



Front Cover

*From
My Heart
to Yours*

**By
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— Dear Friend —

The message contained on these pages can change your life! Please read it! Consider it carefully and with an open mind.

Regardless of race, nationality, economic status, or social standing. I am interested in every person on this earth . . . and I want to share with as many as possible what I profoundly believe to be true and right. My singular motivation is one of genuine love and concern.

Thus, this message is now in your hands. All I ask is that you reflect upon it seriously in view of a never ending eternity to come!

It is from my heart to yours,

Note: All scripture quotes in this publication, unless otherwise noted, are from the New King James translation of the Bible.

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There Is A God!

The evidence is overwhelming! There is indeed a Living God! From the vast expanse of space to myriad forms of life on this earth, a convincing testimony of Divine creation resounds!

The very fact that the universe exists challenges our mental faculties. The reality of it all, and in particular this terrestrial body upon which we live, seeks from our minds an explanation! Think! Try to comprehend it! How did the universe come to be? And especially the earth? And life in its countless forms?

After much pondering, every possible explanation boils down to two basic understandings. Either—

- (1) The universe is a result of some unknown, inexplicable, chance combination of interacting forces, which at some point in time billions of years ago "somehow" brought it into existence; with life evolving from nonlife—

— OR —

- (2) The universe is by purpose and design of an All-Powerful Being (God) who made it, creating life in its innumerable variety by His infinite knowledge, wisdom, and understanding.

Meditate searchingly! Think long and hard! Is the first "explanation" logical? Does it really make good sense to you? To my mind, it is preposterous! It is inconceivable to imagine that the vastness, the order, the complexity, and the magnificence of all we know to exist "just

happened" by some blind chance of interacting "forces." If something so incredible as this did happen, just where did these "forces" come from? To say the least, such an "explanation" is most farfetched, and the probability of it being true so remote as to be incalculable.

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The second explanation is ten thousand times more plausible! Admittedly, it is a matter of "faith" to accept the existence of God. But remember, the atheistic philosophy is a matter of "faith," too. The difference is that "belief in God" as Creator is much more sensible than "belief in chance" as the answer! As for me, I believe with all my heart that there is a God, and that He created the heavens and the earth. I stand in awe of His greatness, and praise and honor Him. I am not ashamed of my faith in God, nor of life's purpose to serve Him.

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The Bible Is The Word Of God

Accepting the existence of God, it is reasonable to believe that He would reveal his will to the pinnacle of His creative genius—humankind! This is exactly what He has done in the Book of Books—the Bible! My profound conviction is that the Bible is truly God's revelation to us.

Faith in the Bible as the word of God is well founded. An in-depth investigation of "how we got the Bible" reveals significant and substantial evidence that the Book is God-given! For example, volumes of data from history and archaeology support the Bible's authenticity. And the very fact of its survival through the centuries, though its enemies have bitterly attacked it and have made stringent efforts to destroy it, says a great deal. Today, it still lives, and flourishes more than ever! Also, the Bible has been translated into more languages and dialects by far than any other book in all history! This should tell the perspective and inquiring person much. Why would this be?—how could this be?—if the Bible were just a book written by men, and not given by the direction of God?

These, and many other reasons, cause me to believe in the inspiration of the Bible. There is really no other way to plausibly account for the Bible than to conclude that it is indeed the produce of Divine inspiration, and protecting Providence. Therefore, I believe that Almighty God has

been the guiding Hand in the giving, preservation, and distribution of His Book among humankind.

The Bible towers above all other books combined, and has been so recognized by many, many of the most prominent figures of history. They, and hundreds of millions of ordinary people, have realized and acknowledged that the Bible is indeed the word of God! Why would this be true if there were not ample reasons for such belief?

Thus, in this message from my heart to yours, special attention is directed to what the Bible has to say! Since references will be cited from both the Old Testament, and

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the New Testament, for your convenience, I hereby supply you a listing of the two division, and the books within each:

Old Testament

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, First and Second Samuel, First and Second Kings, First and Second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi— a total of 39 books within the Old Testament, written over a period of time from about 1500 to 400 B.C.

New Testament

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, First and Second Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, First and Second Thessalonians, First and Second Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, First and Second Peter, First, Second, and Third John, Jude, and Revelation—a total of 27 books within the New Testament, written over a period of time from about 40 to 100 A.D.

You will be given the exact book, chapter, and verse or verses, in the bible from which the quotations found in this message are taken, so that you may look up these references and study them for yourself. I have used more than one translation of the Bible in the preparation of this material and have frequently employed a combination form from these in trying to make the truth as plain as it can be. It has been my desire to present the most accurate and simplest understanding possible of the Biblical text.

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, all scriptural quotations are from the New King James version (NKJv) of the Bible.

Because of my implicit trust in the inerrancy of the Scrip-

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tures . . .because I believe that God has given the Bible to us to guide, direct, and lead us in the right way, I strongly urge you to study it and learn for yourself what God's will for us is.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" Second Timothy 3:16.

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker that does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Second Timothy 2:15.

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Human Beings—The Pinnacle of God's Creation—Accountable To Him

As already expressed, I believe that God, the Supreme Sovereign of this universe, made everything. I, for one, grow sick at heart when he is "left out" by so many in their pathetic attempts to explain this fantastic world without Him. Let us give God the credit and praise that is due Him! He is creator of it all!

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."
Genesis 1:1

"By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. . . . Let all the

earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spoke and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." Psalm 33:6, 8-9).

"The sea is His, and He made it; and His hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture. . . ." Psalm 95:5-7.

"Give to the Lord the glory due His name . . ." Psalm 96:8.

On the sixth day of creation, God made man and woman in His own image. He made human beings superior to all other creatures. And, of all the creatures God made, human beings are the only ones endowed by their Creator with an immortal "spark of life"—the soul, or spirit. It is this "soul" that is in the "image of God."

