

THE DYNAMICS OF THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL

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Chapter 1

The Sin Problem

Since the gospel is God's power to save men from sin, it is important that we begin our study with a brief outline of the sin problem before we turn to its solution which God has prepared for us in Christ.

It is only against the background of man's total sinfulness and depravity that the gospel of Christ becomes meaningful. The gospel, when accepted and applied to our lives, may be defined by the formula: "Not I, but Christ" [Galatians 2:20]. This formula is expressed in the New Testament in various ways [1 Corinthians 15:10; Philippians 3:3, 8-9].

The most difficult part of this formula when it comes to its practical application is the first half, "Not I." The reason for this is because we fallen sinful human beings are born ego-centric or self-centered, and naturally want to live independent of

God [Romans 1:20-23]. A true understanding of the sin problem is the only sure way of destroying all confidence in self and turning to Christ as our only righteousness, hope, and surety. The following is a brief history and analysis of the sin problem.

1. Origin of Sin

- **Ezekiel 28:14, 15.** Sin originated in heaven in the mind of Lucifer, the head of the angelic beings. The Bible does not explain how sin could begin with a perfect being, because sin is unexplainable. Hence, it is referred to as “the mystery of iniquity.”

- **Isaiah 14:12-14.** The essence of Lucifer’s sin was self-exaltation, what the Bible defines as iniquity, which in Hebrew means bent to self [Isaiah 53:6]. Hence, the love of self is the underlying principle of all sin, in complete opposition to the principle of God’s government which is founded upon selfless love or agape [see 1 John 4:7, 8, 16]. Sin therefore may be rightly

interpreted as rebellion against God or His agape. According to 1 Corinthians 13:5, there is no love of self in agape.

- **Romans 7:7.** At the heart of every sin is covetousness or self-seeking. Lust originated with the devil and is not of God [see 1 John 2:15-16].

- **John 8:44.** In heaven, Lucifer (who became Satan) coveted the position of Christ and therefore desired to murder Him so that he might get Him out of the way (murder in God's eyes begins in the mind, see Matthew 5:21-22).

- **Revelation 12:7-9.** Sin in the heart of Lucifer led to war in heaven. Satan and the angels who sided with him were defeated and were cast out of their heavenly home.

2. Development of Sin

While sin originated in the mind of Lucifer in heaven, it was never allowed to develop in heaven. It was on this earth that Satan and his angels

developed sin. Let us see how this was done:

- **Genesis 1:26, 28.** God created this earth for man and, therefore, gave him dominion over it.

- **Luke 4:5, 6.** By deceiving our first parents (Adam and Eve) and causing them to fall, Satan took possession of this world and made it his own; this is based on the principle recorded in 2 Peter 2:19. Please note that Jesus did not question Satan's claim that the world was delivered to him.

- **John 14:30.** Since the fall of man, Satan has become the "prince of this world."

- **2 Corinthians 4:3-4.** Paul refers to Satan as the "god of this world."

- **1 John 5:19.** The whole world, apart from the Christian, is under the control of Satan, or as the Greek text actually says, "the wicked one."

- **2 Peter 2:19.** Man defeated by Satan is in bondage (slavery) to him [John 8:34; Romans

6:17].

Using man as his tool, Satan has developed a kingdom (the Bible refers to it as “the kingdom of this world”) that is based entirely on the principle of self and which is in complete opposition and contradiction to the “kingdom of heaven.” Everything, therefore, that goes to make up this worldly system (kosmos) — nationalism, tribalism, politics, education, commerce, recreation, sports, social clubs, technology, etc. — is founded upon the principle of love of self, even though at times this principle may not be obvious. According to 1 John 2:16, “all that is in the world” (i.e., without exception) is based or founded upon lust (i.e., love of self).

In the New Testament and especially in the book of Revelation the term “Babylon” is used as a symbol to represent the spiritual kingdom of this world which is under Satan and is in opposition to God’s kingdom and His people [Revelation 14:8, 17:3-6; 18:1-3]. The basis of this symbol is founded in literal Babylon of the Old Testament,

the capital of the once-greatest empire this world has ever known [read Daniel 2]. According to Dan. 4:30, the great city of Babylon was built on the principle of self-love and, therefore, represents a fitting symbol of Satan's kingdom. In contrast, "Jerusalem," which represents Christ's kingdom, is from above and is called "the holy city" [Galatians 4:26; Revelation 21:10].

Because Satan is a liar and a deceiver there is much of this world that appears to be good (this is especially designed to be a trap for Christians), but at the end of the world, when Satan will be completely exposed, it will be seen that the whole world (good and bad) worships the dragon "that deceived the whole world" [Revelation 12:9; 13:3-4]. God has allowed Satan to have his own way and develop sin in this world for some 6,000 years. But the time has come when Satan and his kingdom must be exposed and destroyed forever [2 Peter 3:10-13; Psalm 92:7-9].

But for the fallen human race, held in captivity by Satan, God has made a way of escape [2 Peter

3:9]. This is the Good News of the gospel which He wants all to know and receive. According to Matthew 25:34, God has prepared the heavenly kingdom for men “from the foundation of the world,” while verse 41 indicates that the destroying fires of hell have been prepared only “for the devil and his angels.” According to John 3:16, “God so loved the world [the human race] that he gave his only begotten Son,” so that none may perish, but instead all may have eternal life. Those who respond in faith to God’s love manifested in the gift of His Son will experience the deliverance from the condemnation which is resting on Satan and his kingdom [Romans 8:1; John 5:24].

3. Sin Defined

Before we can proceed to study the gospel it would be well to define sin more fully so that the good news of salvation will be meaningful to us. The Bible uses some 12 different words to define sin; but putting these together we may categorize sin into three basic concepts. These three are all expressed in Ps. 51:2-3. They are: iniquity, sin,

and transgression. We will consider each one of them separately.

Iniquity

The root meaning of this word is “to be bent.” As used in Scripture it refers to our spiritual condition. Note the following texts:

- **Psalm 51:5.** David was “shapen in iniquity” from his very birth. This was his spiritual condition since physically he was handsome [1 Samuel 16:12]. The primary meaning of iniquity is not an act but a condition. As a result of the fall, man by very nature is spiritually “bent,” so that the driving force of his very nature is love of self. Paul defines it as “the law of sin and death” [Romans 7:23; 8:2]. It is this condition that is the basis of all our sinning, and which makes us slaves to sin [Romans 3:9-12; 7:14].

- **Isaiah 53:6.** Two things are revealed in this text. 1. Everyone of us has gone astray, since we have all turned or bent “to his own way.” 2. This

own-way-ness (i.e., self-centeredness) is synonymous with iniquity, which was laid upon Christ our sin bearer; and it was this “sin in the flesh” that Christ “condemned” on the cross [Romans 8:2-3].

- Iniquity, therefore, is simply seeking our own way, a condition we are born with and which (without a Saviour) makes it impossible to do genuine righteousness, since the law of God requires even our motives to be pure [Matthew 5:20-22, 27-28]. In contrast to iniquity or self-seeking is agape (divine love) which is of God and which “seeketh not her own” [1 Corinthians 13:5]. Our next study will cover this in greater detail.

- **Isaiah 64:6.** Because man by nature is “shapen in iniquity,” all the righteousness produced by him through his own efforts is like filthy rags before God, because it is polluted with self-love. According to Zech. 3:3, 4, “filthy garments” are equated with iniquity. In contrast to these filthy garments of ours (self-righteousness), the white raiment of Christ (His righteousness) is offered to

the Laodicean church so that they may be truly clothed, and “the shame of [their] nakedness do not appear” before the judgment seat of God [Revelation 3:18; 10:3-4].

- **Matthew 7:22, 23.** Self-righteous acts camouflaged or disguised in the name of Christ are exposed in the judgment and clearly identified as works of iniquity (i.e., works motivated by self-love). All Christians must consider this text seriously. Do our works originate from Christ and therefore motivated by agape, or are they the “fair shew in the flesh” [Galatians 6:12]? Are our works the result of a genuine relationship with Christ (i.e., works of faith) or are we working in His name but we really don’t know Him? [See also Luke 13:25-28.]

- **Philippians 3:3-9.** The converted Paul recognizes the worthlessness of his self-righteousness and willingly exchanges it for the righteousness of Christ which is by faith.

Once we understand the true meaning of

iniquity we will realize that nothing good dwells in us [Romans 7:18] and we will begin to “hunger and thirst” after the righteousness of Christ so freely offered to us in the gospel.

Sin

The actual meaning of this word is “missing the mark.” In Judges 20:16 the Hebrew word sin (translated in the KJV as “not miss”) is used true to its meaning. Used in a spiritual sense, sin is missing the divine mark or coming “short of the glory of God,” which is His selfless love or agape [Romans 3:23].

Since all men are born spiritually “bent” (shapen in iniquity), it is not difficult to see what Romans 3:10, 12 says: there is none righteous and no one who does good. Man’s sinful condition makes it impossible for him to do anything but sin, unless he has a Savior. That is why the gospel is man’s only hope of salvation. While man does have a free will to choose between accepting Christ’s righteousness offered in the gospel or

rejecting it, he does not have a choice between doing sin or genuine righteousness. Man is born a slave to sin and no matter how hard he wills or tries, he will fall short of the divine mark [Romans 7:15-24]. For further study read the following texts: Job 15:14-16; Psalm 14:2, 3; Isaiah 1:4-6; Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 7:21-23.

Transgression

This word means a deliberate violation of the law, or willful disobedience. Transgression presupposes that one has the knowledge of the law. In the spiritual realm, transgression is the violation of the moral law, or ten commandments of God [see 1 John 3:4]. A knowledge of God's law makes sin to be "transgression." Note the following:

- **Galatians 3:19.** The law was given to make sin into transgression.

- **James 2:9.** The law convinces us we are transgressors.

- **Romans 3:20.** Through the law we have the knowledge of sin.

- **Romans 5:20.** The law did not solve the sin problem but made it “abound” all the more.

- **Romans 7:7-13.** The law exposes our sinful condition and reveals our total bankruptcy with regards to righteousness.

Since sin is a deceiver, it would be impossible for sinful man to fully realize his condition unless God revealed it to him. This He has done by giving the law. The law was never given as a means of salvation or to deal with sin. The law is incapable of producing righteousness in us because of man’s sinful state [Romans 8:3]; the only way that man can be saved is in Christ. The Scriptures clearly state that “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight” [Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16; 3:21-22; 5:4]. It cannot make man holy and good because he is sold under sin [Romans 7:12, 14]. But God gave the law to sinful man to be “our schoolmaster [or escort] to bring us

unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith”
[Galatians 3:24].

This will be our study in the following
chapters.

Chapter 2

God's Redemptive Love

The ground of our salvation is God's love; apart from this love there would be no gospel to preach [John 3:16; Ephesians 2:4-7; Titus 3:3-5; 1 John 4:9]. In order, therefore, to understand and appreciate the good news of salvation, we must first be rooted and grounded in God's love [Ephesians 3:14-19].

The Bible clearly teaches that "God is love" [1 John 4:8, 16]. This does not mean that one of God's attributes is love, but that He is love and therefore everything else about Him and His acts must be understood in the context of this love, including His law [Matthew 22:36-40] and His wrath [Romans 1:18-32. Note how Paul defines God's wrath in the passive [vss. 24, 26, 28; love does not coerce but lets go when we deliberately choose our own way].

The greatest stumbling block to understanding

God's love is our own human love. Most Christians make the mistake of projecting human ideals of love on to God. By doing this we reduce God's love to a human level; the result is that we not only misrepresent God but also distort the gospel of His saving grace in Christ. It is for this reason Paul wants Christians to understand "the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge" [Ephesians 3:19].

One major cause for this problem, as we shall see below, has to do with our modern languages. The English language, like most modern languages, has only one word for love. This makes it very difficult when reading our English Bibles to distinguish between human concepts of love, all of which are polluted with self-love, and God's love. In Scripture, God's love (agape) completely contradicts human love (phileo) so that the two cannot be compared but only contrasted. Please note the following:

Isaiah 55:8, 9. Millions of light years separate God's thoughts and ways from ours.

Matthew 5:43-48. In contrast to human love [verse 43], Christ taught what God's love is like and how this love must distinguish the Christian from unbelievers [verses 44-48]. Note John 13:34, 35 also.

Romans 5:6-8. In verses 6 and 8 Paul explains God's love in contrast to human love [verse 7].

Distinction Between God's Agape and Human Phileo

Unlike most of our modern languages (including English), which have only one word for love, the New Testament writers had at least four words in the Greek language to choose from when writing about divine and human love. These four words were:

- **Storge**—Family love or love for one's own kin.
- **Phileo**—Affectionate love between two

people or brotherly love.

- **Eros**—Its common meaning was love between opposite sexes and from which the English got its word erotic. However, Plato gave it a very noble and spiritual meaning and called it “heavenly eros” (platonic love), and defined it as detaching oneself from sensual and materialistic interests and seeking after “God.” Thus eros as Plato defined it became the highest form of human love to the Greeks.

- **Agape**—An obscure word, especially in its noun form, which generally meant loving others without a selfish motive.

Since the New Testament was written in Greek which had these four different words for love to choose from, the New Testament writers could distinguish God’s love from human love by the use of different words and this they did. The word eros never appears in the New Testament, and the most common word used to describe human love is phileo. God’s love, on the other hand, is defined by

all the New Testament writers as agape.

A good example of how two different words are used in the Greek New Testament for love but translated into the same word in English is John 21:15-17. In the first two questions Jesus used the verb form of agape (love that never fails) [1 Corinthians 13:8]. Peter, on the other hand, responded with a phileo, human affection, both times. The third time Jesus switched to phileo, and it is this that “grieved” Peter.

In the New Testament agape was given a very special meaning derived from God’s revelation in the holy history of Christ, and which was supremely demonstrated on the cross [Romans 5:6-10]. It completely contradicts phileo and even heavenly eros (which to the Greeks was the highest form of love) in at least three ways:

Human love (heavenly eros or phileo) is conditional and therefore reciprocal. It needs arousing and depends on outward beauty or goodness. When this human love is projected onto

God it perverts the gospel into legalism or conditional good news or good advice. Note how man must do something good before God can save or even listen to him.

In contrast, God's love (agape) is unconditional and therefore spontaneous, uncaused, and independent of our goodness or self-worth. With this understanding of God's love, salvation or the gospel becomes unconditional good news [Romans 5:6-10; Ephesians 2:4-6; Titus 3:3-5]. It is for this reason the Bible clearly teaches that mankind is saved by grace alone—undeserving or unmerited favor [Acts 15:11; Romans 3:24; 5:15; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-9; Titus 1:14; 2:11; 3:7].

Human love (heavenly eros or phileo) is changeable. This means it is a love that fluctuates and is unreliable. A good example is Peter. He promises Christ at the Passover feast: "I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death" [Luke 22:31-34]. Yet when the test came he failed miserably. In this respect it is worthy to note the dialogue between Jesus and Peter after the

resurrection, as already mentioned above [John 21:15-17]. Twice Jesus asked Peter the question, “Lovest (agapao) thou me more than these?” and both times Peter responded, “Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love (phileo) thee” [verses 15-16]. The third time Jesus switched and said “lovest (phileo) thou me?”

It was not the same question with which Jesus confronted Peter the third time. It was as if He were saying, “Peter, is this the only kind of love (phileo, this unreliable human love) you have for me?” No wonder Peter was “grieved” by this last question. But he was now a truly converted man (in the sense that he had lost all confidence in himself, Philippians 3:3) and in humility he replied, “Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love (phileo) thee” [verse 17]. This is the only kind of love (phileo or eros) that human beings can generate in and of themselves. (Incidentally, the high divorce rate in the United States is primarily due to this fluctuating, unreliable human love, devoid of agape).

In complete contrast, God's love (agape) is changeless. It is this fact that prompted Him to declare to the unfaithful Jews, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" [Jeremiah 31:3]. According to Paul's description of God's love, "agape never fails" [1 Corinthians 13:8]. This was clearly demonstrated on the cross when "having loved His own which were in the world, he loved (agapao) them unto the end" [John 13:1]. When we Christians realize God's unchanging love for us and are "rooted and grounded in agape" [Ephesians 3:17], we will be able to say with the great apostle Paul: "Who shall separate us from the love [agape] of Christ? ... For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love [agape] of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" [Romans 8:35-39].

Human love, at its very best (heavenly eros) is self-seeking. We are by nature egocentric and therefore everything we do and think, in and of ourselves, is polluted with self-love or selfishness.

Hence man's love is always trying to ascend, whether it be socially, politically, academically, materially, economically, or even religiously; we are all slaves to our "own way" [Isaiah 53:6; Philippians 2:21]. As we saw in our last study, we are all shaped in "iniquity" (bent to self). Consequently all of us, without exception, are coming short of God's glory or agape love [Romans 3:23].

But God's love (agape) is the very opposite. It is self-giving. It was because of this that Christ did not cling to His equality with the Father, but emptied Himself and became God's slave, obedient unto death, even the death of the cross [Philippians 2:6-8]. All His earthly life, Christ demonstrated God's agape [John 17:4, first part.] This is "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father" which the disciples beheld [John 1:14]. He lived for the benefit of others; He actually became poor for our sakes, that we "through His poverty might be rich" [2 Corinthians 8:9].

There is no self-love in God's love [1

Corinthians 13:5], and it is this love produced in the lives of Christians through the indwelling Spirit [Romans 5:5; Galatians 5:22] that is the most powerful witness of the transforming power of the gospel [John 13:34-35]. This is what Christ meant when, addressing his followers, He said: “You are the light of the world... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works [of agape], and glorify your Father, which is in heaven” [Matthew 5:14, 16].

The supreme manifestation of God’s self-giving love was demonstrated on the cross when Christ tasted the second death for all mankind [Hebrews 2:9]. This second death is obvious since believers who are justified in Christ still have to die the first or sleep death but will be exempted from the second death [Revelation 20:6]. The second death is the cessation of life or saying goodbye to life forever. On the cross Christ was submitting to this death. He was willing to be deprived of life forever (not just three days) that we may live in His place (this will be covered in detail in the fourth chapter). It was this self-emptying love that

transformed His disciples who before the cross were dominated by self-interest [Luke 22:24]. Likewise, when we get a glimpse of this self-sacrificing love of Christ shining from the cross of Calvary, we too will be transformed [2 Corinthians 5:14-15].

In concluding this contrast between human and divine love, may it become clear to every reader that it is only when we realize these threefold qualities of God's agape love (unconditional, changeless, and self-giving), that the gospel comes to us as unconditional good news of salvation. And when we are "rooted and grounded" in this agape love we will cast out all fear and will be able to serve our God with an unselfish motive [1 John 4:7, 12, 16-18].

Agape and the Great Controversy

When Satan rebelled against God in heaven [Revelation 12:7-9], he was really rebelling against the God's agape love the spirit of His law [Matthew 22:36-40; Romans 13:10; Galatians

5:13-14]. The idea that “love (agape) seeketh not her own” (i.e., self) [1 Corinthians 13:5] was too restrictive to Lucifer. Consequently he objected to it and introduced the principle of self-love or eros [Ezekiel 28:15; Isaiah 14:12-14]. Therefore, ever since his fall, the enemy of God and man (Satan) has hated the concept of agape. When this concept was restored to the human race through the preaching of the gospel, he naturally was ready to attack it with all his might [Revelation 12:10-12]. Hence, the very first thing he attacked in the Christian church was not the sabbath or the state of the dead; these truths came later, but he zeroed in first on the concept of God’s agape love.

After the disciples had passed away from the scene, the leadership of the church fell into the hands of the church “Fathers,” who were of Greek origin. Immediately the great battle to substitute eros concepts for agape began.

The Greeks were insulted that the New Testament writers ignored the highest form of love in their language (heavenly eros) and used an

obscure word (agape) instead. They felt that the disciples of Christ, who were all Jews (except Luke), did not really understand their language and, therefore, a correction had to be made. The first to attempt this was Marcion (died in 160 A.D.). He was succeeded by Origen (died in 254 A.D.) who actually changed John's sublime statement "God is agape" [1 John 4:8] to "God is eros." However, the battle did not stop there; it continued until we come to Augustine, the fourth century bishop of Hippo (North Africa) and one of the great "fathers" of Roman Catholic theology.

Augustine realized how futile it was to substitute eros for agape. Instead he did a very smart thing. By using Greek logic, he took the concepts of agape as well as eros and married the two together, producing a synthesis which he called *caritas* (Latin) and from which we get our English word *charity*, the word that is often used in our KJV for agape. This word *caritas* was not only accepted by Christendom but became the key word to define divine and Christian love in Roman Catholic theology. Its meaning was a mixture of

agape and eros so that the gospel was perverted from “Not I, but Christ” [Galatians 2:20] to “I plus Christ,” a concept of the gospel still prevalent today. The moment the pure meaning of agape was corrupted, the gospel became perverted with self-love, and the Christian church lost its power and was plunged into darkness. It was not until the Reformation (16th Century) that Luther realized the problem and tried to break the synthesis. However, the church today is to a large degree still groping in darkness as to the true meaning of the gospel.

The Three Gospels

Today three concepts of love exist: the concept of eros or self-love; the concept of God’s agape or self-giving love; and the concept of caritas, a mixture of self-love (eros and agape). Each of these three concepts have produced in human history their own kind of gospel. The pagans who are steeped in eros have produced in their various religions the gospel of works. As Aristotle, the great Greek philosopher, declared: “Salvation is

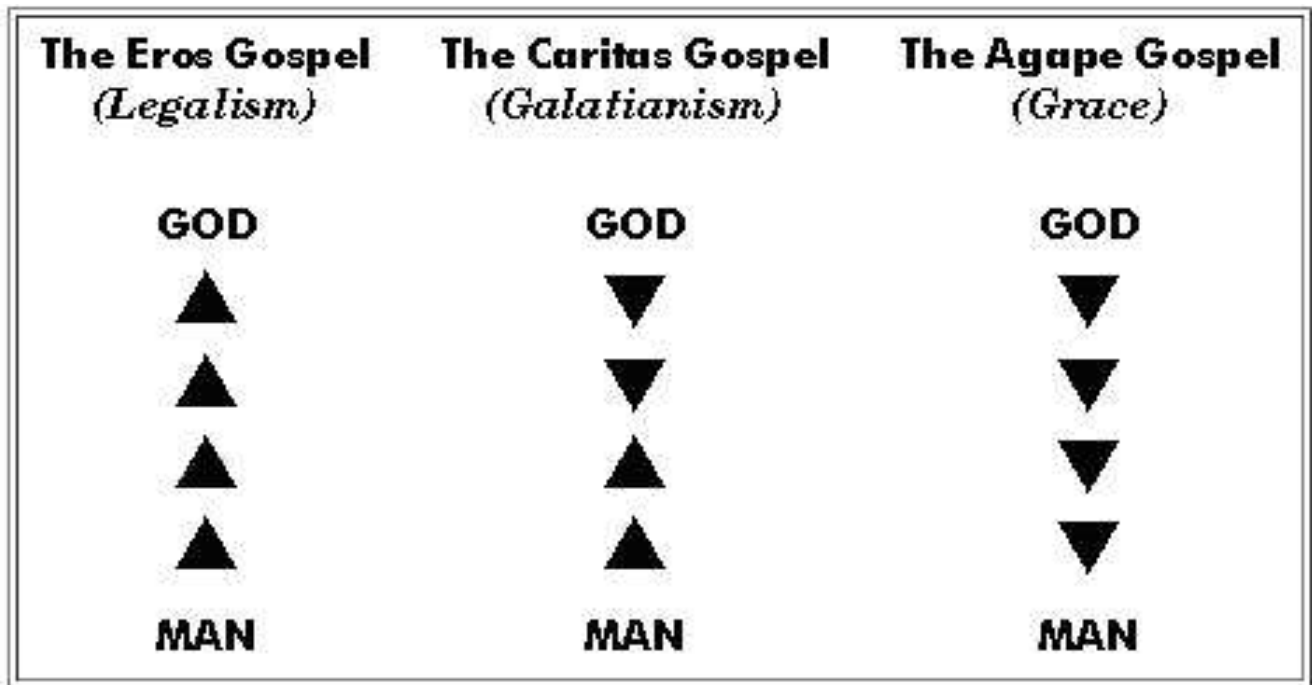
the movement of the creature towards God.” Plato taught a similar idea, and believed that God only saves the lovable. In other words, the eros gospel teaches that man must save himself by pleasing God through sacrifices and good works, to make himself lovable. We call this “legalism” or salvation by works, the basis of all non-Christian religions.

At the heart of Roman Catholic theology is the caritas gospel: man must first give evidence he wants to be saved through his good works, and when God sees this, He will meet him halfway to save him. This gospel teaches that we must do our best to meet God’s ideal and Christ will make up the difference. The Galatian Christians fell into this trap [Galatians 3:1-3] and so have a great number of Christians today the religion of faith plus works, or justification plus sanctification. This is a subtle legalism.

The Bible however subscribes to neither the eros or the caritas gospel. In complete contradiction to the above two gospels, the apostles

taught that while we were “helpless,” “ungodly,” “sinners,” and even “enemies,” God demonstrated His agape love towards sinful men through the death of His Son, which fully reconciled us to Him [Romans 5:6-10]. This agape gospel is the clear teaching of the New Testament. [John 3:16, Ephesians 2:1-6, 1 Timothy 1:15, Titus 3:3-5 are but a few examples.] Both the eros gospel as well as the caritas gospel may be described as conditional good news; but the agape gospel which turned the world upside down in apostolic times [Acts 17:6] is unconditional good news.

It is this gospel that the world desperately needs to see restored and witnessed today, and which will lighten the earth with His glory [Revelation 18:1] before the end comes [Matthew 24:14; Revelation 14:6-15]. For the purposes of comparison, the following diagram represents the three gospels:



God's Agape and Human Self-Worth

One of the effects of the sin problem is that it has produced in many lives a very low sense of self-esteem or self-worth. Unfortunately this problem has magnified in our present complex world with its high divorce rates and competitive lifestyle. The result is a heyday for those who are in the counseling business. But may I introduce you to the “wonderful counsellor” [Isaiah 9:6] who alone has a permanent solution for you.

As we have already seen, in dealing with the sin problem (Chapter 1), the Bible puts very little

value in sinful flesh. To Nicodemus, whose religion put much emphasis on human achievement, Christ said: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh” [John 3:6]. By this He meant that there is nothing good in God’s eyes which the flesh is capable of producing [Romans 7:18]. This is because every thing that man does, in and of himself, is polluted with self-love. Hence there is none good and no one righteous [Romans 3:10,12].

It is for this reason the apostle Paul told the Philippian Christians that we are to have no confidence in the flesh [Philippians 3:3]. All this is devastating to our Good News for you God’s agape love for each one of us. The only permanent solution to the problem of a low self-worth is a clear understanding of God’s unconditional love (agape) and His saving truth in Christ. As the prophet Isaiah declared, in spite of our sinfulness, God will make us more precious than the fine gold of Ophir [Isaiah 13:12]. And this He has done in Christ, as we shall see in our study of the next chapter.

Chapter 3

The Gospel Defined

The word “gospel” originated in North Africa among the Greek-speaking residents of Alexandria. It was first used to announce the good news of the arrival of the grain ships from Phoenicia (present-day Lebanon). The wheat these ships brought was an essential commodity for the survival of the inhabitants of Egypt in those days, so the arrival of these ships was indeed good news.

Since the fall of Adam, the father of the human race, God has promised through the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament to redeem sinful humanity. The birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of that promise. Therefore, in the New Testament the word “gospel” is used to announce the unconditional good news of salvation for all mankind realized in the holy history of our Lord Jesus Christ [Mark 16:15-16; Romans 1:1-4; 10:13-15]. In a nutshell, the gospel may be described as the truth as it is in

Christ.

The apostle Paul defines this gospel as “the righteousness of God” [Romans 1:16-17; 3:21]. By this he meant that the gospel is a righteousness initiated and planned by God before the foundation of the world [Ephesians 1:4; Revelation 13:8], promised by God since the fall [Genesis 3:15], and fulfilled by God in Christ’s holy history [John 3:16-17; Galatians 4:4-5]. In other words, it is a righteousness entirely of God’s doing and without any human contribution whatsoever [Romans 3:28; Galatians 2:16]. In this gospel, God has obtained salvation full and complete for all humanity, so that in Christ mankind stands perfect and complete before God and His holy law [Colossians 2:10; Romans 10:4]. This salvation delivers from three predicaments that sinful humanity faces. They are:

1. Salvation from the guilt and punishment of sin.
2. Salvation from the power and slavery of sin.
3. Salvation from the nature and presence of sin.

