bible? Is this policy of ignoring false teachers actually Biblical? It's an excellent question, and fortunately it's easy to answer.

First of all, Jesus Himself made it quite plain where He stood. The Lord didn't hesitate to condemn false teachers in the strongest possible terms:

**Matthew 23:27:** "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. ...

33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

As you can see, Jesus didn't mince words! He called the

Pharisees hypocrites and a generation of vipers, and He did it *while they were standing there listening to Him*. There was nothing remotely "nice" about what He said! He actually told them, to their face, that they were very wicked men who were headed straight for Hell. The Lord *definitely* confronted both the false teaching *and* the false teacher.

Of course, Jesus was God, and that's an important distinction. Jesus has a right to judge everyone, and one day we will stand before Him and be held accountable for the way we've lived our life. God has every right to judge mankind, so the fact that He exercises that right shouldn't come as a surprise.

So let's look at another example. What did the apostles do when they were confronted with this sort of situation? Did they believe that confronting false teachers was wrong? Did they live by the "be nice at all costs" motto? Actually, they did not. For example, Paul had quite a bit to say about someone named Alexander:

**1 Timothy 1:19-20:** "Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."

**2 Timothy 4:14:** "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works:"

These are remarkable statements! Not only did Paul call Alexander out by name as an evil person (which isn't a "nice" thing to say!), but he said that he *delivered him over to Satan*. Before you panic, I'd like to point out that the reason Paul did this was so that Alexander could learn not to blaspheme. Paul



hoped that by doing this Alexander would come to regret what he'd done and would repent of his sins. However, Alexander apparently didn't learn anything because in 2 Timothy Paul once again mentioned Alexander's wickedness and asked God to avenge Paul for all the evil things Alexander had done do him.

We can see that the apostle Paul called out two false teachers by name (Hymenaeus and Alexander). Paul didn't restrain himself to just addressing the false teachings themselves, and he didn't say "Well, let's be nice about it." Paul never said anything remotely like "Even though some people are teaching false doctrines, it would be wrong and judgmental to call them out on it. We need to get along with such people and be nice to them." No, Paul was pretty direct in saying that Alexander was evil and people needed to be aware of who he was and what he was doing.

This is not the only example of this that we can find in the Bible! There are many more cases where the apostles called out someone for being a false teacher or an evildoer:

**Galatians 2:11:** "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed."

**2 Timothy 4:10:** "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia."

**III John 1:9-10:** "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth

them that would, and casteth them out of the church."

This isn't just limited to the New Testament; you can find the same thing in the Old Testament as well. For example, Nehemiah names quite a few names:

**Nehemiah 13:7-8:** "And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff to Tobiah out of the chamber."

**Nehemiah 13:28-29:** "And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was son in law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me. Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites."

Another place where you can find this is in the Psalms. In fact, there's a whole class of psalms called imprecatory psalms, in which the psalmist asks God to avenge him for some evil that was done to him. For example, one psalmist wrote this:

**Psalms 69:22-28:** "Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake. Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them. Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in

their tents. For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded. Add iniquity unto their iniquity: and let them not come into thy righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous."

That's some pretty harsh language! Now, lest we think that these verses were simply the ravings of a godless lunatic, it's worth noting that we find the same sort of thing going on *in Heaven*. Take a look at what the book of Revelation has to say:

**Revelation 6:9-10:** "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"

**Revelation 11:16-18:** "And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, We give thee thanks, O LORD God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldst destroy them which destroy the earth."

**Revelation 16:5-7:** "And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments."

I realize that we've strayed a little bit from the original topic, but there's an important point here. The modern church has been infiltrated with the idea that its primary role in life is to be *nice*. Calling out false teachers for heresy isn't nice, so many people say we shouldn't do it. Asking God for vengeance is *especially* not nice. The church believes that it needs to be nice at all times and never say anything that isn't positive and uplifting.

If you look at the Bible, however, it becomes obvious that this philosophy isn't the least bit Biblical. We aren't called to be nice; we're called to be loving, and that's an entirely different matter! There's nothing loving about refusing to tell people that sins are sinful. After all, the wages of sin is death! If you don't call out sin then you're allowing it to continue to claim one souls after another. Condemning it and urging people to repent of it is the only way to save them from its terrible consequences. We *must* call it out!

Likewise, there's nothing loving about refusing to confront false teachers. Life isn't a game where everyone goes to the same place after death and receives the same meaningless prize. We are playing for keeps, and the reward is either everlasting life in paradise or everlasting torment in the Lake of Fire. There's no middle road or neutral ground! False teachers are denying everlasting life to millions of people and sending

them down the road to Hell. They're like angry bears roaming around in crowded neighborhoods, looking for the weak and disabled so they can tear them limb from limb. If there was a rabid bear in your neighborhood you wouldn't ignore it on the grounds that we should be nice to bears; instead you would hide your children and then call animal control so they could capture the bear before it hurts anyone.

Refusing to name false teachers is devastating for many reasons. If no one confronts them then how will they learn that what they're doing is wrong? If no one names them then how will those who are weak or new to the faith find out that they should be avoided? There's nothing loving about refusing to warn people against people who teach that there's no Hell or judgment for sin. How many people are going to hear these false teachers and go away deceived because no one warned them? How many souls will be lost forever because those who knew better refused to do something about it?

The call to be loving means that sometimes we have to engage in behaviors that aren't very "nice". Paul really did turn Alexander over to Satan, but the reason he did it was in the hope that Alexander might learn the error of his ways and change. Would it really have been better if instead Paul had done nothing and let Alexander continue down the road to eternal damnation?

Now, I realize that the imprecatory Psalms are a bit different. The key there is to realize that while God forbids *us* from taking revenge, He does *not* rebuke our thirst for justice. What God says is that when we've been wronged we should allow the Lord to take care of it. Those who have been martyred for the cause of Christ *do* thirst for justice to be done, as we saw in Revelation 6:9-10. The Lord doesn't rebuke this desire but instead promises that justice *will* be done. One day He will avenge His children, but that's a topic for another time.

Refusing to confront false teachers may be "nice", but there's nothing loving about it. I fear that our refusal to combat

false teachings *and* those who teach them only makes it easier for false teachers to guide millions of people down the road to Hell. After all, if you refuse to tell campers that a vicious wolf is roaming their campground, what do you think is going to happen? Is being "nice" really worth all the souls that it's going to cost?

## What "Worship" Actually Means

It's pretty universal for churches refer to their Sunday morning services as "Worship services". I have to ask, though: are they really *worship* services? I'm not convinced that the church actually understands what the word "worship" really means.

We can find the word "worship" many times throughout the Bible. For example, the wise men worshipped Jesus:

**Matthew 2:11:** "And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh."

Does this mean the wise men sang Jesus some songs and then listened to a sermon? Nope. It means they literally bowed down to Him.

Here's a time when a leper came to Jesus:

**Matthew 8:2:** "And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."

Did this leper sing a song to Jesus? No. He literally bowed down at His feet and then asked to be cured of his leprosy.

Here's a time when the disciples worshiped Jesus:

**Matthew 14:31-33:** "And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God."

Did the disciples sing to Jesus? No. They bowed down at His feet in awe and amazement.

I could give a *lot* more examples, but I think you get the point. The Bible is extremely consistent in the way it uses the word "worship". That word does *not* mean to sing songs! We already have a word for that, and it is the word "praise". The word "worship" means to bow down to God.

When people gather together and sing hymns, are they worshipping Jesus? No, they are praising Him. Worship and praise are not the same! We worship Jesus when we bow down before Him. We worship Him when we do His will instead of our own. You will never find a "worship service" mentioned anywhere in the Bible. There are many times when people gather together to praise the Lord or listen to a sermon, but worship is something that each individual must do by themselves. It's not a group activity! You must make the choice to walk in His ways instead of your own. You must choose to submit to Him in your life instead of doing whatever you please. Those are acts of worship! What happens in Sunday morning services are acts of *praise*, which is a group activity.

It's very easy to praise God without worshipping Him. In

fact, God said that people do this all the time:

**Isaiah 29:13:** "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:"

Can you honor God with your lips while your heart is far from Him? Absolutely. I think that's very common in churches. Praise and worship are not the same thing, and churches shouldn't act like they're synonyms. If you come to church and sing a few praise songs, that doesn't mean that you've engaged in an act of worship. If you truly want to worship Jesus then you must submit to Him in your life and bow down to Him.

Churches should teach people what the word "worship" really means. We aren't doing people any favors by confusing the terms "worship" and "praise"! Churches do *not* have a "worship team". That whole concept doesn't even make sense! What churches have is a *praise* team. The fact that the word "worship" is so widely misused makes me think that people don't understand what worship is in the first place.

Should people praise God? Yes. Should people worship God? Yes. Are those two things the same? No, they are not.