"Then God said, let Us (i.e., the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth, and everything that

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creeps on the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." Genesis 1:26-27.

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." Genesis 2:7

No other creature was given the faculties, the capacities, the potential, and the dignity that God gave each human being. No doubt about it—humankind is the pinnacle of God's creative genius and power!

Each person has a spiritual entity (i.e., being, existence) as well as a physical entity. The physical side of a person shall die, but the spiritual entity shall exist forever. Thus, the Bible teaches the accountability of the human soul to God. It tells us of the judgment to come, and of the eternal separation between the righteous and the wicked. Consider carefully:

" . . . it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment." Hebrews 9:27.

" . . . for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. . . .So then each of us shall give account of himself to God." Romans 14:10, 12.

God " . . . has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man [i.e., Christ] whom he has ordained. He has give assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." Acts 17:31.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." Second Corinthians 5:10.

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The Bible speaks of the righteous judgment of God, who "will render to each one according to his deeds': Eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality: but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath. There will be tribulation and anguish on every soul of man who does evilbut glory, honor and peace to everyone who works what is good For there is no partiality with God Romans 2:6-11.

The wicked "shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into eternal life." Matthew 25:46.

The Bible plainly teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ will most assuredly come again to bring vengeance upon the ones who have rejected God and His offer of grace through the gospel. The teaching of eternal punishment, or hell, is plainly presented in the Scriptures:

The apostle Paul, in writing to persecuted Christians, said, "Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These

shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power, when He comes in that day to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe. . ." Second Thessalonians 1:6-10.

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The apostle Peter wrote, *"God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world . . . bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward live ungodly;"* Second Peter 2:4-6. And continuing, , *"the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. In which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and its works that are in it will be burned up."* Second Peter 3:10.

Other Scripture references to read and consider on this subject are Mathew 5:22, Matthew 10:28, Revelation 6:12-17, Revelation 14:9-11, and Revelation 20:10, 15.

I fully realize that many people scoff at the Biblical doctrine of the judgment, and of eternal punishment in hell, but that doesn't alter the fact that it is true! In His word to us, God said what He meant to say, and He meant what He said! My friend, you can be assured of that! Make no mistake about it—don't be deceived by anyone who makes mockery of what the Bible teaches. As the Psalmist said—

"It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." Psalm 118:8.

We need to be keenly aware of our accountability to God! We need to know and be reminded that the judgment is coming! We each shall experience eternity; and eternity is defined this way: "from everlasting to everlasting; time without any beginning or ending." Think about that! Your soul is the most valuable possession you have! Don't be careless with it! Regardless of what you may achieve or obtain on earth, if you lose your soul at the judgment you are an eternal loser!

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Jesus asked, *"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"* Matthew 16:26.

But Christians—those saved from sin by the grace of God—need not fear the coming judgment. These can rejoice with glad anticipation and happy expectation at the Lord's return! Because the Bible teaches that not only will Christ bring Divine wrath upon those who know not God and who have rejected the gospel, but that He will receive unto Himself those who have been His faithful followers on earth. The Scriptures tell us of the beautiful city of heaven which shall be the everlasting abode of the redeemed.

Jesus told his disciples, *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."* John 14:1-3.

Through the great mercy and grace of God, and the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, and His subsequent resurrection from the dead, the Christian can look forward to *"an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you."* First Peter 1:3-4.

A number of other passages of Scripture give us additional information about eternal life, or heaven. Among them are Second Corinthians 5:1-8, First Thessalonians 4:13-17, and Revelation 7:14-17. Please read these in your Bible. Heaven is a reality, and the righteous will live there forever.

With all this in mind, I plead with you to carefully, and prayerfully, consider the remainder of this message from my heart to yours.

Sin—The Problem Of Humankind

The Old Testament Scriptures introduce us to the problem of sin and its destructive consequences. The New Testament Scriptures give us additional pertinent information.

In Genesis 3, we have the record of Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit. While permitting them to eat of every other tree in the

garden of Eden, God had told them not to eat of the *"tree of knowledge of good and evil."* God warned them that if they did, the penalty would be death. But they succumbed to the enticements of Satan and transgressed—they did the very thing that God had told them not to do. They thus "sinned." And because of their sin, they had to pay the penalty, which was death.

It was through this transgression of Adam and Eve that sin first entered into the world, and death came into the world also, as a result of sin. And ever since, in all of Adam and Eve's posterity, which have reached an "age of accountability," sin has transpired. Thus, the problem of sin, and its consequences (i.e., death), is worldwide.

"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat; for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'" Genesis 2:16-17.

"Then the serpent [i.e., Satan] said to the woman, 'You will not surely die.'" Genesis 3:4. Please note: Satan told the first lie. Satan is the "father of lies." John 8:44.

"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit, and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate." Genesis 3:6.

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"Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness and sin is lawlessness." First John 3:4.

"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23.

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned." Romans 5:12.

"For the wages of sin is death." Romans 6:23.

"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when

desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death." James 1:13-15.

Death is actually a "separation." Physical death is the separation of the human spirit from the body. When the spirit leaves the body, the body is dead. Earthly life ceases to be at that point. In like manner, "spiritual death" is a separation. When a person departs from a right relationship with God by committing sin, "spiritual death" is the result. At such time there is a cessation of spiritual life. Consider:

". . . the body without the spirit is dead. . . ." James 2:26.

The prophet Isaiah indicted the wicked people of his day by saying, *". . . your iniquities have separated you from your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you. . . ." Isaiah 59:2.*

God had warned Adam and Eve that they would die in the day they ate the forbidden fruit. And they did indeed! They died spiritually that very day! God drove them out of the garden of Eden, and thus, away from his holy pres-

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ence. Read Genesis 3:23-24. They, therefore, were separated from God. Their right relationship with their Creator had been broken because of sin (i.e., lawlessness—transgression of God's will).