The first salvation is the means of our justification; the second is the means of our sanctification; and the third is the means of our glorification. It is important that every believer realize that while Christians can claim justification as an already established fact [Romans 5:1], sanctification is an ongoing, present continuous, experience [1 Thessalonians 4:2-7; 5:23]; and glorification is a future hope to be realized at the second coming of Christ [Romans 8:24-25; Philippians 3:20-21].

All three aspects of salvation have already been accomplished or fulfilled in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence all three aspects of salvation are offered to mankind in Christ and they cannot be separated. Whom God has justified He will glorify, provided we do not turn our backs on Him through unbelief [Romans 8:30; Hebrews 10:38-39]. In view of this, all three aspects of salvation constitute the Good News of salvation, and since they all come to us in one parcel, Jesus Christ, they are inseparable

and we cannot choose to receive one without the other.

Further, everything we experience in terms of our salvation in this world and the world to come is based on the finished work of our Lord. This means that the ground of all Christian experience is the holy history of Christ. For this reason, it becomes vital that we should be grounded in the truth as it is in Him. If our knowledge concerning Christ's earthly mission is wrong then naturally our experience will be wrong. Likewise, if our knowledge of the truth in Christ is partial or incomplete, so will be our experience. It is for this reason Jesus taught, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" [John 8:32, 36].

When for example some of the Corinthian Christians denied the resurrection of believers, Paul did not defend the truth of the resurrection by the proof-text method, but proved the resurrection of the believers on the basis of Christ's resurrection [1 Corinthians 15:12-23]. Similarly, Peter comforts suffering believers with this admonition: "But

rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" [1 Peter 4:13].

Through faith a believer identifies himself with Christ and Him crucified. This means that at conversion the one who believes subjectively receives and becomes one with Christ and Him crucified; and faith is being sure of things hoped for (God's salvation in Christ), the substance of which we as yet have not fully experienced [Hebrews 11:1].

The Two Phases of Salvation

In view of the above, we may divide salvation into two related but distinct phases. First, salvation is what God has already accomplished for all mankind in the earthly mission of Christ (the three aspects of salvation from sin as mentioned above). It is this salvation that Christ identified with the good news of the gospel, and which He commissioned His disciples to proclaim to all the

world [Mark 16:15]. This salvation is often described by the apostle Paul by the idea of you in Christ [1 Corinthians 1:30-31; Ephesians 1:3-6; 2:13; Philippians 3:9). We may describe this salvation as an objective truth realized in the earthly history of Christ and therefore referred to theologically as the objective gospel.

Secondly, salvation in the Scriptures is also referred to as what God accomplishes in the believers through the Holy Spirit. This phase of salvation is not an addition to the objective facts of the gospel, but is making real in experience what God has already obtained for mankind in Christ. Therefore it may be described as the fruits of the objective gospel. It is often expressed by the idea of Christ in you [Romans 8:10; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 3:17; Colossians 1:27]. It includes peace with God that comes through justification by faith [Romans 5:1; Acts 10:36; Colossians 1:20]; victory over sin and holiness of living through the process of sanctification by faith [Romans 6:22; 2 Peter 1:5-7]; and the changing of our sinful nature to a sinless nature through glorification to be

realized at Christ's second advent [Romans 8:24-25; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54; Philippians 3:20-21]. Since this second phase of salvation has to do with the believer's experience, it is often referred to as the subjective gospel.

Today, there is much confusion in the minds of many Christians concerning these two phases of salvation. The reason is that many have failed to see the distinction between what God has already accomplished in Christ some two thousand years ago and what God is presently doing in the lives of the believers through the indwelling Spirit.

This, in turn, has led to much controversy over the doctrine of righteousness by faith. While Christ is our righteousness in both of these phases of salvation, and both are made effective by faith alone, there are certain important distinctions between the two.

The first phase of salvation is often described as the imputed righteousness of Christ, and is what qualifies the believers for heaven now and in the

judgment. The second phase of salvation is described as the imparted righteousness of Christ and is what witnesses or gives evidence to the imputed righteousness of Christ. It does not contribute one iota toward our qualification for heaven, but witnesses or demonstrates what is already true of us in Christ. But a lack of imparted righteousness demonstrates that the sinner has either not clearly understood the gospel or has rejected the gift of imputed righteousness, i.e., he refuses to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ, which indicates he does not have genuine faith and therefore unfits himself for heaven [James 2:20-23; Matthew 22:11-13].

Following are the four main distinctions between the objective facts of the gospel (you in Christ) and the subjective experience of the believer who by faith has identified himself with Christ and Him crucified (Christ in you).

“You in Christ”—The Objective Gospel

1. Complete—“In Christ” we stand perfect in

all righteousness [1 Corinthians 6:11; Ephesians 1:3; Colossians 2:10].

2. Universal—“In Christ” all humanity was redeemed or legally justified, i.e., reconciled to God [Romans 5:18; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; 1 Timothy 4:10; Titus 2:11; 1 John 2:2].

3. Outside of Us—“In Christ” the righteousness accomplished was without any help or contribution from us [Romans 3:21, 28; Philippians 3:9].

4. Meritorious—This righteousness “in Christ” is the only means of our salvation, and unless we resist and reject it, it fully qualifies us for heaven now and in the judgment [Acts 13:39; Romans 3:28; 10:4; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5].

“Christ in You”—the Subjective Gospel

1. Incomplete—“Christ in you” is an ongoing, growing process of sanctification to be fully

realized before the second advent; and the glorification of our bodies or nature, to be experienced only at the second advent [Romans 5:3-5; 8:18-23; 1 Corinthians 15:51-57; Philippians 3:12-14, 20-21; Colossians 1:27; 2:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Peter 1:3-8].

2. Particular—“Christ in you” applies only to believers who have by faith experienced the new birth [John 3:16; Romans 8:9-10; 1 Corinthians 6:17-20; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 6:14-16; 1 Timothy 4:10].

3. Allied—“Christ in you” involves the cooperation of the believers who by faith are walking in the Spirit [John 15:1-5; 17:23; Romans 8:9-14; 13:12-14; Galatians 2:20; 1 John 3:23-24].

4. Demonstrative—“Christ in you” witnesses or gives evidence of our salvation in Christ, but is not meritorious [Matthew 5:14-16; John 13:34-35; 14:12; Ephesians 2:10; Titus 3:8].

According to the objective truth of the gospel,

all that is necessary for sinful man to be declared righteous and to be a candidate for heaven has already been accomplished in Christ. Hence those who have by faith welcomed their position in Him are reckoned or considered by God as already being righteous or just, holy or sanctified, and glorified “in Christ” [Ephesians 1:3-6; 2:5-6; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11]. “The just by faith shall live” [Romans 1:17] was the greatest rediscovery Luther made since the falling away of the gospel in the Dark Ages.

The “In Christ” Motif

Once we come to grips with the above facts, it becomes obvious that the only hope of this doomed world rests on believing and appreciating the objective facts of the gospel. Further, as already pointed out, every Christian experience is based on the finished work of Christ so that we must build our Christian ethics on the objective facts of Christ’s holy history. As Paul puts it: “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” [1 Corinthians 3:11-15]. In view

of all this, it is not surprising that the central theme of Paul's theology is the "in Christ" motif or idea.

The key phrase running through all of Paul's epistles is "in Christ" or "in Christ Jesus." If you were to take this phrase out, there would be very little left in Paul's exposition of the gospel. This recurring phrase is often expressed by other similar phrases, such as, "in Him" or "by Him" or "through Him" or "in the Beloved" or "together with Him," etc. These are all synonymous terms implying the "in Christ" motif.

The truth behind this phrase was first introduced by Christ Himself, when He told His disciples to "abide in me" [John 15:4-6, emphasis mine]. This is the undergirding words of the gospel. And if we do not understand what the New Testament means by this term "in Christ," we will never be able to fully understand the message of the gospel. There is nothing we have as Christians except we have it "in Christ." Everything we have, enjoy, and hope for as believers is ours always "in Christ." Apart from Him we have nothing but sin,

condemnation, and death.

Now, I must admit, this expression “in Christ” is a most difficult phrase to understand. Just as Christ’s words “you must be born again” was mind boggling to Nicodemus; so likewise, the idea of “in Christ” is a very difficult concept for us to grasp. This is especially true of the western mind. How can I, as an individual, be in someone else? Worst still, how can I, born in the 20th Century, be in Christ who lived almost two thousand years ago? This makes no sense to our western way of thinking.

What does Scripture mean when it tells us that we were together with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection? And further, what did Paul mean when he tells us that we are already “sitting in heavenly places in Christ” [Ephesians 2:6]. Because we cannot fathom these facts we tend to ignore or skim over them. Yet the whole understanding of the gospel hinges on our understanding the significance of these vital words.

The “in Christ” motif is based on the Biblical teaching of solidarity or corporate oneness, a concept that is unfortunately to a large degree foreign to the Western mind. According to the plain teaching of the Bible, the whole of mankind is linked together by a common life and therefore is considered a unit or corporately one. This is because God created all men in one man [Genesis 2:7; Acts 17:26]. The word “life” in Genesis 2:7 is in the plural form in the Hebrew text; this means that God breathed into Adam the breath of lives, i.e., the lives of all men. Consequently, when Adam fell, the whole human family fell “in him,” since the fall took place before Adam had any children [Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22].

This important truth will be covered in greater detail in the next chapter, when we study the two Adams, but at this point it must become clear that God redeemed or legally justified all mankind in Christ, the same way that Satan brought the downfall or condemnation of all mankind in Adam [Romans 5:18].

By a divine act initiated and carried out by God alone, the corporate life of the whole human race in its fallen condition was incorporated into Christ at His incarnation when by a divine miracle the divinity of Christ and our corporate humanity that needed redeeming were united into one person—Jesus Christ [1 Corinthians 1:30]. It is through this mystery that God qualified Christ legally to be the second or last Adam (Adam in Hebrew means mankind), our representative and substitute. Then by His life and death which fully met the positive demands of God’s holy law as well as its justice, Christ became forever our righteousness and surety. This in a nutshell is the “in Christ” motif, and is what constitutes the good news of the gospel [Ephesians 1:3-12; 2:4-7]. It is for this reason that the humanity of Christ is said to be “everything to us.”

Every believer in Christ must realize that the basis upon which He can abide in you through the Holy Spirit [Romans 8:9-10] and fulfill in you the holy demands of the law [Romans 8:4], is founded and built on the objective fact that you “in Christ”

have already met all the requirements and demands of the law. Hence the conclusion Paul comes to in expounding the doctrine of Justification by faith: “Do we then make void the law through faith [i.e., justification by faith, see vs. 28]? God forbid: yea, we establish the law” [Romans 3:31; 10:4].

The Doctrine of Substitution

The above truth leads us to the important doctrine of substitution. This doctrine was at the very heart of the theological controversy in the Reformation between the Reformers and the Roman Catholic scholars. The central issue in this controversy had to do with the ethical problem of the truth of justification by faith. The question that was raised, and is still being asked today, is: “How can God justify the ungodly (i.e., sinners) who believe while still maintaining His integrity to the law which condemns sinners?” [Romans 4:5; Galatians 3:10].

The Roman Catholic scholars insisted that God first had to make the individual believer righteous

through infused grace before He could declare him justified. The reformers rejected this legalistic solution to the problem and came up with the doctrine of substitution; that God declares a believer justified on the basis of the doing and dying of Christ which fully met the law's requirements. This was unacceptable to the Catholic scholars as being unethical or illegal, since no law will allow guilt, punishment, or righteousness to pass from one person to another; consequently they accused the reformers of teaching “legal fiction,” or “as if passed-on righteousness,” or “celestial book-keeping.”

Both parties were correct to a point, yet both taught error. The Catholic theologians were correct ethically, since God has to make sinners righteous before He can legally declare them righteous. They were, however, unbiblical in their solution and rightly deserved to be accused of legalism. The Reformers on the other hand were correct in their solution as the Bible clearly teaches that believing sinners are justified on the basis of the doing and dying of Christ [Acts 13:39; Romans

10:4]. They were nevertheless ethically or legally wrong in their definition of substitution. It is a fundamental principle of all law, God's or man's, that you cannot transfer guilt or punishment from the guilty to the innocent [Deuteronomy 24:16; 2 Kings 14:6; Ezekiel 18:1-20]. Conversely, you cannot legally pass on the righteousness of one to another [Ezekiel 18:20].

How then are we to correctly define substitution? Biblically, the doctrine of substitution is based on the concept of solidarity or corporate oneness. As already pointed out, all men stand legally condemned because all sinned in one man Adam. Likewise, God can legally justify sinners because all men corporately obeyed in one "Man" Christ. God made this possible by uniting His Son with the corporate life of the human race that needed redeeming at the incarnation. This qualified Christ to be the second Adam and legally to substitute for fallen humanity.

The Reformers failed to solve the ethical problem of the gospel for the simple reason that

they, like the Roman Catholic Church, made a distinction between the humanity of Christ and the humanity He came to redeem. It is only when we identify the humanity of Christ with the corporate fallen humanity of the human race He came to redeem that we are able to preach an ethical gospel that is unconditional Good News.

The Humanity of Christ

Before we turn to our next study of the two Adams which clearly defines the Biblical concept of substitution, it is essential that we answer two vital questions concerning the humanity of Christ. The first is: “What was the primary purpose in Christ being made flesh?” The answer to this question is the starting point of a true understanding of Christology. Today three answers are being given to this question within Christendom. They are:

1. To prove that the law of God can be kept by man.

The problem with this answer is that it cannot be substantiated explicitly by Scripture. Naturally, the fact Christ did keep the law perfectly in His humanity proved that man, controlled by God's Spirit, can fully meet the law's demands. But the Bible does not teach that this is the primary reason why Christ became a man.

2. To be our example.

While the Bible does point to Christ as our example, it does so only with reference to believers who have accepted Christ by faith and have experienced the new birth [1 Peter 2:21; Philippians 2:5-8]. But Scripture does not teach that this is the primary reason why Christ took on our human flesh. Those who emphasize Christ as our example without first clearly presenting Him as our Saviour give the impression that they are teaching the example theory of the atonement, which is why they are often accused of the heresy

of perfectionism or legalism (see “From Controversy to Crisis” by Kenneth Samples, Christian Research Journal, Summer 1988, p. 9).

3. To redeem mankind from sin.

Scripture presents this as the primary reason for the Son of God being made flesh [Matthew 1:21; Galatians 4:4-5; Hebrews 2:14-17]. At the very heart of the doctrine of Christology is the glorious truth that Christ assumed humanity so that He could be the Saviour of the world. And only to those who have first received Him as their Saviour does He become to them an Example.

Once we have established the primary reason why Christ became a man, to redeem fallen humanity, this leads us to the second important question, and that is: “How did Christ in His humanity save mankind?” To this question two answers are taught within Christianity: vicariously, and actually. Each of these answers demands a different view on the nature of Christ’s humanity:

1. Those who hold to the vicarious position (one person acting in place of another), as the Reformers and many Evangelicals today, teach the pre-fall nature of Christ. Here is their basic argument:

Sin is a dual problem; it is first of all a condition or a state, since to them a sinful nature is sin that automatically stands condemned. Accordingly, Christ had to take a sinless human nature in order vicariously to substitute for our sinful nature which stands condemned. They insist that if Christ had taken our sinful nature as we know it, He would automatically have been a sinner Himself in need of a Saviour. Secondly, His perfect life and sacrificial death substitute for our sinful performance. Thus by His sinless human nature which vicariously substitutes for our sinful nature and by His perfect performance (i.e., doing and dying), Christ vicariously redeemed mankind from sin. But this position presents a twofold problem:

a. It makes the gospel unethical since, as we

have seen already, no law, God's or man's, will allow guilt or righteousness to be transferred from one person to another. Therefore, those who teach vicarious substitution are rightly accused of teaching "legal fiction" or "as if passed-on righteousness" (by Osiander and Newman in the Counter-reformation, and Islamic scholars today).

All attempted solutions given to this ethical problem—such as "Christ is above the law," or "since He volunteered to die in man's stead this makes it ethical"—are unacceptable. As we saw, law will not allow sin to be transferred from the guilty to the innocent. Only when the two are linked together, as it was illustrated in the sanctuary service, does the substitution become legally accepted [1 Corinthians 10:18].

b. The "vicarious" view is very conducive to turning the gospel into cheap grace, i.e., since Christ did it all without having to identify Himself with us (He lived and died instead of us), we can receive the blessings of His holy history by a faith understood as a mental assent to truth without

identifying ourselves in that history, which true faith and baptism demand [Galatians 2:19-20; Romans 6:1-4].

2. Those who take the actual position teach the post-fall nature of Christ. Their argument is that since Christ came to save fallen humanity He had to assume the humanity that needed redeeming, which of course was sinful. Thus by identifying Himself with our corporate fallen humanity Christ qualified Himself to be the second Adam and legally to be our Substitute.

Consequently, by His doing and dying Christ actually changed mankind's history so that all humanity was legally justified at the cross and justification by faith is making effective that legal justification in the life of the believer. Faith therefore is more than a mental assent to the truth. It requires a heart appreciation of the cross which produces obedience or surrender of the will to the truth as it is in Christ [Romans 1:5; 6:17; 10:16; Galatians 5:7; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8]. Such obedience of faith is the basis of true holy living

[Galatians 2:20, Romans 6:10-13]. But some ask a serious question about this view:

If Christ identified Himself with our sinful human nature (which they understand is equated with sin), the proponents of the vicarious view charge that we drag Christ into sin and therefore make Him a sinner like us in need of a Saviour. Paul clearly teaches that the sinful human nature of us sinners is indwelt by sin [Romans 7:17, 20, 23] and, therefore, we are “by nature children of wrath” [Ephesians 2:3]. Since the Bible clearly teaches that Christ took the same flesh as that of the human race He came to redeem [Hebrews 2:14-17], the correct solution to the problem is to take note of the qualifying word used by the New Testament writers when they refer to the humanity of Christ [for example, John 1:14; Galatians 4:4, and 2 Corinthians 5:21]. In these three texts the word “made” is used with reference to the nature of Christ’s humanity.

What does this word mean? The Greek words translated in the King James’s Version of the Bible

by “made” mean “to become.” When Christ became a man, He actually became what He was not, so that the sinful nature He assumed was not His by native right but something He took upon Himself, or assumed, or was made to be in order to redeem it. In other words, as Ellen White points out in *Medical Ministry*, p.181: “He took upon His sinless [divine] nature our sinful [human] nature, that He might know how to succor those that are tempted.” The words “took part” found in Hebrews 2:14 and the word “likeness” in Romans 8:3 carry the same connotation as the word “made” (see the *International Critical Commentary*, 1982 ed., and *Word Biblical Commentary on Romans 8:3*).

Had Christ consented to the sinful desires of that nature which He assumed, even by a thought, then He would have become a sinner Himself in need of a Saviour. That is why it must be stressed that in dealing with the human nature of Christ we must be “exceedingly careful” not to drag His mind or His choice into sin, or say that He “had” a sinful nature. But the fact is that Christ did actually assume our condemned sinful nature as we know it,

but in His case He totally defeated “the law of sin and death” that resided in that sinful human nature which He assumed, and then executed it on the cross. This is the main thought expressed in Romans 8:1-3 which is Paul’s explanation of Romans 7:24, 25.

The Biblical Idea of Corporate Identity

Since the Western mind is dominated by the individualistic concept, many find the “in Christ” motif a rather difficult concept to grasp. In view of this, the next chapter will go into greater detail on the Biblical teaching of the two Adams. However, it may be helpful in concluding this chapter, and before proceeding to our next one, to examine the logic of Hebrews 7 where the writer proves, using the idea of solidarity or corporate oneness, the superiority of Christ’s priesthood to that of the Levitical. Because Christ as a Jew was born of the tribe of Judah He was disqualified by Old Testament law to belong to the Levitical priesthood. Therefore the writer of Hebrews identifies Christ as our High Priest after the order

of the priesthood of Melchizedek [Hebrews 6:20].

In Hebrews 7 he goes on to prove that Melchizedek was superior to Levi. Once this is established, it is not hard to see how Christ as a priest after the order of Melchizedek is superior or better than the Levitical priesthood. But how does the writer of Hebrews prove that Melchizedek is superior to Levi? Simply by reminding his readers that Levi paid tithe to Melchizedek. The argument is brilliant: the one who pays tithe is always inferior to the one to whom the tithe is paid. But Levi never paid tithe to Melchizedek as an individual, for he was not even born in the time of Melchizedek. How then did he do it? “In Abraham,” says the writer of Hebrews.

Levi, who was the great-grandson of Abraham and had yet not been born, was “in the loins of Abraham” when he met Melchizedek and gave him his tithe [Hebrews 7:7-10]. This argument is based on the Biblical idea of corporate solidarity and will be helpful for us to understand how all humanity stands condemned “in Adam” and is justified “in

Christ,” since all humanity were “in the loins” of these two men, respectively, and were, therefore, implicated in what they both did. The following diagrams, which describe the unipersonality of Christ, may be helpful to understand the “in Christ” motif—first showing how our Lord, the God-Man, qualified to be our saviour at the incarnation and, secondly, what took place at the cross and resurrection when He redeemed fallen humanity.

Jesus Christ at the Incarnation

Two Distinct, Opposite Natures United in One Person

In order for Christ to legally qualify to be our substitute and representative, His divinity had to be united to our corporate fallen humanity that needed redeeming. It is in the incarnation that these two distinct opposite natures were united together in one person and Christ became the second Adam. This is the “in Christ” motif, the central theme of Paul’s theology [1 Corinthians 1:30, Ephesians 1:3-6].

HIS DIVINE NATURE

What He Is:

1. Son of God [Luke 1:35]
2. Self-Existing [John 1:4]
3. Spirit [John 4:24]
4. Equal with God [Philippians 2:6]
5. Sinless [2 Corinthians 5:21]
6. Independent [John 10:18]
7. Immortal [1 Timothy 1:17]
8. Lawgiver [James 4:12]

HIS HUMAN NATURE

What He Was Made:

1. Son of Man [Luke 19:10]
2. Of a Woman [Galatians 4:4]
3. Flesh [John 1:14]
4. A Slave of God [Philippians 2:7]
5. Sin [2 Corinthians 5:21]
6. Dependent [John 5:19, 30]
7. Mortal [Hebrews 2:14-15]

8. Under Law [Galatians 4:4]

Jesus Christ in the Resurrection

The Two Natures Become One, Sharing the Same Divine Life

On the cross our corporate, condemned life died eternally (the wages of sin) “in Christ” [2 Corinthians 5:14]. In the resurrection God gave the human race the eternal life of His Son [1 John 5:11]. All that we are, as a result of the fall, Christ was made at the incarnation, that through His life, death, and resurrection, all that He is we were made “in Him” [2 Corinthians 5:17]. This is the good news of salvation.

Thus, by nature we:

1. Are spiritually dead, but “in Christ” were made spiritually alive [Ephesians 2:5]
2. Are sinners, but “in Christ” were made righteous [2 Corinthians 5:21]
3. Are sinful, but “in Christ” were made holy

- and blameless [Ephesians 1:4]
4. Are condemned, but “in Christ” were made justified [Romans 5:18]
 5. Are sons of man, but “in Christ” were made sons of God [1 John 3:1]
 6. Are doomed, but “in Christ” were made to sit in heavenly places [Ephesians 2:6]
 7. Are mortal, but “in Christ” were made immortal [2 Timothy 1:8-10]
 8. Are poor, but “in Christ” were made rich [2 Corinthians 8:9]
 9. Are nothing, but “in Christ” were made joint-heirs [Romans 8:17]
 10. Are lower than the angels, but “in Christ” were made kings and priests [Revelation 5:10]

“Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift” [2 Corinthians 9:15].

Chapter 4

The Two Adams

The truth of the two Adams is one of the most neglected and misunderstood doctrines of Scripture. Yet it is one of the most important teachings of the Word pertaining to mankind's salvation. This is because the eternal destiny of all humanity is wrapped up in these two men, Adam and Christ (the second Adam).

Scripture clearly teaches that “in Adam all die” and “in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). According to the Bible, God created all men in one man (i.e., Adam — Gen. 1:27, 28; Gen. 2:7; Acts 17:26). Satan ruined all men in one man (i.e., Adam — Romans 5:12, 18; 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22); and God redeemed all men in one Man (i.e., Christ — 1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 1:3; 2:5-6).

It is this writer's conviction that we can never fully understand or appreciate all the implications

and privileges of our salvation in Christ unless we come to grips and realize our situation “in Adam.” Two passages in the New Testament explain in some detail this vital doctrine of the two Adams, Romans 5:12-21, which many Bible scholars consider the high point of Romans; and 1 Corinthians 15:19-23, 45-49. In order to understand this truth it is important we look carefully at these two passages.

Romans 5:11-21

In Romans 5:11, the apostle Paul states a glorious truth of the gospel — that we Christians can rejoice because we have already received the atonement. This means the reconciliation Christ has obtained for all men by His death on the cross (Romans 5:10) has already become effective in the life of all believers. He then goes to expound how we receive this atonement in verses 12-21. He does it in a unique way, by using Adam as a type or pattern of Christ (note the last part of verse 14). The reason he does this is because, as already mentioned, we are redeemed “in Christ” in the

same way we are lost “in Adam.” The history of these two men, Adam and Christ, has affected the eternal destiny of all humanity. Consequently, to use Adam as a pattern of Christ, Paul first explains our situation “in Adam.” He does this in verses 12-14.

In verse 12, Paul states three facts concerning our sin problem: The first is that sin entered the world (i.e., the history of the human race) through one man (Adam). Second, this sin condemned Adam to death; this is because God made it clear to our first parents, “in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shall surely die” (Gen. 2:16, 17). Third, Paul goes on to state that this death spread to all humanity, or became universal. The reason for this is “for that all have sinned.” In view of the fact this last phrase of verse 12 is an incomplete statement, it has brought endless controversies in the history of the Christian church. What did Paul mean by that phrase? Did he mean that all men die because “all have sinned” like Adam, or was he implying that all men die since “all have sinned” in Adam?

Strong arguments have been presented defending both positions by reputed Bible scholars and both views are held today by sincere Christians. Since Paul's purpose in discussing Adam is to use him as a type or a figure or a pattern of Christ (verse 14, last part), our conclusion as to what he meant by that phrase “for that all have sinned” has very important ramifications. While grammatically both arguments may be correct, nevertheless when we carefully examine the context and logic of this chapter (verses 12-21) and consider the implications of the two views, it becomes clear that to be consistent with the context as well as the logic of this passage, along with the clear teaching of Paul with regards to justification by faith, we would have to take the position that Paul's idea here is that the death that came to Adam because of his sin spread to all men because “all have sinned” in Adam.

Since God created all humanity out of Adam (Acts 17:26), then it goes without saying that all humanity was in Adam when he sinned, and therefore the whole human race was implicated or

participated in that act of disobedience (it must be noted that all of Adam's children were born after he had sinned). Hence, the condemnation of death that came to Adam was passed on to all mankind. At least five reasons may be given why this is the correct meaning of that phrase "for that all have sinned."

1. It is not historically true that all die because they have sinned like Adam. A good example are babies; they die, even though they have no personal sins. The only explanation for their death is that all sinned in Adam.

2. The verb "sinned" in this phrase of verse 12 is in the aorist tense. In Greek this tense normally refers to a once-and-for-all act that has taken place in the past. Hence, grammatically "all have sinned" is most probably referring to a past historical event and not the personal sins of people which are many and continuous. Note the second half of Romans 3:23, which is referring (in the present continuous tense) to our many personal sins, in addition to the first half of verse 23 which states that "all have

sinned” (again in the aorist tense) implying, “in Adam.”

3. According to Romans 5:13, 14 (in which Paul explains what he meant by “all have sinned” in vs.12), those who lived from Adam to Moses died, even though they had “not sinned “after the similitude [or likeness] of Adam’s transgression.” Hence, the immediate context clearly contradicts the argument that all die because “all have sinned” like Adam.