## Conclusion

If you've made it this far then it should be obvious by now why I think the modern church is very unbiblical. I'm not saying that the *doctrines* of churches are unbiblical (although that may be true as well, depending on what denomination we're talking



about). I am saying that the way people "do church" is completely unbiblical. Christians often say that the Bible is their sole guide for faith and practice, and claim that they want to obey the Bible and not go beyond it – but when it comes to the way we run our churches, we've tossed the Bible out completely and have come up with all sorts of traditions that have no Biblical support and cannot be justified. Our ways are *not* better than God's ways. The way we have come up with to "do church" is extremely ineffective and has had terrible consequences.

Is there any Biblical support for having church buildings? Nope. But we have them anyway, and we spend millions of dollars on them, and we go deep into debt to pay for them, and we ask the congregation to make huge sacrifices in order to fund them. These buildings are always growing larger and larger, and taking more time and resources to maintain and repair. The buildings are a huge burden and have led to a lot of other problems, but we want them anyway. If we met in people's homes, like *every church we find in the New Testament*, we would solve a whole host of problems. But that's not what we do.

Is there any Biblical support for a pastor to have a congregation of ten thousand people? Absolutely not. The whole job of a pastor is to know his sheep, and help them, and go after them when they're in trouble – but it's possible to attend a large church for *months* without the pastor even noticing you're there. If you want help from the church you're going to have to get in touch with someone yourself and make an appointment, and then possibly pay a fee for counseling services. The pastor doesn't know who you are and doesn't have time for you, and he isn't going to think about you when crafting his sermons. He has thousands of people that he's preaching to, and he can't possibly deal with each person individually and work alongside them. This wouldn't be a problem if people met in small groups in their homes, but that's not the way we do things.

Is there any Biblical support for pastors delivering every single sermon as a monologue that must never be interrupted with questions or corrections? Nope. Some sermons in the Bible were long and others were short, but people were allowed to ask questions. Paul even told people to judge those who were speaking and correct them if they were wrong. In the modern church a pastor picks a sermon and preaches it to 3000 people in the hope that somehow there might be something in it for someone. If we had small home churches then the messages could actually be directed at the problems people were struggling with. People could ask questions and get clarification. They could actually learn something, instead of being lectured and then sent home to work out any problems on their own.

Is there any Biblical support for services being exactly an hour or two long? Nope. In the Bible services were as long as they needed to be. People gathered together and then remained together until they were done. They prayed as long as needed, and preached as long as needed, and talked as long as needed. Sometimes the service only lasted a few minutes and sometimes it lasted all night. The length didn't really matter. Is that how we do things? Absolutely not. Our services are planned out in advance, right down to every song that will be sung and every prayer that will be prayed and the exact list of points the pastor will make in his sermon. The service will start exactly on time and end exactly on time (with very little variation). The service is going to be exactly the same regardless of who shows up that day or what their needs are. The number of people who come (or don't come) has no impact on how the service unfolds at all. There's no Biblical support for that, and no church in the Bible ever operated that way, but that's the way we do things today.

I could go on and on and on. Is there Biblical support for tithing? No. Is there Biblical support for pastors marrying people? No. Is there Biblical support for meeting exactly once a week on Sunday mornings? No. Is there Biblical support for voting in

pastors and voting them out? No. Is there Biblical support for having the entire congregation sit passively during the service? No. Is there Biblical support for pastors switching jobs again and again until they reach the peak of their career and land a prestigious position at a megachurch? No. Is their Biblical support for separating children from their parents once the service starts, and dividing people into different age groups so they can all be taught separately? No. Is there Biblical support for opening up church services to people who aren't Christians at all, and never having any services or events that are only for believers? Nope. There's not even any Biblical support for calling part of the church building "the sanctuary" and designating it as a holy place (which is how many people view it). The building isn't "the church"! The *people* are the church. God doesn't dwell in the building; instead the Holy Spirit dwells within us. The sanctuary is not holy! Instead it is the *people* who are holy.

Yes, this land is full of buildings that are called churches. They have pastors that don't know the people who attend the services, because there are so many people attending that the pastor can't possibly get to know them. You can go into these buildings and attend the services, but you can't expect people to know when you're in trouble because it doesn't work that way. The pastor is probably not going to come looking for you if something bad happens, but if you fill out a form and schedule an appointment then maybe you can get some counseling (although you may be charged for it). You can hear sermons in these buildings, but the sermons aren't designed with you in mind and may have nothing to do with what's going on in your life. If you've been going to church for a while then all the sermons will probably be things you've heard before. If you've been going a long time then you could probably give the sermon yourself because you already know all the points that are going to be made. You're essentially stuck in first grade forever because the pastor will never explore the Bible on a deeper level. He

can't, because his church is full of people who aren't saved or who don't really care very much about Christianity.

If you go to a church service, you will be able to say hello to the person who has been sitting behind you for the past three years – but that will probably be the extent of your conversation. You will sing whatever songs you are told to sing, and you will pray whatever you are told to pray. If there's a responsive reading then you will say whatever the pastor wants you to say. You can give when the offering plate is passed around, and nearly all your money will go toward paying for the building and the salaries of the staff (some of whom may make significantly more money than you do). You can then sit quietly while the pastor preaches at you. Once the service is over and you've finally left the building you can then pray your own prayers and sing your own praises to God. You can study the Bible and have friends over and build relationships with them. You can talk to someone about your problems and help them with theirs. You can bear one another's burdens – but you're going to be doing it outside of the very expensive church building, because that's not what that building is for.

I've heard it said that fewer people go to church these days than they did in the past. What amazes me is that anyone goes to church at all! Why would you want to drive across town in order to sit passively for a few hours and then drive back home? How does that benefit anyone? If you go to a small group then you can help others and be helped in return, but you have no options to do anything in a church service. If you miss church for a month it won't negatively impact the service at all, because there's nothing for you to do in the service but sit there quietly.

That might not be so bad if there was Biblical support for the way we conduct our services, *but there isn't*. In the Bible, services were held by small groups of people who met in homes. Christians talked to one another, and asked questions, and corrected one another, and helped one another. They noticed

when there were problems and they went after the lost. They met frequently (on a daily basis, actually), they shared meals together all the time, and they were actively involved in each other's lives.

Are there congregations that manage to get to know each other and become close to one another in spite of all this? Sure – but that is happening *in spite* of the way they conduct their services, not because of them. The service is designed to keep everyone passive, and it does a really good job of that. The only thing people are asked to do is stand when they're told to stand, sit when they're told to sit, sing when they are told to sing, and be quiet when they're told to be quiet. You don't have to do anything in a service at all! In fact, you *can't*. The paid staff will handle it all for you. Your presence at the service is not going to make it better, and your absence will not make it worse. (Was that true in New Testament churches? Definitely not. But that's exactly how our services are designed to work.)

Is there Biblical support for that model? Nope – not even close. So why are churches structured this way? *Because that's what people want*. The modern church is governed by the congregation. They have the power to vote in deacons, elders, and pastors, and to vote them right back out again. If the people didn't like the way things were being done then they could change it – but they don't. The truth is that the modern church has a lot of aspects that appeal to the flesh. After all, no one is going to expect anything from you and you're not going to be asked to do anything. The services are going to be kept short, and you will know exactly when you're going to be leaving. You don't have to establish close relationships with anyone or open up about your problems. You can keep living in sin all you want, and the chances are no one around you will even notice. The sermons are never going to challenge you, which means you don't have to worry about studying the Bible and making sure you know what's going on. All of the work will be done by other

people, which gives you the freedom to sit there quietly and vegetate. You're also not going to be held accountable for anything! If the church does somehow get a pastor who's a real firebrand, they can just vote him out and replace him. The church will carefully insulate you from anything unpleasant and make sure you don't hear anything that you don't want to hear. If you don't have a passion for God and want to remain in your sins then the modern church is a dream come true.

It's also a great system for pastors. They get a large building, and a large ministry, and a large staff, and lot of resources to play with. I realize there are a lot of small churches that claim to not have very much money, but even "small" churches often have budgets of *hundreds of thousands of dollars per year* (which is probably *far more* than the budget of anyone in the congregation). Besides, there's always the dream of "striking it big" – and if a pastor realizes that his church isn't going to grow then he can just jump ship to a bigger one. No pastor is going to want to have a small house church when he could have a multi-million-dollar complex with a large full-time staff! There's no prestige in a small house church at all. No one is going to be impressed by a congregation of 15 people. It's true that small class sizes are *enormously* beneficial for *the people who are actually in those classes*, but I think it's safe to say that spiritual growth is pretty far down on the list of priorities for most churches. (I know that seems harsh, so here's a question for you. Which do you think is more helpful for spiritual growth: allowing questions during a service, or refusing them? Even *schools* allow students to ask questions, because it's so obvious that it helps people understand the material – but not churches. What does that tell you about our priorities?)