Not only did Adam and Eve die that day spiritually, but God also placed the curse of physical death upon them and all humankind because of sin.

". . . dust you are, and to dust you shall return." Genesis 3:19.

The dust shall *"return to the earth as it was; and the spirit will return to God who gave it." Ecclesiastes 12:7.*

While we all must die physically because of what Adam and Eve did, we die spiritually only for our own sins. Each person is responsible for himself, spiritually. The theology that teaches we inherit the "guilt" of Adam's sin is false theology! We do inherit the "consequence" of Adam's sin, but not the "guilt," and there is a great difference. To illustrate the difference, envision a drunken husband and father who comes home and, in a rage, beats his wife and children. The wife and children indeed

suffer the consequence of his drunkenness, but it would be absurd to say they are guilty of it! People die physically because of Adam's sin, but they die spiritually because of their own person sins.

The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. . . ." Ezekiel 18:20.

Many people today laugh at sin and make a big joke out of it, and try to make others think it is not so bad. Don't be deceived—sin is devastating! It can cause you to lose your soul throughout all eternity. Sin brings death! Death means separation. Therefore, eternal death is everlasting separation from God, and from all that is good, and right, and true. Hell is no joking matter!

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"Fools mock at sin." Proverbs 14:9.

While Satan masquerades as a friend, he is really the very worst enemy that we have. Satan is seeking the eternal ruination of every human soul by tempting and enticing to sin. But the Bible warns:

Be sober, be vigilant: because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, . . . First Peter 5:8, 9.

"Do not be deceived. God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the spirit will of the spirit reap everlasting life." Galatians 6:7, 8.

"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." James 4:7.

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Jesus Christ, The Savior

In the context of "sin and death" in Genesis 3, we get our first glimpse at the remedy for sin that God had in His infinite mind. Verse 15 informs us that the "seed of woman" would "bruise the head" of the serpent. The Bible identifies for us who the "seed of woman" is, and also who the "serpent" is:

(1) The "*seed of woman*" undoubtedly refers to Jesus Christ. The Scriptures tell us concerning His virgin birth . . . Jesus had no human father: "*Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, 'Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you: blessed are you among women!' But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son and shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest and the Lord God will give Him the throne of David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.'*" Then Mary said to the angel, '*How can this be, since I do not know a man?*' And the angel answered and said to her, '*The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.*"' Luke 1:26-35. Read carefully in your Bible the following Scripture context also: Matthew 1:18-23. And note carefully the wording of what the apostle Paul wrote: ". . . *when the*

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fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman . . ." Galatians 4:4. Jesus is the '*seed of woman*' mentioned in Genesis 3:15. He is the only begotten Son of God. He had no earthly father. He was born of the virgin Mary.

(2) The "*serpent*" unquestionably refers to Satan. In the context of Revelation 12:7-9, the Bible identifies "*that*

serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world. . . ."

Obviously, then, Genesis 3:15 is a prophetic picture of the victory Christ would gain over Satan by living a sinless life and triumphing over Satan's most potent weapon—death! Jesus arose from the dead! He thus conquered Satan!

"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of devil."

The apostle Paul wrote that He was *"declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."*

Jesus Himself said, *"I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death."* Revelation 1:18

Beyond any doubt, Jesus is the mighty Deliverer! He is the Savior! To establish this great truth in your heart, let me share with you a few references from the New Testament that teach that Jesus existed in times eternal with God the Father, took upon Himself the form of flesh through the virgin birth, and lived upon this earth for the purpose of saving us from sin!

"In the beginning was the Word [i.e., Jesus Christ], and the Word was with God, and the

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Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. . . . For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." John 1:1-2, 14, 17.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." John 3:16-17.

"In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation [i.e., the atoning sacrifice to appease God's wrath, and to satisfy His divine justice] for our sins." First John 4:9-10.

At the birth of Jesus, the angel announced: ". . . I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a savior, who is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:10, 11.

"This is a faithful saying and worthy of acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners . . ." First Timothy 1:15.

Jesus was truly the Lamb of God. He was the perfect sacrifice for sins, and He gave Himself for our sins! He Himself never committed sin, but became the sin-offering for us. Thus, our redemption (i.e., being purchased back from our voluntary enslavement to Satan through sinning) has been made possible only through the sacrificial blood shed by Jesus in our behalf on the cross. Our being recon-

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ciled to God is possible only because Christ atoned for our sins on the cross! Please not carefully the following scriptures:

John the baptizer introduced Jesus by saying, "Behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." John 1:29.

"God commendeth his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him. For if, while were still enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life; and not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation." Romans 5:8-11.

The apostle Peter told Christians they had been redeemed from sin, not by silver or gold, *"but with the precious blood*

of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."
First Peter 1:18-19.

Again, the same apostle informs us that Christ carried *"our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed."* First Peter 2:24.

The apostle Paul wrote to Christians and said, concerning Christ, that *"He gave himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father."* Galatians 1:4.

Jesus *" . . . put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."*
Hebrews 9:26.

The apostle Paul recorded these profound

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words: *"For He [God] made Him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us [i.e., to carry the full burden of our sins], that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*
Second Corinthians 5:21.

" . . . because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses [sins], made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)."
Ephesians 2:4-5.

For further enlightenment on this great theme, please read in your Bible such Scriptures as Colossians 1:13-23, Hebrews 7:22, 28, Hebrews 9:11-28, Hebrews 10:1-12, Ephesians 1:3-7, and Philippians 2:5-11.