4. Four times in Romans 5:15-18 the apostle Paul clearly and explicitly states that Adam’s offense or sin (and not our personal sins) brought to the whole human race judgment, condemnation, and death. Thus the context of this passage clearly supports the idea that all die because “all have sinned” in Adam. In addition, verse 19 goes on to state that Adam's one sin constituted or made us sinners.

5. Since Paul is using Adam as a type or pattern of Christ in this passage, if we insist that all men

die because “all have sinned” like Adam, to make this analogy fit Christ we would have to teach that likewise all men live or stand justified because they have obeyed like Christ. This would turn justification by faith into legalism or salvation by works; the very opposite of Paul’s clear teaching in Romans. But the truth is that since “all have sinned” in Adam and therefore stand condemned to death in him, likewise Paul’s idea is that all have obeyed “in Christ” and therefore stand justified to life in Him (vs.18).

Once we have established this fact, the reasoning of verses 13 and 14 of Romans 5 makes sense. For here Paul is simply proving the fact he stated in verse 12 that all die because “all have sinned” in Adam. He does this by looking at a segment of the human race, those who lived from Adam to Moses. These people, to be sure, were sinning; but since God had not yet explicitly spelled out His law or given it to mankind as a legal code until Moses, He could not justly condemn these people to death for their personal sins. This is what Paul means in verse 13, “but sin

is not imputed ([i.e., counted or reckoned] when there is no law.”

It must be pointed out here that according to the New Testament those who died in the flood did so because they rejected salvation and not because they were sinners (1 Peter 3:18-20). Nevertheless, Paul points out in verse 14, these people were dying even though their sins were not identical to Adam’s one transgression. The difference is that while the human race from Adam to Moses were “missing the mark” (meaning, to sin), Adam's act of disobedience was a “wilful violation of a law” (meaning transgression) and which justly deserved death (Gen. 2:17). In view of this, the only valid reason these people were dying was because all humanity stands condemned to death in Adam.

Some who realize they cannot deny the above facts, yet still believe and teach that all die because “all have sinned” like Adam, try to solve the problem by insisting that in Adam we receive only the first or sleep-death, while our personal sins are responsible for the second death. Such reasoning

may sound convincing but will not stand the test of Scripture. The word death in Romans 5:12 appears twice, the first time applying to Adam and the second to his posterity or mankind. The same death that came to Adam, says Paul, passed on to all humanity.

Surely Adam knew nothing about the first death before the fall and therefore, the death sentence pronounced on Adam when he sinned was the second death—goodbye to life forever. And it is this death that has passed on to all men “in Adam.” In other words, in Adam the whole human race belongs legally on death-row. Besides, the first or sleep-death, which is experienced by both believers and unbelievers, became necessary because of the plan of redemption. Had there been no “lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” Adam would have forfeited his life the day he sinned and mankind would have died eternally (the second death) in him (Gen. 2:17). It is only in Christ that we can pass from death to life (John 5:24; 1 Corinthians 15:55-57; 2 Tim. 1:10; Rev. 20:6).

In dealing with this truth, may I warn the reader that we must not go beyond Scripture and teach that in Adam all humanity also inherits his guilt. That is the heresy of original sin introduced by Augustine and adopted by the Roman Catholic Church. Guilt, when used in a legal sense, always includes volition or responsibility and God does not hold us responsible for something in which we had no choice. It is only when we personally, consciously, persistently, deliberately, and ultimately reject the gift of eternal life in Christ that the guilt and responsibility of sin and the second death become ours (John 3:18, 36; Mk. 16:15, 16; Hebrews 2:1-4; 10:14, 26-29).

Having established our situation in Adam in verses 12-14, Paul proceeds in verses 15-18 to show how Adam is a type or pattern of Christ. Just as what Adam did affected all humanity, likewise what Christ (the second Adam) did also affected all mankind, except in the opposite sense. For, unlike Adam, Christ obeyed, the very opposite of Adam's disobedience. According to Romans 5:15-18, when

Adam sinned he brought the judgment of condemnation and death to “all men.” In the same way when Christ obeyed, He not only redeemed humanity from the results of Adam’s sin but “much more,” He cancelled all our personal sins plus bringing in the verdict of “justification to life” to all men (vss. 16, 18; note “many offences” in vs. 16, implying Adam's plus our personal sins). This is the unconditional good news of salvation that the gospel proclaims.

Proceeding to verse 19, Paul adds another dimension to the problem of Adam’s sin, that it “made” or constituted all mankind into sinners. This means that in addition to condemnation and the death sentence, we are also born slaves to sin because of the fall, and therefore are incapable of producing genuine righteousness in and of ourselves (Romans 3:9-12; 7:14-25). But in the second half of vs.19, Paul reminds us that because of Christ’s obedience we shall be “made righteous” (note the future tense; this of course applies to all those who receive Him (vs. 17). And to demonstrate that Adam’s sin has made us slaves to

sin, God gave His law (vs. 20; Romans 7:7-13). The law, in other words, entered or was given by God not to solve the sin problem but to expose it, for it showed how Adam's one sin has produced a whole human race of sinners (note the word "offense" in verse 20 is in the singular, and therefore refers to Adam's one sin). However, the good news is that where sin has multiplied through Adam's fall, God's grace in Christ has been multiplied all the more.

This brings us to the next important point concerning this passage under consideration. You will notice that Paul mentions two things with reference to Christ in Romans 5:15-20 which he does not apply to our situation in Adam. First, what God accomplished for all men in Christ is referred to as a "gift" or "free gift." This means that while all men have been legally justified in Christ's doing and dying, it is a gift and like any gift only those who by faith receive it will enjoy the benefits of Christ's obedience. Paul makes this clear in verse 17 by using the word "receive" with reference to the gift of the righteousness of Christ.

Secondly, Paul repeatedly uses the expression “much more” when pointing to the blessings we receive through Christ’s obedience. What he means by this is that in Christ “much more” has been accomplished than simply undoing the damage we inherit in Adam. For example, by His death Christ not only liberated humanity from the condemnation of death that resulted by Adam’s one sin but much more, He redeemed us from our own “many (personal) offenses unto justification” (vs. 16). Again in Christ, not only do we receive eternal life, the opposite of eternal death, but much more we shall “reign (or rule) in life by one, Jesus Christ” (vs.17; 8:17; Rev. 20:6; 22:5). This is super-abundant grace.

Hence, “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (v. 20). Consequently, Paul concludes in verse 21: As sin ruled our lives from birth and would do so until death, his plea is let grace now take over and reign in the believers life, producing righteousness, until eternity is ushered in.

1. According to Romans 5:12-19, whether I am reckoned a sinner and condemned to death, or whether I am declared righteous (justified) and qualify for eternal life, has to do with the history of Adam or Christ. On the basis of Adam's disobedience I am reckoned a sinner, or on the basis of Christ's obedience I am declared a righteous person.

2. If we belong to the humanity produced by Adam, we are constituted as sinners and are condemned to eternal death. If, however, we belong to the humanity initiated by Christ, we are declared righteous and qualify for eternal life and heaven. In other words, our eternal destiny rests upon which humanity we choose to belong to.

3. All men by creation are "in Adam." This is the hopeless situation which we inherit and which from birth we find ourselves in. Hence we are "by nature the children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3). But the Good News is that in Christ God has given mankind a new identity and history. This is His

supreme gift to humanity; and therefore, he who believes in Christ and is baptized into Him (Galatians 3:27) shall be saved (Mk.16:16). In other words, our subjective position in Christ is by faith. What God has done for the whole human race in Christ (deliverance from sin and death, replaced by righteousness and eternal life) is given as a “free gift,” something we do not naturally deserve. Hence this gift is referred to as grace or unmerited favor. This gift, to be experienced, has to be received and is made effective by faith alone.

4. Adam and Christ belong to opposite camps which cannot be reconciled. Adam is equated with sin and death, Christ with righteousness and life. Consequently it is impossible for anyone subjectively to belong to Adam and Christ at the same time. To accept Christ by faith means and involves our totally renouncing our position in Adam (2 Corinthians 5:17; 6:14-16). Baptism is a public declaration that we have died to sin (our position in Adam) and have resurrected with Christ into newness of life (our position in Christ, Romans 6:1-4, 8; 2 Tim. 2:11). This, incidentally,

is of vital importance with reference to our sanctification (2 Corinthians 4:10, 11; Philippians 3:9-11).

5. In view of the above, the human race may be divided into two groups or camps: the Adamic race made up of many nations and tribes (Acts 17:26), and the believers who are all one in Christ (Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 10:17; Galatians 3:27-28; Ephesians 4:11-13). Because of the gospel, man is given the choice to belong to either one of these two groups. We may retain our position in Adam by unbelief and reap the fruits of his sin; or by faith we may become united to Christ and receive the benefits of His righteousness.

The Bible describes these two groups in various ways:

- Sheep and goats (Matthew 25:32).
- Righteous and wicked (Prov. 28:1; Romans 2:5-11).
- Right-hand or left-hand (Matthew 25:33).
- House on rock or house on sand (Matthew

7:24-27).

- Children of light or children of darkness (1 Thessalonians 5:5).
- Kingdom of heaven or kingdom of this world (John 15:19).

1 Corinthians 15:19-23, 45-49

When we turn to 1 Corinthians 15:19-23, 45-49, we will discover that Paul repeats the same idea he presented in Romans 5:12-21. Sin entered the human race through one man in the same way that resurrection to life came to all men through one man. Briefly, this is what these verses in Corinthians say:

Verses 19, 20. Correcting those who denied the resurrection (see vs.12), Paul points out here that the great hope of the Christian is the resurrection. Christ Himself, who rose from the dead, is the first-fruits of those who are still resting in their graves “in Christ.” Paul then goes on to explain that this hope is not built on the basis of our goodness but on our position in Christ.

Verse 21. For since death came to the whole human race through one man (note, man is singular and refers to Adam, vs. 22). So also through one Man (i.e., Christ) came the resurrection from the dead.

Verse 22. Death came upon all men because of our position in Adam. Likewise, the resurrection and the hope of eternal life come to all men who are in Christ (note the expressions, in Adam and in Christ, both of which imply solidarity or corporate oneness).

Verse 23. Christ the prototype of all those that are in Him has already risen from the dead, being the first-fruits. But they that are Christ's (i.e., the believers) will experience this at the second Advent.

Verse 45. The first Adam being a created being (i.e., having a life that has a beginning and therefore can have an end), became the source of our created life. The last Adam introduced the life-giving Spirit

(i.e., eternal life).

Verse 46. The created life (or natural life) came first. The life-giving Spirit came afterwards.

Verse 47. The first man (Adam) was made from the dust of the earth, and such was the character he produced (carnal). The second man (Christ) was from heaven, the Son of God; the character He manifested was of God (spiritual, Romans 1:4).

Verse 48. As the children of the earthly (Adam) reflect the nature and character of the earthly (i.e., sin); so also those who belong to the heavenly (Christ) will reflect the heavenly character and nature (i.e., righteousness).

Verse 49. And just as we all, by nature, are a reproduction of the earthly (Adamic) image; so likewise we shall (future tense, the context being the resurrected nature) reflect fully the image of Christ's resurrected nature at the second advent (verses 50-54; Romans 8:23-25; Philippians 3:20-

21).

According to 1 Corinthians 15:21-23, 45-49, there have only been two heads of the human race, Adam and Christ. There will never be another; hence Christ is referred to as the “last Adam” (vs. 45). On these two heads rests the destiny of the entire human race. Adam is the prototype of the unredeemed humanity, while Christ is the prototype of the redeemed humanity. What is true of Adam is true of his people, and what is true of Christ is true of His people. Adam’s situation after the fall is the situation of all the unredeemed, while that which was realized by Christ for all men will be the situation of all the redeemed “as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (vs. 22).

Christ’s resurrection is the second advent. Not our righteousness (self-righteousness) but Christ’s righteousness qualifies us for heaven, now and in the judgment.

In verse 45 Adam is called the first Adam,

while Christ is referred to as the “last Adam.” Then again in verse 47 Adam is referred to as the “first man” while Christ is called the “second man.” These terms in reference to Christ have important implications. As the last Adam, Christ was the sum total of all that is of the first Adam. As the second man He is the head of a new or redeemed human race. Having gathered all that was of the first Adam, Christ as the last Adam superseded the whole Adamic race by His death on the cross (2 Corinthians 5:14; 1 Peter 2:24).

On the cross He died or tasted the second death as substitute or representative of the whole human race (Hebrews 2:9). In this way He abolished death (2 Tim. 1:10). In superseding the whole Adamic race at the cross and thus meeting the just demands of the law on our behalf, Christ qualified in the resurrection to be the second man, the head of a new redeemed humanity (2 Corinthians 5:17), who are found altogether in Him. It is this fact alone that the blessed hope is founded upon and we long for His appearing so that we will be fully like Him (Philippians 3:20-21).

Conclusion

According to the clear teaching of the two Adams, our hope rests entirely on Christ our righteousness, for “by the deeds of the law there shall no person be justified before God” (Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16). But they who are justified by faith in Christ shall live (Romans 1:17; Hebrews 2:4; Philippians 3:9).

At creation God made Adam out of the dust of the earth and breathed into him the breath of lives so that Adam became a corporate living person (Gen. 2:7). This corporate life which Adam received from God was a perfect sinless life which was Spirit-controlled so that it was dominated by selfless love (agape), for he was created in the image of God, and God is agape (Gen. 1:26; John 4:24; 1 John 4:8, 16). Having created Adam and his companion Eve out of him, God commanded Adam to multiply his life and fill this earth with men and women who were all to reflect the character of God (Gen. 1:28). This was originally

the divine purpose for this world.

Unfortunately, before Adam and Eve began the multiplication process, they fell into sin and this affected the corporate life of Adam in three ways:

1. His sinless life became guilty of sin (Gen. 2:17; 3:6, 7).

2. His guilty life came under the condemnation of the law, the penalty of which is death (Ezk.18:4,20).

3. His perfect sinless life became a sinful life so that instead of being controlled by the Spirit of agape it came under the bondage or slavery of sin (self-love) and the devil (Isa. 53:6; John 8:34; Philippians 2:21; 2 Peter 2:19).

Since the human race is the multiplication of Adam's life (Acts 17:24-26; blood symbolizes life, Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11; Deut. 12:23), therefore all the above three facts concerning Adam's life passed on to the human race. Hence, this life we

receive at birth is:

1. A life that has sinned (Romans 5:12).

2. It is a life that is in bondage or slavery to sin and the devil (John 8:34; Romans 7:14; 1 John 3:8).

3. It is a life that is forfeited by the law. This means that the law demands this life and when the law's just demands are met we are left with nothing but eternal death (John 3:36; 1 Corinthians 15:22; Rev. 20:14,15). This is our situation "in Adam," and we can do nothing ourselves to change or alter these facts. "In Adam" we have all sinned and are in bondage to sin and must all die. In other words, we are, without the gospel, hopelessly lost and doomed forever.

It was to deliver us from this situation and to restore God's original purpose for man that Christ was made flesh. He came as the second head of the Adamic race and introduced the reign of grace through His perfect life, death and resurrection.

Hence, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). So then, while the fallen human race is the multiplication of Adam’s sinful life, we may say that the church (described in the New Testament as the body of Christ, Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:13, 14) is the multiplication of Christ’s righteous life (Romans 8:29; Hebrews 2:11; 1 John 3:1,2). This is the foundation upon which the church is to be built.

Therefore, thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift (2 Corinthians 9:15) which has changed our hopeless situation in Adam and given mankind a new identity and hope in Christ. Through the gospel we receive the very life of Christ (this is realized at conversion or the new birth experience, John 3:3-6). This life which is received by faith in Christ is:

1. A life that has perfectly obeyed the law, and kept it in every detail in our corporate humanity

which Christ assumed (Matthew 5:17; Romans 10:4).

2. A life that has condemned and conquered the power of sin in the flesh (John 8:46; Romans 8:2-3).

3. A life that was submitted by Christ to the full wages of sin on the cross (Romans 5:8,10; Philippians 2:8).

4. A life that has overcome death and the grave (1 Corinthians 15:55-58; Hebrews 2:14-15).

All these facts become reality to us when we by faith receive this life. This life in the first place justifies us, since it perfectly obeyed the law and met its just demands on behalf of our sins; secondly, this life is able to deliver us fully from the slavery to sin, and produce in us the very righteousness of God, since it has already accomplished this in Christ's humanity (1 Tim. 3:16). Finally, this life will raise us from the dead and guarantee us eternity for it is eternal life (John

3:36; 6:27; 1 John 2: 25).

These are the privileges that all have who are in Christ. And if we learn to live by His life instead of our natural life, then we are truly abiding in Him (John 15:4-8) and walking in the light (1 John 1:6-7) or in the Spirit (Romans 8:4; Galatians 5:16); and the fruits of such a life will be well pleasing to God. When we come to the study of the subjective gospel, we will discover that it is the life of Christ abiding in us and dominating us which is the means of our sanctification, “Christ in you the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). In Christ we possess a life that is greater than the power of sin and the devil (1 John 4:4). And when this new life takes over, sin will be mortified in our bodies and instead, Christ will be revealed (Romans 8:9-14). Thus the earth will be lightened with the glory of God through His people (Rev. 18:1). This will be God’s final display before Christ comes (Rev. 10:7; see also COL 69).

Having made an in-depth exposition of these two passages on the two Adams, let us, for clarity’s

sake, summarize the conclusions.

The Two Adams Summarized

1. Adam's sin brought all mankind under the death sentence—both the first and second death. The first death being a necessity because of the gospel program and the second death being the actual wages of sin.

2. Christ's obedience did two things for all mankind: (i) it saved all humanity from the second death, the wages of sin, and (ii) it brought the verdict of justification to life on all men. Note: Since believers die the first death, the gospel obviously only redeems us from the second death (Rev. 20:6). On the cross Christ tasted and abolished only the second death, the curse of the law (Hebrews 2:9; 2 Tim. 1:10; Galatians 3:13).

3. The whole force of the parallel in Romans 5:12-21 between Adam and Christ depends on the idea of the solidarity of mankind in Adam and in Christ. In the great majority of the 510 times the

word “Adam” is used in the Old Testament, it possesses a collective significance. In the same sense, Christ is referred to as the last or second Adam in the New Testament.

4. Salvation from the second death and the verdict of justification to life is God’s supreme gift in Christ to all humanity (John 3:16). This constitutes the Good News of the gospel. But like any gift it has to be received in order to be enjoyed (Romans 5:17). Those who knowingly, willfully, and persistently reject God’s gift of salvation in Christ (the gospel) are deliberately choosing the second death instead of eternal life. Therefore in the judgment God bestows on them what they have deliberately and persistently chosen, and they can only blame themselves (and they will do so) when they face the second death (John 3:18, 36; Mk. 16:15,16; Romans 14:11).

5. Every baby is born subjectively under the reign of sin, condemnation, and death because of the fall of Adam (Romans 3:9-20). To continue to live under this reign of sin and death and resisting

the grace of Christ will culminate in the second death. But objectively Christ, by His doing and dying, has delivered all humanity from this reign and placed mankind under the “reign” of grace, righteousness, and eternal life. To accept this gift of grace by faith is to say goodbye to the reign of sin and death and to live under the reign of grace and righteousness which ends up with eternal life (Romans 5:21; 6:14, 22, 23).

6. You cannot choose to remain in Adam and at the same time accept by faith to be in Christ. To receive Christ, the author of righteousness, means to say goodbye to Adam, the author of sin. (Romans 6:15-18).

7. Your eternal destiny depends on which humanity you have chosen. Unbelief means deliberately choosing to remain in Adam and the reign of sin and death. Belief means willfully choosing to be in Christ and the reign of righteousness and eternal life. It is for this reason God will not bring the sad history of this wicked world to an end until this gospel has been preached

“into all the world for a witness” (Matthew 24:14).

Based on the deliberate choice we make concerning the two Adams, each one of us will be judged on judgment day. “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live” (Deut. 30:19).

In concluding this most important study, it must be emphasized that not only is this truth on the two Adams of utmost importance to our understanding of the objective gospel and justification by faith, but it is also of great practical value to our Christian experience since the fruits of this doctrine are unto holiness of living or sanctification. It is for this reason Christ declared: “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,” and “if the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:32, 36).

Chapter 5

The Cross of Christ

The cross of Christ was the very heart of the New Testament message (1 Corinthians 2:1-2). The apostle Paul summed up the Good News of the gospel in the message of the cross: “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Yet there is much confusion and ignorance among God’s people today on this vital subject. The devil is quite happy when we decorate our churches with crosses, print crosses on our books, tattoo them on our bodies, hang them around our necks, and even preach about the cross, as long as we remain ignorant about the truth of the cross.

The cross is the supreme manifestation of God’s agape love; it is where the just demand of the law on behalf of the human race was met and it demonstrated the power of God in Christ Jesus that

defeated the devil and sin. Satan does not want the truth of the cross made available to us, and for this reason he has enshrouded this truth in darkness, and, as a result, the Christian church has lost much of its power.

But the truth of the cross must and will be restored, and before the end comes the light flowing from it in the hearts of the believers will lighten this earth with the glory of God: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:31-32).

In order to get the full benefit from this study on the cross of Christ, I have divided this subject into three sections, each unfolding an important truth crucial to our salvation and Christian living. May God open our eyes that we may not only see, but rejoice and glory in Christ and Him crucified.

1. The Cross of Christ and the Great Controversy

At the cross Satan, the antichrist, “that old serpent ... which deceiveth the whole world,” was totally defeated, judged, and condemned. Here is a truth that all Christians must clearly see and understand. The great controversy which began in heaven between Lucifer and Christ (Rev. 12:7, 8) met its determining end at the cross; for here Satan, the great deceiver, was fully exposed so that the whole universe saw him as he really was, a liar and a murderer. It is only as we too see Satan in the light of the cross that we will know him as he really is.

In heaven, Lucifer had the highest position among the angels, but iniquity (self-exaltation) entered his mind (Ezek. 28:14, 15), and he coveted the place of Christ who was one with the Father (Isa. 14:12-14). Unknown to the other angels, Lucifer, having now become Satan, desired in his mind to get rid of or murder the Son of God so that he might have His place of honor. Having deceived

one third of the angels, he waged war on Christ and His angels. However, he and his angels were defeated and cast out of their heavenly home (Rev. 12:7-9).

Following this, Satan unlawfully took dominion of this earth from Adam and Eve and using fallen man as his slave and tool, developed this world into a kingdom of his very own based on the principle of self-love. We saw all this in our study of “The Sin Problem,” Chapter 1.

For over four thousand years after the fall of Adam, Satan kept secret in his mind that inner desire he cherished in heaven, to murder the Son of God. But one silent night on the hills of Bethlehem, while shepherds were watching their flocks, Satan and his angels heard some strange singing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” God who so loved the world had sent His only beloved Son to be the Saviour of fallen humanity (John 3:16).

This news came to Satan as a wonderful

opportunity to satisfy his long cherished desire. Now he could fulfill that which he wanted to do in heaven—murder the Son of God. After all, the whole world was under his control (1 John 5:19); what better opportunity could have fallen into his wicked hands than this? Here in his world, Christ, his bitter enemy, had risked His life to come as a helpless babe to redeem that which he (Satan) had unlawfully taken. What could he do to this hated Foe who had defeated him in heaven and cast him out of his heavenly home?

Satan lost no time. Using Herod the Great as his agent, orders were sent to kill every male child under two years old in Bethlehem, in an attempt to kill Jesus (Matthew 2:1-16). This scheme, however, failed—Christ's hour had not yet come (John 7:30; 8:20). Although the Bible is almost silent about the childhood and early manhood years of Christ, undoubtedly many attempts must have been made by Satan to fulfill his evil desire, which will be disclosed in the judgment.

Then came the ministry of Christ, and Scripture

records many attempts on His life, each one prompted by Satan himself. The following are two examples:

- **Luke 4: 9-11.** Satan himself takes Jesus to the top of the temple tower and says, “If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence....” What could be the motive behind such a suggestion but a desire to kill Christ?

- **John 10:31.** The Jews, no doubt under the control of the evil one, “took up stones again to stone him.” The word again indicates that this was not the first time the Jews were prompted by the devil to kill Christ.

But all attempts on the life of Christ failed because of one reason: “for His hour was not yet come.” God was protecting His Son and this made it impossible for Satan to fulfill his desire.

But now comes Gethsemane, and Jesus is arrested by a devil-controlled mob. And He responds, “When I was daily with you in the

temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me, but this is your hour, and the power of darkness [Satan]” (Lk. 22:53). The moment had arrived in the history of the universe when Satan must be exposed. All heaven and earth must see him for what he is. Jesus said to the Jews, “Ye are of your father the devil and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth” (John 8:44). Whom did he (the devil) murder in the beginning? Physically no one, but in his heart (mind) he lusted or desired to murder the Son of God when in heaven, as Lucifer, iniquity entered his mind and he wanted the place of God. (Please note: murder to God does not have to be an act; it begins, like all sin, with a cherished desire; Matt. 5:21-28).

At the cross Satan was given full control of Christ, to do with Him as he pleased. Thus only could that evil hidden desire, cherished for so long, come out into the open. Now the whole universe would understand what sin really is and what it will end up doing, if given the chance. Sin is hatred against God; sin is rebelling against Him and His

law of love, which if allowed to have its own way will end up murdering God. This is what the cross of Christ exposed about sin and the devil, the originator of sin.

In John 15:18 Jesus declared: “If the world hate you [His disciples], ye know that it hated me before it hated you.” Why should the world hate Christ who went about doing good? Because “the whole world lieth in the wicked one” (1 John 5:19), and the wicked one, who is Satan, hates Christ. It is therefore not surprising that the Jews, under the control of the devil, cried out with one accord, “Away with him, away with him” (John 19:6, 15). At the cross Satan revealed his hatred for God.

With Christ in his control, there was only one direction Satan could go with Him—put Him to public shame, inflict untold suffering upon Him, and finally murder Him. Thus only could the inner desire of the devil be satisfied. Using the world as his tool, all three were heaped upon Christ at the cross—shame, suffering, and death. Note the following texts:

- **Hebrews 6:6.** At the cross Satan's world crucified "to themselves the Son of God, . . . and put him to an open shame."

- **Hebrews 12:2.** Because He loved us Christ "endured the cross, despising the shame" (see also Philippians 2:8).

Dying on a Roman cross, besides being a most shameful death, reserved only for the worst criminals and runaway slaves (Isa. 53:12), was also a most painful form of death. Roman crucifixion was preceded by flogging which caused much suffering. This was followed by the criminal forced to drag his cross to the place of death; and finally the crucifixion itself produced untold suffering beyond description. Yet Christ endured all this to fulfill the will of God (Lk. 24:26, 46; Acts 3:18; 1 Peter 2:21).

It is of utmost importance that we realize that the shame and suffering inflicted upon Christ at His crucifixion by cruel men did not come from

God, but was prompted by the devil. God, of course, allowed it so that the true character of Satan might be exposed, but He was not responsible for it. We must therefore never equate the physical suffering and shame Christ endured on the cross as the supreme sacrifice that saves us. We must never confuse what Satan did to Christ on the cross with what God did to His Son. God and Satan were not partners at the cross.

Our next section will deal with what God did to His Son on the cross, and that which constitutes the supreme sacrifice which saves us. But the devil, who was solely responsible for the physical suffering of Christ, has somehow deceived the Christian church into believing that the physical suffering on the cross instituted the supreme sacrifice of Christ which has contributed towards our salvation. No! For if we believe so, then the devil has actually helped towards our salvation and this can never be so in the light of the great controversy.

So then, at the cross of Christ the true character

of Satan was revealed and this forever has brought his downfall in the eyes of God's angels and the unfallen worlds. But not only to them, the cross must also unveil the true character of Satan to us; for as Christians we are Christ's representatives on earth, and therefore "the offence of the cross" which Christ endured for our sake must also become ours (Galatians 5:11).

As Christians we have said goodbye to our position in the world (John 15:19; 17:16) and have been crucified to it (Galatians 6:14), and have become one with Christ. Therefore, we have become enemies of Satan and his world. Consequently, that which Satan, working through the world, did to Christ on the cross he will do to us. This is "the offence of the cross" which all true believers must endure.

The fact that the world does not hate us or put us to shame today is simply because we are so carnal in behavior that the world does not see Christ in us. But let Christ through the power of the gospel be revealed in our lives, and immediately

the world will turn against us. It will hate us (see John 7:7; 17:14; 1 John 3:13), put us to shame (Acts 5:41), and persecute us (see John 16:33; Romans 8:17-18; 2 Tim. 3:12).