The modern church is exactly the way that people want it to be. The problem is that *it's not the way God wants it to be*. The Lord has given us a pattern to follow in His Word, and He expects us to follow it. He's told us exactly how He wants the

church to operate. Jesus has also told us what He will do if the church ignores Him and does whatever they want instead:

**Revelation 2:4-5:** "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

What did Jesus say He would do if the church didn't repent? He said He would remove it from His presence and cast it aside. Oh, the building might remain and the people might still show up, but from God's perspective it would no longer be a church at all. It would just be a group of people who were wasting their time doing things that God hated.

God commands us to walk in His ways. When are we going to stop and think about what we're doing and compare it to what the Bible has to say? If our traditions and ways of doing things have no Biblical basis then shouldn't we do something about that? Why are we fighting so hard to keep our church buildings when, honestly, we probably shouldn't have them in the first place? Why are we fighting so hard to make sure a church service is attended by 1500 people, when those people would be far better served if they were in a small group of only 15 people? Are we *really* serving God? Do we truly have the best interests of the congregation at heart?

I realize we have a lot of impressive buildings. There was once a time when the disciples tried to show Jesus how impressive Herod's temple was. Do you know what He had to say about that magnificent building which, at the time, was one of the greatest structures in the world?

**Mark 13:1-2:** "And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

Do you think that God would have used the Romans to tear that temple apart stone from stone if that building was pleasing in His sight and a true house of prayer? I'm pretty sure the answer is *no*. God tore that temple apart because it was a den of thieves.

There may come a day when the government comes against our church buildings and tears them down. If that happens, I have to ask: is it possible that God is allowing the government to shut down the church because it stopped pleasing Him a long time ago? If our churches were firmly based on the Bible then that would be one thing – but are they? There are many people today who are fighting to preserve their church buildings. Wouldn't it be better to go back to the Bible and do things God's way instead?



# Resource 1: Chapter Summary

## 1 John

### I John 1

- WHAT WE HAVE SEEN, HEARD, AND TOUCHED – THE WORD OF LIFE – WE DECLARE TO YOU, SO THAT YOU MIGHT HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH US AND WITH GOD
- GOD IS LIGHT, AND IN HIM IS NO DARKNESS AT ALL
- IF WE WALK IN THE LIGHT, WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH ONE ANOTHER AND CHRIST’S BLOOD CLEANSES US FROM ALL SIN
- IF WE SAY THAT WE HAVE NO SIN WE DECEIVE OURSELVES; IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS HE WILL FORGIVE AND CLEANSE US
- IF WE SAY THAT WE HAVE NOT SINNED WE MAKE HIM A LIAR

### I John 2

- THESE THINGS I WRITE TO YOU THAT YOU SIN NOT
- JESUS IS THE PROPITIATION FOR THE SINS OF THE WHOLE WORLD
- WHOEVER SAYS THAT THEY KNOW CHRIST, BUT DO NOT KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS, IS A LIAR
- HE WHO HATES HIS BROTHER IS IN DARKNESS
- I WRITE TO YOU CHILDREN BECAUSE YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN, I WRITE TO YOU FATHERS BECAUSE YOU HAVE KNOWN GOD; I WRITE TO YOU YOUNG MEN BECAUSE YOU HAVE OVERCOME THE WICKED ONE
- IF ANYONE LOVES THE WORLD, THE LOVE OF GOD IS NOT IN HIM
- HE WHO DOES THE WILL OF GOD ABIDES FOREVER

- IT IS THE LAST TIME; THERE ARE MANY ANTICHRISTS
- IF THEY HAD BEEN OF US THEY WOULD HAVE CONTINUED WITH US
- YOU HAVE AN UNCTION FROM GOD AND KNOW ALL THINGS
- WHOEVER DENIES THE SON DOES NOT HAVE THE FATHER
- ABIDE IN HIM SO THAT WHEN HE APPEARS WE WON'T BE ASHAMED
- EVERYONE THAT DOES RIGHTEOUSNESS IS BORN OF HIM

## **I John 3**

- BEHOLD GOD'S LOVE, THAT WE SHOULD BE CALLED THE SONS OF GOD
- THE WORLD DOES NOT KNOW US BECAUSE IT DID NOT KNOW HIM
- WE KNOW THAT WHEN HE APPEARS WE WILL BE LIKE HIM
- WHOEVER SINS HAS NOT SEEN HIM OR KNOWN HIM
- CAIN SLEW HIS BROTHER BECAUSE CAIN'S WORKS WERE EVIL
- DO NOT BE AMAZED IF THE WORLD HATES YOU
- WHOEVER HATES HIS BROTHER IS A MURDERER, AND NO MURDERER HAS ETERNAL LIFE IN HIM
- WE OUGHT TO LAY DOWN OUR LIVES FOR THE BRETHREN
- DO NOT LOVE IN WORD BUT IN DEED
- GOD IS GREATER THAN OUR HEART AND KNOWS ALL THINGS
- WHATEVER WE ASK WE RECEIVE OF HIM

## **I John 4**

- EVERY SPIRIT THAT DENIES THAT JESUS HAS COME IN THE FLESH IS NOT OF GOD BUT IS THE SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST

- GREATER IS HE THAT IS IN YOU THAN HE THAT IS IN THE WORLD
- HE WHO IS NOT OF GOD DOES NOT HEAR US
- HE WHO DOES NOT LOVE IS NOT OF GOD, FOR GOD IS LOVE
- GOD MANIFESTED HIS LOVE BY SENDING HIS SON
- HEREIN IS LOVE, NOT THAT WE LOVED GOD BUT THAT HE LOVED US
- NO MAN HAS SEEN GOD AT ANY TIME
- WE KNOW WE DWELL IN HIM BECAUSE HE GAVE US OF HIS SPIRIT
- GOD DWELLS IN WHOEVER CONFESSES THAT JESUS IS GOD'S SON
- THERE IS NO FEAR IN LOVE, BUT PERFECT LOVE CASTS OUR FEAR
- WE LOVE HIM BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US

## **I John 5**

- WHOEVER BELIEVES THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST IS BORN OF GOD
- WE KNOW THAT WE LOVE GOD'S CHILDREN WHEN WE LOVE GOD AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS
- HE WHO BELIEVES THAT JESUS IS GOD'S SON OVERCOMES THE WORLD
- JESUS CAME BY WATER AND BLOOD
- THERE ARE THREE THAT BEAR RECORD IN HEAVEN: THE FATHER, THE WORD, AND THE HOLY GHOST; THESE THREE ARE ONE
- THERE ARE THREE THAT BEAR WITNESS IN EARTH: THE SPIRIT, THE WATER, AND THE BLOOD; THESE THREE AGREE IN ONE
- HE WHO DOES NOT BELIEVE GOD HAS MADE HIM A LIAR
- HE WHO DOES NOT HAVE THE SON DOES NOT HAVE LIFE

- I WRITE THESE THINGS SO THAT YOU MAY KNOW THAT YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE
- IF WE ASK ANYTHING ACCORDING TO HIS WILL HE HEARS US
- IF ANYONE SEES HIS BROTHER SIN A SIN THAT IS NOT UNTO DEATH, LET HIM PRAY AND HE WILL GIVE HIM LIFE
- WE KNOW THAT WE ARE OF GOD, AND THE WHOLE WORLD LIES IN WICKEDNESS
- KEEP YOURSELVES FROM IDOLS

# Resource 3: The Teachings Of The Bible

## 1 John 1

- Jesus was from the beginning (v1)
- Jesus is an eternal being; He already existed in the beginning and He had no beginning Himself (v1)
- The apostle John heard the words of Jesus personally; he was an eyewitness to the things that He did (v1)
- The apostle John saw Jesus personally, and looked upon him (v1)
- The apostle John touched Jesus (v1)
- Jesus is the Word of life (v1)
- The things that John wrote about Jesus were things he had seen for himself; he was an eyewitness to them, and was giving a firsthand account; this is true of the other disciples as well (v1)
- Jesus was manifested to the world, and to the disciples (v2)
- God manifested Jesus so that He could be seen (v2)
- The apostles (including John) had seen Jesus, who God manifested; they were eyewitnesses (v2)
- The apostles (including John) bore witness of Jesus, who they had seen with their own eyes (v2)

- Jesus has everlasting life; He had no beginning and He will have no end (v2)
- Before Jesus was born He was with the Father; before His birth He was with God (v2)
- Jesus existed before He was born in Bethlehem (v2)
- The disciples proclaimed the things that they had seen (v3)
- The disciples proclaimed the things that they had heard (v3)
- The words of the disciples are eyewitness, firsthand accounts; they were telling people what they had personally seen and heard (v3)
- The Bible contains firsthand accounts of the life of Jesus (v3)
- The reason the disciples testified about Jesus was so that others might have fellowship with them (v3)
- In order to have fellowship with Jesus you need to have a reliable, true account of the life of Jesus; you need to know who He is and what He did; you cannot have fellowship with Jesus apart from what is written in the Scriptures (v3)
- The disciples had fellowship with God the Father (v3)
- The disciples had fellowship with God the Son (v3)
- Jesus is the Son of God (v3)
- Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah) (v3)
- God the Father is referred to using male pronouns (v3)