The Bible teaches that the gospel (i.e., the good news about Jesus and what he did for us) is God's power to save. And the very "heart and center" of the gospel is that Christ died for our sins, and that He was raised from the dead through the power of the Almighty God for our justification, and exalted to God's right hand where He lives to make intercession for His followers, and to be our Advocate, Mediator, and High Priest. This is indeed good news!

Paul wrote, *"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes . . ."* Romans 1:16.

And again, *" . . . the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."* First Corinthians 1:18.

And, in the same letter, Paul wrote, *"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that*

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word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures," First Corinthians 15:1-4.

The Bible teaches that Christ *"was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification."* Romans 4:25.

In speaking of Jesus, the inspired writer said, *" . . . when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."* Hebrews 1:3.

Peter wrote of Him, that He *" . . . has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him."* First Peter 3:22.

The apostle Paul wrote, *" . . . there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus."* First Timothy 2:5.

Concerning Jesus, we are informed, *" . . . He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For such a high priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens"* Hebrews 7:24-26.

And the apostle John penned these words to Christians: ". . . if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." First John 2:1.

If Christ had not been willing to give Himself as the

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sacrifice for sins, there would be no forgiveness, and no hope of eternal life. But he was willing, and He did, in fact, die on the cross to atone for our sins! He was then buried, but Almighty God raised Him from the dead and exalted Him to His own right hand. Thus, through Christ, our sins can be forgiven! We can be saved from the penalty of death that our sins deserve! There is, in Christ, assurance of the resurrection unto life eternal! That is great news! That is the gospel! No one can be saved apart from it!

Thus, Jesus commanded his apostles: *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."* Mark 16:15-16.

Through the incomprehensible love of God, His mercy, and His grace, salvation is offered to everyone in and through Jesus Christ! Because Jesus was willing to die in our stead, good news of salvation can be proclaimed!

"And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love . . ." First John 4:16.

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich." Second Corinthians 8:9.

Jesus is the Savior and salvation can be possessed as a reality in one's life only in Christ! Outside of Jesus Christ there is no salvation from sin! There is no other way into the eternal presence of God except through Jesus Christ! All spiritual blessings are in Christ! There are none outside Him, or apart from Him. He saves those who believe and obey. It's just that simple.

Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."* John 14:6.

In speaking of Jesus, Peter affirmed, *"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."* Acts 4:12.

The apostle Paul taught explicitly that every spiritual blessing is *"in Christ."* Ephesians 1:3.

Christ is the author of eternal salvation *"to all who obey him."* Hebrews 5:9.

What Then, Must Be Our Response?

Before a person will do anything about his spiritual needs, he must first realize his lost condition. He must be made aware that sin has caused a "separation" between himself and God. In other words, a person must be "convicted of sin." This is accomplished as one learns God's word, either by reading it right out of the Bible or in a writings such as this, or by hearing it proclaimed by a faithful preacher of the gospel.

Not only must there be a realization of one's lost condition, but there must also be exposure to the gospel message—that forgiveness and salvation may be obtained in Jesus Christ!

The sinner who is not aware of his lost condition has little or no concern for his own soul's welfare. But for the individual who has become cognizant of sin and its terrible consequences, and of his own lost condition, there is joy in believing the good news of salvation in Christ! Such an individual has come to recognize the peril of his spiritual situation. He has learned that apart from Christ he is lost! It is, therefore, an urgent matter that he accept, without delay, the great salvation provided by the love and mercy of God!

"How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?"
Hebrews 2:3.

Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Second Corinthians 6:2.

Faith, then, is the initial response of a human heart to God's offer of grace and mercy extended to us through the atoning merit of Christ's sacrifice for us. Faith in God the Father and faith in Jesus Christ as God's Son is essential to a person's being saved from sin!

"But without faith, it is impossible to please Him; for he who comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Hebrews 11:6.

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And Jesus said, ". . . if you do not believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins. John 8:24.

The Bible puts much emphasis on one's personal faith. It is necessary. It is the underlying basis of being acceptable to God. This is gleaned from reading both the Old and New Testaments.

The great man, Abraham, is a noble example of a person who deeply believed in God, and trusted God's directives. But we need to be careful to note that Abraham's faith was not just an idle belief, but an expressive, motivating force that prompted him to be obedient to God. Thus, obedience to God is as important as faith in Him. A faith that fails to obey is a dead faith. But Abraham's faith was a living faith that obeyed.

"For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted [i.e., credited] to him for righteousness.'" Romans 4:3.

Paul wrote of Abraham, saying, "He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was able also to perform. And therefore it was accounted to him for righteousness." Romans 4:20-22.

When God tested Abraham's faith by instructing him to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice, he set about to do what God told him to do. That is obedient faith, and God was pleased with Abraham. Upon observing Abraham's willingness to do as He had appointed, God stopped him short of taking Isaac's life. Read Genesis 22:1-12.

That God wanted us to see faith and obedience being expressed together, is clear from noting the tone of the inspired writers of the

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New Testament recorded the incident with these words: *"Was not Abraham our father justified by works [i.e., obedience] when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by his works, and not by faith only."* James 2:21-34

"Saving faith," therefore, is expressive faith—faith that obeys God! The Bible does not teach the doctrine of "salvation by faith alone." In fact, it teaches just the opposite—one is not saved by "faith alone." Notice again the above quotation from James.

I doubt that it would be possible to over emphasize the importance of one's personal faith, or He who is the object of that faith. One's trust in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and as the Savior, is of paramount importance—faith in the atoning efficacy of His blood!

The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome, and said, *"being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith . . ."* Romans 3:24-25.

Thus, *"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* Romans 5:1.

While emphasizing the necessity of faith, let us not minimize the importance and necessity of obedience. To negate the importance of obedience while holding to the doctrine of "salvation by faith alone" is folly! Faith and obedience go together, and together form the proper and complete response that a person should make to God's offer of

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salvation through Christ.