Let us therefore not be deceived when the world is good to us and speaks well of us. Said Jesus, “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.” (Lk. 6:26).

At the cross, the world under Satan had to make a choice between Christ (in whom Pilate the judge could find no fault), and Barabbas (the worst criminal that could be found in the jail). The world without hesitation chose to release Barabbas, for he was one of their own, and to crucify Christ. The world today is still under Satan, and this is the choice it will make if it has to choose between one of its own and the most insignificant but genuine believer. This, dear believer, is the cost of discipleship.

Again, at the time of the cross, the world was

divided within itself. There were the Jews who were against the Romans, and the Pharisees against the Sadducees. But Christ was their common enemy and against Him they were united. So also today the world is divided into many factions, but let the character of Christ be reproduced in the church and the world will unite against the saints. This will be the time of great tribulation that will come at the end of time when the church will finally demonstrate the power of the gospel.

At the cross Satan and Christ met again and this time Satan was confident of victory; but his victory was turned into defeat and from this defeat Satan will never recover. Praise the Lord for such a Saviour!

2. The Cross of Christ and the Atonement

In the last section we saw what Satan did to Christ on the cross—put Him to open shame, inflicted untold suffering on Him, and finally placed Him on the cross to die a terrible death. God allowed all this to happen to His only beloved Son,

and Christ in turn, willingly submitted to this cruel treatment, so that Satan would be fully and completely exposed before the eyes of the universe.

But far more than this happened at the cross. For God took this opportunity of what humanly speaking looked like defeat for Him, and made it a means by which the whole fallen human race could be saved. In other words, He turned defeat into victory. “We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called [saved], both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Corinthians 1:23-25).

In this section of our study of the cross we will look beyond the physical suffering of Christ, inflicted upon Him by cruel men and which played no part in the atonement, to the real suffering of Christ, which constitutes the supreme sacrifice and

which is the means by which sinful men are reconciled to a holy and righteous God.

We must realize that not only was Satan's character fully revealed at the cross, but much more, God's character was also fully revealed. And the just demands of the law were also fully met at the cross. The apostle John declared: "The Word was made 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" (John 1:14) and Paul wrote to the Roman Christians: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3:24-26).

Again we read: "[Christ] was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 3:24-25; 4:25). It was at the cross that the

glory of God (His self-sacrificing love, see *Desire of Ages*, p. 20) was fully displayed, and we too, like the disciples, must behold His glory if we are to grow in the fulness of Him. “But we all, with open face beholding as in the glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Against the dark background of sin and Satan the glory of God was manifested at the cross in all its brilliancy. What this glory was we must now investigate. All human barriers such as preconceived ideas or traditions must be put aside, so that we may behold the truth as it is in Christ and Him crucified.

In order for us to appreciate the true significance of the cross of Christ, in the light of the atonement (a word that means God and sinful man have been reconciled, or brought to at-one-ment), we must realize that sin is something that has separated us from God (Isa. 59:2) and made us His enemies (Romans 5:10). Hence, in order for

sinful man to be saved, he needs to be reconciled to God. According to Scripture, Christ has reconciled us to God (2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Hebrews 2:17) and this reconciliation was realized at the cross (Ephesians 2:16; Romans 5:10). How is this so? In other words, how was it possible for the death of Christ to reconcile us to God? This indeed is a most important question, and one that will open our eyes to the true nature of Christ's death, the supreme sacrifice that revealed God's glory or self-sacrificing love.

Again, we must realize that sin, besides being something that God hates and will not tolerate, is "the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). And God has made it absolutely clear that "the wages of sin is death" (Gen. 2:16,17; Ezk. 18:4, 20; Romans 6:23). Christ's death on the cross was "unto sin" (Romans 6:10). This simply means that on the cross as our substitute and representative, Christ experienced the death which is described in the Bible as the wages of sin, or as Hebrews 2:9 puts it, He "by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

This brings us to a most important consideration, for in the Scriptures two kinds of death are mentioned. There is the first death referred to in the Bible as sleep (John 11:11-14; 1 Corinthians 15:51; 1 Thes.4:14). This is the common experience of all men, both saved and lost. Then there is the second death, which is an eternal death (good-bye to life forever), and which will be experienced by the lost at the end of the millennium (1,000 years after the second advent (Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8)).

The first death, terrible as it may seem to us, is not the wages of sin, but only its consequence. Hence all who die this death will experience a resurrection—the saved to eternal life, and the lost to face the second death, the wages of sin. It is the second death that is the wages of sin, for it is in this death that God, the source of all life, abandons the unrepentant to his own choice of unbelief, leaving him without any hope whatsoever.

Therefore, “blessed and holy is he that hath part

in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power” (Rev. 20:6). Why is it that those who have accepted by faith their position in Christ, and who will be raised in the first resurrection (1 Thessalonians 4:16), will escape the second death? Christ as their sin bearer has already “tasted” the second death for them (Hebrews 2:9). Here is a truth that the carnal mind cannot understand, for it is foolishness to him, but to us who are saved it is the power of God unto salvation. The cross of Christ thus understood becomes to the believer the power of the gospel that is able to deliver us from the guilt and punishment of sin, as well as from its power.

It is of utmost importance, both to our salvation and our Christian experience, that all believers recognize that on the cross Christ actually tasted the second death on behalf of fallen humanity, and that this death constitutes the supreme sacrifice. By deceiving the Christian church into believing a lie—that man possesses an immortal soul—the devil has enshrouded this glorious truth of the cross in darkness. For you see, if man possesses an

immortal soul, then death simply becomes a separation of the soul from the body, in which case the second death (good-bye to life forever) becomes impossible. For this reason the church has had to interpret the supreme sacrifice of Christ on the cross in terms of His physical sufferings which were inflicted on Him by cruel men and which were no different from the kind of death many humans have suffered. For this reason too, the idea that the lost will be eternally tortured or burn in fire throughout eternity had to be introduced as the wages of sin. Neither of these teachings is founded on Scripture.

Futhermore, by directing the church to look at the cross from the Roman perspective, Satan has also hidden the true meaning of the cross in darkness, with regards to the real sacrifice of Christ. It is only when we look at the cross from the Jewish point of view, as did the New Testament writers, that we can realize its full significance.

It is true that the Roman cross was the most painful and shameful instrument of execution ever

practiced by men. It was first invented by the Phoenicians approximately 600 B.C., then adopted by the Egyptians who in turn passed it on to the Romans, who refined it and used it to execute runaway slaves and their worst criminals. But the cross meant something very different to the Jews, and only as we see the cross from their perspective can we realise what was really implicated in it.

According to John 19:5-7, the Jews demanded that Christ be crucified, because He had committed the sin of blasphemy, since “he made himself the Son of God.” However, when we examine the law of blasphemy in the Old Testament, we discover that this law stipulated death by stoning and not crucifixion (Lev. 24:16). Were not the Jews aware of this? They certainly were, for when Christ declared, “I and my father are one,” the Jews “took up stones again to stone him” (John 10:30, 31). Why then did they insist that Pilate crucify Him, especially when one realizes that crucifixion was not practiced by the Jews?

The answer is that they had more in mind than

just having Christ put to death. The Jews of Christ's day equated crucifixion with hanging on a tree, which to them was equivalent to the irrevocable curse of God (Deut. 21:23). This was equivalent to the second death, or good-bye to life for ever (we must remember that the Jews did not believe in the immortality of the human soul, which was a pagan Greek concept).

A good example of how hanging on a tree represented the curse of God is found in the book of Joshua. God had told Abraham that He would give the Amorites (an ancient term for the Canaanites) four hundred years probationary period in which to accept the true God of heaven, while his descendants, the Jews, would be slaves in Egypt (Gen. 15:13-16). When Joshua was leading the Jews into Canaan in the Exodus, five kings joined together to attack the Gibeonites who had joined hands with Joshua. God gave Joshua's army the victory, and when the five enemy kings were captured and brought to Joshua, he slew them and then had them all hanged on five trees as evidence of God's curse, or what happens when one

knowingly and deliberately rejects the God of heaven (Josh. 10:25-27).

To the Jews, Christ crucified meant more than physical death; it meant that God was placing His curse on Him, the equivalent of the second death (Isa. 53:6, 10). This God did, not because of blasphemy, as the Jews accused Him of, but because “He . . . spared not His own Son but delivered Him up [to the full wages of sin] for us all.” Hence, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Galatians 3:13). It is for this reason that the New Testament writers who viewed the cross from the Jewish perspective identified the crucifixion of Christ with hanging on a tree (Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; 1 Peter 2:24).

No doubt many will raise the question in their minds: “How could Christ possibly experience the second death, seeing He was divine, predict His resurrection, and actually rise from the dead?” The first question can be dismissed easily since the

divinity of Christ did not die on the cross, but Christ as a man and as our Substitute died (i.e., our corporate human life which He assumed at the incarnation and which stood condemned, died). Divinity is immortal and therefore cannot die either the first or second death. The other two questions can be cleared up only in the light of the self-emptying of Christ that took place at the Incarnation.

What was involved in the Incarnation when Christ, the second person of the Godhead, was made flesh and became the Son of man? According to Philippians 2:6, 7, Christ “emptied Himself” or “made Himself of no reputation,” in order to represent the humanity He came to redeem. What did this actually involve? Clearly, in order to be our Saviour, Christ placed His entire being along with every divine prerogative or power, entirely into the hands of His Father. The Father, in turn, took Christ, who had now willingly and voluntarily made Himself a slave to the Father, and through the Holy Spirit placed Him in the womb of Mary (Lk. 1:26-35).

This meant that Christ, while still retaining His divinity, gave up the independent use of that divinity while living on this earth as our substitute and representative. Consequently we are told in Scripture that the child Jesus grew in wisdom (Lk. 2:40, 52), something not possible had Christ retained His divine prerogatives, and as a man He Himself declared that apart from the Father He could do nothing (John 5:19, 30; 6:57). This meant He had to live on this earth as men have to live—totally dependant on God, that is, by faith alone.

Note the following comparison between Christ as God and Christ as man:

CHRIST AS GOD

Immortal. John 1:4; 5:26.

Creator. John 1:3; Colossians 1:16.

Knows all things. John 2:24-25; 16:30.

Independent. John 10:18

CHRIST AS MAN

Mortal. Romans 10:5; 5:6; 1 Corinthians 15:3.

Made human. Matt. 2:1; Hebrews 2:9; 10:5.

Must acquire knowledge. Lk. 2:40, 52.

Dependent. John 5:19, 30; 6:57; 8:28.

As God, all that is true of God is true of Christ. Likewise, as a man, all that is true of men was true of Christ (Hebrews 2:14-17). Therefore for Christ as God to become like us men, Christ had to empty Himself completely of all His divine prerogatives. Only then could He be made in all points like unto us and qualify to be our Saviour and substitute.

All this throws important light on His death on the cross. For not only was Christ as the Son of man totally dependant on the Father for His every need, but even when it came to the resurrection, Christ (who even though He possessed His own uncreated, unborrowed, divine life) could not raise Himself from the dead without the authority and direction of the Father. It is for this reason that Scripture clearly teaches that Christ was raised up

from the dead by the glorious power of the Father (Romans 6:4; Acts 2:24, 32; Ephesians 1:20).

In the light of this truth we must now evaluate the death of Christ on the cross. We have already seen what Satan through the world did to Christ on the cross. Now, besides this and apart from it, God also did something to His beloved Son on the cross. The prophet Isaiah tells us that He laid upon Him the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53:6). By this is meant that the wrath of God against all sin was heaped upon Christ our sin-bearer as He hung on the cross. For this reason the Bible declares that God spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all (Isa. 53:4, 10; Romans 4:25; 8:32).

This truth was revealed of old through the sanctuary service, when the sacrificial lamb, which represented Christ, had to be consumed by divine fire at the brazen altar (Lev. 9:24), which fire represented the wrath of God against sin (Hebrews 12:29). Likewise this same truth was implied by our Lord at that first communion in the upper room when Christ instituted the Lord's supper. He took

the cup and said: “Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:27-28). Later, in the garden of Gethsemane, we hear Him pray three times in agony: “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39-44).

What exactly did He mean by the cup? The answer can be found in the three angels’ message of Revelation 14. “And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation” (Rev. 14:9, 10). The cup is clearly the irrevocable curse of God, which is the second death.

All His life on this earth Christ had lived by faith, totally depending upon His Father; and as we have already seen, apart from the Father Christ could do nothing. This was part of the price He had to pay in order to be the second Adam and Saviour

of the world. But now at the cross, something terrible happened to Him. The Father forsook Him (Matthew 27:46); this meant that Christ was left without hope—without the hope of resurrection and without the hope of seeing His Father again.

The eternal life that Christ possessed and which He had placed in charge of the Father at the Incarnation, was now being taken away from Him in order that God might give it to the fallen human race. In turn, the second death which rightfully belonged to us was now being experienced by our Lord (Hebrews 2:9). In the ultimate sense, this is what Paul meant when he declared, “He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

This was the supreme sacrifice that Christ had to make in order that He might save us. Christ the Shepherd was laying down His life for His sheep; not for three days, but for eternity (John 10:11, 15). It is only in this context that we can understand what Christ meant when He said, “For God so loved the world, that he gave [not lent] his only

begotten Son” (John 3:16). This the disciples, who were Jews, clearly saw, and it completely transformed them from a group of greedy men to truly converted disciples, ready to turn the world upside down with the gospel (Acts 17:6). The same transformation will take place in our lives when we fully realise the true meaning of the cross (2 Corinthians 5:14, 15).

Unseen by the human eye, Satan was watching the whole scene, fully aware of the issue involved. But while he was responsible for putting Christ there on the cross, at the same time he did not want to see the human race saved nor did he want God to display and demonstrate His matchless unconditional agape love. So while Christ was suffering untold mental anguish under the wrath of God, the devil, once again using the world as his agent comes to the Saviour with fierce temptations that can never be fully understood by mortal men: “He saved others, let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God . . . If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself” (Lk. 23:35-37).

Who can understand such superhuman temptations? Surely, from the human point of view, Christ had every reason to save Himself and let the ungrateful rebellious world be lost. But no! Christ's love for the sinful fallen race was greater than the love He had for Himself: "Hereby perceive we the love [agape] of God, because he laid down his life for us" (1 John 3:16).

At the cross Christ had to make a most important choice or decision, upon which the destiny of the whole human race rested: shall He come down from the cross and save Himself (using His own divine power) against the will of the Father (He could have done so), or shall He save the world by submitting to the just wages of sin by the total and eternal sacrifice of Himself? This was the real issue Christ faced. He could not save Himself and the world at the same time; it had to be one or the other.

The choice Christ made was, "I will say good-bye to My eternal life that the human race may have it, and in exchange I will accept the second

death, the just payment for sin, which they deserve.” The divine life of Christ did not come to an end at the cross but it was laid down for the human race in exchange for the second death that rightfully belongs to us.

This means that, at the cross Christ chose to say good-bye to His eternal life forever, not just for three days, in order that we might have this eternal life. This constitutes the supreme sacrifice of the cross — the glory of God shining in the face of Christ. This was the bitter cup Christ had to drink, which produced great drops of blood at Gethsemane, when He in His humanity pleaded with the Father.

Having made this self-sacrificing choice on the cross, that He as the second Adam would accept the second death for every man, Christ cried out, “it is finished,” and, bowing His head, He died (John 19:30). What was finished at the cross? The sacrifice of the atonement, the price for every sin was once and for all fully paid (Romans 6:10).

Thus, while we were yet sinners and enemies of God, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son (Romans 5:8, 10). The just and righteous Father who was in Christ “reconciling the world unto Himself,” was perfectly satisfied that His Son had met the just demands of His holy law. In the light of this truth the prophet Isaiah could prophesy: “He shall see the travail of his soul [Christ’s mental anguish on the cross as He experienced the second death)] and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge [of the cross] shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities” (Isa. 53:11; please note that the context of Isaiah 53 is the cross of Christ).

We must bear in mind that the supreme sacrifice of the cross was made by a sinless Christ; that is to say, in no way did Christ ever yield to sin while He tabernacled in our humanity. In view of this, Christ did not deserve Himself to be punished by the second death. Even though He did experience the second death on behalf of the human race, God was perfectly just in returning to Christ His divine life which He had laid down for

sinful man.

However, it must be noted that no longer was this returned life the sole property of Christ alone, for through the sacrifice on the cross the eternal life of Christ has become a shared life — a truth of vital importance to all humanity. For this reason, after the cross, Christ is no longer referred to as the only begotten Son of God, but “the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29; Rev. 1:5). This is true of Christ in reference to Him being the head of a new redeemed humanity, He being the first-fruits or first-born of all who are in Him (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23). Likewise, in the resurrection Christ who sanctifies and the believers who are sanctified “are all of one,” i.e., they share the same life (Hebrews 2:11).

Before the cross, Christ is referred to in Scripture as “the only begotten of the Father” (John 1:14; the Greek word translated begotten actually means somebody very special). After the cross and in the resurrection Christ becomes “the first begotten of the dead” (Rev. 1:5). These terms

“only begotten” and “first begotten” have important distinctions. The term “only begotten” can only apply to an only child, but the expression “first begotten” refers to the first child among many children. This is the difference the cross of Christ has made in the life of God and man. Before the cross God had only one beloved Son, but now, through the supreme sacrifice God has many beloved sons and daughters, of whom Christ is the first (1 John 3:1-2; 1 Peter 1:3-4). What a wonderful God and Saviour we have!

Not only has He delivered us from the condemnation of sin and death but, much more, He has raised us up and made us to be the very sons and daughters of God, so that one day we will share His very throne in heaven and in the earth made new (Rev. 20:6; 22:5). No wonder Paul was lost for words when he declared: “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift” (2 Corinthians 9:15).

Are you beginning to understand, dear reader, why the great apostle Paul could glory in nothing else but Christ and Him crucified? May God open

our eyes too, that we who are living in these last days may behold the glory of God shining in the face of our Saviour crucified; and may the love of Christ constrain us so that for us to live is to live for Christ alone, who loved us and gave Himself for us.

3. The Cross of Christ and the Human Race

Having seen the true significance of the supreme sacrifice of Christ on the cross, we must now turn our attention to our third study on the cross. In this section we will consider the human race, to which each one of us belongs, in the light of the cross of Christ. Here is yet another truth of which many seem to be ignorant, and yet it too is of vital importance to our salvation from sin.

In our study on the Two Adams (Chapter 4), we saw that “in Adam all die,” while in Christ “shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). We should have no misgivings about the fact that the death brought upon us by Adam's one sin is the second or eternal death. Since all have sinned in

Adam (Romans 5:12), then all must ultimately die the wages of sin in Adam, which is the second death. The life we all were born with originated in Adam. It is a life that has sinned in Adam and therefore it is a life that is forfeited by the law. The just demand of the law is always eternal death, for “the soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezek. 18:4, 20). What this all means is that apart from a Saviour every child born of Adam is born on death row. The eternal life, offered to us as a free gift in Christ is always in contrast to the eternal death we inherit from Adam. Thus, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish [say goodbye to life forever], but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

We must be absolutely clear in our minds that Christ did not come to change the death sentence that hangs over the human race; but He did come to fulfill that death sentence and make a way of escape for lost humanity. For Christ to change the death sentence would mean He had break His own law or make it null and void; and this can never be for the law is a revelation of His just and righteous

character which character never changes (Hebrews 13:8).

Since all have sinned in Adam, die the first death we must, but Christ came that we may be made alive in Him. To understand this, we must go back and take another look at 1 Corinthians 15:45, 47. In these two verses, Adam is referred to as the first Adam and the first man, while Christ is called the last Adam and the second man. According to verse 45, Adam is the first head of the human race, while Christ is the last (or second) head of the same human race. And, in verse 47, Adam is the head of the first or old human race, while Christ is the head of the second or new human race.

As the last (or second) Adam Christ gathered unto Himself the whole Adamic race and on the cross died the wages of sin (the second or eternal death) which is what we all deserved in the first Adam. And by His death on the cross, Christ in the resurrection rose up from the dead as the second man, the head of a new humanity who are altogether found in Him. Hence, “if any man be in

Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). It was at the cross that old things, or the old humanity, passed away; and it is in the resurrection that “all things are become new.”

At the cross not only did Christ die the second death, but much more, we, too, died in Him. And, thus, we were delivered forever from our position in Adam and this doomed world, which position was under the condemnation of the law. Through the resurrection we were made alive in Him, born anew to a “lively hope,” which is entirely under grace and which is in Christ, the second man, the head of a new humanity. Therefore, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3).

This, in fact, is the truth all of us submitted to, or should have submitted to, when we were baptized into Christ (see Romans 6:3-6). For

baptism, as we shall study later on, is simply our surrender or submission to what God did to us in Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Further, note how the apostle Paul illustrates this same truth of the cross in Romans 7:4, "Wherefore, ye brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another [husband], even to him who is raised from the dead that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

In Adam we were married, as it were, to the law, that is to say, the law (like a husband) had dominion or authority over us as long as we lived (see Romans 7:1). But being incorporated or united to the body of Christ (the last Adam), by the act of God, we died to the law on the cross of Christ and thus were delivered from its dominion and authority (Galatians 4:4-5), freed from our position in Adam. And in the resurrection we were born anew, married to Christ (the second man) and became one with Him, possessing His life and living under His dominion and authority. For this reason Scripture defines the church as the body of Christ, and Christ as the Head of the church

(Ephesians 5:23).

Through the cross of Christ we have said good-bye forever to the life we inherited in Adam, and in exchange we have received the life of Christ. It is this truth, above any other truth, that will determine whether we remain carnal Christians living like ordinary men (1 Corinthians 3:1-3) or become spiritual Christians bearing the fruit of Christ's life (John 15:4-8). This matter will be discussed in detail when we come to the study on the subjective aspect of the gospel, or salvation as a personal experience.

So then, the third important truth of the cross of Christ we must all know is that the whole human race which originated in the first Adam died in Christ the last Adam. Let it be clear that this was absolutely necessary, for without doing away with us in Adam Christ could not introduce the new human race to which we Christians belong and to which we have been born again to a "lively hope." Having stated this fact clearly, we must now back this truth up with the clear teaching of the Bible.

The following statements have been taken from Good News for Modern Man, a New Testament translation in today's English, so that the words of Scripture may become more meaningful to the modern reader:

- **1 Corinthians 1:30, 31:** “But God has brought you into union with Christ Jesus, (you in Christ) and God has made Christ to be our wisdom; by him we are put right with God, we become God's own people, and are set free. Therefore, as the scripture says, whoever wants to boast must boast of what the Lord has done.”

- **Galatians 2:20:** “I have been put to death with Christ on his cross, so that it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.” This death, Paul explains in verse 19, is the death the law demands which is the second death. “So far as the law is concerned, however, I am dead — killed by the law itself — in order that I might live for God.”

- **Colossians 2:20:** “You have died with Christ

and are set free from the ruling spirits of the universe. Why then do you live as though you belonged to this world?” Our death with Christ has set us free from our position in this world which is slavery to the devil and the wicked angels.

- **Colossians 3:3:** “For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

- **2 Corinthians 5:14:** “For we are ruled by Christ’s love for us, now that we recognize that one man died for all men, which means that all men take part in his death.”

- **2 Timothy 2:11:** “This is a true saying: If we have died with him, we shall also live with him.”

These texts which have been quoted for our benefit make it unmistakably clear that the cross of Christ was a corporate cross on which the whole human race died in Christ, in order that we might be set free from the rule of sin and the devil, and made alive unto God. Dear reader, unless you have seen Christ bearing not only your sins on the cross,

but also you, you will never know in your experience the full power of the gospel, which power is to be found in the cross of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:17-18).

In concluding our study on the cross of Christ we may summarize the three great truths as follows:

1. Satan's true character along with the true character of the world and the true nature of sin were all revealed or manifested on the cross of Christ when the Son of God was put to open shame, inflicted with untold suffering and brutally crucified.

2. In contrast, the love and justice of God were fully displayed at the cross when Christ bore the full guilt and penalty of sin on behalf of the whole human race and thus experienced the second or eternal death for every man, "the just for the unjust" (1 Peter 3:18).

3. The whole human race was included in

Christ, the last Adam, so that all men died in Him on the cross, the penalty required by the law; so that we were forever delivered from our position in Adam, which position was under the power and condemnation of sin.

Thus, the cross of Christ becomes a means by which (a) we are given a true knowledge of sin and the devil, (b) we receive forgiveness of our sins, because Christ bore the guilt and penalty of all sins, and (c) we experience the power of God over sin, because He has struck a death blow to our life of sin, and in exchange given us the very life of Christ which has conquered sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3).

Therefore, “far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Amen!

Chapter 6

Righteousness by Faith

In studying Chapter 3, we defined the gospel and looked at salvation mainly as an objective fact, what God has prepared and provided for sinful mankind in Jesus Christ. That study showed us that in Christ salvation full and complete has already been prepared or obtained for all humanity; that is to say, Christ's life, death and resurrection has provided salvation from the guilt and punishment of sin, salvation from the power of sin, and salvation from the curse of sin. This we called the objective gospel, which gospel we looked at in detail in our studies of the two Adams and the cross of Christ.

Beginning with this study, we will now turn our attention to the subjective aspect of the gospel, or salvation as a personal experience. The gospel can only become living reality to us when we experience its power in our lives. In other words, what God has prepared and provided for all

mankind in Christ must become real in our experience if the gospel is to be of any value to us.

Without that experience, the truth or the objective facts of the gospel only remain as a theory to us and not as the power of God unto salvation. Not only did Jesus say that we shall know the truth but He also added, “the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32); and it can make us free only when we believe or receive the truth of the gospel in our hearts (Mk. 16:15, 16; Romans 5:17).

When we studied the objective gospel, we looked at the everlasting gospel from God’s point of view. However, when it comes to studying the subjective gospel, we shall look at the everlasting gospel from man’s point of view. In considering the gospel from God’s point of view, we are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8-9), and Christ is our righteousness. But when we consider the gospel from the human-response point of view, we are saved by or through faith, and the righteousness of Christ becomes ours by faith alone. The subjective

gospel in other words is making real in experience by faith the objective facts of the gospel, and therefore faith becomes the key word in the subjective gospel; which word we must now look at in detail.

Genuine Faith

Faith is our human response to the objective facts of the gospel, or Christ our righteousness. This response, in order to be genuine faith, must always be motivated by love or a heart appreciation of the gospel. John 3:14-16 makes it absolutely clear that faith is man's heartfelt response to the love of God in His gift of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Once we have clearly and fully understood the objective facts of the gospel, and especially the truth concerning the cross of Christ, then as the apostle Paul declared, "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2

Corinthians 5:14-15). The fact that Christ was willing to say good-bye to His eternal life forever in order that we might live in His stead can only fill us with love and adoration. This is genuine faith which worketh by love (Galatians 5:6), and which produces genuine worship.

Every believer must realize that the great enemy of souls, the devil, has prepared one or more counterfeits for every objective truth of the gospel by which and through which he deceives God's people. The counterfeit for the righteousness of Christ, for example, is self-righteousness, a righteousness that may look good or even genuine but is not of the gospel (Romans 10:3-4); and therefore in the eyes of God is equated with filthy rags (Isa. 64:6; Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16). Genuine faith also has its counterfeit, which is egocentric faith or faith that is motivated by self-interest. Like the genuine faith, the counterfeit or egocentric faith also professes to be in Christ, but it originates from the flesh which is dominated by self-concern and therefore does not belong to the gospel of Christ, and hence is void of power. This

is the kind of faith the Christians that the apostle James wrote to had (James 2:14-16); which faith is condemned by God, since it is void of works. Such faith has robbed the Christian church of its power today.

In contrast to this egocentric faith, the three angels' message (which is the everlasting gospel) offers us the faith of Jesus which is able to produce a people who have the patience of the saints and who keep the commandments of God (Rev. 14:12). This faith of Jesus, described in the Laodicean message as gold tried in the fire (Rev. 3:18; see also 1 Peter 1:7), is the faith Jesus had, which He demonstrated in His earthly life and which was victorious on the cross. His was a faith which was motivated only by agape love and was therefore able to withstand the fiery test of the second death.

In contrast, we see the faith of His disciples before the cross experience, a faith which was motivated by self, and consequently a faith which failed so many times (Matthew 8:26; 14:31; 16:8). So then, the first thing we must know and realize

about true faith is that it is our human response to the gospel which is always motivated by love or a deep heartfelt appreciation of Christ.