- God the Son is referred to using male pronouns (v3)
- The gospel makes it possible to have fellowship with Jesus (v3)
- The gospel makes it possible to have fellowship with God the Father (v3)
- This book was written so that our joy might be full (v4)
- The words in this book are intended to bring us joy (v4)
- This book was written by more than one person (v4)
- The people (plural) who wrote this book were all eyewitnesses to Jesus (v4)
- It is possible for the teachings and doctrines of the Scriptures to bring joy (v4)
- Jesus preached a message to the disciples (v5)
- The disciples proclaimed the message that Jesus had given to them (v5)
- The disciples were proclaiming the message of Jesus, not their own message (v5)
- God is light (v5)
- There is no darkness in God at all (v5)
- God is not a mixture of both good and evil; instead He is pure good (v5)
- Although the world teaches that good needs to be balanced out by evil, that is not what the Bible teaches; God is light, and is against the darkness (v5)
- Those who claim to have fellowship with God but who walk in darkness are liars (v6)

- It is impossible to be a Christian and walk in sin at the same time; those who are living sinful lives may claim to be Christians, but they are lying (v6)
- One of the characteristics of genuine Christians is that they walk in the light, and hate the darkness (v6)
- One of the ways you can tell if a person's faith is real or not is by their actions; if they are walking in darkness then they are not a Christian at all (v6)
- There are some people who lie about their salvation (v6)
- The truth is that those who walk in darkness are not of God (v6)
- Those who seek to have fellowship with God must walk in the light, and not in the darkness (v6)
- God does not have fellowship with darkness (v6)
- God does not call us to a mixture of both darkness and light (v6)
- God is in the light (v7)
- God commands us to walk in the light, and to not walk in darkness (v7)
- If we walk in the light then we have fellowship with one another (v7)
- If we walk in the light then we are saved; those who walk in the light are genuine Christians (v7)
- Fellowship comes from walking together in the light (v7)
- All genuine Christians walk in the light; those who do not walk in the light, but walk in darkness, are not saved at all (v7)



- The blood of Jesus is what cleanses us from sin; we are cleansed by His blood (v7)
- We can only be cleansed by the blood of Jesus; nothing else can do it (v7)
- If we want to be saved then we must walk in the light; those who are unwilling to walk in the light are not forgiven (v7)
- God will not save those who walk in the darkness (v7)
- We must seek to walk in the same light that God does; we must walk in His ways in order to be saved (v7)
- We are not allowed to live as we please or make up our own rules; instead we must walk as God walks (v7)
- Light cannot have fellowship with darkness; it is impossible for a Christian to have fellowship with a non-Christian, for to have fellowship together we must walk together in the light (v7)
- We cannot be saved apart from Jesus, for only His blood can cleanse us from sin (v7)
- Jesus is the Son of God (v7)
- In order to be saved we must be cleansed from sin (v7)
- If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves (v8)
- Everyone has sin in their lives; everyone is a sinner (v8)
- Those who claim to be without sin are deceiving themselves (v8)
- There is no one who is without sin; there is no one who is not a sinner (v8)

- There is no one who does not need the blood of Jesus (v8)
- Some people deceive themselves (v8)
- The truth is that we are sinners and we need a Savior; we need the blood of Jesus to cleanse us from our sin (v8)
- In order to be forgiven for our sins we must confess our sins to God (v9)
- If we do not confess our sins to God then we cannot be saved; salvation requires the confession of sins (v9)
- God is faithful (v9)
- God is just (v9)
- If we confess our sins then God will forgive our sins (v9)
- If we confess our sins then God will cleanse us from all unrighteousness (v9)
- God is the only one who can forgive our sins (v9)
- God is the only one who can cleanse us from all unrighteousness (v9)
- We need to have our sins forgiven (v9)
- We need to be cleansed from all unrighteousness (v9)
- Those who claim to be without sin are calling God a liar (v10)
- Those who claim to be without sin do not have the word of God within them; they are liars (v10)
- Everyone has sinned; there is no one who is without sin (v10)

- You must admit that you are a sinner in order to be saved; those who refuse to admit that they have sinned are not saved (v10)
- You must confess your sins to God in order to be saved; those who refuse to confess their sins are not saved (v10)
- You must go to God and seek forgiveness for your sins in order to be saved; those who have not done that are not saved (v10)

[Last updated 12/19/2022]

## **1 John 2**

- The apostle John refers to the recipients of this letter as his children (v1)
- The reason the apostle John wrote this letter is so that Christians would stop sinning (v1)
- Christians need to stop sinning; this is important (v1)
- Sin is bad (v1)
- Christians have an advocate with the Father (v1)
- Jesus is our advocate (v1)
- Jesus is righteous (v1)
- Jesus is the propitiation for our sins; He was punished on our behalf so that we could be forgiven and redeemed (v2)
- Jesus suffered for our sins (v2)

- Jesus took the punishment that we deserved for our sins upon Himself (v2)
- Jesus is the propitiation for the sins of all Christians (not just the sins of the Jews) (v2)
- The only way to be saved is through Jesus (v2)
- The proof of salvation is keeping the commandments of Christ (v3)
- Those who keep the commandments of Jesus prove that they know Him; this is evidence that they are saved (v3)
- Keeping the commandments of Jesus is vital (v3)
- It is very important to know Jesus (v3)
- It is very important to keep the commandments of Jesus (v3)
- Jesus gave us commandments to follow (v3)
- There are certain things that indicate whether a person is a genuine Christian or not (v3)
- Those who are saved know Jesus (v3)
- Anyone who says that they know Jesus, but does not keep His commandments, is a liar (v4)
- Those who truly know Jesus will keep His commandments (v4)
- Those who do not keep the commandments of Jesus do not actually know Him (v4)
- Some people will falsely claim to know Jesus when they do not (v4)
- Not everyone who claims to know Jesus actually does (v4)

- Those who do not keep the commandments of Jesus are not saved (v4)
- Those who do not know Jesus are not saved (v4)
- The love of God is perfected in those who keep the commandments of Jesus (v5)
- Keeping the commandments of Jesus is an act of love (v5)
- Keeping the commandments of Jesus is an act of perfection (v5)
- Those who break the commandments of Jesus are not demonstrating love; instead they are involved in sin and hate and rebellion (v5)
- In order to be loving we must keep the commandments of Jesus (v5)
- In order for God's love to be perfected in us we must keep the commandments of Jesus (v5)
- The way we can tell that our salvation is genuine is by keeping the commandments of Jesus; if we keep His commandments then that means we are saved (v5)
- Those who are not in Jesus will not keep His commandments (v5)
- Those who do not keep the commandments of Jesus do not have the love of God in them (v5)
- Those who claim to be Christians must walk as Jesus walked (v6)
- If you do not walk as Jesus walked then you are not a Christian (v6)
- Abiding in Jesus means walking in His ways and obeying

### His commands (v6)

- The difference between a genuine Christian and a false Christian is obedience to Christ (v6)
- Christians must seek to be like Christ (v6)
- Obedience to God is an act of love (v7)
- The commandment to obey God is an old commandment, not a new one (v7)
- The commandment to love one another is an old commandment, not a new one (v7)
- God told us to love one another from the beginning (v7)
- The apostle John is giving us a new commandment; it seems to be the same as the old commandment (to love one another); this commandment may be both old and new, since God gave it in ancient times and Jesus also repeated it to His disciples (v8)
- Now that Jesus has come into the world, the darkness is past (v8)
- Now that Jesus has come into the world, the true light now shines (v8)
- Jesus brings light to the world (v8)
- Before Jesus came into the world, the world was in darkness (v8)
- Those who are in Jesus are in the light (v9)
- Those who are not in Jesus are not in the light (v9)
- In order to be in the light we must be in Jesus (v9)
- Those who hate their brother (fellow Christians) are not

saved; they are not in the light (v9)

- Those who hate their brother (fellow Christians) are still in the darkness (v9)
- Christians must love one another (v9)
- Those who do not love one another are not saved; instead they are still in the darkness (v9)
- One of the characteristics of genuine Christians is a love for others (v9)
- Those who love others abide in the light (v10)
- Those who love others are saved; (keep in mind that loving one another means keeping the commands of Jesus) (v10)
- Those who love others have no occasion for stumbling within them (v10)
- It is very important to love others (v10)
- Those who love others are not in darkness (v10)
- Those who hate others are not in the light; instead they are in the darkness (v11)
- Those who hate others are walking in darkness (v11)
- Those who hate others do not know where they are going (v11)
- Those who hate others have been blinded (v11)
- It is very bad to hate others (v11)
- Hating others brings trouble upon yourself (v11)
- Those who hate others do not know the Lord and are not

saved (v11)