If there is any one thing plainly and repeatedly taught throughout the Bible it is the importance of obedience to God! From Genesis through Revelation, this fact is emphasized again and again. Let us note just a few of the many Scriptures which could be cited—

Moses said to the nation of Israel, *"Therefore, you shall be careful to do as the Lord your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. You shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, . . ."* Deuteronomy 5:32-33.

And again he said to them, *"Behold I set before you today a blessing and a curse; the blessing if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today; and the curse if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, . . ."* Deuteronomy 11:26-28.

The wise king Solomon said, *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all."* Ecclesiastes 12:13.

Jesus said, *"Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."* Matthew 7:21.

Jesus made it plain that only those who obey the will of God are His spiritual kinsmen. Read Matthew 12:50.

". . . , blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!", Luke 11:28.

"But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" James 1:22.

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Jesus is the author (i.e., source of) eternal salvation *" . . . to all who obey Him."* Hebrews 5:9.

Jesus Christ, as Lord, gave some conditions of pardon and a person's salvation is contingent upon recognizing these, and submitting obediently to them. As we have seen, faith is the initial response

required of a human heart to the gospel, and is the primary basis of one's acceptance by God. No one is going to be saved who doesn't believe. But, in addition to faith, the Bible also teaches that repentance is a necessary condition of salvation.

Jesus said, ". . . *unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.*" Luke 13:3.

The Bible tells us that ". . . *repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His [Christ's] name to all nations . . .*" Luke 24:47.

The apostle Peter told believers who were inquiring what they must do to be saved, to "*Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins . . .*" Acts 2:38.

And again Peter preached, "*Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.*" Acts 3:19.

The apostle Paul declared that God now commands "*all men everywhere to repent.*" Acts 17:30.

Peter affirmed that God is "*longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*" Second Peter 3:9.

Repentance is a change of a person's mind, or will, prompted by remorse for having offended God by sinning against Him. Such a change of will results in a reformation of one's life. In other words, a person who has been enmeshed in sin, but who becomes a believer by hearing the gospel, then feels bad about sin in his life, decides to

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change direction, quit sinning, and start living for the Lord. That's repentance.

"For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; . . ." Second Corinthians 7:10.

Even after a person becomes a Christian he must continue to have a penitent attitude because all of us continue to be sinful creatures through the weakness of the flesh. But for those in Christ who have

stopped pursuing sin, the blood of Christ cleanses from sin as acknowledgement of sin is made before God and His forgiveness is sought.

To Christians, the apostle John wrote, *"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* First John 1:7-9.

There is a big difference in "pursuing" a sinful life style, as contrasted with inadvertently falling short of God's glory through human weakness, though trying to do right. The Bible teaches that a person who has come to believe in Christ as the Lord and Savior must repent of the "pursuit of sin (or the sinful life style) in the process of becoming a Christian, and that after becoming one, continue to be penitent in the day to day mistakes and shortcomings that are a part of everyone's life.

Not only must a person believe and repent in the process of responding to the gospel, but a number of Scriptures teach us that it is the Lord's will that a penitent believer confess faith in Christ in the presence of others. This confession is an expression of one's implicit faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of the Living God, and in His being Lord. While done

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verbally in the process of obeying the primary commands of the gospel, it is something that should continue to be repeated in word and life throughout the earthly pilgrimage of everyone who becomes a Christian.

During his personal ministry, Jesus said, *"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father who is in heaven."* Matthew 10:32.

Obviously, the confession Jesus had in mind was the same one Peter made of Him in expressing his conviction: *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* Matthew 16:16.

This is further evidenced by reading the story of the conversion of the treasurer of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. Philip, the evangelist, preached the gospel of Jesus to him and he asked to be baptized. Philip told him he could if he believed *"with all your heart."* The man replied,

"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Acts 8:26-37.

The apostle Paul wrote, *"that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."* Romans 10:9-10.

And the apostle John wrote, *"Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God."* First John 4:15.

When a person believes the gospel, repents of past sins, and confesses faith in Jesus Christ before others, that individual is then ready to enter Christ and thus, become a child of God. The New Testament teaches plainly that baptism is the culminating act of obedience that puts a penitent

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believer into Christ. By original definition, baptism is a burial. The Greek word "baptizo," transliterated (i.e., spelled in the letters of the alphabet of another language) into English, "baptize," means to "dip, to plunge, to cover up, to bury, to immerse." All reputable Greek lexicons give this information. Baptism is immersion—it is a burial. The Bible makes it very clear that the element in which penitent believers are to be immersed, or buried, is water.

Jesus was immersed by John in the water of the Jordan river. Read Matthew 3:13-17.

"Now John was baptizing in Aenon near Salem, because there was much water there." John 3:23.

Baptism, then, is immersion in water. Baptism is not sprinkling or pouring. If, dear reader, you have just been sprinkled with water, or have some water poured over your head, you have not been Scripturally baptized. Bible baptism is immersion—a burial with Christ. This is a very important matter!

"buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead." Colossians 2:12.

"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Romans 6:4.

The essential nature of baptism is evidenced in its identity as the "new birth." Jesus spoke of the new birth on one occasion, and set it forth as being necessary in order for a person to enter the kingdom. The New Testament clarifies what Jesus meant by "being born again" in many corresponding Scriptures. The new birth is baptism into Christ for remission of sins.

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Our Savior said, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."* John 3:5. He used the expression "born again," in verse 3.

In giving the great commission to His apostles, our Lord and Savior said, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."* Mark 16:15-16.

Matthew quotes Jesus as saying: *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."* Matthew 28:18-20.