One reason why so many Christians today fail to demonstrate the power of the gospel is because they possess or are motivated by self-centered faith, and this in turn is because they have failed to understand or are ignorant of the true facts of the objective gospel which is Christ our righteousness. If one is given to understand that salvation, full and complete, has not been already obtained in Jesus Christ, that ultimate salvation depends to some degree on our behavior, such as keeping the law or being good; then naturally the faith generated by such an individual will always be polluted with self-concern.

Where justification by faith is not clearly understood, there is insecurity; where there is insecurity, there is fear; and where there is fear, there can be no love but self-concern, for “perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment” (of the judgment, 1 John 4:17, 18). The idea that

one has to be good, or the feeling that I am not good enough to qualify for heaven, is one of the great stumbling blocks that has hindered God's people today from experiencing genuine faith, which is motivated by love. As a result the church today is spiritually bankrupt (Rev. 3:17). For this reason, it is of utmost importance that we understand the objective facts of the gospel, the truth as it is in Christ, without which we can never experience genuine faith which worketh by love (Galatians 5:6).

Saving Faith

Not only must our faith be motivated by love in order to be genuine faith; our faith must also be a saving faith if we are to experience the power of the gospel. There are too many Christians who believe and teach that saving faith is trusting in Christ for salvation in the same way one would trust an insurance company for material security. Again, this is a counterfeit faith, since the trusting is founded on self-interest. Genuine saving faith on the other hand involves more than just trusting in

God or Christ for salvation. While faith includes absolute trust in God, the two Greek words in the New Testament (elpizo and peitho), translated by the word “trust” in our English Bibles are never equated or synonymous with faith.

Three important elements are always to be found in true saving faith which is motivated by love: (i) a knowledge of the truth, as it is in Christ; (ii) believing the truth, as it is in Christ; and (iii) obeying the truth, as it is in Christ. Let us briefly consider each of these elements:

1. A Knowledge of the Truth

The apostle Paul made it very clear to the Roman Christians that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17). The context of this text (vss. 15, 16) indicates that the source of faith is hearing the gospel of peace, the truth as it is in Christ. Jesus Himself made it very clear that a knowledge of Him is essential to saving faith. He declared, “Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. . . . If the Son therefore

shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:32, 36). Again, the apostle John records these words spoken by our Lord in prayer: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent” (John 17:3).

Many other texts may be cited which clearly indicate that a knowledge of the true gospel is a necessary and essential element to having a saving faith. At the heart of the Jewish problem is this very fact: “I bear them record,” said Paul, “that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Romans 10:2-3). It was for this reason Christ gave the great commission to His disciples: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mk. 16:15). It is in this context that we are to understand the words of our Lord: “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end

come” (Matthew 24:14; see also Rev. 14:6). For this reason also we must earnestly seek to know more fully the truth as it is in Christ; for the knowledge of the gospel is a saving knowledge that will increase and deepen our faith. (Ephesians 4:11-15).

2. Believing the Truth

The second element to be found in all genuine faith is believing the truth as it is in Christ. The Bible is clear that a mere head knowledge of the truth does not save. For example, Jesus made it clear to His disciples: “He that believeth [the gospel] and is baptized shall be saved” (Mk. 16:16). In the Greek the words faith and belief come from the same root word, because faith involves belief. But not only must one mentally believe the gospel, but this belief must come from the heart; this is most important.

Speaking to the Roman Christians, Paul said: “Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world” (Romans 1:8). What was it that made their

faith outstanding? The answer may be found in Romans 6:17: “But God be thanked, that ... ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine [the gospel] which was delivered you.”

In the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:3-9, 15, 18-23), Christ illustrated many kinds of believers who have responded to the Word, but the only ones whose faith is of any value and bears fruit are those who have understood clearly the gospel and have made a heart response to it (vs. 23; read also Acts 8:36-38).

In this day and age there are many reasons why one may respond positively to the gospel. To some (especially in the Third World) it may mean cheaper or free education; to others it may mean a job, or clothes, or food; again there are others who join the church because of family or peer pressure, or emotional security, etc. But in all these, such faith is not genuine and will never be able to bear good fruit or stand the test of trial or persecution. Only those whose faith is founded on a heartfelt response to the gospel truth may be said to have a

genuine saving faith.

The reason why Mary's act of faith was highly commended by Jesus (Mk.14:3-9) was because it proceeded from a grateful heart. Her faith was not self-centered, like that of the disciples or of Simon the leper, but was as a result of a deeper heartfelt appreciation of Christ's saving grace (Lk. 7:36-50). At the cross the self-centered faith of the disciples was finally destroyed, and after the resurrection it was replaced by genuine faith; it is my prayer that the study of the objective gospel, especially the cross, may also destroy our self-centered faith and replace it with genuine faith which worketh by love (Galatians 5:6).

3. Obeying the Truth

Finally, saving faith includes total submission or surrender to the objective facts of the gospel. Here above all is the element that makes faith an instrument through which the power of the gospel can be experienced.

But unfortunately it is here that many go wrong; for true saving faith goes beyond a mere mental assent to the gospel. This was the concern expressed by the apostle James: “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble” (2:19). In studying the objective facts of the gospel we discovered many things about us that were realized in Christ’s holy history. For example, we discovered that when Christ died to sin on the cross, we also died in Him. Thus, in saving faith we identify ourselves with that fact so that we too must say goodbye forever to our old life of sin which we inherited from Adam. Only then are we qualified to be resurrected and to live with Christ (2 Tim. 2:11). Genuine saving faith requires us to surrender to all the facts of Christ and Him crucified.

Now we all know that we do not die to sin personally in and of ourselves when we believe, and therefore we still possess the old sinful nature. Consequently we have discovered that even though we are Christians we are totally unable to live the life God demands. However, if we obey or

surrender to the truth as it is in Christ, the truth that in Him our natural sinful life has been crucified, or put to death in Him, then faith means our submission to that fact, and this motivates us to allow Christ to live in us.

To put it in Paul's words, to obey the gospel means: "Likewise reckon [or consider] ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:10-11). Then immediately we are living on the plane of faith, and therefore our old life is no longer in control since it is crucified; but it is the resurrected life of Christ that dominates and controls us through the indwelling Spirit, and such a life will always be pleasing to God (Galatians 5:22-24) because it is the life of Christ (John 15:4-8).

It was this element of faith, this total surrender to the truth as it is in Christ, that Paul had in mind when he declared to the Galatians: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the

flesh I live by faith [total surrender] of the son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

It is this continual attitude of complete submission or surrender to the truth as it is in Christ (the objective facts of the gospel) that makes faith an instrument or channel of saving power through which we stand justified and the character of Christ is reproduced in us. So then, to live by faith alone means above all to live a life that is totally surrendered to Christ. This is what it means to walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-17; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18). Hence, we conclude that Christ our righteousness made real in our lives by faith becomes righteousness by faith.

That is to say, Christ’s righteousness becomes our personal experience by faith. This in fact is what Jesus was saying to His disciples in John 15:5: “He that abideth in me, and I in Him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.” To abide in Christ simply means that we submit or surrender ourselves to our position in Christ (that is, you in

Christ). This being so, then to abide in Christ is the same as living by faith or walking in the Spirit, which in turn makes it possible for the life of Christ, or Christ in you, to “bear much fruit.”

So then, it is through faith that the life of Christ (which each believer possesses through the indwelling Spirit) is given perfect freedom to fully express itself through our human bodies, just as Christ living by faith alone, totally surrendered to His position in God, allowed Him to do the work and fully reveal Himself through His humanity. “I am in the Father, and the Father in me” (John 14:8-11; 5:19,30; 8:28; 1 Tim. 3:16). Likewise, we must also by faith alone, total surrender to Christ, allow Him to fully reveal Himself through us (John 6:56, 57; 14:12).

This, in fact, is what Jesus meant in Matthew 11:28-30 when addressing “all ye that labor” He said, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me ... for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” The yoke of Christ is the yoke of total surrender to our position in Christ as He totally surrendered to His

position in the Father. Saving faith, therefore, involves much more than trusting in Christ for eternal security. Further, saving faith means more than depending on Christ for help to aid us in keeping the law or being good. The formula for Christian living is always “Not I but Christ.” God will never help the flesh (self-life) to be good, for the flesh (which is Satan’s domain) and God are enemies (Romans 8:7; Galatians 5:17). Hence, saving faith demands that we maintain a humble attitude of complete submission and surrender to our position in Christ crucified; so that He and not our self-life may live in us and manifest Himself through us.

This is the true significance of righteousness by faith. We will discover that active faith, thus understood and practiced, amounts to the same thing as “watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Matthew 26:41), or, “men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Lk. 18:1, 8), or “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). This is how we live by faith alone.

Consequently, it is not only by faith alone that we stand justified, but it is also by faith alone that we are sanctified, and the life of Christ we possess is manifested in us. That is why, the moment we step off this platform of living by faith alone, the flesh or this self-life we naturally possess immediately takes over and the result is that sin will overtake us; so that instead of the good we want to do we find that we are doing the very opposite, the experience of Romans 7:15-24. True righteousness by faith therefore includes both the joys of justification as well as the experience of sanctification.

The Place of Faith

The next thing we need to know and understand about faith is its place in our salvation. There are some Christians who believe and teach that it is our faith that saves us; this is wrong. Faith in and of itself can save no one. Nowhere in Scripture are we told that we are saved because of our faith, or on account of our faith. If our faith saves us, then it becomes a form of works and we

can boast about it. In other words, I can say, “I am saved because I believe in Christ. I have done something!”

The Bible, on the other hand, clearly teaches that we are saved by faith or through faith. This means that faith is only the instrument or channel through which we receive Christ as our righteousness. But it is Christ, His life, His death, and His resurrection, that saves us.

The function of faith is to unite or link us to Christ. Just as a tow-bar unites a broken-down car that has lost all ability to move by itself to a wrecker that has great power, so also faith, like the tow-bar, unites us who are dead in sins and can do no righteousness in and of ourselves (Romans 3:10-12; Ephesians 2:1,5) to Christ who has conquered, condemned and triumphed over sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3).

Jesus said: “Without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). All power belongs to Christ, who is able to save us to the uttermost, from both the curse

of sin as well as our total inability to do righteousness. Paul declared: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13). Through faith Christ can produce in us the very righteousness of God (Romans 8:4; Hebrews 7:25; Rev. 14:12).

Faith, in other words, must always have an object, and the object of genuine faith is always Christ; and nothing must take the place of Christ, not even our faith. By faith we become one with Christ so that His righteousness is counted as our righteousness and His power is made available to us. This is what it means to be standing in grace (Romans 5:2).

Besides, faith is a gift of God and not something we have or can generate ourselves (Romans 12:3). How can man believe the gospel, that is, produce faith in and of himself, seeing that the gospel is foolishness to the natural mind? (1 Corinthians 2:14). He cannot, without the influence of the Holy Spirit.

So then, the one who is saved by faith is one who is resting entirely on Christ as his righteousness, both in reference to his standing before God in the judgment, as well as in his personal day-by-day Christian experience. This is the true significance of the sabbath rest (Hebrews 4:2-3), and the foundation upon which the doctrine of righteousness by faith is built (Philippians 3:9-11).

Works of Faith

It is of vital importance that we understand what is meant by “works of faith” and how this differs from “works of the law.” While works of faith genuinely belong to the gospel of Christ and are a necessary part of it, on the other hand, “works of the law” are a counterfeit and a subtle deception of the devil.

Once we have grasped the true significance of saving faith and its place in our salvation, it is not hard to see that anyone who possesses a genuine saving faith in Christ will at the same time manifest

in his or her behavior the indwelling life of Christ which the Bible describes as the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25). The apostle James identifies these fruits as works of faith (2:14-26). According to him, many Christians in his day equated faith to a mere mental assent or a verbal agreement to the gospel, a problem which unfortunately still exists today.

In correcting this false view of faith the apostle points out that faith involves more than a superficial or egocentric acceptance of the gospel; he makes it very clear that faith without works is dead (2:17, 20, 26). In other words, faith must manifest itself in our lives, otherwise we really do not have faith at all. So then, true faith is something dynamic, because it unites us with Christ, and therefore must produce works which works are the righteousness of Christ produced in the believer by the indwelling Spirit of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17, 18).

Now how does all this differ from “the works of the law” which the apostle Paul so earnestly

opposes in his epistles (Romans 3:20; 9:30-33; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-9)? (The original Greek says “works of law”). Clearly, Paul is not contradicting James, but the two inspired writers are in full agreement, since Paul too upholds works of faith (Ephesians 2:10; Titus 2:7, 14; 3:8; Hebrews 10:24).

It must be remembered that the New Testament writers did not have a word in the Greek language that was equivalent to our English word “legalism.” Consequently they used the phrase “works of law” to signify salvation by works or legalism. The difference between “the works of law” and the works of faith is a very subtle one, for it does not lie primarily in the works itself, but rather in the origin or source of these works. Let me explain:

Externally, works of the law appear to be keeping God’s commandments or doing His will. In works of faith the law of God or His will is being fulfilled in us. On the surface there seems to be no difference between the two; since the

ultimate goal of both “works” is to do the will of God as expressed in His law. But it is only when we look at the matter more deeply to find the source and motivation of these works that we discover that there is a world of difference between “works of faith” and “works of law.”

All works of faith originate from the indwelling life of Christ when the believer is living by faith alone. On the other hand, or in contrast, works of the law always originate from the flesh (one’s own natural life), when the sinner attempts to keep the law or imitate the life of Christ through effort which is in reality self-concern. The person doing “works of the law” may pray to Christ for help or even plead with God for the power of the Holy Spirit, but at the center of all his works and activities is the natural strength of the soul. This in fact was the heart of the Galatian problem. Those Galatian Christians were born of the Holy Spirit (had received the life of Christ), but the devil had deceived them into trying to perfect their characters through the flesh (Galatians 3:1-3). Sad to say, many of God’s people today have fallen into the

same subtle trap.

At the expense of repetition, may I remind the reader once again that the formula of the gospel is, “Not I but Christ.” Where there are works of faith there you will find no energy of the flesh, or natural strength used. For “the work of faith” is simply Christ living in me by faith (Galatians 2:20). Behind all such works love is always the motivating factor, since Christ is love. Hence love (Christ’s agape in us) becomes the fulfillment of the law (Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:14; also 1 John 4:7, 12).

On the other hand, works of law originate from our self-concern and therefore will always be motivated or polluted by self, no matter how good the works may appear to us or to others. This in fact is the sin of the Laodicean church; she has unconsciously substituted works of the law (motivated by self-concern) for works of faith (a heart-felt concern for Christ; Rev. 3:17). We may therefore conclude that performing “works of the law” is a subtle or unconscious form of rebellion

against God, since all such works are really independant of God. For this reason, God will condemn all such works in the judgment, equating them with iniquity (Matthew 7:21-23; Lk. 13:25-28).

May I make two things absolutely clear. First, under no circumstances will God have partnership with the flesh (i.e., our self-concern); for the flesh belongs to Satan and therefore must be crucified (Galatians 5:24). Second, only God can produce godliness or geniune righteousness; and He will do so in us if we have lost all confidence in the flesh (that is our own natural ability) and are living by faith alone (Philippians 3:3-9). God did not give us His only begotten Son so that we may copy or imitate Him, but that we might receive Him into ourselves with all our heart (John 3:16). It is only as we surrender ourselves totally to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us that our lives can become well pleasing to God (John 15:1-8). We must clearly understand that God is not looking at us to see how good we are or how hard we are trying to keep His law. No! There is only one thing

that God looks for in each believer and that is how much of His Son does He see in us.

Before proceeding to the next point, it would be well to say a word here about walking in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16; Romans 8:1-4). The life of Christ indwells every believer through the presence of the Holy Spirit, for this reason “Christ in you” is equated to “the Spirit in you” (Romans 8:9-10). Hence, the life of Christ is referred to as the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:2).

We have already seen that Christ's life becomes meaningful to us only when we understand the gospel and live by faith in a prayerful attitude of absolute surrender to Christ our righteousness. Since in Scripture, Christ's life is identified with the indwelling Spirit of God, living by faith is the same as walking in the Spirit. In both cases our self-life is rendered null and void (dead) by the cross of Christ, so that the life of Christ or the Holy Spirit has complete control over us, our thoughts, our desires, our feelings, our motives and our actions (compare Romans 13:14 with Galatians

5:16). All this is in contradiction to walking in or after the flesh, which is the basis or formula for works of the law. Chapter 9 will study in detail the work of the Holy Spirit.

Justification and Sanctification by Faith

Having defined what genuine saving faith is and having seen what part it plays in our salvation, we will conclude our study of this chapter by taking a look at the two main divisions, namely justification by faith and sanctification by faith, which together go to make up this doctrine of righteousness by faith. There is some confusion today concerning these two aspects of righteousness by faith which needs to be clarified so that we may have a clear picture and understanding of this most important doctrine.

There are two facts concerning the doctrine of righteousness by faith about which we must be clear: (1) Both justification and sanctification are founded or built upon the objective gospel, or what Christ has already prepared and provided for the

fallen human race in His holy history. (2) Both are received or experienced in the life of a believer through faith alone. I cannot over-emphasize these two facts concerning righteousness by faith.

We must now ask ourselves, what really is meant and involved in justification and sanctification by faith, and in what respects do the two differ? Bearing in mind that both are founded on the objective facts of the gospel, we may describe justification by faith as the righteousness of Christ which is imputed to us as a natural consequence of accepting or being united to Christ by faith; and sanctification by faith is the righteousness of Christ being imparted to us as a result of living by faith.

The legal justification effected at the cross is not something we experience, but something we receive or “believe” as a free gift by faith, while sanctification is something we personally experience as we walk by faith. And that something we receive and experience is the righteousness of Christ. Justification is therefore

the gift of the gospel which legally declares the sinner righteous before God, while sanctification is the provision of the gospel which actually produces righteousness in him. The one qualifies him for heaven, while the other makes him fit to live in heaven. Thus, the gospel fully satisfies man's need.

We have already discussed the fact (Chapter 3) that justification is simply the objective gospel applied to the believer who has put on Christ through faith. By this is meant that when a person accepts the gospel and by faith is united to Christ, becoming one with Him, immediately all that Christ has prepared and provided for us as our substitute and surety is made effective, so that the history of Christ now becomes lawfully the history of the believer, who is now in Christ by faith.

Consequently, no longer is such a person under condemnation but has passed from death to life (John 5:24; Romans 8:1). God looks at him (the justified believer) as if he has met all the demands necessary to qualify for heaven and eternal life. Hence, justification by faith can be described as the

work of a moment, a heart response to what Christ already accomplished.

On the other hand, sanctification is an hourly, daily, and a lifetime experience realized by a justified believer who continues to walk by faith. Not only does the gospel give us the righteousness of Christ freely in order that we might be delivered from the condemnation of the law, but much more, the gospel gives us the righteousness of Christ as a personal experience, so that we might actually reflect the character of Christ. Therefore any person who thinks he can stop at justification by faith and make it everything, has received only half of the gospel even though this half has all through history qualified believers for heaven.

God did not send His Son only to legally deliver us from sin so that He might declare us righteous. Much more, Christ came in order that He might set us free from the prison of sin, and restore in us the image of God. And this work of restoration which includes sanctification by faith is part and parcel of the good news of the gospel even

though it will not be fully realized until the close of probation when His people are finally sealed (Romans 8:23; Ephesians 2:7; Rev. 7:1-4; 14:1-5).

It is God's purpose that His Son be manifest in the community of believers now, in this present world (Ephesians 4:11-15), so that His people fully display the character of Christ to a perishing world. Thus only can God demonstrate to a lost world the power of the gospel, which power in Christ Jesus has already proved itself superior to the power of sin and the devil. So then, it is in these dual or double facts, the receiving of Christ's righteousness through justification by faith and the experiencing of Christ's righteousness through sanctification by faith (sometimes referred to as the fruits of justification), that we get a true and complete picture of the doctrine of righteousness by faith.

The main differences, therefore, between justification and sanctification by faith are:

1. Justification by faith makes effective our

legal or forensic standing before God, while sanctification by faith has to do with our daily personal experience as Christians.

2. Justification by faith is meritorious, i.e., it qualifies the believer for heaven, now and in the judgment, while sanctification by faith is demonstrative, i.e., it manifests what we already have in Christ through justification by faith.

3. Justification by faith is the work of a moment, though it remains effective all our believing life, while sanctification by faith is a work of a lifetime which has to be experienced daily through a living faith. But apart from these three differences, justification and sanctification by faith are closely related and cannot be separated since in both, the righteousness of Christ is the key factor, and both are realized by faith alone. For this reason, the doctrine of justification by faith, understood in its broadest sense, includes the experience of sanctification or holiness of living. (Note, for example, James' argument in James 2:21-24).

Before we conclude this important subject, a word or two must be said about certain misunderstandings taught by many. The first is the misconception that justification by faith refers only to the forgiveness of our past sins. It is true that one important truth about justification is the forgiveness of our past sins, but far more than that is involved in this truth. The righteousness of Christ, as we saw in studying the objective gospel, involved more than the fact that Christ died for our sins. Besides meeting the just demands of the law on behalf of all our sins, past, present and future, Christ also positively kept or fulfilled the whole law on our behalf. All this becomes ours at the moment we are justified by faith.

In other words, justification by faith gives man all of Christ's righteousness which He prepared and provided for us, so that nothing more is left or required of us to qualify for heaven. In this, every Christian must be absolutely clear, otherwise we will still be victims of self-concern and be constantly afraid about our eternal security, a

condition which makes it impossible to have a real heart appreciation for Christ's cross and without which we cannot experience genuine sanctification by faith.

It is true that forgiveness is the most wonderful thing for us sinners, but glorious as it may be, forgiveness is still a negative thing, for it only takes care of our sins so that we are acquitted or counted not guilty. However justification by faith is both a negative as well as a positive truth; while it does include the forgiveness of all our sins, it goes beyond that, for it declares us positively righteous, and does change the heart. In justification, the very righteousness of Christ is put to our account so that we stand perfectly righteous before God now and in the judgment. This is the super-abundant gift of the gospel of Christ (Isa. 54:17; Acts 13:39; Romans 10:4).

Sad to say, the devil has deceived many into believing that justification by faith does not fully qualify them for heaven; that something else is required of us, that is to say, the keeping of the law

or doing good works. As a result, a great majority of sincere Christians have been trapped into a subtle form of legalism and are therefore living in constant fear and insecurity; a condition that has robbed the church of power and the real joy of Christian service. which should be motivated by love. This was at the heart of the Galatian problem and which caused Paul to write that stern epistle.

Another misunderstanding among many has to do with this familiar expression, “Sanctification is the work of a lifetime.” Many interpret this statement to mean that it takes a lifetime or more to reach the goal of sanctification.

Such an interpretation of this expression is a great error and another deception of the devil. On the contrary, Christians who are not living a Christ-filled life are living a sub-normal life. After only a few years from being converted from rank heathenism, the apostle Paul rebukes the Corinthian Christians for still remaining babes in Christ (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). The normal Christian life is Christ living in me by faith.

Anything short of this is falling short of God's ideal for every believer. However, due to the fact that the sinful flesh is very much alive in us and is constantly seeking to push up its ugly head, sanctification by faith is only possible as we continually and constantly believe, and therefore watch and pray. It is this that makes sanctification a work of a lifetime. Just as eating is a work of a lifetime, in order to maintain physical life, so also sanctification is the work of a lifetime, if Christ is to continually live through and in us.

This then is what righteousness by faith is all about. It is making real the very righteousness of Christ through faith. First, by imputation, which justifies us or puts on to our account everything that is true of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:11; Ephesians 2:5-6; Hebrews 10:14). Second, by impartation, so that we are growing in Him daily (being sanctified) reflecting more and more His righteous character.

“In Christ” we are perfect in every respect, in character or performance, in justice and legally;

this is what Christ has obtained for us by His life, death and resurrection (Hebrews 9:12); and this is the basis of our being justified. But in practice, we often fall short of perfection. The Christian life of sanctification is the experience of becoming in character or practice what we already are “in Christ” through justification by faith. The following texts show us what our position or standing is in Christ through faith and the corresponding practice or life we follow after by faith:

JUSTIFICATION

What our standing is in Christ by faith

(Ephesians 1:3; Colossians 2:10; Hebrews 10:14)

1. Dead to sin

(Romans 6:2-10; Colossians 2:20)

2. Alive to God

(John 5:24; 20:31; Romans 6:11; 8:10; 1 John 5:1)

3. Legal righteousness

(Romans 1:17; 3:21-26; 4:1, 6; 5:17; 1 Cor. 1:30; Philippians 3:9)

4. Adopted as children of God

(Ephesians 1:5; Galatians 3:26; 1 John 3:1; Romans 8:16)

5. God's claimed possession

(Ephesians 1:4; 2 Tim. 2:19)

6. Not of this world but citizens of heaven

(John 15:19; 17:14-16; 1 John 5:19)

7. Crucified to the world

(Galatians 1:4; 6:14, 15)

8. Become slaves of God

(1 Cor. 7:22, 23; Romans 6:22)

9. Have new life

(2 Cor. 5:17; 2 Peter 1:4; Galatians 6:15)

10. Made obedient to the law
(Romans 10:4; 3:31; Philippians 3:9)

11. Light to the world
(Matt. 5:14; 1 Thes. 5:5)

12. Cleansed
(John 15:3; 1 John 1:7,9)

13. Made holy
(Ephesians 1:4; 1 Cor. 3:17; Hebrews 3:1)

14. Free from sin's slavery
(John 8:32-36; Romans 6:18; 8:2)

15. Made secure in Christ
(1 Peter 1:5; Romans 8:1; John 10:27-28)

16. Spirit indwelt and led
(1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19, 20; 2 Cor. 6:16; Romans 8:9-10)

17. Spirit-gifted
(Romans 12:5-6; 1 Cor. 12:4, 12; Ephesians

4:7-13)

18. Empowered for witnessing

(Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 4:7; Ephesians 3:20; 2 Tim. 1:7)

19. Given possession of Christ's love

(Romans 5:5; 1 Cor. 12:31; 13:1-13; 1 John 2:5; 5:1)

20. Legally in Christ

(1 Cor. 1:30; Ephesians 1:3-6,10; 2:5, 6, 13)

SANCTIFICATION

What our experience becomes in Christ through faith

(Ephesians 4; Colossians 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:17; Hebrews 13:20-21)

1. Give no place to sin

(Romans 6:11-15; 13:14; Colossians 3:1-3; 1 Peter 2:24)

2. Live unto God

(Romans 14:8; 2 Cor. 5:15; Galatians 2:19, 20; Titus 2:12)

3. Live righteously

(2 Tim. 2:22; 1 John 3:7; 1 Cor. 15:34; Philippians 1:11; 1 Tim. 6:11)

4. Act like God's children

(Ephesians 5:1, 8; 1 Peter 1:13-14)

5. Yield or surrender to God

(Romans 12:1; 2 Tim. 2:19-21)

6. Love not the world but live like citizens of heaven

(1 John 5:4-5; 2:15; Colossians 3:1-2; James 1:27)

7. Avoid worldly practices

(1 John 2:15-17; Ja.1:27; 4:4; Romans 12:2)

8. Serve joyfully as God's slaves
(Romans 6:17-19; 12:11; Hebrews 12:28)

9. Walk in newness of life
(Romans 6:4; 7:6; Ephesians 4:24)

10. Keep fulfilling the law
(Romans 8:4; 1 John 5:2,3; Rev. 14:12)

11. Walk as children of light
(Matt. 5:15,16; Ephesians 5:8)

12. Cleanse yourselves
(2 Cor. 7:1; Philippians 4:8)

13. Live holy lives
(1 John 3:7; 1 Peter 1:15-16; 2 Peter 3:14)

14. Do not let sin rule you
(Romans 6:22; Galatians 5:1,13, 14; 2 Cor.
3:17-18)

15. Enjoy that security
(2 Peter 1:10; Hebrews 10:19-22; 1

Thessalonians 1:5)

16. Yield to the Spirit's control

(Galatians 5:16,17,25; Ephesians 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19)

17. Use your gift

(Romans 12:3-8; 1 Peter 4:11)

18. Witness that power

(1 Cor. 2:4; Ephesians 6:10; Philippians 3:10; 4:13)

19. Love as Christ loved

(John 13:34,35; 1 Peter 1:22; 4:8; 1 John 3:18,23; 4:7,12)

20. Joyfully abide in Christ

(John 15:4-7; 1 John 2:6, 28; 3:6)

It is clear from the above study that the life God expects from every believer is the life of His Son. Every provision has already been made for us in Christ. While we are not justified by faith plus

works, true justification by faith always produces works (John 14:12; Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:5, 8). Therefore, “Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4).