- The reason that the apostle John wrote this letter is because our sins have been forgiven (v12)
- Our sins have been forgiven for the sake of Christ's name (v12)
- Our sins have been forgiven because of Jesus (v12)
- Our sins have already been forgiven; the forgiveness occurred in the past, and is done (v12)
- Our forgiveness has already been completed and accomplished (v12)
- The apostle John wrote this letter to fathers (v13)
- Jesus was from the beginning; He is an eternal (uncreated) being (v13)
- Christians know Jesus (v13)
- The apostle John wrote this letter to young men (v13)
- The fathers that John was writing to were Christians (v13)
- The young men that John was writing to were Christians (v13)
- The young men had overcome the wicked one; (they did this through their faith in Christ) (v13)
- Christians have overcome the wicked one (v13)
- Christians have known the Father (v13)
- John repeated that Christian fathers have known him who was from the beginning; John is repeating that Jesus is an eternal, uncreated being (v14)



- The Christian young men that the apostle John was writing to were wrong (v14)
- John repeated that the Christian young men that John was writing to had overcome the wicked one (v14)
- It is very important to overcome the wicked one; (this is done by faith) (v14)
- The word of God abides in Christians (v14)
- Christians must not love the world (v15)
- Christians must not love the things that are in the world (v15)
- Those who love this world are not Christians (v15)
- Those who love the things of this world are not Christians (v15)
- Those who are not Christians do not have the love of the Father within them (v15)
- One of the distinguishing characteristics of Christians is that they do not love this world, or the things that are in this world (v15)
- Those who are filled with the love of the Father will not love this world, or the things that it contains (v15)
- The things that are in this world are not of God the Father (v16)
- Since the things that are in this world are not of God the Father, we must not love them (v16)
- We must not love things that do not come from God the Father (v16)

- The sinful lusts of our flesh do not come from God the Father (v16)
- The sinful lusts of our eyes do not come from God the Father (v16)
- The sinful pride of life does not come from God the Father (v16)
- Those who seek after the lusts of the flesh, and love them, are not saved (v16)
- Those who seek after the lusts of the eyes, and love them, are not saved (v16)
- Those who seek after the pride of life are not saved (v16)
- Those who seek after things that do not come from God the Father are not saved (v16)
- The sinful lusts of our flesh come from this world (v16)
- The sinful lusts of our eyes come from this world (v16)
- The sinful pride of life comes from this world (v16)
- It is not just actions that are sinful; desires can be sinful as well (v16)
- There are things in this world that do not come from God the Father (v16)
- Christians must not seek after the sinful lusts of the flesh (v16)
- Christians must not seek after the sinful lusts of the eyes (v16)
- Christians must not seek after the pride of life (v16)
- This world is passing away (v17)

- This world is not eternal; one day it will be gone (v17)
- The lusts of this world are passing away (v17)
- The lusts of the flesh are passing away (v17)
- The lusts of the eyes are passing away (v17)
- The pride of life is passing away (v17)
- The things in this world that do not come from God are passing away (v17)
- He who does the will of God will abide forever (v17)
- Since Christians are those who walk in God's ways and do God's will, we will abide forever (v17)
- Although this world will pass away, Christians will not pass away; we will last beyond the end of this world (v17)
- If we want to abide forever then we must do the will of God (v17)
- Those who do not do the will of God will not abide forever (v17)
- When this letter was written, it was already the last time (v18)
- One day the antichrist will come (v18)
- In the days of the apostle John there were already many antichrists (v18)
- Since there were already many people who were against Christ, that means it is the last time (v18)
- The identifying characteristic of the last time is the rise of antichrists (v18)

- There were false converts who claimed to have been associated with the true church, but who were not (v19)
- These false converts could be identified by the fact that they left the true church and went in a different direction (v19)
- Since these people did not remain with the true church, it was proven that they were false converts (v19)
- The passage of time will make false converts manifest; those who are false will eventually leave the truth (v19)
- Those who are true converts will remain with the truth; they will not leave it (v19)
- Those who seemed to be with the church at first, but then left it, are called antichrists; they are preaching against the truth (v19)
- Christians have an unction from the Holy One; we have the right and ability to interpret the Scripture on our own (v20)
- Christians know all things; we do not need someone else to interpret the Scripture for us (v20)
- Christians do not need to listen to antichrists; instead we can study the Scriptures for ourselves, because the Holy Spirit has given us the right and the ability to do that (v20)
- The apostle John wrote this letter because its recipients knew the truth (v21)
- No lie is of the truth (v21)
- The apostle John wrote this letter to Christians (v21)

- Christians are those who know the truth (v21)
- There is no truth in the Bible that tells Christians to tell lies or to make lies or to teach lies; no lie is of the truth, and no lie comes from the truth (v21)
- Those who deny that Jesus is the Messiah are liars (v22)
- Those who deny that Jesus is the Messiah are antichrists (v22)
- Those who deny the Son deny the Father as well (v22)
- It is impossible to deny the Son without also denying the Father (v22)
- Those who deny that Jesus is the Messiah are not saved; instead they are the enemies of God (v22)
- Whoever denies the Son is also denying the Father; those who reject Jesus are also rejecting God the Father as well (v23)
- Whoever acknowledges the Son also has the Father as well; those who accept Jesus as the Messiah also have God the Father as well (v23)
- Those who have the Son have the Father; those who reject the Son have also rejected the Father (v23)
- Those who deny the Son are not saved (v23)
- The message that we heard from the beginning needs to continue to abide in us (v24)
- If the message that we heard from the beginning abides in us then we will continue in the Son (v24)
- If we continue in the Son then we will continue in the Father as well (v24)

- We must not leave the truth that we heard from the beginning; we must continue to abide in the truth, and not leave it (v24)
- Jesus has promised us eternal life (v25)
- Christians will have eternal life (v25)
- Those who continue to abide in the truth, and remain in Jesus, will have eternal life (v25)
- The reason Christians will have eternal life is because Jesus has promised it to us (v25)
- There are some people who try to seduce others away from the truth (v26)
- Antichrists try to lure people away from the truth, and cause them to accept and believe a lie (v26)
- Christians need to be on their guard against those who would lure them away from the truth (v26)
- The apostle John wrote to Christians to warn them about antichrists, who try to lure believers away from the truth (v26)
- Christians have an anointing from God (v27)
- The anointing that Christians have received abides in us (v27)
- Christians do not need to be taught secret knowledge by other people; the anointing that God has given us enables us to read and understand the Scriptures on our own (v27)
- God has given Christians an anointing that allows us to understand the Scriptures (v27)

- Those who do not have this anointing from God cannot understand the Scriptures (v27)
- The anointing that God has given Christians teaches us all things (v27)
- The anointing that God has given Christians teaches us to abide in Jesus (v27)
- The anointing from God guides us to the truth (v27)
- The anointing from God does not guide us into lies; (although there are antichrists who will try to lead us into lies) (v27)
- The reason that Christians can understand the Scriptures on their own is because of the anointing that God has given us (v27)
- The anointing that God has given us enables us to understand all of Scripture, not just part of it (v27)
- We can trust the anointing that God has given us, because it is of the truth (v27)
- Christians must abide in Jesus (v28)
- One day Jesus is going to return; the day is coming when He will appear (v28)
- If we abide in Jesus then we can have confidence (v28)
- If we abide in Jesus then we will not be ashamed when He returns (v28)
- There are some people who will be ashamed when He returns (v28)
- Those who do not abide in Jesus will be ashamed when He returns (v28)

- The way to be confident in the return of Jesus, so that one does not have to be ashamed when He suddenly returns, is to abide in Him (v28)
- The apostle John taught that since Jesus is one day going to appear, we must abide in Him so that when He does appear we will not be ashamed (v28)
- Jesus is righteous (v29)
- All those who do what is righteous are born from Jesus (v29)
- In order to do what is righteous we must be born from Jesus (v29)
- One of the identifying characteristics of genuine Christians is that they do what is righteous (v29)
- Those who do not do what is righteous are not born of Jesus (v29)

[Last updated 12/20/2022]

## **1 John 3**

- Christians are called the sons of God (v1)
- The reason Christians are called the sons of God is because of what God (the Father) has done for us; He is the one who adopted us (v1)
- Only Christians are called the sons of God; that designation does not apply to everyone (v1)
- The fact that Christians are called the sons of God is a



tremendous act of love (v1)