In the physical realm, we all know that there must be a begattal (i.e., conception) before there can be a birth. The same is true in the spiritual realm. One must first be begotten, and then born. When the gospel is received by faith in one's heart, the "spiritual conception" takes place.

In writing to Christians, James speaks of God, saying, *"Of His own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures. . .and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."* James 1:18, 21b.

Thus, the apostle Peter teaches Christians: *"Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth. . .having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever."* First Peter 1:22-23.

When the faith that has been produced in the human heart by the gospel expresses itself in obedience, that is the

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new birth process—the believer repents, confesses faith in Christ before others, and is baptized (i.e., the act of being "born again") into Christ for the remission of sins. Birth, by definition, "is the act of coming into life." In the spiritual realm, life is in Christ. Therefore, the act that brings us into Christ is the "new birth."

Jesus said, *"I have come that they may have life, and they may have it more abundantly."* John 10:10.

"And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." First John 5:11-12.

In writing to Christians, Paul said, *"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."* Galatians 3:27.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." Second Corinthians 5:17.

Baptism is the act that brings a penitent believer into Christ. It is the culmination of the birth process. A person is "begotten" by hearing and receiving the gospel message in faith. As faith "develops", just as a physical embryo must develop before it is actually born, it express itself in repentance, and motivates the individual to confess belief in Jesus as God's Son before others. The individual thus reaches the point of being ready for birth. This spiritual birth is accomplished by being baptized—baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins—saved by God's grace; cleansed by the precious blood that Jesus shed in His death upon the cross. Thus, such an individual is "born again" of "water and the spirit." Born of "water" is the very act of being immersed in water, to be raised to walk in "newness of life." Born of "the Spirit" in complying with the

instructions the Holy Spirit gave by inspiring the apostles, and guiding them

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into "all the truth," one facet of which was the instruction to be baptized.

Jesus had told his apostles *"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; . . ."* John 16:13.

What did the Spirit guide the apostles to teach?—*"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; . . ."* Acts 2:38.

We see, therefore, that the Holy Spirit guided the apostles into giving the conditions of pardon that correspond perfectly with what Jesus taught during His personal ministry—faith, repentance, confession, and baptism! Other first century evangelists, such as Philip (Acts 6:5-6, 8, 10), were inspired by miraculous spiritual gifts through the laying on of the hands of the apostles and were guided into the same understanding—

"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. . . . But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized." Acts 8:5, 12.

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this scripture, preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, 'See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?' Then Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he [Philip] baptized him [the eunuch]." Acts 8:35-38.

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The great apostle Paul himself, in recounting his conversation, related that after three days of fasting and prayer in Damascus, that a gospel preacher by the name of Ananias came to him and said—

"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
Acts 22:16.

It wasn't the water of baptism that washed away his sins—it was the precious blood of Christ. The truth is this: the blood of Christ is appropriated when the penitent believer obeys the Lord's command to be baptized. Christ shed His blood in dying on the cross and the Bible teaches that we are *"baptized into his death!"* Thus, we come in contact with His blood when we are baptized. The benefits of the atoning blood of the Savior are received in baptism—past sins are washed away by His blood shed for us, and the sincere, penitent believer arises from the watery grave, redeemed and made whole. With this understanding, we can readily see that baptism is vital to our salvation. And thus, the apostles penned:

"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" Romans 6:3.

"knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver or gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." First Peter 1:18-19.

"There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." First Peter 3:21.

Baptism saves in the sense that it is a God-given command and when a person obeys God's command to be baptized, with an understanding of, and appreciation for

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Jesus Christ, the Savior, and His atoning sacrifice, he then receives the benefits of that sacrifice, and is cleansed by Christ's blood and saved by God's grace.

The whole conversion process is easily seen in a careful study of Acts 2. Please open your Bible to that book and chapter and begin reading with verse 22. You will learn that the sermon delivered on that occasion by the apostle Peter consisted of four essential truths:

- (1) Jesus Christ had been approved of God among men.
- (2) Jesus Christ had been crucified.
- (3) Jesus Christ had been raised from the dead.
- (4) Jesus Christ had been exalted and made Lord by Almighty God.

Those four "points" are clearly seen by reading verses 22-36. Verse 37 indicates that a goodly number of those who heard this message (i.e., the gospel of Jesus Christ) believed it, and inquired, *"What shall we do?"* By inspiration, the apostle Peter then gave them the terms of pardon:

"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins;. . ." Verse 38.

The record then states: *"Then those who gladly received his word were baptized and that day about three thousand souls were added to them."* Verse 41.

"And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." Verse 47.

My friend, isn't that plain? Is there any reason for anyone to be confused? Obviously, the process by which they were saved from sin, was precisely the same way they became Christians. It was the way they became members of the Lord's church and children of God. The Bible does not

teach that persons are saved by one process and then can go out and "join the church of their choice" by another process. The conversion process is plainly set forth in the New Testament Scriptures: the truth of

the gospel was proclaimed; those who believed it inquired as to what they needed to do to be saved; they were told to repent and be baptized in order to obtain the remission of sins; those who did became Christians and were added to the Lord's church by Him. It is just that simple.

Let us examine one more context to further substantiate what has already been set forth. Please turn in your Bible to the sixth chapter of the book of Romans. The apostle Paul wrote this letter to Christians who live in the city of Rome. Among other things he wrote, are these words:

"But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin [i.e., they had at one time been engulfed in sinful pursuits], yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." Romans 6:17-18.

Let us pose a question—what was the "form of doctrine" delivered unto them? Answer—the gospel of Jesus Christ, the heart of which is the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord. Please read Romans 1:16 and First Corinthians 15:1-4.

Now, consider another question—how could they obey that? Answer—they "crucified" their sinful selves in repentance, and buried their "old selves" (dead because of sin, but now also dead to the pursuit of sin) by baptism into the death of Christ, and were raised as new creatures, to walk in newness of life.