Chapter 7

The Joyous Experience of Salvation

The gospel may be described as the plan of salvation, and this plan has already been prepared and provided in Jesus Christ. This is what we have studied in Chapters 2-4 when we considered the objective gospel. That is to say, in studying the objective gospel, we look at the plan of salvation as God has worked it out for us in His Son, and as such, it is a finished work. Everything necessary for our salvation, whether it be from the guilt and punishment of sin, or the power of sin, or even the curse of sin, all has already been fulfilled in Christ.

But now we must consider the doctrine of salvation from man's point of view, or salvation as a subjective experience. As was emphasized in our last study, the objective gospel becomes real in the experience of the believer, otherwise the truth of this gospel remains merely a set of teachings or

doctrines void of any power. This, unfortunately, is the situation of the church today.

In studying the doctrine of salvation as a personal experience, we will define salvation, consider what is involved in being saved, and look at the relationship between salvation as an objective fact and salvation as a subjective experience.

Salvation Defined

To many, salvation is looked upon as being delivered from death unto eternal life, or from hell into heaven. While this is true, we will discover that salvation involves much more than this. For in being saved, a radical change takes place both in our position as well as our status. This is something that all must clearly understand.

By birth, we are in Adam. This is our natural position; and, as we saw in the study of the Two Adams (Chapter 4), this position is a hopeless one, since in Adam “all have sinned” (Romans 5:12)

and “all die” (1 Corinthians 15:22). However, the moment we from the heart respond to the good news of the gospel, immediately we are delivered from our position in Adam and are now, by faith, united to Christ. This does not only mean a radical change in position from “in Adam” to “in Christ,” but this also involves a radical change in status. For in Adam we belonged to this world, or were of this world; that is to say, as children of Adam we were by birth and nature citizens of this world, which, in turn, is totally under Satan’s control (John 14:30; 1 John 5:19). And the world is also doomed to destruction (2 Peter 3:9, 10).

But now, being in Christ by faith, we are no longer of this world (John 15:19; 17:14, 16), but have been delivered from this present evil world through the cross of Christ (Galatians 1:4). Hence, the apostle Paul could declare: “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Galatians 6:14).

Salvation, therefore, may be defined as an

exodus from this world which is under the control and dominion of Satan, into the church which belongs to the kingdom of God and is under the rule of Christ. This great truth was, in fact, revealed in times of old in the exodus of God's people from Egypt into Canaan, Egypt being a type of the world and Canaan a type of the church.

When the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, which symbolized baptism (see 1 Corinthians 10:1, 2), they said good-bye forever to Egypt (the world) and Pharaoh (symbol of Satan); and when they entered Canaan, the promised land, it was a type of the church which belonged to the realm of God.

It is for this reason the New Testament writers purposely chose the term "ekklesia" to identify the people of God. This Greek word, which in our English Bible is translated "the church" is a most interesting one. It is made up of two words which, when put together, reveal a most important truth. The two words are "ek," which means "out of," and "klesia," which means "called people." These two words put together define the church as "a

called out people.” Believers are, therefore, a called out people; but the question we must ask is, from what are we called out? And the answer is, the world. Jesus made this clear in John 15:19, “Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of [ek] the world.”

All this throws important light on the definition of salvation and has important implications to us. The first is that, as Christians, we no longer belong to this world, but have become the citizens of heaven. And in view of the fact that Satan, “the prince of this world,” is at war with Christ the Lord of heaven, then, as Christians, we have become strangers living in enemy territory. For this reason, Jesus declared that the world must hate us and persecute us (John 15:19; 1 John 3:13). If it is not doing that, it is not because the world has changed but simply because the world does not really see Christ in us (2 Tim. 3:12).

Secondly, as citizens of heaven, all ties with the world must come to an end. Hence all national and tribal pride must go, for in Christ “there is neither

Jew nor Greek.” All class distinction must go, for “there is neither bond nor free,” and even our status symbols must come to an end for “there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). Further, while it is true we are to be the salt and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13, 14), nevertheless, as Christians we are not to have partnership with the world. The apostle James makes this very clear: “Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (4:4; see also 1:27).

Finally, to be saved in Christ means to say good-bye to the root of all evil which is “the love of money” (read 1 Tim. 6:10). The vital ingredient that makes this world run is money, and the love of money is at the center of all lust. Money in and of itself is not evil, otherwise the church would have no right to touch it; and as Christians living in the world we need money; but it is the love of money that is the root of all evil. This is because the love of money is clear evidence that we have not let go of our self-life which the cross of Christ demands

of us and, therefore, the lust of the flesh is still dominating us.

One good evidence that any one can have whether he be poor or rich that he is truly in Christ and has tasted salvation, is his relationship to money. For this reason God has introduced His program or system of paying tithes and offerings (see Mal. 3:8, 9). If we are truly saved in Christ, paying tithes and offerings will be a delight, no matter what our financial situation is.

On the other hand, if our faith in Christ is self-centered and not motivated by love, this will clearly show in our withholding tithes and offerings, for our lives will contradict the truth of the gospel, which truth Jesus clearly stated when He declared, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35; see also 2 Corinthians 5:7).

It is not our money which God wants, it is us. The cross of Christ demands that we totally belong to God, for we have been bought by the precious blood of His Son (see 1 Peter 1:18, 19; 1

Corinthians 6:20; 2 Peter 2:1). But how can God or His church really know that we have truly surrendered ourselves to Him, which is what genuine faith demands? It is by our tithes and offerings. When we fail in this, we are truly robbing God of what is rightfully His, and that is ourselves. The one great reason why the church is so poor financially today is because it is full of members whose faith is a pretence, a faith that is egocentric, rather than that which worketh by love. Oh, that God might open our eyes that we might see ourselves as we really are, “wretched and miserable, and poor and blind and naked” (Rev. 3:17).

Salvation and Baptism

When Jesus commissioned His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel, He made it very clear to them that “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:15, 16). Why did Christ include baptism as a necessary part of salvation? This is a most important question and one that every Christian must be able to answer,

since it is vitally connected to salvation. Too often we get so involved in what constitutes the right mode of baptism that the true significance of baptism is lost sight of, much to the delight of the enemy of souls.

Baptism in and of itself does not save us, but it is what it stands for that is vital. Between the church of Christ and the world of Satan stands the cross of Christ and this cross to which we have become identified by faith and baptism eternally separates us from this doomed world. This is what the Bible means by being saved or washed “by water” (1 Corinthians 6:11; Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5; Rev. 1:5).

When we turn to 1 Peter 3:20, 21, we get the true significance of baptism. In verse 20, the apostle Peter declares that at the time of the flood only “eight souls were saved by water.” Then in verse 21 he links this with our baptism, “the like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us.” In order to see the connection between these two statements, we need to ask ourselves, From

what was Noah and his family saved at the time of the flood? Was it not from this doomed world? God came to Noah and instructed him to build an ark because He was about to destroy the antediluvian world by water. For 120 years Noah built the ark while, at the same time, he preached to a lost world to enter it.

Now this ark was built and rested on the earth, but when the flood came every living thing was drowned, only Noah and his family with all the animals on board the ark rode the waters and were saved. This experience eternally separated Noah and his family from the wicked world of which they were a part. The ark was a type of the church of Christ which will one day ascend into heaven when this wicked world will be destroyed by fire. To enter this church, we must pass through the waters of baptism that eternally separates us from this wicked, doomed world to which we belong by natural birth. Baptism, therefore, rightly is defined as the door through which we make our exit from this present wicked, doomed world and enter the church of Christ which is destined for heaven.

According to Romans 6:3, 4, baptism symbolizes our union with Christ crucified, buried, and resurrected. And just as Christ's death was unto sin and this world (see Romans 6:10; Galatians 1:4), so likewise by our union with Christ crucified and buried, we are saying good-bye forever to sin and this wicked world. When we enter the waters of baptism, we are by this ordinance actually taking part in our own funeral service, made real to us by faith in the cross of Christ, so that we along with our whole wicked world, to which we were a part, are forever buried in the waters of baptism.

And as Christ rose from the dead apart from sin, so also we in Christ arise out of the water as new beings to serve God in newness of life. Hence, baptism is a public confession of our faith by or through which we have become dead and our life is now hid in Christ Jesus (Colossians 3:3). This is what salvation is about, which the ordinance of baptism symbolizes.

Let every believer, therefore, bear in mind that it is not the act of baptism that saves us, but it is our surrender or submission to the truth revealed in baptism that saves us. There are many who, unfortunately, think that because they were baptized the Biblical way (that is, by immersion), that this in and of itself saves them. This is a deception, for the act of baptism, no matter how correctly it is performed, cannot save us. We must not fall into the same error the Jews made. For example, they put the emphasis on the act of circumcision instead of its significance (see Jer. 4:4; Romans 2:29; Colossians 2:11). Baptism by immersion becomes important and of value only as to what it signifies, and this we must always bear in mind; that it is what baptism symbolizes: our union by faith to Christ crucified, buried, and resurrected. This saves us and not the act itself.

Saved Into the Church

Men and women are saved by the gospel primarily, not from hell into heaven, or death into eternal life, but from the world into the church. The

first step in man's salvation as a subjective experience is always from the world into the church. In order to save us, the cross of Christ must deliver us from the world which is hostile to God and under condemnation, into the church which is the body of Christ. Every other aspect of salvation is based upon this fact. Christ will never take us to heaven to enjoy the heavenly life as individuals but as members of His church.

It is for this reason that the church on earth is Christ's supreme concern (Ephesians 5:27). Those who have already ascended into heaven, such as Enoch, Moses, and Elijah, are but the first-fruits of those who belong to the corporate body of Christ, for whom Christ is preparing a place, for whom He will come at the second advent. Salvation, therefore, begins with being delivered from the world into the church.

When we were of the world, we belonged to a nation or tribe or to a certain section of society. As such we were very much a part of that which goes to make up the world. But, as Christians, we have

said good-bye to all this—buried it in the waters of baptism. The cross of Christ forbids anything that is of self and of this world to cross over into the church, “for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Yet it is a great tragedy to see so much of the world creeping into or infiltrating the church today. We are copying its fashions, accepting its philosophy, and also depending upon its resources. All this is a contradiction to the gospel of Christ; and this is because the church has lost sight of the true meaning of the doctrine of salvation. No wonder that the church is so weak and can hardly be distinguished from the world. When Christ was here on earth, He was a stranger and a sojourner. He was in the world and witnessed the truth to the world, but He was not of the world. And all that was true of Him, must become true of the Christian, and the church of which we have become a part.

“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4, 5).

Every believer must realize that to be saved means that we are on the one hand saying good bye to all that is of the world, and on the other hand have become a vital part of the church. According to the New Testament, the key definition of the church is “the body of Christ” (Romans 12:2-5; 1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 1:19-23; Colossians 1:24). A Christian is one who by faith has become a vital part or member of this body. This in fact was what Christ had in mind when He introduced the element of the bread into the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper. “For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread” (1 Corinthians 10:17).

When we look at salvation in the light of this truth, we will discover that it has important implications regarding how we live the Christian life. While we were of the world, we could live more or less as we pleased since this world,

developed by Satan, is founded upon the principle of self-love.

But now, as Christians and vital parts of Christ's body, no longer can we think and do things our own way. The law or principle of the body demands that we live entirely under the authority and dependance of the head which is Christ (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18). In other words, just as the various members of the human body are under the full control of the head, so also we as Christians must also be under the full control of Christ. Anything outside of this is a contradiction to the plan of salvation.

If all Christians would have their eyes opened to this fact and submit themselves to this truth, the church would be naturally or without any human endeavor perfectly united and demonstrating the life of Christ. Once again to use Paul's illustration of the human body as a type of the church (see 1 Corinthians 12:14-25), we know that the reason why there is perfect coordination and unity in the

human body is that it does nothing whatsoever in and of itself but lives entirely under the direction of the head. Likewise, the church being a corporate body of Christ will experience a similar unity and coordination when the various members of the body, which comprises the individual believers, will do nothing whatsoever in and of themselves but will live entirely under the directions of Christ alone.

When this is realized we will not only experience perfect coordination and unity in the church, which is the most powerful form of witnessing (see John 13:35; 17:20, 21), but we will also discover that every believer, without exception, has an important function within the framework of the body. Thus, while “all members have not the same office,” nevertheless all members have a vital part to play in the function of the church:

“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or

ministry, let us wait on our ministering or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness” (Romans 12:4, 6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-25).

Further, we will discover when this truth is realized that every believer will have great regard for the work of other believers and have deep concern for the welfare and needs of his fellow brethren; so that there will be no “schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it” (1 Corinthians 12:25, 26).

Again the church understood and functioning as the body of Christ will also develop, just as the human body grows and develops. In Ephesians 4:11-13, we read that when Christ ascended into heaven, He bestowed gifts on the body: “And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; as some,

evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

The world under Satan has been developing for approximately the last six thousand years, likewise the church too must develop so that where sin abounds grace must much more abound (Romans 5:20). The more Satan demonstrates the power of sin and self, so also the more must God demonstrate the power of the gospel, or love, through the church. In the great controversy between Christ and Satan we know that Satan is a defeated foe, but Christ’s victory must be demonstrated through the church, and it will be demonstrated at the end of time.

Today, much that is of the world is camouflaged so that even Christians are unaware of the fact that “the whole world lieth in the evil one”

(1 John 5:19 RSV), and therefore are caught off-guard. But the time is coming and is almost here, when it will be seen that “all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshiped the dragon [the devil] which gave power unto the beast” (Rev. 18:1).

At that time this earth will be lightened with the glory of God through the church (Rev. 18:1). It is this demonstration that must take place before Christ can return again. The world today is indeed ripe for the end, but, unfortunately, the church is not, and God is patiently waiting for His people to repent and seek His face with all their hearts. That is why the true gospel must be restored urgently to God's people so that it may become in reality “the power of God unto salvation.”

The Scope of Salvation

The angel of the Lord declared to Joseph, “And thou shalt call his name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). For this purpose did Christ come into the world, that

He might save us totally and completely from sin. And having prepared salvation full and complete for the lost human race, He ascended up to His Father. We saw all this in studying the objective gospel, but our concern now is, how is this salvation dispensed to us who have responded positively to the Good News?

Unfortunately, many Christians have a limited knowledge of the plan of salvation as already prepared and finished in Christ Jesus (the objective gospel). Consequently their subjective experience is in turn limited. For this reason, most Christians are somewhat embarrassed when asked the simple question, “Are you saved?” In fact those that ask the question are very often themselves ignorant of the full scope of the plan of salvation.

While all that is necessary for our salvation from sin is already an accomplished fact in Christ, we will discover that salvation as a subjective experience is a past, present, and future reality. We have already seen that in Christ we have been saved from the guilt and punishment of sin, the

power of sin, and the presence and curse of sin. This is the position of all who by faith are in Christ. But when it comes to these things being a reality in our lives, these three aspects of salvation are not received at one and the same time. It is true that all three are guaranteed to the believer who is resting in Christ, but God does not dispense them to us at the same time; instead we experience these things in three stages.

The first is at conversion, when the believer is united to Christ by faith. The moment our union with Christ is realized we are already saved from the guilt and punishment of sin, and are declared perfectly righteous. This is what it means to be in a justified state.

However, this does not mean that we have been saved experientially from the power or grip of sin; this is to be a present continuous experience which must be realized daily as we now continue to live by faith or walk after the Spirit. This is the second stage of our salvation which is referred to as the process of sanctification, and which must continue

as long as we live.

Then, at the second advent, all believers will be redeemed or saved from the curse and presence of sin. This, of course, is the blessed hope to which we look forward (Tit. 2:15; Romans 8:19-25).

So, then, a Christian may say with confidence that he is saved on the one hand, but at the same time he must confess that he is being saved, and that he will be saved. Yes, as believers we are already saved from all condemnation and, therefore, have peace with God (Romans 5:1; 8:1); but at the same time we are being saved from indwelling sin as we continue to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12). And, finally, we look forward to His glorious appearing when we shall be saved from the corruption of sin that has infiltrated every member of our bodies (1 Corinthians 15:51-57; Philippians 3:20-21).

This being the full scope of the plan of salvation, our hope as Christians is not limited to this life. For this reason, Paul declared to the

Corinthians, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable,” (1 Corinthians 15:19). Our hope is not only in this life (see Colossians 1:27), but above all in the life to come. To stop at our past salvation is to receive only one-third of the gospel. As Christians, not only must we rejoice that eternal life and heaven is ours, but “every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3; Romans 13:14; Galatians 5:16).

And, finally, let us comfort and help each other, looking forward to that glorious day when He shall appear to take us to the heavenly home where we shall experience the full salvation made available to us in Christ Jesus.

Chapter 8

The Principle of the Cross

According to the apostle Paul, the power of the gospel is to be found in the cross of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:17-18). In Chapter 5 we made a study of the cross of Christ as a truth or an objective fact. In this present study, we will be concerned with the application of this truth to our lives. We will discover that when the cross of Christ is applied to the life of a believer, it becomes the power of God unto salvation. However, the cross of Christ also has very important implications for the Christian life, and we will consider this first before we proceed to study the cross of Christ as the power of God which is able to save us from sin.

The Believer's Cross

It is impossible for a genuine believer to be united to Christ without being identified with His cross. Baptism, as we saw in our previous study, is our identification or union with Christ crucified,

buried, and resurrected (Romans 6:3-5). By faith a believer becomes one with Christ crucified and, consequently, in becoming a Christian, the truth of the cross we discovered in Chapter 5 becomes of vital importance to every believer.

Most of us are familiar with the fact that we must carry some form of a cross in the Christian life (Matthew 10:38; 16:24; Luke 9:23; 14:27). But, unfortunately, many are ignorant of the fact that the cross of every believer is none other than the cross of Christ.

Many equate their cross with the hardships and trials of this life and, therefore, have the idea that God has given each one of us separate crosses to bear. That is to say, some have heavy crosses to bear while others have light crosses, or some have big crosses, while others are fortunate enough to bear small ones, all depending on our circumstances. This is a mistake and a deception of the devil. It is not what Jesus had in mind when He spoke about bearing our crosses. The hardships and trials of this life are the curse of sin, and all men,

believers and unbelievers alike, must bear them.

The cross that Jesus spoke about and which each believer must carry in order to follow Him, in principle is none other than His cross. Faith identifies every believer with the cross of Christ so it becomes the believers' cross, and this we must never forget. No doubt the thief who was crucified with Christ had to literally carry his own cross, but it was the cross of Christ that that he accepted in principle that will qualify him for heaven. The only cross that is of any value to save us from sin is that cross; and by faith and baptism this cross has become the cross of every believer.

Hence with Paul we can and must declare, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14; Galatians 2:20). It is only as every believer grasps this truth and identifies his cross with the cross of Christ that it will become meaningful to us as the power of God unto salvation.

Consequently, let it be very clear that apart from the cross of Christ there is no salvation from sin, and we must therefore never separate our cross from the cross of Christ. To do this is to introduce a subtle element of salvation by works, and as we have already seen in a previous study, works of any form that proceed from us have no value and no place in the gospel of Christ.

As long as we live in this world of sin, the principle of Christ's cross must be daily applied to the life of every Christian. There is no choice in this matter, for Jesus made it clear that it is a necessary and vital part of the Christian life. "And He said to them all, if any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Of course, to the carnal person whose faith in Christ is self-centered, this is a hard thing to do, but to the believer who is constrained by the love of Christ, the cross is something in which to glory or rejoice, for "unto us which are saved it [the cross of Christ] is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18).

The Offense of the Cross

You will remember when we studied the truth of the cross that we discovered three things that took place when Christ was crucified:

1. what Satan and the world did to Christ on the cross;
2. what God did to His Son on the cross; and
3. what God did to the human race in Christ on the cross.

Each of these three things plays a vital part in the life of every believer and we will consider each one separately.

At the cross, Satan and his world showed their absolute and utter hatred for Christ, and it was this that led them to put Him to open shame (Hebrews 6:6), inflict upon Him untold suffering, and finally hang Him on the cross to die a most cruel death. This truth applied to the life of every believer is referred to in the Bible as “the offense of the cross” (Galatians 5:11).

I trust by now that it has become clear to the reader that Christianity is more than joining a denomination, but involves a radical change in position as well as in status. A person who genuinely becomes a believer and joins the church is no longer “in Adam” but is now “in Christ,” neither does he belong to the world but has become a citizen of God’s kingdom.

In view of the fact that a great controversy exists between Satan the prince of this world and Christ the Lord of Heaven, it becomes obvious to anyone who says good-bye to his position in this world and unites with Christ’s kingdom on earth (which is the church) that he is bound to come under attack from Satan and this world.

This Christ made clear to His disciples on more than one occasion: “Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves . . . But beware of men [of the world, implied]: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before

governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles” (Matthew 10:16-18, 22). Again He said, “If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (John 15:18, 19; 1 John 3:13).

In the eyes of the world every true Christian is a traitor and is therefore an object of hatred and persecution. Paul writing to Timothy made it clear to this young pastor, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). But this, you will say, is not true today. It is not true today, not because the world has improved or changed, or that a reconciliation has taken place between Christ and Satan. No! The tragedy of the matter is that the church has committed “fornication;” an unholy wedlock has taken place between “Jerusalem which is from above,” and “Babylon the Great,” which symbolizes the world and its philosophy of self-love (see Daniel 4:30).

The sad fact is that for too long we have had partnership in one form or another with the world so that today the church of Christ, like Israel of old, is in Babylonian captivity. For years, ignoring the counsel of God clearly taught in the Old Testament and fully revealed in the gospel and the principle of the cross (see Galatians 6:14), we as God's people have been borrowing the philosophies of the world. We have been using and depending on its resources, involving ourselves in its politics, having dialogue with its various organizations, so that today the church is in captivity to the world. This is notably felt in many parts of the globe where the church works and functions under the orders and directions of the worldly governments. For this reason, God's final message to His people is, "Come out of her [Babylon], my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18:1-4; 14:8).

The distinction between the church today and the world can hardly be seen but this state of affairs will not continue for long, for God has made it clear that He is going to step in and remedy the

situation. “Though the number of children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: for he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. And as Isaiah said before, ‘Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrah’” (Romans 9:27-29). Therefore, declares the True Witness to the church of the last days, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent” (Rev. 3:19).

When Christ will have sifted and purified His church (Amos 9:9-12) and reproduced His character in the lives of His people, then the “offense of the cross” will become a reality again and history will repeat itself. (Note John 7:7; the world could not hate the Jews because it did not see Christ in them).

Then this divided world will again reunite itself against their common enemy, the church of Christ and God’s people will once again be hated, put to open shame, and suffer untold affliction and death

(Matthew 24:9-10; Luke 6:22). At that time the glory of God must shine through us as we rejoice to be counted worthy to suffer shame for His name (Acts 5:41), and we will have to take courage from the words of Peter, “For even hereunto were ye called because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Peter 2:21).

The Blood of Christ

We have considered “the believer’s cross” and “the offence of the cross,” both of which are the heritage of every true Christian who is united by faith to Christ. Now we must turn our attention to the glorious power of the cross. The cross of Christ is the power of God unto salvation and unless we discover how to tap this power we will never know or experience the joys of the Christian life. For this reason it is not sufficient to simply know the truth of the cross, but we will also be touched by its power if the cross of Christ is to be meaningful or of value to us.

And let there be no misgivings or doubts, for the cross of Christ is able to save us to the uttermost from every aspect of sin, its guilt, its punishment, and its power. That is what God has ordained it to do (Hebrews 7:25-27).

The power of the cross is two-fold. It is able to save us from the guilt and punishment of our many sins, as well as being the means by which God saves us from our slavery to sin. This dual function of the cross is the result of the two things God did to His Son on the cross, namely: (1) He punished all our sins in Christ; and (2) He included the whole human race in the death of His Son. In this section we will deal with the first aspect of the power of the cross, which Scripture refers to as “the blood of Christ,” and then, in the next section, we will consider the second aspect, “the cross of Christ.”

At the cross, the sins of the whole human race were placed upon Christ our sin-bearer. That is to say, the sin of Adam, which brought condemnation upon all men, plus the sins of all men born in this

world, to the very last person to be born, all were heaped upon Him our Substitute (Isa. 53:6). And as we saw in the study of the cross of Christ (Chapter 5), God did not spare His own Son but meted out the full wages of sin upon Him so that “by one offering He [Christ] hath perfected forever them that are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14; 9:25-28). This supreme sacrifice in fulfillment of the many sacrifices offered in the sanctuary service of the Old Testament is equated with “the blood of Christ” in the New Testament.

For this reason we will discover that the New Testament writers placed infinite value upon the blood of Christ. For example, it is able to redeem us (1 Peter 1:18-19), justify us (Romans 5:9), cleanse us from all sins (1 John 1:7), cancel the guilt of our many sins (Matthew 26:27-28), and make peace between sinful men and holy God (Colossians 1:20). This is but some of the value of the precious blood of Christ to every believer.

However, before we can proceed to discover the power of Christ’s blood in the life of the

believer, it would be well for us first to understand the significance of this expression “the blood of Christ.” We will find in reading the Scriptures that blood plays a vital role when it comes to this matter of dealing with sin. Thus we read, “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without the shedding of blood is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22). This is because, according to Scripture, the life of the flesh is in the blood (Gen. 9:4). Consequently, shed blood symbolizes or indicates that life has been laid down in death.

For this reason God declared to Israel of old, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Lev. 17:11). For this reason too, the angel of death passed over the children of Israel who had the blood of the sacrificial lamb splashed on their door posts (Ex. 12:12).

All the blood shed in the various sacrificial systems of the Old Testament was a type or a

shadow pointing to the blood of Christ, that is to say, His life which He laid down at the cross for the sins of the world. Therefore we must never interpret the blood of Christ to refer to the literal human blood of Christ, which was no different from our blood (Hebrews 2:14), and which incidentally would have no power to save us. The blood of Christ signifies the divine life of Christ which was original, unborrowed, underived, and which He laid down in the second death to save us from the guilt and punishment of sin; it is this which has the power to save us from our sins.

Having dealt with the true significance of Christ's blood, we must now go on to discover its value and power. According to Scripture, the blood of Christ is able to save us in three ways, and it is of utmost importance that we become aware of the threefold function and power of the blood. The three ways mentioned may be defined as Godward, manward, and Satanward. Let us briefly consider each of them.

Godward. The apostle John tells us that to

commit sin is of the devil as well as being the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4, 8). Our sins, therefore, have a decided effect upon our relationship with God Himself. As the prophet Isaiah put it, “Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear” (Isa. 59:2).

This, of course, puts us in a hopeless situation, since men cannot really live apart from God, as He is the source of all life. How then can sinful man be reconciled to a holy God? There is only one answer to this problem, the blood of the cross. The death of Christ for our sins is the only way we can be reconciled to God; thus, “when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death [blood vs. 9] of His Son” (Romans 5:10). Hence, when the blood of Christ is by faith applied to our life of sin, reconciliation takes place between God and us and this brings peace to our hearts. “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1; John 14:27).

But the blood of Christ is so wonderful that not only does it reconcile us to God when we first come to Him through Christ, but more than this, it continues to cleanse and forgive our sins daily as we confess them daily (1 John 1:7, 9). The power of Christ's blood never diminishes, neither can it ever lose its efficacy or effectiveness to save us from our sins. For this reason the believer's relationship with God is never broken and this means that we can come boldly to God every time, through the blood of Christ no matter what our experience may have been (Hebrews 10:19-22).

Every believer should know this and rejoice. But, unfortunately, the prayer life of many is hindered because we insist on looking at ourselves and our failure when it comes to approaching God, instead of coming to Him in the merits of Christ's blood. Whatever may be our Christian experience, never must we approach our holy God but by the blood of Christ, and as such we can do so boldly and without any shame or fear.