- The world does not know Christians (v1)
- Christians are not of the world; we are separate and distinct from it (v1)
- The reason the world does not know Christians is because it does not know God (v1)
- There is a fundamental difference between Christians and the world (v1)
- The world does not know God (v1)
- Christians are already the sons of God; that is something that is true right now (v2)
- Although Christians are already the sons of God, we do not know what we will ultimately become; at some point we will be changed into something more than what we are now, but that change has not yet happened (v2)
- God has not revealed to us the details of the change that is coming; one day Christians will be transformed, but the details have been hidden (v2)
- One day Jesus will appear; He will return to this world (v2)
- When Jesus appears, we will be changed; our transformation will happen at the moment of His return (v2)
- When we are changed, we will be made like Jesus; we will be transformed from what we are now into beings who are like Him (although the details of that are currently unknown) (v2)

- When Jesus returns, we will see Him (v2)
- When Jesus returns, we will see Him as He is (v2)
- Jesus is not going to return invisibly; when He returns He will be seen (v2)
- The hope of the return of Jesus should drive Christians to faithfulness and holiness (v3)
- The hope of the return of Jesus is very important; it is a key motivating factor for Christians (v3)
- Christians should be focused on the return of Jesus; it should motivate us in our daily lives (v3)
- Christians must purify themselves from sin (v3)
- Jesus is pure (v3)
- Christians must purify themselves so they become more like Jesus; since Jesus is pure, we must seek to be pure as well (v3)
- Whoever commits sin transgresses the law (v4)
- Sins and transgressions are the same thing; those who commit a sin are also committing a transgression (v4)
- Christians must not sin (v4)
- Christians must not transgress (break) the law (v4)
- Jesus was manifested to this world (v5)
- The reason Jesus was manifested was to take away our sins (v5)
- Only Jesus can take away our sins (v5)
- Our sins need to be taken away (v5)

- We have sins (v5)
- Jesus is sinless; He never sinned, and there is no sin in Him (v5)
- Jesus came to take away our sins; those who deny that, and claim that He appeared for some other reason, are guilty of teaching heresy (v5)
- Jesus existed before He was manifested (v5)
- Those who abide in Jesus do not sin; (this seems to be talking about an unrepentant person who lives a life of sin and refuses to turn from it; the difference is between the one who confesses their sin and seeks to turn from it, versus the one who is unrepentant and is unwilling to turn away from sin) (v6)
- Those who sin have not seen Jesus (v6)
- Those who sin have not known Jesus (v6)
- Those who claim to know Jesus, but who live lives of unrepentant sin, are lying; they do not know Him at all, for the sin in their lives testifies to the truth (v6)
- Those who abide in Jesus have seen Him (v6)
- Those who abide in Jesus know Him (v6)
- Those who live a righteous life (as Jesus lived) are righteous (v7)
- Jesus is righteous (v7)
- We must not let anyone deceive us: those who live a righteous life are righteous, and those who do not live a righteous life are not righteous (v7)
- It is a deception to argue that those who live sinful lives

are righteous (v7)

- The identifying characteristic of a righteous person is that he lives a righteous life (v7)
- Those who claim that there are righteous people who do not lead righteous lives are engaged in deception (v7)
- Those who lead sinful lives are of the devil (v8)
- Sin is of the devil (v8)
- The devil is sinful (v8)
- The devil exists; he is a real creature (v8)
- The devil sinned from the very beginning (v8)
- The devil existed from the very beginning (v8)
- The devil has been sinful from the beginning (v8)
- Jesus is the Son of God (v8)
- The reason the Son of God was made manifest was in order to destroy the work of the devil (v8)
- One of the ways that Jesus destroys the works of the devil is by taking away our sins (v8)
- Jesus is going to destroy the works of the devil (v8)
- The devil has done things in this world (v8)
- The works of the devil are going to be destroyed (v8)
- Those who lead sinful lives are not of God; instead they are of the devil (v8)
- The identifying characteristic of those who are of the devil is that they lead sinful lives (v8)

- Whoever is born of God does not commit sin; (this seems to be talking about leading a life of unrepentant sin - the difference between a person who has repented of sin and turned from it, and a person who refuses to repent and who will not turn away from sin) (v9)
- Christians are those who are born of God (v9)
- Those who lead sinful lives have not been born again; they have not been born of God (v9)
- Those who are born of God cannot lead sinful lives; the fact that they are born of God makes it impossible (v9)
- Those who are born of God (genuine Christians) have been changed; those people cannot lead the same lives they used to, because they are different (v9)
- It is possible to tell the difference between a genuine Christian and an unbeliever (v10)
- Only genuine Christians are children of God (v10)
- Not everyone is a child of God (v10)
- Some people are the children of the devil (v10)
- Those who are children of God can be identified because they lead righteous lives (v10)
- Those who are children of the devil can be identified because they lead wicked lives (v10)
- The type of life that you lead reveals whether you are a child of God or a child of the devil (v10)
- Those who do not lead righteous lives are not of God (v10)
- Those who do not love others are not of God (v10)

- If a person does not love others then that means he is not righteous (v10)
- You cannot be righteous without also loving others (v10)
- The way we can tell whether or not we are saved is by looking at the type of life that we lead; if we have truly been saved then we will love others and we will lead a righteous life (v10)
- Christians must love one another (v11)
- God gave the commandment to love one another from the very beginning; (in fact, the commandments of God are a picture of what love looks like) (v11)
- The commandment to love one another is not new (v11)
- Cain was a real person who actually existed (v12)
- Cain had a brother (v12)
- Cain's brother was a real person who actually existed (v12)
- Cain was wicked (v12)
- Cain was of the devil (v12)
- The reason we know that Cain was of the devil is because of his wicked actions (v12)
- Cain murdered his brother (v12)
- The reason Cain murdered his brother was because Cain's actions were evil but his brother's actions were righteous (v12)
- Cain's brother was murdered because he lived a righteous life (v12)

- Cain hated the fact that his brother lived a righteous life (v12)
- The works of Cain were evil; this was true even before Cain murdered his brother (v12)
- It is a wicked thing to murder people because they are righteous (v12)
- Those who murder the righteous are of the devil (v12)
- We should not be surprised if the world hates us (v13)
- The apostle John refers to the recipients of this letter as his brothers; he does not use "brothers and sisters", and yet this is not seen as offensive or rude (v13)
- The world may hate us (v13)
- We are not of the world; we are a separate group that is distinct from the world (v13)
- Christians have passed from death unto life (v14)
- Christians have already passed from death unto life; this is not something that will happen in the future, but something that has already happened in the past (v14)
- The reason that Christians have already passed from death unto life is because Christians love one another (v14)
- Genuine Christians love other Christians; this is one of the characteristics of Christians (v14)
- Those who do not love others have not passed from death to life; instead they are still children of the devil (v14)
- One of the identifying characteristics of genuine

Christians is that they love other Christians; those who do not love other Christians are of the devil (v14)

- Cain did not love his brother; this was proof that he was of the devil (v14)
- Those who do not love other Christians are like Cain (v14)
- Those who hate others are murderers in the sight of God (just like Cain) (v15)
- Those who hate other Christians are like Cain in the sight of God; they are wicked children of the devil (v15)
- No murderer has eternal life abiding in him (v15)
- Christians have eternal life abiding in them (v15)
- Christians already have eternal life (v15)
- You cannot be both a murderer and a Christian (v15)
- In the sight of God, hate is the same as murder (v15)
- Those who hate Christians do not have eternal life abiding in them (v15)
- The reason we can tell that God loves us is because He laid down His life for us; the sacrifice of His life is proof of His life (v16)
- God laid down His life in order to save us (v16)
- Christians should be willing to lay down their lives for the brethren (fellow Christians) (v16)
- Laying down your life to save someone else is an act of love (v16)
- The love of Christians for one another should be so great that it should even reach to the point of being willing to



lay down our lives (v16)

- Jesus actually died; He truly laid down His life for us; He did not simply appear to die, but He actually died (v16)
- If a fellow Christian is in need, and we are in a position to help them, then we should; that is how we demonstrate our love for others (v17)
- If a fellow Christian is in need, and we refuse to help them even though we could help them if we wanted, then that proves we do not love others (v17)
- Our love for one another must not just be empty words; it must be followed up in deeds and actions (v17)
- The way that we demonstrate our love for others is by meeting their needs when we are able to do so (v17)
- There may be times when other Christians have needs (v17)
- God never promised that if a person becomes a Christian he will never find himself in a position of need (v17)
- There are some Christians who have more wealth and goods than others (v17)
- If the love of God truly dwells in us then we will be motivated to help others who are in need (v17)
- Those who refuse to help other Christians, even though they could, are proving that the love of God does not dwell in them; they are showing that they are not genuine Christians at all (v17)
- Christians must love one another with actions; mere words are not enough (v18)