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized

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into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ we believe that we shall also live with Him. Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once

for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:1-11.

One last question—when were they freed from sin? When did they become servants of righteousness? Answer—when they obeyed the gospel; when they were baptized into Christ!

As already pointed out, baptism was that culminating act of obedience that put a penitent believer into Christ, wherein salvation became a reality. What was true in New Testament times is still true today. People are saved today in exactly the same way!

In summary, the gospel is God's power to save. When a person hears it and believes it, he then must obey it. Obedience involves repentance, confession of faith in Christ, and baptism into Christ for the forgiveness of sins. In this process of obeying the gospel, culminated by baptism, a person becomes a Christian; "born again" of water and the Spirit into the family of God, and automatically thereby becomes a member of the Lord's church. This is just the

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beginning of the Christian life—a life of obedience to Christ, and service to Him. It is the happiest life in the world because a Christian is freed from the burden of sin and guilt. The Christian in joy serves a Living Savior who is Lord of lords and King of kings!

"Whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls." First Peter 1:8-9.

"Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" Philippians 4:4.

Therefore, my friend, if you have never yet obeyed the gospel of Christ, I ask you the same question Ananias asked Paul in the long, long ago . . .

"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Acts 22:16.

The Lord's Church

During his personal ministry, Jesus taught much concerning His kingdom, or church. I refer you to the New Testament books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, which are accounts of His life and teachings. Among numerous things pertaining to His kingdom, He said—

"and on this rock [i.e., the truth that He was indeed the Son of God] I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Matthew 16:18.

Notice that the Lord did not say, "I will build a church." Neither did He say, "I will build many churches." Christ said, *"I will build my church."* He spoke of just one. He declared, *"The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."* The word, Hades, means "the place of disembodied spirits; the unseen state of the dead." Thus, the expression, "gates of Hades," refers to death—therefore, Jesus is saying that not even death shall prevail against His church! This church, or spiritual kingdom, which Christ taught repeatedly was of incomparable value, would be everlasting and indestructible. Please read such Scriptures as Daniel 2:44 and Daniel 7:13–14 from the Old Testament, Luke 1:32–33, Matthew 13:40–45, as well as Matthew 16:18 from the New Testament, which substantiate this truth. It was of Divine origin, and Divine providence would protect it.

While Jesus yet lived on the earth, the church (i.e., Christ's kingdom) was spoken of as being in the future. It was not at that time established. But let us note the sequence of events which followed His death on the cross, and His subsequent resurrection from the dead—

- (1) He ascended back into heaven to the father—Read Luke 24:50–51 and Acts 1:1–11.

- (2) He was seated at God's right hand—Read Mark 16:19 and Hebrews 1:3.

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- (3) God gave Him power, and rule, and authority—Read

Ephesians 1:19–21 and First Peter 3:22.

- (4) God gave Him to be the head of the church—Read Ephesians 1:22–23 and Colossians 1:18.
- (5) Christ, then, established His church through the preaching of the apostles—Read all of Acts 2.

The church of Christ came into existence on the Jewish feast day called Pentecost following the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus. The place was the city of Jerusalem. The year was 33 A.D.—this date being in accord with the generally accepted calendar. Prior to the second chapter of the book of Acts, the church was spoken of as being in the future. But in Acts 2, the record clearly indicates it came into existence. From that point in the Bible (Acts 2) through the remaining portions of the New Testament, the church is spoken of as being in existence. Therefore, we know precisely when and where the church of our Lord was established—33 A.D., in Jerusalem. With all this in mind, let us now note some other very important things about Christ's church:

- (1) Christ loved the church and died for it, purchasing it with His own precious blood: ". . . *Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her.*" Ephesians 5:25. Concerning the church, Paul said, ". . . *which He purchased with His own blood.*" Acts 20:28.
- (2) The church is Christ's spiritual body—Please read First Corinthians 12:12–27 and Ephesians 1:22–23. —There is one body. Read Ephesians 4:4. Since the body is the church, and there is only one body, then it is elementary to

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conclude that there is only one true church.

- (3) The church belongs to Christ—He purchased it, He built it, and God gave him to be the head of it.

- (4) The church is the body of the saved; the body of the redeemed. It is Christ's "eklesia" (i.e., the "called out" of Christ).
- (5) The church is a spiritual "house," wherein each Christian is a living stone. Read Ephesians 2:21–22 and First Peter 2:5.
- (6) The church is the body to be reconciled to God! Read Ephesians 2:13–16.
- (7) The church is a divine institution. It is neither Catholic nor Protestant—it is not a human produced denomination or sect. The Lord's church was conceived in the mind of God from times eternal, and His wisdom is clearly evidenced in it. Read Ephesians 3:8–11.

Religious division is wrong! The very concept of denominationalism is contrary to what Christ prayed for and opposite to what His will teaches.

Jesus prayed for those who would believe on Him through the teaching of the apostles, *"that they may all be one; as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that You hast sent Me."* John 17:21.

In writing to the church in Corinth, which was beginning to show signs of division, the apostle Paul wrote, *"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be*

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perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." First Corinthians 1:10

The Bible teaches that God is not the author of confusion—read First Corinthians 14:33. But the division within the so-called "Christendom" is indeed confusing. Multitudes of people don't have any idea what to believe! There are so many denominational churches wearing all kinds of names, and worshipping in different ways, that the average person is

hopelessly confused. You can be assured, my friend, that God is not the author of such!

Denominationalism is the antithesis of the unity the Bible teaches. Reflect carefully and thoughtfully on the following quotation from Ephesians 4:3–6.

"endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

The cause of religious division and confusion is the failure to recognize and submit to the authority of Christ! Too many people want to have their own way about things, instead of being humbly obedient to the will of Christ. It is not enough to just say, "Jesus is Lord." We must do what the Lord said for us to do!