Manward. Sin not only affects our relationship

with God, but it also brings guilt and distress to our lives (Gen. 42:21; Ps. 40:12). Every one of us is familiar to a greater or lesser degree with the problem of guilt. And needless to say, guilt is a very unpleasant thing; in fact, medical science today confirms the fact that the great majority of human sickness and woe may be traced to the problem of guilt. The devil, through his world, offers many remedies to overcome this problem of guilt, such as drinking alcohol or smoking cigarettes, or taking drugs, etc., but none of these things can genuinely or permanently save us from the pain of guilt. Once again, it is only the blood of Christ that can rescue us from a guilty conscience (Hebrews 9:14; 10:2).

Therefore, a believer who has been touched by the power of the blood of Christ is among the happiest persons in the world, in spite of everything else he may have to put up with in this life. For not only has he made peace with God through the blood of Christ, but at the same time, he has found inner peace with himself through this same blood. David, the king who had committed

some terrible sins, including murder, knew something of the power of Christ's blood and therefore could declare, "Blessed [happy] is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile" (Ps. 32:1, 2; Romans 4:8). Such is the privilege of every believer whose faith rests in the blood of the Lamb.

Satanward. There is a third effect that our sins produce. It gives ground to Satan, the enemy of souls, to accuse us before God. In Revelation 12:10, we are told that Satan is the accuser of the brethren who accuses us before God day and night. The accusations of the devil are true, for we have many sins of which to be accused that neither we nor God cannot deny. How are we able to meet these accusations? Verse 11 gives us the answer: "And they overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb." This is the third function of the blood of Christ; it is able to meet every accusation Satan makes against the saints.

The Bible records several incidents in which Satan is hurling accusations against the saints; or

he is opposing God for favoring the saints. For example, in Zechariah 3:1-4 we read of Joshua the High Priest who represents the congregation standing before the angel of the Lord, and there we find Satan ready to resist or accuse him. Again in Jude 9, we read about the conflict between Christ and Satan over the body of Moses. In every such instance we will find that Satan and his accusations are brought to naught, and the weapon that is the cause of his defeat is the same every time; it is the blood of Christ. On the basis of His blood, Christ our advocate and mediator rebukes every accusation and claim of the devil; this is the wonderful power of His blood. As the apostle Paul put it, “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Romans 8:34).

In the Jewish calendar, one day stood out as being of more importance than any other day of the year, the Day of Atonement, for it pointed to the final day of judgment. On this day the true people of God were cleansed from all their sins (Lev.

16:30). How was this realized? It was by the blood of the Lord's goat (Lev. 16:9, 15, 16), which symbolized the blood of Christ (see Hebrews 9:11-12).

Thus, the hope of every believer in the day of judgment is not our personal goodness or achievement but the blood of Christ and His righteousness. "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" (1 John 1:17).

Again Satan does not only accuse us before God, but he also enjoys pointing his finger at us, too. Each time we fall into sin or fail to meet God's ideal, the devil immediately takes advantage and tries to discourage us by accusing us through our conscience. The question is, how do you react to such accusations? Do you fall under them and feel defeated and give up? Or do you stand up and respond, "Yes, I am a sinner and I have sinned grievously, but I have found mercy." Would you be free from the accusations of the devil and the

burden of sins? There is power in the blood of Christ; and all that is required of you is to avail yourself of it by faith.

This then, is the wonderful power of Christ's blood made available to us through God's "unspeakable gift." By it we are reconciled to God, because it is able to blot out every sin and make us at-one-ment with Him; by it our evil and guilty conscience is purged so that we have that inner peace that passeth understanding (Philippians 4:7). By it we are able to meet any and every accusation of the devil. It is for this reason that the New Testament writers put infinite value on the blood of Christ, and for this reason we, too, must do the same.

The Cross of Christ

So far we have considered the subjective application of what Satan did to Christ on the cross, and what the Bible refers to as "the offence of the cross," and we have considered the value of Christ's blood, which is the subjective application

of what God did to Christ on the cross. Now we must turn our attention to the third and final application of the truth of Christ's cross, and that is what God did to the human race in Christ on the cross. Our study on the cross of Christ (Chapter 5) revealed that the whole human race died "in Christ" at the cross.

Why, you may ask, did God include the human race in the death of His Son? Was it not enough that Christ bore the sins of the whole world?

Two main reasons are given in Scripture as to why it was necessary for God to include all men in the death of His Son. In the first place, it was necessary in order that we might be delivered from our position "in Adam," which position we saw is under condemnation (Romans 5:12-21). In 1 Corinthians 15:22 we read, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Now it is clear that we cannot have this hope of "being made alive" in Christ if we have not first died in Adam; and the fact is that we have already died in Adam at the cross when we died in Christ, the second or

last Adam. Thus the hope of the resurrection unto life can only belong to those who have by faith submitted and surrendered to their death in Christ (read John 12:24, 25).

Secondly, it was necessary for God to include all men in Christ's death because it was the only way He could make us free from the power of sin (Romans 6:7). In order to appreciate this we must clearly understand the dual problem of sin. Sin is not only an act (the transgression of the law), which makes us guilty before God and brings us under the condemnation of the law, but sin is also a power that has man in its grip. This is clearly revealed in Romans 7:14-24 where Paul describes the typical situation of someone who wants to do good but finds that he is unable to do so because he is captive to the law of sin. No matter how much one may determine to follow after righteousness in and of ourselves, this is impossible because of the principle of sin that dominates our lives. Jesus made it absolutely clear to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). By this He meant that the nature of the flesh cannot be

changed; and the Bible clearly declares that the nature of the flesh, which is our natural life we inherited from Adam, is unable to keep the law or do righteousness, for it is enmity with God (Romans 8:7).

As Christians we appreciate the glorious fact that Christ died for our sins on the cross (the blood of Christ), so that we might obtain forgiveness. But you have discovered, I am sure, that forgiveness, wonderful as it may be, is not enough. You want deliverance from sin also; for otherwise your life is a vicious circle of sinning and being forgiven, and sinning again; and to say the least, this is most frustrating. Sinful acts may be forgiven and blotted out through the blood of Christ, but basic sinfulness cannot be forgiven, it must come to an end. God, for example, is able to forgive us for our selfish acts or for losing our temper; but selfishness itself or this disposition we have of losing our temper, He cannot forgive; it must go, or, to be more specific, it must be crucified, and this is why God included you and me in the cross of Christ.

The great error most make when they first come to Christ is to think that the flesh or our natural life can be changed and reformed so that it may be made pleasing to God. As a result, most Christians start off their Christian life by making promises and resolutions to God. Sooner or later, depending on how strong a willpower one possesses, we all discover that such promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. No matter how hard we try, the result is always the same—failure.

What is the problem? Clearly, we have failed to see the truth that the sinful life of the flesh is beyond repair. But once our eyes have been opened to this truth (revealed to us by the law of God, Romans 7:7-13) we will rejoice in the cross of Christ and understand why God has put us into Christ crucified, and, in exchange, given us the very life of His Son.

Unlike every other non-Christian religion, Christianity does not offer sinful men a changed life but an ex-changed life. Thus, the sooner we Christians realize that the perfecting of the flesh is

impossible (Galatians 3:1-3), the sooner we will surrender to the formula of the gospel, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Galatians 2:20).

The greatest discovery an unbeliever can make is that Christ died for him, while the greatest discovery a Christian can make is that, on the one hand, he has been crucified with Christ and, on the other hand, his life is now hid in Christ (Colossians 3:3). Such a discovery will bring to an end all self-effort in the life of the believer, and instead he will “live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

So, then, in summarizing this glorious truth concerning the power of the cross, we can say that the blood of Christ is God’s solution in dealing with all our sins while the cross of Christ is His remedy for delivering us from the very fountain or source of sin. The first is the means of our justification, while the second is the means of our sanctification. And just as we cannot obtain forgiveness from our sins unless we see Christ

bearing all our sins on the cross, so likewise we cannot know deliverance from sin's power unless we see Christ bearing us on the cross.

Sanctification, or victory over sin, involves a dual process that takes place at the same time; on the one hand, we, by faith, totally surrender to our death in Christ, so that, on the other hand, the Spirit of Christ, who dwells in us, might manifest in and through us the life of Christ. This is how the Apostle Paul describes it: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthians 4:10-11; Philippians 3:10).

What, then, is the conclusion of the matter? When we combine the blood of Christ (His death for our sins) with the cross of Christ (our death in Him) we have indeed discovered the wonderful power of the cross, full and complete, and we can rejoice with Paul and say, "God forbid that I should

glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
Such is the blessing God has for each one of us in
the cross of Christ, for “the cross is to them that
perish foolishness, but unto us that are saved the
power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Chapter 9

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit (Part 1)

The work of the Holy Spirit plays a most important role in the subjective gospel, for while salvation full and complete has already been prepared and provided in Christ Jesus (the objective gospel), nevertheless it is the work of the Holy Spirit to communicate this salvation to the fallen human race (2 Corinthians 13:14).

Our Lord made it clear to His disciples at the end of His earthly ministry, that after He would ascend to His Father He would send the Holy Spirit whose work would be to guide them into all truth and make real in their experience that which He had prepared for them (John 16:13-15; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18). Every believer, therefore, should be fully aware of the work of the Holy Spirit, so that he may know how to cooperate with Him in the divine program of salvation in Christ.

In making a study of the work of the Holy Spirit, we will see that it is threefold: (1) in the life of the unbeliever; (2) in the life of the believer, and (3) in the life of the church. We will consider each one separately since these threefold aspects of the Holy Spirit's work have important distinctions.

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Unbeliever

The truth of the gospel is beyond the reach of the natural mind, no matter how educated it is (1 Corinthians 2:10-14) and, therefore, it cannot be discovered or derived naturally (Matthew 16:16-17; 1 Corinthians 12:3). Further, the Good News of the gospel is also foolishness to our carnal way of thinking (1 Corinthians 1:18).

In view of all this, the work of the Holy Spirit becomes necessary in the gospel program, for without Him no one could discern the truth as it is in Christ, or be convicted of it, no matter how well he may know the Scriptures. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned; nor could he experience the

power of the gospel without the Holy Spirit.

For this reason no Christian can claim that he has “won” so many souls; this privilege belongs solely to the Holy Spirit. Man at his very best can only be a humble instrument in the hands of God through whom the gospel is preached and witnessed. The experience of the disciples at the cross (their failure) and at Pentecost (their success) clearly revealed this (Acts 1:8).

In John 16:8, Jesus indicated clearly what the work of the Holy Spirit would be: “When he [the Holy Spirit] is come, he will reprove the world [the unbelievers] of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” This is the first step in man’s salvation. Sinful fallen man has to be convicted of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to do this through the preaching of the gospel.

Notice that the word “sin” here is not used by our Lord with reference to the transgression of the law (since the world may not be familiar with the

law of God), but is spoken of in terms of unbelief. Note verse 9: “Of sin, because they believe not in me,” (see also Romans 14:23). This is because man is not lost because he has committed sins, but because he is without Christ; that is to say, he is born of Adam and therefore already stands condemned in him. This we already discussed in Chapter 4, “The Two Adams,” when we saw how man’s eternal destiny does not rest on what we do (our behavior), but rather on the issue to which humanity we belong.

Consequently, those who are “in Adam” come under the condemnation of the law, since they are constituted or regarded as sinners, while those who by faith are “in Christ” are reckoned as a righteous people and have, therefore, passed from death unto life (John 5:24). Hence, the first work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the unbeliever is to convict him that he is a lost sinner because he is not “in Christ” by faith.

Secondly, and along with the above conviction, the Holy Spirit convicts sinful man that

righteousness can only be found “in Christ”; all the righteousness man can produce in and of himself is equated with filthy rags (valueless) in God’s eyes (Isa. 64:6). Going back to John 16:10 we read, “Of righteousness, because I go to my Father.” The going to the Father simply indicates that the work of redemption is a finished work, for we read in Hebrews 10:12, 13, “This man [Christ], after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever [a finished work], sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.”

The dispensation of the work of the Holy Spirit in the fullest sense could not begin until the sacrifice of the atonement made through Christ was complete. Now that Christ is in heaven, having prepared salvation full and complete by a perfect sacrifice, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to complete the work of His atonement in sinful man who is willing to believe (Romans 5:11).

Finally, the unbeliever must be convicted of the judgment, “because the prince of this world is

judged” (John 16:11). All men who hear the gospel must also be made aware that this world under Satan has already been judged unto destruction, and the only hope for the worldly man is to respond by faith to the free gift of salvation in Christ (John 3:16). But there is Good News in this judgment: Jesus explains the “judgment” of the prince of the world as his being “cast out” (John 12:31). The sinner can rejoice to believe that Satan is “cast out” of his life when he exercises faith in the Saviour.

Jesus made it clear in Matthew 25:41 that the everlasting fires of destruction have been prepared only for “the devil and his angels,” but if men reject the free gift of salvation prepared for them in Christ (Matthew 25:34), then God has no alternative but to include these unbelievers in the destruction of this doomed world (Hebrews 10:26-29). For this reason, the preaching of the true gospel, which will be realized once again in these last days (Matthew 24:14; Rev. 14:6), includes the fact that “Babylon the great [symbol of Satan’s world and which includes worldly Christianity] is

fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils” (Rev. 18:1-3); 14:8). Man’s only hope therefore is to “come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Rev. 18:4).

The church to whom our Lord has commissioned the preaching of the everlasting gospel must realize the threefold process of the work of the Holy Spirit in saving this lost world. Too often our preaching of the gospel is not according to the divine pattern, so that the Holy Spirit is hindered in convicting the world “of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” May God give us the wisdom to preach the true gospel to our modern world, wherein millions are without Christ and therefore without hope.

The Experience of Conversion

Before we can proceed to the second aspect of the Holy Spirit’s work in the life of the believer, it is necessary that we understand the mechanics of the conversion experience. When an individual

responds positively to the threefold convictions of the Holy Spirit, repents, believes, or surrenders to the truth as it is in Christ, and is baptized (Mark 1:14, 15; 16:15, 16), a radical change takes place in his life in that the Holy Spirit actually comes and indwells the new believer (Acts 2:37-41).

The Bible refers to this experience as the new birth or regeneration (John 3:3-5; Tit. 3:5; 1 Peter 1:23). This indwelling of the Holy Spirit is, of course, the same as receiving the life of Christ (Romans 8:2, 10); and it is this that really changes man's position and status from being "in Adam" to being "in Christ," and which, in turn, qualifies the believer for heaven (Romans 8:9).

Thus, it may be said that the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the unbeliever is from without, while the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer is from within. By this I mean that while the convictions of the Holy Spirit with reference to truth in the unbeliever as well as the believer are both felt and experienced in the conscience, nevertheless the unbeliever is not "indwelt" by the

Holy Spirit, while the believer has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19).

This is a most important distinction, for Jesus made it clear to Nicodemus that “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). We will discuss in the next section how the Holy Spirit works within the believer, but at this point it is important that we understand the difference between the unbeliever and the believer with reference to the Holy Spirit.

As long as a person is not “indwelt” by the Holy Spirit, he is in a lost state, even though he may receive the convictions of the Holy Spirit or may even be a church member (Romans 8:9). But to be born again of the Holy Spirit is, on the other hand, to be quickened or made alive from sin’s death (Ephesians 2:1, 5). This is true or genuine conversion, the beginning of the Christian life.

To be converted, therefore, is one and the same thing as being born of the Holy Spirit (new birth), and it is this experience that changes our status

from an unbeliever to a believer. Also, it is this experience which justifies a believer (James 5:20) and places him in a position where sanctification is possible, because now he possesses the very life of Christ through the indwelling Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:2).

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Believer

When we study the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, we will discover that it is to reproduce in the believer the character of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose character was that of God (John 14:9).

Man was originally created with the Holy Spirit dwelling in him so that through Him he might reflect God in his character. But, as a result of the fall, man is born into this world without God, and is, therefore, spiritually bankrupt. The purpose of the gospel, besides saving man, is to undo the damage brought by Adam's original sin so that the divine image might be restored in man. And the starting point of the gospel as a subjective

experience is the new birth.

In other words, the prerequisite for holiness of living is being born of the Holy Spirit, not only for salvation, but also for the purpose of fulfilling God's original plan for man, which was to reflect His glory of self-sacrificing love.

Every believer must be fully aware of the above facts, and this applies in a special way to this last generation of Christians, for it is through God's remnant people that this earth is to be lightened with His glory (Rev. 18:1; Rev. 14:12). Full provision for the restoration of God's image in man has already been made in the humanity of Christ and through His redeeming work. But it is the responsibility and work of the Holy Spirit to make this real in the life of every believer who has become one with Christ and who is living by faith or walking by the Spirit.

As we saw previously, to deliver us from our position in Adam and this doomed world and to establish us into Christ and His church is the first

task of the Holy Spirit. Having done this in the case of the true believer, the Holy Spirit now dwells in him or her in order to put into effect the deeper work of the cross of Christ, by which the old life is in reality put to death daily more and more so, that the life of Christ in turn may be increasingly manifested (2 Corinthians 4:10-11; 3:17, 18; Ephesians 3:16-19; 4:4-13).

The work of holiness of living is not left for the believer to produce, but it is the sole work of the Holy Spirit. It is for this reason that Christ has sent Him to indwell every believer. If every Christian would realize this, self-effort would come to an end and we would make room for the third person of the Godhead to manifest in us the life of our Lord. This was the situation of the apostles at Pentecost and this is how it must be with us today.

This second aspect of the Holy Spirit's work, which is in the life of every converted believer, is referred to in Scripture as the process of sanctification and which, according to the Apostle Paul, involves the spirit, soul, and body (1

Thessalonians 5:23). The significance of this important work can only be understood and appreciated in the light of the spiritual makeup of man. Just as a doctor has to know man's physical makeup (anatomy) in order to help his physical ailments, so also the believer must be familiar with his spiritual makeup in order that he might cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the work of sanctification.

When we consider man's physical structure as a doctor does, we discover that he is made up of various components or organs, each having a specific function within the body but which at the same time are closely related to each other. So likewise, when we look at man through the spectacles of Scripture, or as a spiritual being, we will discover that he is made up of three components or organs (spirit, soul and body), each having a specific work in the spiritual realm, but which, at the same time, are closely interrelated to each other.

The great error of the Christian church after the

apostolic period was to separate the body from the soul and give the soul a separate existence independent of the body. This concept was borrowed from the Orphic religion of the Greeks and is not a Biblical teaching. According to Scripture, the function of each of these three elements or components is distinct, contributing to the spiritual existence of the whole man, but none of these is able to exist independent of the others, so that at death the whole man, spirit, soul and body dies, or in Bible terminology, sleeps unconsciously (Ezek. 18:4, 20; Eccl. 9:5, 6; 8:8).

In examining the spiritual structure of man as revealed in Scripture, we will find that there exists a definite connection between the tabernacle or sanctuary as outlined in the Old Testament, and the temple of God in the New Testament, which is the Christian himself or herself (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19), because the Sanctuary was a type or symbol of Christ incarnate (Ps. 29:9; John 2:19-21; Rev. 21:3; also compare Ps. 77:13 with John 14:4-6). In turn, He is the prototype of the regenerate believer (Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:5; Hebrews 3:4-6; 1

Corinthians 6:16).

You will notice in reading your Bible that the promises of God as given under the new covenant are but the reality of the type as seen in the sanctuary of the old covenant (Jer. 31:33, 34; Ezk. 36:26, 27; Hebrews 8:6-13; 2 Corinthians 2-6, RSV).

In the old covenant the law was written on tables of stone and placed in the ark. In the new covenant, the same law is written in our hearts and placed in the “inward man” (Romans 7:22). In the old, God dwelt in the innermost part of the tabernacle, while in the new, God in the person of His Spirit dwells in the innermost part of man (Ezek. 36:27; John 14:17; Rom 8:9, 11). In the old, the sanctuary structure represented the temple of God but, in the new, the Christian himself becomes a temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19).

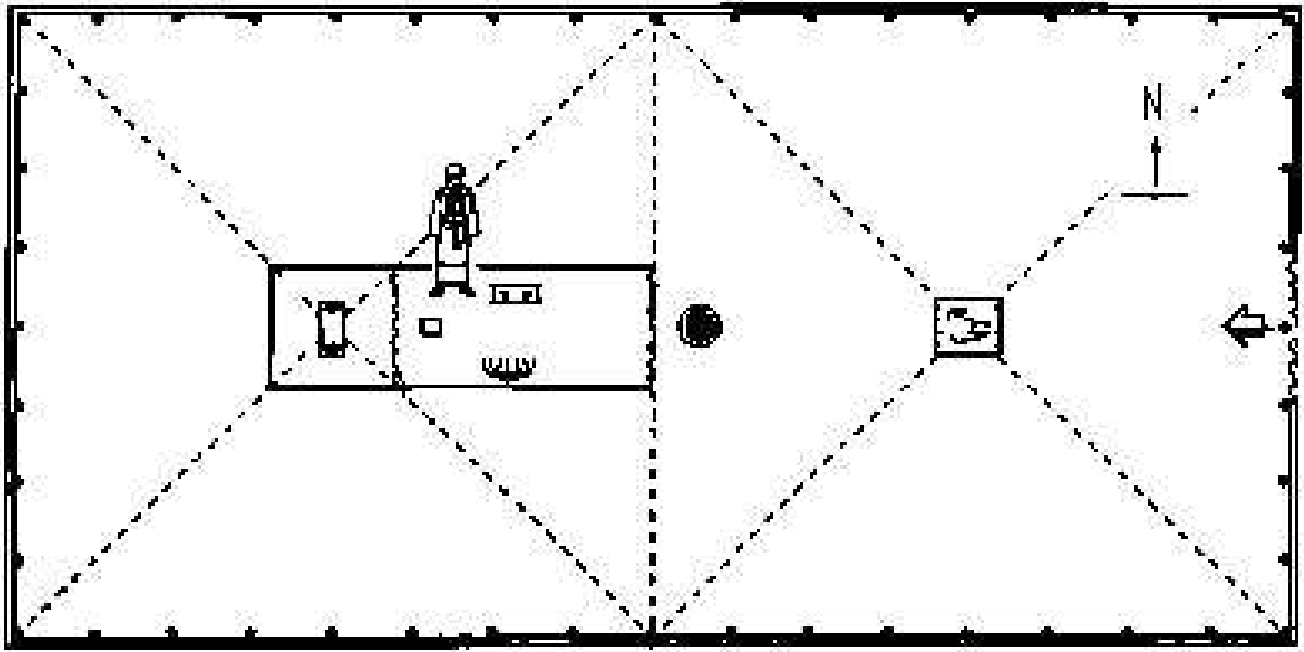
Thus, as God formerly dwelt in the tabernacle (Ex. 25:8), so the Holy Spirit indwells the believer today. We know that the sanctuary of the old

covenant was divided into three parts (Ex. 25:8-27; 18; Hebrews 9:2-4): the courtyard, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place. This was a “pattern” of the “true tabernacle” in heaven (Hebrews 8:1-2). Likewise, the believer who in reality represents God’s temple on earth (Isa. 57:15) is divided into three parts. The body with its various members may be compared with the courtyard, occupying an external position with its life visible to all; this is the place of sacrifice (Romans 12:1; Colossians 3:5). Inside is man’s soul, which constitutes the faculties of his mind (i.e., the emotions, the will, and the intellect) through which God operates. This corresponds with the Holy Place, where the daily ministry of the priest was carried out. Innermost and behind the second veil and within man’s self-consciousness lies the human spirit, which may be compared to the Most Holy Place, the dwelling place of God. In the converted man, the Holy Spirit dwells in man’s spirit; it represents for him “the secret place of the Most High.”

The following is a simple diagram of the sanctuary, God’s temple in the old covenant, which

was a shadow or type of the Christian who in Christ is the reality, the temple of God in the new covenant. The sanctuary, in other words, typified Christ, in the first place, with the believer in Him (“you in Christ” — the objective gospel), and secondly it also typified the Christian himself (“Christ in you” — the subjective gospel).

Thus we may say that the sanctuary of the Old Testament was God’s model plan of the everlasting gospel which was first fulfilled in Christ and must now be realized in the church, of which each believer is a part. The cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary is a work accomplished by the High Priest, but it is contingent on the cleansing of the hearts of His people on earth.



Having discovered that spiritually man is constituted of spirit, soul, and body, we can now proceed to consider the place and function of each of these elements and their relationship to the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit

Every believer must realize he has a spirit, otherwise it will be impossible for him to “worship the Father in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23, 24). Instead he will worship God according to his feelings, the thoughts and emotions of the soul being no true worship, which unfortunately is the

problem with much of our worship today. The Bible teaches clearly that every person possesses a spirit. This spirit must not be confused with our breath, nor equated with our soul, nor identified with the Holy Spirit. The following texts give ample proof that man, as created by God, possesses a spirit:

- **Proverbs 25:28:** “He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.”

- **Zechariah 12:1:** “Saith the Lord, which ... formeth the spirit of man within him.”

- **1 Corinthians 2:11:** “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him...?”

- **Romans 8:16:** “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.”

Besides the above texts, many others indicate

that man has a spirit; and this was what God had primarily in mind when He declared, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen. 1:26), for “God is a Spirit” (John 4:24). It is man’s spirit that makes him above all different from the animals; and it is for this reason that we find even the most primitive man worshiping some form of a god. The spirit of man desires to commune with the spirit world, just as our bodies communicate with the material world and through our souls (minds) we are social beings. Man, in other words is a spiritual, social, and physical being because he is made up of spirit, soul, and body.

The spirit of man was created or formed by God in order that He might have a dwelling place in man, as a result of which He could control and direct man’s mind or soul, which, in turn, must control the whole body (Colossians 2:19). Thus the whole man, living in total dependence on God who indwelt him in his spirit, could reflect the very character of God, which character is selfless love (1 John 4:7, 8). This was God’s original plan and purpose for man when He created this world and

our first parents.

But, sad to say, the entrance of sin marred this wonderful program. When Adam sinned, the Holy Spirit left him, leaving his spirit vacant. As a result, Adam's life was plunged into darkness (selfishness replaces love) and he came under the dominion of Satan (2 Peter 2:19). This is how, unfortunately, all the children of Adam are born, not "indwelt" by God, and slaves to the devil and sin. Thus, using fallen man as his tool, Satan has developed this world in total opposition to God (see Chapter 1). Therefore, men born in this world, uninhabited by God's Spirit, can only walk "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2).

Nevertheless, sinful man has not been left without a hope, for "blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). The plan of redemption formulated in the mind of God "before the

foundation of the world” (see Ephesians 1:4) was designed to recover man fully from his fallen state and restore in him the image of God. This is what Christ has prepared for each one of us in His humanity, and which now is made available to the believer through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Before conversion, the spirit of man is not filled by God’s Spirit so that its function can hardly be felt, except for the convictions made by the Holy Spirit from without. Consequently, that which dominates the whole man prior to the new birth is the soul with its life of self, or in some cases, the body with its lusts—neither of which life is pleasing to God. However, at conversion the spirit of man is regenerated or made alive by the coming and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Man’s spirit after conversion becomes the dwelling place of God and the seat of His will. This is what we referred to earlier as the new birth experience, which experience is absolutely essential to justification and which is the prerequisite to sanctification; the process by which God’s character is reproduced in man.

The believer who has experienced the new birth is a born-again person who has received the life of Christ in the person of the Holy Spirit. Such an individual is described in Scripture as a babe in Christ (1 Corinthians 3:1), who is saved from the guilt and punishment of sin and is accounted righteous (justified) but who has yet to learn to “walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16). Just as a new born baby has to learn to walk on its feet, so also a babe in Christ must now learn to walk in the power of the indwelling Spirit; this is the process of sanctification.

And as the Holy Spirit begins to increase in strength, that is, to control the life of the believer (this is only realized as we learn to walk by faith alone, which is by the spirit), two things will be manifested: a change will be seen in the believer’s character so that it begins to reflect more and more the character of Christ, and the Christian will begin to distinguish between that which proceeds from his spirit and that which comes from the self-life of the soul. This is the separation spoken of in

Hebrews 4:12 between soul and spirit, which is produced by the Word.

It is in our spirit that God regenerates us, teaches us, and leads us into His rest. But sad to say, due to long years of bondage to the self-life of the soul, many Christians know very little of their spirit and the “Spirit of life” that dwells in them and which is able to make them “free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2). We ought to tremble before God daily, asking Him earnestly to teach us through experience what is spiritual and what proceeds merely from the feelings and emotions of the soul. Even in our Bible study we tend to depend and rely more on our mental ability (hence the emphasis on education and degrees) rather than letting the Spirit guide us into all truth (1 Corinthians 2:12-14; John 16:13).