- Christians must love one another in the truth; we must not sacrifice the truth in the name of "love" (v18)
- A love that does not include actions is not love at all (v18)
- A love that is not grounded in the truth is not love at all (v18)
- One of the defining characteristics of Christians is that they demonstrate their love with actions (v19)
- There are ways that we can know for sure that we are saved (v19)
- There are concrete and visible differences between those who are truly saved and those who are not (v19)
- If we find ourselves in doubt, we can fight those doubts by going back to this book and seeing the differences between those who are saved and those who are not; we can look at the evidence of our life as proof that we are saved, and that our fears and doubts are groundless (v19)
- It is possible for Christians to find themselves faced with doubts even though they are genuinely saved; just because we have doubts or are troubled doesn't mean those doubts are valid (v19)
- There may be times when our heart condemns us, even though we are truly saved and have not done anything wrong (v20)
- God is greater than our heart (v20)
- We should not follow our heart (v20)
- We should not listen to our heart; instead we should put our faith in what the Word of God has to say (v20)

- We should not follow our feelings; there are times when our feelings will mislead us (v20)
- God knows all things; there is nothing that He does not know (v20)
- God knows our circumstances and what is going on in our life (v20)
- There may be times when our heart condemns us, but God does not; our heart must not be our guide, as it is not reliable (v20)
- John referred to Christians as "beloved"; he uses very affectionate language, and this is not seen as inappropriate (v21)
- It is possible to have confidence toward God; we can know for sure that we are saved (v21)
- Despite what Catholics claim, it is not a sin to have assurance of salvation; in fact, that is something we ought to have (v21)
- Christians should pray (v22)
- Christians should ask God for things (v22)
- It is not wrong for Christians to ask God for things (v22)
- There are times when God grants our prayers and gives us what we ask for (v22)
- The reason God grants our prayers is because we obey His commandments (v22)
- Christians must obey God's commandments (v22)
- God has given us commandments, and He wants us to obey them (v22)

- Christians must do what is pleasing in God's sight, not what is pleasing in our sight or in the sight of our culture (v22)
- There are some things that are pleasing in God's sight, and there are other things that are not (v22)
- Jesus is the Messiah (the Christ) (v23)
- Jesus is the Son of God (v23)
- God commands us to believe in Jesus; that is His commandment (v23)
- The reason God answers the prayers of Christians is because they believe on the name of Jesus (v23)
- Christians must love one another (v23)
- Christians are characterized by love for one another, and by belief on Jesus (v23)
- Those who keep the commandments of God dwell in Him (v24)
- Those who do not keep the commandments of God do not dwell in Him (v24)
- God dwells in those who keep His commandments (v24)
- God does not dwell in those who do not keep His commandments (v24)
- Keeping the commandments of God (to believe in Jesus and to love one another) is a key distinguishing feature of Christians (v24)
- If we keep God's commandments (to believe in Jesus and to love one another) then we can know for sure that we are Christians, and God abides within us (v24)

- God abides within all genuine Christians; we dwell in God, and He dwells in us (v24)
- God has given His Spirit to all genuine Christians (v24)

[Last updated 12/21/2022, 12/28/2022]

## **1 John 4**

- Christians should not believe everything they hear or are taught (v1)
- Christians must test the things that they hear, to see if it is the truth (v1)
- There are many false prophets (false teachers) in the world (v1)
- Since there are many false prophets, Christians must be very careful about what they believe (v1)
- Christians need to know how to test the things they are taught, to see if it is the truth from God or not (v1)
- Christians must exercise discernment (v1)
- Not all spirits are from God (v1)
- Not all teachings are from God (v1)
- Not all teachers are from God (v1)
- Not all prophets are from God (v1)
- Those who prophecy things that are not from God are false prophets (v1)
- Those who teach things that are not from God are false

teachers; this is true even if some of the things that they teach are right (v1)

- Jesus is the Messiah (the Christ) (v2)
- Jesus has come in the flesh; even though He is God, and existed before the world began, He still came into this world and became a man (v2)
- No true spirit will deny Jesus (v2)
- No true spirit will deny that Jesus is divine (v2)
- No true spirit will deny that Jesus has come in the flesh - that although He is divine and has always existed, He humbled Himself and became a man (v2)
- No true spirit will deny that Jesus is both fully man and fully God (v2)
- One of the key ways to tell if a spirit is true or false is by looking at what they teach about Jesus (v2)
- All true spirits will confirm what the Bible teaches about Jesus (v2)
- All spirits that deny Jesus in some way are not of God (v3)
- All spirits that deny the divinity of Jesus are not of God (v3)
- All spirits that deny that Jesus came in the flesh and became a man are not of God (v3)
- All spirits that deny that Jesus is fully man and yet fully God are not of God (v3)
- All spirits that deny Jesus in some way are antichrist; those spirits are opposed to Christ and are not of God (v3)

- The spirit of antichrist is already in this world (v3)
- The spirit of antichrist is opposed to Jesus, and teaches lies about Him (v3)
- All true Christians are of God (v4)
- All true Christians have overcome the antichrist spirits (v4)
- Since God dwells in all true Christians, the One who dwells within us is greater than the one who dwells in the world (v4)
- The false spirit of antichrist dwells in the world (v4)
- God is greater than the spirit of antichrist (v4)
- The reason genuine Christians have overcome the antichrist spirits is because God dwells within us (v4)
- The antichrist spirits are of this world (v5)
- When the antichrist spirits speak to the world, the world hears them (v5)
- The reason the world listens to the antichrist spirits is because those spirits are of this world (v5)
- All genuine Christians are of God (v6)
- Those who are truly saved will listen to what the apostles have to say, and will accept and believe it (v6)
- Those who reject what the apostles have to say are not of God (v6)
- One of the distinguishing characteristics of genuine Christians is that they accept and believe what the apostles teach (v6)

- There is a spirit of truth (v6)
- There is a spirit of error (v6)
- Christians need to learn how to distinguish truth from error (v6)
- Christians must not believe everything they are told (v6)
- The apostle John did not tell Christians to go to an "expert" and believe what they have to say about truth and error; instead he taught Christians how to tell for themselves (v6)
- Each Christian is responsible for telling the difference between truth and error; Christians cannot outsource that to someone else (v6)
- Christians must love one another (v7)
- Love is of God (v7)
- Those who love other Christians are born of God (v7)
- Christians are born of God (v7)
- Those who love other Christians know God (v7)
- One of the distinguishing marks of genuine Christians is that they love other Christians; (this is in contrast to the world, which hates Christians and persecutes them) (v7)
- Those who do not love Christians do not know God; such people are not Christians at all, no matter what they claim (v8)
- God is love (v8)
- One of the ways to distinguish genuine believers from false believers is by looking at the way they treat



## Christians (v8)

- God manifested His love for us by sending Jesus into the world; Jesus is the proof of God's love for us (v9)
- Jesus is the only begotten Son of God; there are no others (v9)
- Jesus is the begotten Son of God (v9)
- All Christians live through Jesus; there is no other way to be saved (v9)
- God sent His Son into the world so that we might live through Him (v9)
- God is the one who loved us; we did not love God (v10)
- God loved us (v10)
- God sent Jesus to save us (v10)
- Jesus is the propitiation for our sins; He suffered and died for our sins, and took upon Himself the punishment for our sins, so that we might be saved; He redeemed us with His own blood by suffering in our place, and on our behalf (v10)
- God is the one who sent Jesus into this world to save us from our sins (v10)
- Since God loved us, we must love one another (v11)
- Christians should show the same type of love for one another that God showed for us (v11)
- No one has ever seen God (v12)
- If we love one another, then God dwells in us (v12)
- Even though no one has ever seen God, He dwells within

all genuine Christians (v12)

- If we love one another, then God's love is perfected in us (v12)
- God's love is perfected in those who love other Christians (v12)
- If we love one another, then we know that we dwell in God and He dwells in us (v13)
- One of the characteristics of genuine Christians is that they love other believers; those who love other Christians are proving that they dwell in God and that He dwells in them (v13)
- God has given us His Spirit (v13)
- The Spirit of God is what enables us to love one another (v13)
- When we love one another, we are proving that God's Spirit dwells within us (v13)
- The apostles have seen Jesus (v14)
- The apostles testify about Jesus (v14)
- God the Father sent His Son into this world (v14)
- The reason the Father sent His Son into this world was so that Jesus could be the Saviour of this world (v14)
- Jesus is this world's only saviour; there are no others (v14)
- Jesus is the saviour of this world (v14)
- This world needs a saviour (v14)
- God dwells in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of

## God (v15)

- God does not dwell in those who do not confess that Jesus is the Son of God (v15)
- God dwells within all genuine Christians, and they dwell within Him (v15)
- Jesus is the Son of God (v15)
- Christians are those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God (v15)
- God has great love for us (v16)
- Christians know about the love that God has for us (v16)
- Christians believe that God has great love for us (v16)
- God is love (v16)
- He who dwells in love dwells in God (v16)
- God dwells in those who dwell in love (v16)
- Love is central to the Christian walk; it is a defining characteristic (v16)
- If we love one another then our love is made perfect (v17)
- If we love one another then we may have boldness in the day of judgment; we may be assured of our salvation (v17)
- A day of judgment is coming (v17)
- Some people will be spared in the day of judgment, but others will not (v17)
- In this world we are to be like Christ is; we are to be

images of Christ to this world (v17)