Jesus inquired, *"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?"* Luke 6:46.

The church of Christ today, as in New Testament times, recognizes the headship of Jesus, and submits to His authority.

Jesus said, *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."* Matthew 28:18>

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Therefore, no council, or synod, can formulate doctrines or legislate rules for the Lord's church. The church of Christ yields only to the authority of its Head. It accepts no man made creed books—no Catechisms, no Manuals, no Disciplines, or Confessions of Faith—it accepts only the word of the Lord. "We speak where the Bible speaks, and are silent where the Bible is silent." We are of the conviction that the Bible only will produce Christians only!

The church of Christ is structured exactly as revealed in the New Testament, in local congregational organization, and worship. Likewise, in doctrine and practice. There is no central organization—each congregation is autonomous under the headship of Christ. The worship is simple—singing without mechanical instruments of music, the observance of the Lord's supper each Sunday as a memorial of Christ and His sacrificial death for us, prayer to the Father in the name of Christ, the proclamation and teaching of the Bible, and the free-will giving of its members to support the work of the church.

All of this is in keeping with the recognition of the Lord's authority, and the acceptance of the New Testament Scriptures as His last will and testament for us.

Jesus said, *"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."* John 4:24.

To do otherwise is to worship God to no avail, because Jesus, in condemning the false religionists of His day, plainly stated: *"And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrine the commandments of men."* Matthew 15:9.

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You Can Be A Christian Only

As has been clearly demonstrated from the Scriptures, when people heard, believed, and obeyed the gospel, they were saved from past sins and automatically became Christians, being added to the church by the Lord. They became nothing more than, and nothing less than, Christians. The process by which they were saved was exactly the same way they became Christians, and members of the church of Christ. Such individuals did not become some kind of "brand-name" Christians, but Christians only. They didn't belong to any man-made church, either Catholic or Protestant.

"And the disciples were first called Christians . . ." Acts 11:26.

"Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter." First Peter 4:16.

My friend, you can be just a Christian, also, if you will believe the truth and obey the gospel command to repent, confess faith in Christ, and be baptized. When you do this in humble sincerity, the Lord will add you to His church and you will be a Christian! No one "votes" on you. You don't subscribe to some man made creed. You don't join any denomination. You simply become a Christian by believing and obeying the gospel. You become a member of His church—the church of Christ.

As a Christian, you will want to, and you will need to worship regularly with the church of Christ in your community. You will generally find the members thereof to be the very finest kind of people. You may discover some few hypocrites and some human imperfections among them. Unfortunately, hypocrites can be found most anywhere, including the church. Such will be lost eternally, if they don't change! You will also come to know those who are indeed *"the salt of the earth"* and *"the light of the*

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world," just as Jesus said His true followers would be (Matthew 5:13-16). Your association with these—the preciousness of fellowship with kindred minds and hearts—will be the most rewarding experience of your life! These, as your brothers and sisters in the family of God, will help you and encourage you to be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ and His teachings—

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:23-25.

"Therefore comfort each other and edify one another . . ." First Thessalonians 5:11.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." First Corinthians 15:58.

Jesus said, *"Be faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life."* Revelation 2:10b.

Peter assured Christians that if they would abound in the Christian graces (Second Peter 1:5-10), that *". . . an entrance shall be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."* Second Peter 1:11.

The blessings of being a Christian are great and wonderful! The happiness and peace of mind in knowing that one's relationship with God is what it should be is of inestimable value!

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"And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Philipians 4:7.

The Christian life is the most meaningful life a person can possibly live. It brings contentment and fulfillment, deep inward satisfaction, and hope. So many people are searching in vain for these because they are looking for them in the wrong places! They are not to be found in fame, fortune, or physical pleasures. Neither the "thrills and frills" nor the "glamour and glitter" of this world can satisfy the yearnings of the human soul! "Drinking" and drugs bring only ruination and despair! Reveling and carousing afford but momentary excitement which soon fades away, leaving nothing of lasting value. Sexual gratification obtained in adultery, fornication, or homosexual perversion is but fleeting and takes a devastating toll in degrading one's self respect and in scarring one's conscience. All of these things are sinful and wrong and counter-productive to one's spiritual well being. This wicked world cannot fulfill the longings of a person's spiritual being. No wonder, then, the apostle John wrote the following words—

"Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. First John 2:15-17.

Truly, the Christian life is the abundant life! It gives one peace, joy, and hope that transcends this earthly life.

Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." John 10:10.

The abundant life, my friend, is in Christ Jesus! That, I can guarantee you! Christians are greatly blessed on earth,

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and have the precious promise from God of eternal life in the heavenly city of bliss and happiness forevermore!

The following words of Jesus are significantly comforting:
"Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and children and lands with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life." Mark 10:29-30.

My ardent prayer is that God will bless this message from my heart to yours, in your conversion to Christ, His truth, and His way. I love you and I want you to be saved eternally. And much more important, the Lord loves you and wants you to be saved. But you must believe and obey the truth and live for Him. I have tried to communicate the truth to you as clearly as possible. What you do about it is up to you. But please, I beg you, in view of a never ending eternity to come, accept it. Only the truth can make you free. As Jesus declared,

"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32.

It is with the most sincere sentiments that this message has been given to you. I close with the words of the apostle Paul in ascribing honor to God—

"to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." Ephesians 3:21.

This message is given to you by one who cares and who is concerned for you soul's eternal destiny.

"From My Heart To Yours" was written by Mr. Maxie B. Boren, a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ, in a genuine interest and concern for saving souls and no other motive than to glorify God and His Son, Jesus Christ.. You can write Mr. Boren at his mailing address: P.O. Box 210667, Bedford, Texas 76095.

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