- There is no fear in love (v18)
- Perfect love casts out fear (v18)
- Fear and love cannot exist at the same time (v18)
- If we have fear then we lack perfect love; we have not yet been perfected in love (v18)
- Christians do not need to be afraid of the judgment; if we are afraid then we have not yet been perfected in love (v18)
- Fear torments those who are afraid (v18)
- Christians are those who love God (v19)
- The reason we love God is because He first loved us (v19)
- God loved us before we loved Him; if He had never loved us then we would have never loved Him (v19)
- Our love comes from the love that God had for us; He loved us first (v19)
- It is impossible to love God but hate your brother (v20)
- Those who hate others do not love God, even though they may claim to love Him; such people are liars (v20)
- If you find a person who claims to love God but who hates others, then you have found a liar (v20)
- It is impossible to love a God who we have never seen, and yet hate our brother who we have seen (v20)
- We have not seen God (v20)
- If you want to know if a person loves God, then look at

the way that person treats other Christians; if that person does not love them and treats them poorly then he does not love God either, no matter what he might claim (v20)

- God has commanded us to love one another (v21)
- Those who love God must love others as well (v21)
- It is impossible to love God and yet not love others (v21)

[Last updated 12/28/2022]

## **1 John 5**

- All those who believe that Jesus is the Messiah are born of God (v1)
- Those who do not believe that Jesus is the Messiah are not born of God (v1)
- Some people are born of God, while others are not (v1)
- Jesus is the Messiah (the Christ) (v1)
- We must believe that Jesus is the Messiah (v1)
- All those who love Jesus also love the people that He saved (v1)
- One of the defining characteristics of genuine Christians is that they believe that Jesus is the Messiah (v1)
- One of the defining characteristics of genuine Christians is that they love other Christians (v1)
- The apostle John repeats throughout this letter that those who hate Christians cannot possibly love God or be

genuinely saved (v1)

- The way we can tell that we love other Christians is because we love God and we keep His commandments (v2)
- Those who do not keep God's commandments do not love others (v2)
- Keeping God's commandments is an act of love (v2)
- We must love the children of God (v2)
- Not everyone is a child of God; some people are, but other people aren't (v2)
- We must love God (v2)
- We must keep God's commandments (v2)
- God has given us commandments that we must keep (v2)
- Those who do not keep God's commandments do not love others (v2)
- The love of God is keeping His commandments; the way we demonstrate true love is by obeying His commandments (v3)
- Those who do not keep God's commandments do not love God (v3)
- The commandments of God are not grievous (v3)
- Everyone who is born of God overcomes the world (v4)
- We overcome the world by faith; faith is how we obtain victory over the world (v4)
- We must overcome the world; we must defeat it, and not be a part of it (v4)

- The world is something that we need to overcome and defeat (v4)
- Faith is a powerful weapon and a mighty tool for victory (v4)
- In order to overcome the world we must be born of God (v4)
- The people who have overcome the world are those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God (v5)
- The key to overcoming the world is belief that Jesus is the Son of God (v5)
- Those who do not believe in Jesus have not overcome the world (v5)
- Jesus came by water (v6)
- Jesus came by blood (v6)
- The Spirit bears witness that Jesus came by both water and blood (v6)
- The Spirit is truth (v6)
- Jesus is the Word (v7)
- God the Father is in Heaven (v7)
- God the Son (Jesus) is in Heaven (v7)
- The Holy Ghost is in Heaven (v7)
- Jesus bears witness in Heaven (v7)
- God the Father bears witness in Heaven (v7)
- The Holy Spirit bears witness in Heaven (v7)
- God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit all bear

witness of the same thing (v7)

- God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all one; they are one God in three persons (not three different gods) (v7)
- This book teaches the concept of the Trinity (one God, three persons) (v7)
- God the Father is God (v7)
- God the Son is God (v7)
- The Holy Spirit is God (v7)
- The Holy Spirit bears witness in earth (v8)
- The water bears witness in earth (v8)
- The blood bears witness in earth (v8)
- The testimony of the Holy Spirit, the water, and the blood all agree in one (v8)
- The witness of God is greater than the witness of men (v9)
- People accept the testimony of men; they should accept the testimony of God even more, because it is far greater than the words of men (v9)
- God the Father has testified about His Son, Jesus (v9)
- We should accept God the Father's testimony about Jesus (v9)
- Those who believe on the Son of God have God's witness in them (v10)
- Those who do not believe God are calling God a liar (v10)



- Those who do not believe God are rejecting the testimony that God the Father made about His Son (v10)
- We must believe the testimony that God the Father made about His Son (v10)
- Those who reject Jesus are calling God a liar (v10)
- God has given us eternal life (v11)
- Our eternal life is in Jesus, the Son of God (v11)
- The only way to obtain eternal life is through Jesus (v11)
- God has already given us eternal life; that is not something we will receive in the future, but is something we already have (v11)
- He who has the Son of God has life (v12)
- He who does not have the Son of God does not have life (v12)
- The only way to obtain life is through the Son of God (v12)
- This book was written to those who believe in the Son of God; it is written specifically to Christians who believe in Jesus (v13)
- This book was written so that Christians could have assurance of their salvation, and know for sure that they have eternal life (v13)
- This book was written so that people would believe on the name of the Son of God (v13)
- In order to have eternal life, we must believe on the name of the Son of God (v13)

- God wants us to have assurance of our salvation (v13)
- It is possible to have assurance of our salvation; we do not have to live in doubt (v13)
- Eternal life is worth having (v13)
- It is good to have eternal life (v13)
- If we ask God for something that is according to His will, He hears us (v14)
- God hears prayers from Christians that are according to His will (v14)
- Christians should pray (v14)
- It is not wrong for Christians to ask God for things (v14)
- Our prayers need to be in accordance with the will of God (v14)
- If our prayer is in accordance with the will of God, we can pray with confidence (v14)
- There are some prayers that God hears, and there are others that He does not (v14)
- If God hears our prayer then He will grant it (v15)
- God will grant prayers that are according to His will (v15)
- There are times when God grants our prayers (v15)
- Prayer is a meaningful thing to do; if we pray according to the will of God then He will grant our prayer (v15)
- It is possible for Christians to sin (v16)
- It is possible for Christians to commit a sin that does not lead to death (v16)

- Not all sin leads to death (v16)
- Not all sin is equally severe (v16)
- Just because a person sinned does not mean they are not a Christian (v16)
- If we see a Christian who has committed a sin that does not lead to death, we should pray for that person (v16)
- If we pray for a Christian who has committed a sin that does not lead to death, God will hear that prayer and grant life to the person who is sinning (v16)
- Christians should not pray for those who have committed a sin that leads to death; God will not hear that prayer and will not grant it (v16)
- There are some people that Christians should pray for, but there are others that we should not (v16)
- The sin that leads to death cannot be prayed for (v16)
- There is a sin that leads to death (v16)
- Christians should pray for one another (v16)
- Christians still struggle with sin (v16)
- Christians do not automatically become perfect and sinless when they are saved; it is still possible for Christians to sin (v16)
- All unrighteousness is sin (v17)
- There is a sin that does not lead to death (v17)
- Whoever is born of God does not sin; (since John just talked about Christians who sin, this is most likely talking about the sin that John has been discussing in this letter -

those who do not love Christians, or those who do not believe on Jesus) (v18)

- Christians are those who are begotten of God (v18)
- Our salvation comes from God; it does not come from ourselves (v18)
- Those who are genuine Christians keep themselves from sin (v18)
- Those who do not keep themselves from sin are prey for the devil (v18)
- Those who sin are not born of God; they are not genuine Christians (v18)
- The devil seeks after those who are living lives of sin (v18)
- If we want to protect ourselves from the devil then we must avoid sin (v18)
- Christians are of God (v19)
- We can know that we are of God; we do not have to live in doubt (v19)
- The whole world lies in wickedness (v19)
- This world is wicked (v19)
- The Son of God has come into this world (v20)
- The Son of God has given us understanding (v20)
- God has given us understanding, so that we may believe in Jesus (v20)
- Jesus is the one who is true (v20)
- Those who are genuinely saved are in Jesus (v20)

- Jesus is the Son of God (v20)
- Jesus is the Messiah (the Christ) (v20)
- Jesus is the true God (v20)
- In Jesus we have eternal life (v20)
- Those who believe in Jesus are believing the truth (v20)
- Christians must keep away from idols; idols are something that we must avoid, and have nothing to do with (v21)
- Idols are bad; they are wicked and evil (v21)

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