Chapter 10

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit (Part 2)

The element which makes us human belongs is the soul. Some of these elements are the ability to learn and think, our ideals, love or hate, feelings, discernment, choice and decisions, etc. Numerous examples are to be found in the Bible in the original languages of the Old and New Testaments where the word “soul” is used to refer to man as a person [Genesis 14:21; Exodus 1:5; Deuteronomy 10:22; Acts 2:41; 7:14; Romans 13:1]. This is because the seat and essence of man’s personality is to be found in the soul, where dwell the faculties of the mind [Job 7:15], the will [Proverbs 2:10, 19], our knowledge [2 Samuel 5:8; Job 10:1; John 12:27], and the emotions.

Since the soul is the seat of our personality, it is the seat of the real “I.” For this reason the Scriptures often use the word “soul” in the original

as a personal pronoun such as I, you, me [Genesis 12:13; Deuteronomy 23:24; Mark 14:34]. Therefore, our “self” is our soul. Hence, everything that originates from the soul is polluted with self, which the Bible equates with iniquity (see Chapter 1); that is why self-righteous acts are condemned in the judgment as works of iniquity [Matthew 7:21-23].

Again, since everything originating from man’s soul is infected with self, the Bible often uses the word “soul” to refer to self. Two examples that may be cited are Leviticus 11:43 and Esther 9:31.

The soul, with its life of self, is man’s natural life and is referred to in the Scriptures as “the flesh” [Galatians 3:3; Romans 8:4]. This is an important fact that all Christians must realize, for it bears greatly upon whether one becomes a spiritual Christian or remains a carnal (fleshly) believer [Romans 8:5-6]. Since the life of the soul is none other than the life of self, the thoughts, desires, opinions, love, feelings, etc., that originate or proceed from the soul are all controlled by self.

This is our natural life, because we inherit it at birth.

Consequently, such a life is the life of the flesh, which is the only life the unconverted man can live; and nothing we do of ourselves can change this life, not even education or culture. But sad to say, this life of the flesh is also the experience of the carnal believer [1 Corinthians 3:3], a life that is a contradiction to Christ and the life of the Holy Spirit.

In the wholly sanctified man, however, the self-life of the soul is crucified through the application of the cross of Christ [Galatians 5:24]. As a result, that which proceeds from the soul (mind) as well as the behavior of the body is now under the direction and authority of the Holy Spirit which indwells the believer's spirit. Such a life is the life of Christ reproduced in the believer, and is well pleasing to God.

This brings us now to our main point and that is the operation or work of the Holy Spirit in the life

of the believer. We have established the fact that the Holy Spirit dwells in the spirit of the believer; but it is in the believer's soul or mind that He operates. Just as God, in the sanctuary of the Old Testament, dwelt in the Most Holy Place, but directed His people through the ministry of the Holy Place [Urim and Thummim, Exodus 28:30; Numbers 27:21], so likewise the same procedure is followed in the human temple. God's Spirit dwells in the believer's spirit but operates through his soul. When this happens, the believer has the mind of Christ [Philippians 2:5].

It must be made clear at this point that the believer's body — and, therefore, his behavior — is never controlled directly by the Holy Spirit but is done through the soul (mind). Going back to the earthly sanctuary, we notice that access to the Most Holy Place was only possible through the Holy Place, so that it was impossible to communicate from the Most Holy Place to the courtyard except through the Holy Place. Similarly, the Holy Spirit dwelling in the believer's spirit (represented by the Most Holy Place) can have access or controls his

body only through his soul (symbolized by the Holy Place).

In order to see how this works in actual practice, we must consider the life of Christ, for He is the prototype and our example. The humanity of Christ was identical to that of ours in every point [Hebrews 2:17], so that the body He received through Mary was a body of sin [Galatians 4:4; Romans 1:3] which was dominated by the law of sin [see Romans 8:2-3].

For this reason, Christ could be and was tempted in all points as we are [Hebrews 4:15] through the lust of the flesh [James 1:14]. However, from His birth or conception Christ was born of the Spirit [Luke 1:35] and, from the very beginning of His earthly existence, He learned to walk in the Spirit, so that Luke could declare, “The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit.” Thus the mind or soul of Christ from the very start of His human history was under the full control of the Holy Spirit who dwelt in His Spirit [see Luke 4:1, for example].

The temptations of Christ came to Him through the sinful (selfish) desires of His flesh as mentioned above, the same way as do ours. For example, it was through bodily wants that Satan tempted Him in the wilderness to use His divine power to satisfy self, independent of His Father's will [Luke 4:2-4]; or again, it was the natural fear of death (self-love of the flesh) that led Jesus to plead thrice with His Father to remove the bitter cup of the cross [Mark 14:34-41].

But the fact is that the self-centered desires of the flesh cannot be satisfied without the consent of the mind or soul; in other words, temptation in and of itself is not sin until the mind consents to the temptation. "When lust hath conceived [in the mind], it bringeth forth sin" [James 1:14-15]. But since the mind of Christ was under the full control of the Holy Spirit, the response of His mind to every temptation was "No!" That is to say, "not my (self) will, but thine [God's] be done." Therefore, sin had no part in His life [John 6:38]; but instead He condemned sin (the law of sin) in the flesh

[Romans 8:2-3].

Christ's flesh, being sinful flesh like ours, lusted after sin, but his mind being spiritual, never yielded to sin and therefore He conquered sin in the flesh, through the power of the Spirit. So likewise, if we have the mind of Christ, or to put it in Paul's words, if we put on "the Lord Jesus Christ," we will make no "provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lust thereof" [Romans 13:14].

In Hebrews 2:18 we read, "For in that he [Christ] himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." Every time Christ was tempted, He suffered. We know that Christ was tempted as we are, otherwise His being able "to succour them that are tempted" would become meaningless. But the question we must ask is, where did Christ suffer being tempted?

The answer is found in 1 Peter 4:1, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise [like Christ] with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath

ceased from sin.”

Please note that the suffering of Christ which Peter is referring to has to do with victory over sin and not His suffering on the cross. Christ being tempted in the flesh suffered in the flesh [see Hebrews 2:10], but His victory was in the mind. So also says Peter, if we arm ourselves with the mind of Christ, which was the mind of the Spirit, sin will cease in our lives, but the flesh will suffer [see Romans 8:5-10]. This is because the nature of the flesh, as we will discuss later on in this Chapter, cannot alter, but will always desire to sin and therefore must suffer if not satisfied.

It is in the mind or the soul that Christ gives the believer victory over sin through His indwelling Spirit. In fact, it is this to which Paul was referring when he declared in Romans 7:25, “So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.” Note also the admonition found in Romans 12:2, “And be not conformed to this world [i.e., “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16)], but

be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind [surrendering the mind to the Spirit], that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” The mind is surrendered to the Spirit by a continual attitude of prayer. This is what is meant by “praying in the mind.”

In the unbeliever, the soul as well as the body is under the dominion of sin (self-life), so that perfect harmony exists between the two. Paul made this clear to the Ephesians when he reminded them of their former or pre-converted life which was “fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind” [Ephesians 2:3]. This is because the life of the soul is also the life of the body in the unconverted man, which life has been contaminated with self, as a result of the fall. In the carnal Christian who is born of the Spirit but still walking after or in the power of the flesh (self-life), the mind may desire to do the will of God but, unaided by the Spirit, it cannot overcome the law of sin in our members [Romans 7:22-23].

Such a life is therefore also marred by sin,

although the person may not be as grievous a sinner as the unbeliever. But the spiritual Christian is one who is not only born of the Spirit but is by faith absolutely surrendered to the Spirit (has the mind of Christ), so that it is no longer “the old man” but Christ, through His Spirit, that is living in him. Thus, “the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” [Romans 8:4].

The Body

The body in fallen man is the instrument which gives expression to the self-life of the soul. What the soul (mind) wills is expressed through the body.

The body as created by God was made to be a servant of the soul, which in turn was to be under the direction and authority of God’s Spirit dwelling in man’s spirit. Thus, the desires of the body — such as sex, hunger, love, etc. — as originally created by God were to be controlled by God through the soul (mind) so that man’s behavior

would reflect the character of God.

But when man sinned and separated himself from God's authority, becoming independent, the natural desires of the body, now polluted with self, became lust, satisfying self rather than God. Thus, man's nature became perverted so that the lust of the flesh became the controlling factor in man's life. Hence, the life of fallen man is in harmony with the principle of self originated by Satan, which is the very opposite of what God originally planned for man.

According to Scripture, our bodies in their sinful condition are referred to as "the body of sin" [Romans 6:6]. This is because the principle of sin — which is the principle of self — has permeated every member of the human body [Romans 6:6; 7:23].

The body in and of itself is not sinful, but it is the self-life that motivates the body and which originates from the unregenerated soul that is sinful and therefore makes our "flesh" sinful. And this

body with its life of sin is beyond repair. For this reason, the believer looks forward to the Second Advent when our sinful bodies will be redeemed [Romans 8:23; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Corinthians 15:50-54]. Until then, the principle of the cross — which is the principle of self-denial — must daily be applied through the Holy Spirit to our sinful lives [Luke 9:23].

The body of sinful man, as well as his soul, are both under the power of self so that at his very best, without God, he is totally self-seeking. This is the clear teaching of Scripture: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way” [Isaiah 53:6; Philippians 2:21; 2 Timothy 3:1-2]. Thus, the natural life of man is the life of the flesh which we must now consider.

The Flesh

The natural self-life of the soul and body together make up the life of the “flesh.” Man becomes flesh by birth [John 3:6]. The natural man, therefore, cannot live any other life but the

life of the flesh. Man may educate himself and become highly cultured, but he will still live the life of the flesh. That is to say, selfishness in one way or another will be the controlling factor in his life. The unconverted man is powerless to fulfill any of God's will being "weakened by the flesh" [Romans 8:3].

In fact, the flesh is hostile to the Spirit of God and will not truly submit to God's law; indeed it cannot [Galatians 5:17; Romans 8:7]. Every believer must fully realize that the corruption of the flesh is unrepairable [1 Corinthians 15:50-53]. Great though His power is, God will not transform the nature of the flesh into something that is pleasing to Him. This is because the self-life of the flesh belongs to the realm of Satan, which realm is condemned by God unto destruction. For this reason, at the cross Christ crucified the flesh [Hebrews 10:19-20].

Both the soul and the body are by nature of the "flesh." The unbeliever and, unfortunately, many Christians do not understand God's Word, and are

therefore always trying to improve or reform the flesh. The flesh, being sinful, is deceitful [Jeremiah 17:9], so that it can appear good on the surface to oneself and others; but within it is “full of hypocrisy and iniquity” [Matthew 23:25-28]. Hence all genuine attempts to improve the flesh, either by punishing the body or making promises and resolutions, are bound to meet with failure. Due to its exceeding corruption, God warns His people to hate “even the garment spotted by the flesh” [Jude 23].

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh,” said Jesus [John 3:6], and therefore it will always remain so. God recognizes the impossibility of the “flesh” to be changed, improved, or bettered, since its originator, the devil, cannot change. In saving man, therefore, from the power of sinful flesh, He does not try to change the flesh but has put it to death through the cross of Christ, and instead gives man a new life, the life of His Spirit. The flesh must be crucified! This is salvation from the power of sin [Galatians 5:24]. Once the self-life of the soul surrenders to the cross of Christ by faith, this

makes it possible for the Spirit to take over the faculties of the soul (mind).

It is important at this point that the reader also understand the dual works or behavior of the flesh. When the lust of the body dominates the life of an individual, such a life is full of wickedness. However, when the soul dominates a man he may live by high moral standards (like moralists), so that his civic character may be a fairly good one. Nevertheless, the lives of both of these individuals are the life of the “flesh,” even though their outward characters may be very different.

The acts (or behavior) of the flesh may therefore be divided into two distinct categories: (1) sinful acts and (2) self-righteous acts. The sinful acts mainly proceed from the lusts of the body and you will find a list of these acts enumerated in Galatians 5:19-21, referred to as “the works of the flesh.”

The self-righteous acts, on the other hand, proceed from the soul and do not resemble the

defiling sins of the body. On the contrary, they are good, often religious, and commendable acts. The self-righteous acts of Paul before his conversion are a good example [Philippians 3:4-6]. Believers may hate the sinful acts of the flesh, but often they love the self-righteous acts [Galatians 6:12-13].

But in God's sight, both these works are condemned as sin or iniquity [Isaiah 64:6; Matthew 7:22-23]. It is only when we realize this that we will be able to appreciate the stand Paul took with reference to his self-righteousness, "But what things were gain to me [his previous self-righteousness] those I counted loss for Christ ... and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own [self] righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" [Philippians 3:7-9].

From the human point of view, the self-righteous acts are highly valued, but from God's point of view all the good acts of the soul (or flesh) are hostile to the Holy Spirit. This is because the

flesh makes self the center and elevates self-will above God's will. The soul may serve God, but always according to its own idea or feelings, not according to God's. It may even try to keep God's law with all its power, yet self never fails to be at the heart of every activity. In 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, the apostle Paul divides all believers into two classes: the spiritual Christian in whom the indwelling Spirit of God controls the whole person, spirit, soul, and body; and the carnal Christian who has experienced the new birth [see vs. 16] but is still dominated by the life of the flesh.

Consequently, the life of the carnal Christian is not much different from that of the ordinary man (i.e., the unbeliever). The spiritual Christian, on the other hand, is reflecting the life of Christ, being filled (i.e., wholly controlled) by the Holy Spirit [Luke 4:1; Acts 2:4; 11:24; Ephesians 5:18].

The major problem facing the Christian church today is the problem of carnality. The churches are full of babies in Christ, even though the believers on the whole are "old" Christians. According to

Paul, this was the problem of the Corinthian and Galatian churches [1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Galatians 3:1-3]. History has repeated itself, sad to say, but thank God it is not too late to repent. May every believer learn, therefore, that there can be no partnership between the flesh and the Spirit and that the only formula for the Christian life is, “Not I, but Christ.”

Hence, victory over the flesh should be the deep longing of every believer living in these last days, since the glory of God is to lighten the whole world in our day [Revelation 18:1]. And this victory is gained through the deeper work of the cross, as the Holy Spirit daily brings it to bear upon us. Once a believer has by faith reckoned himself crucified with Christ [Romans 6:11], he must now allow God’s Spirit to put this into effect, crucifying daily the self of the flesh. Each time self pops up its ugly head, the Spirit will bring conviction; our reaction must not be to defend or excuse ourselves but to surrender this self to the cross of Christ. When self is completely crucified in God’s people, then the splendor of God’s glory will shine forth

through our mortal bodies [Romans 8:11-14]. Such believers are ready to meet their Lord without tasting death.

The deeper work of the cross, which is to remove our self-life so that the Spirit might reproduce in us the character of Christ, is often spoken of in the Bible as fiery trials and chastenings [Hebrews 12:5-11; 1 Peter 4:12-13]. Though painful to the flesh at the time, “nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” [Hebrews 12:11]. It was only through suffering in the flesh that Christ was able to produce righteousness in sinful flesh [Hebrews 2:10, 18; 5:8-9].

Likewise, “he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin” [1 Peter 4:11]. Therefore, we who rejoice in Christ Jesus must also rejoice in His suffering, so that His name may be glorified on earth. “Let this mind, therefore, be in you which was in Christ Jesus,” so that you no longer live the rest of your life in the flesh to the lusts of men, but

to the will of God [Philippians 2:5; 1 Peter 4:2].

In concluding this most important section, with reference to the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, I trust it has become clear that there is no aspect of the Christian life that is independent of the Holy Spirit's influence. The total life of the Christian is intended by God to be a life guided and controlled by the Spirit of God [Proverbs 3:5-6]. Thus, the Bible clearly teaches that the Holy Spirit is the one who liberates us from this self-life of sin [2 Corinthians 3:17-18], is the means of our sanctification [2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2], guides us into all truth [John 16:13], makes our prayers meaningful [Romans 8:26; Jude 20], and gives us the power to witness the gospel [Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8]. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of every believer.

Therefore, putting self aside, by surrendering to our death on the cross of Christ, let us make full provision for the third person of the Godhead to communicate unto us the full salvation prepared and provided for us in Christ Jesus.

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church

The work of the Holy Spirit does not stop in the life of the individual believer, but also involves the life of the whole church. Every believer has been baptized into the body of Christ, which is the church, by the Holy Spirit: “By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” [1 Corinthians 12:13]. The new birth does not only put us into Christ but also identifies us with His body, so that “we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another” [Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 10:17; 12:12]. Thus, the indwelling Spirit becomes the connecting link that unites all believers together to form the body of Christ, the church.

Hence, according to the New Testament teaching, the church is a closely knit body of believers, with no distinctions whatsoever of race,

color, sex, or status [Galatians 3:26-28]. It is a fellowship of men and women who are all by faith one in Christ and who are to be perfectly united and coordinated for the purpose of manifesting the life of God in the same way that Christ manifested it in His human body when He was on this earth [John 14:9; 1 Timothy 3:16].

But sad to say, the Christian church has miserably failed to do this, so that our present world has not really had an opportunity to see what God is like. For this reason, every believer must come to the realization that salvation in Christ is more than a personal way of escape from eternal damnation. Every person saved in Christ is saved “unto good works” [Ephesians 2:10; Matthew 5:16; Colossians 1:10; 1 Peter 2:12]; and this is within the framework of the church, which is to be the salt and light of the world.

Unless we who call ourselves Christians know this and are willing to be instruments in the hands of God’s Spirit, the world which consists of more than 75 percent non-Christians will never really

witness the power of the gospel, and this means millions will go down into Christless graves.

The apostle Paul makes it clear that every member of the church has a specific function in relationship to the body, as allotted by the Holy Spirit [Romans 12:5-8; 1 Corinthians 12:14-26; Ephesians 4:11-15; 1 Peter 4:10-11]. These texts indicate clearly that every believer has been endowed with one or more gifts of the Spirit through which the church itself is to be ministered to and by which the church as the representative of Christ is to witness Him to the world. Thus together, the church as the body of Christ, is to manifest God in the flesh.

In other words, it is only through the church as a whole that the life of Christ can be fully displayed. No individual member can fully display or manifest Christ completely, for the simple reason that no individual member is the total body of Christ. Therefore, it takes the church as a united body, living in perfect coordination and conformity to the directions of the Holy Spirit, to manifest the

totality of Christ to the world. It is this that will take place before Christ comes, and which the Bible refers to as “the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets” [Revelation 10:7; Colossians 1:25-27].

From the above facts it becomes obvious that, besides His work in the life of the individual believer, the Holy Spirit has a most important work to do in the life of the church. This work as we have already implied is two-fold. In the first place, He bestows gifts upon the church for the specific purpose of developing the body of Christ until it grows “unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” [Ephesians 4:13]. Such gifts are prophesy [1 Corinthians 14:3-4]; evangelists, pastors, and teachers, etc. [Ephesians 4:11-13]. And secondly, the Holy Spirit bestows gifts upon the church in order that she may demonstrate and witness the power of God to a lost world. Such gifts are miracles, tongues, healing, etc. [1 Corinthians 12:8-11; 14:22].

After almost 2,000 years of church history, it is

both sad and unfortunate that neither has the church grown unto the fullness of Christ, nor has it fully displayed the life of God in the flesh. In view of this, should we, 20th Century Christians, not come to God in humility and corporate repentance for this failure of the church?

After all, the fault does not lie with God but with men. It is we who have distorted the truth of the gospel [Galatians 1:6, 7; 1 Timothy 4:1-2; 2 Timothy 4:3-4; 2 Peter 2:1], and have put the cause of self (including denominational pride) above the cause of Christ. Speaking of the last days the prophet Joel proclaimed, “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh” [Joel 2:28].

The question we need to ask ourselves is, When will God pour out His Spirit upon all flesh? The answer is given in Joel 2:12, 13, 17, 18: “Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning, and rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God....

Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them. Wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God? Then will the Lord be jealous for His land, and pity His people.”

It is this deep heartfelt repentance that God is patiently waiting for from His people. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent” [Revelation 3:19]. And when this is realized by the church corporate, then will He pour out His Spirit upon all flesh; and this earth will be “lightened with His glory” [Revelation 18:1].

“Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion [symbol of the church]; for the time to favor her, yea, the set time is come.... So the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory. When the Lord shall build up Zion [the church], He shall appear in His glory” [Psalms 102:13, 15-16].

“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely, I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus”
[Revelation 22:20].

Chapter 11

Law and Grace (Part 1)

During my missionary service in Uganda, a young African approached me with a sincere desire to witness for Christ. He asked, “Are you saved?”

After convincing him that I was a Christian, I returned his question, “Are you saved?”

“Praise the Lord, I am saved!” he replied enthusiastically.

“If you are saved,” I responded, “then how is it that I can smell pombe [the local beer] on your breath?”

Taken aback a bit, he answered with amazement, “Don’t you know that we are saved by grace and not by works?”

So I asked him to explain what he meant by “saved by grace.”

“Christ did it all,” he said.

“I see,” I said, “you mean that He lived a perfect life instead of you and died instead of you?”

“That’s it, you’ve got it!” he exclaimed.

“If that is true,” I teased, “then He also went to heaven instead of you.” Naturally, he was not willing to buy that.

Many Christians today, like this young man, have failed to understand the Biblical meaning of salvation by grace and, as a result, have accepted what the great German martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, aptly described as “cheap grace.” They believe that, because Christ did it all, a Christian has the liberty to live as his sinful nature likes. Nothing could be further from the truth, for the Bible teaches no such thing. How then are we to understand this wonderful truth of being saved by grace? And did Christ, in saving us by grace, do

away with the law, as many teach today?

Tension Between Law and Grace

Because of the seeming tension that exists between law and grace, many Christians find it difficult to reconcile the two. On the surface, the two seem to be antagonistic towards each other. The law demands obedience for salvation [Romans 10:5], while grace offers salvation as a free gift without works [Ephesians 2:8-9]. The law condemns the sinner [Galatians 3:10], while grace justifies the ungodly [Romans 4:5]. Consequently, the result is that many who accept God's offer of free grace reject the law.

The Old and New Testaments, however, do not present grace in opposition to the law. Both have their source in God, and God is not self-contradictory.

In trying to resolve the tension between law and grace, a great number of Christians today believe and teach the doctrine of

despensationalism: that salvation from Moses to Christ was based on man's obedience to the law, commonly known as the old covenant. But since Christ came and obtained eternal redemption for sinners, mankind is now saved by grace, the new covenant, and the law has been done away with. But Scripture does not support this idea.

Such teachings, which divide the Bible into sections or dispensations, not only deny the unity of Scripture but also contradict the clear teaching of the New Testament. Ever since the fall of man, God has had only one way of saving sinful mankind, and that is by grace, through His redemptive activity in Christ. In Romans 4, the apostle Paul clearly shows this. Abraham, the father of the Jews, he says, was not saved by works or through circumcision or keeping the law, but by faith in God's promise of salvation in His Son.

God never gave the law as a means of salvation; that idea is the perversion of the Jews [Romans 9:30-33]. Paul goes to great lengths to correct this error in his epistle to the Galatians

[Galatians 2:16]. God's purpose in giving man the law was primarily to convict him of sin [Romans 3:20], so that his gift of salvation may become meaningful. "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" [Galatians 3:24].

But because man is by nature egocentric, it does not take much for him to be trapped into legalism — salvation by the works of the law. At the heart of every pagan religion is the belief that man must save himself by his own good works. The Bible teaches that this is impossible, and man's only hope is salvation by faith in God's redeeming grace [Romans 3:20-22]. "Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" [Romans 3:28].

Not Under Law but Under Grace

Every born-again Christian must realize that he is no longer under law but under grace [Romans 6:14]. This is the great privilege of all who have accepted Christ as their Saviour. But what does it

mean to be under grace and how does this affect our lives as Christians?

If we are to understand what it means to be saved under grace we must first be clear on the Biblical terms of “under law” and “under grace.” Once we have grasped the true meaning of these phrases, only then will we appreciate the true value of being saved under grace, and will realize how this affects our lives and relationship to God’s law.

Under Law. This phrase means that our standing before God is based on our performance in terms of the law, which is a revelation of the express will of God. Being under law means justifying yourself in the presence of God by your behavior regarding the law — God’s measuring stick of righteousness. Law is always something which comes to a person and says, “Do this or don’t do that and you shall live” [Romans 10:5]. Failure to keep the law results in the curse: “Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” [Galatians 3:10].

This was the position of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Having created our first parents with a perfect sinless nature, God placed them under law: “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die’” [Genesis 2:16-17].

When Adam and Eve disobeyed this command they came under the condemnation of death, that is, they forfeited their lives. And since the human race is the multiplication of Adam’s life [Acts 17:26], and all mankind was in Adam when he sinned and therefore was implicated in his sin, this death sentence has passed on to all humanity [Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:22].

Due to the fall, being under the law also means being under the curse or condemnation of the law, and this is mankind’s plight; we are “by nature the children of wrath” [Ephesians 2:3]. No matter how

good an opinion we may have of ourselves, the fact is that we were born into a lost race. This is how Paul describes our predicament:

“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh [person] be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin” [Romans 3:19-20].

What the apostle is telling us here is that not only does mankind stand condemned under the law but that its demands are also beyond our possibilities. It was to save fallen man from this terrible situation that: “God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” [Galatians 4:4-5]. In redeeming us from under the law, Christ put us under grace and this is the position of all who have by faith received Him.

Under Grace. The primary definition of New Testament grace is God’s loving disposition towards sinners that led Him to give “His only begotten Son so that whosoever believeth should not perish but have everlasting life” [John 3:16].

This is how the apostle Paul describes grace: “In whom [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” [Ephesians 1:7]. The word “grace” itself means a favor done to the undeserving, and since by nature and behavior fallen man is an enemy of God, what God has done in saving humanity in His Son becomes more than a free gift; it is by grace that we are saved [Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 5:6-10].

Because all men were created in Adam, all men are born under the law, and “the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth” [Romans 7:1]. But having united Himself with us in the incarnation and having borne us on His cross, we have become dead to the law’s dominion “by the body of Christ” [Romans 7:4]. Then in the resurrection, Christ

raised us up with His eternal life, born anew “unto a lively hope” [1 Peter 1:3], married to Christ, the second husband, and are, therefore, under His dominion. This is what it means to be under grace.

So we as Christians are no longer under the law in the sense that our justification or salvation depends upon our personal self-motivated attempts at obedience to the law. That, of course, is still the position of all who have not received Christ as their personal Saviour. But for us believers, those who by faith have become one with Christ, we are no longer under the law, but under grace, and Christ has become the end (or fulfillment) of the law for righteousness [Romans 10:4].

Therefore, to be under grace is the opposite of being under law; no longer are we justified before God on the basis of our actions or works of the law; but we are justified entirely on the basis of what Christ has already done in His life, death, and resurrection.

It is Christ’s perfect righteousness which He

obtained in His humanity as our substitute that justifies us. By His positive obedience to the law and His death, which met the justice of the law, Christ forever became our righteousness, that is, to all who will accept His saving grace [Romans 5:17].

Further, to be under grace also means that we have died to the life of sin and our life is now hid in Christ [Colossians 3:3]. The death of Christ on the cross was a corporate death in which all men died in one man [2 Corinthians 5:14]. Therefore, Christians who have by faith identified with this death have become dead to sin and the dominion of the law and are alive unto God. This is what our baptism was all about; our union with Christ crucified, buried, and resurrected. The result is that now, under grace, we walk in newness of life [Romans 6:3-4]. This is what it means to be under grace and all this has important implications regarding Christian living.

Living Under Grace

The first truth which we need to understand concerning this privilege of being under grace is that while we as Christians are delivered from being under the law, this does not mean that the law has been done away with. Anyone who reaches this conclusion and teaches so is perverting the gospel. Justification by faith does not do away with the law, but establishes it [Romans 3:31].

The law of God is as everlasting as God Himself, for it is codified love [Romans 13:8, 10; Galatians 5:13-14] and God is love [1 John 4:8, 16]. Christ Himself taught in the Sermon on the Mount that He did not come to abolish the law. “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. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach man so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” [Matthew 5:18-19].

The problem we faced under the law did not lie in the law itself but in us. Clearly, the law is holy, just, and good [Romans 7:12], but the fault is with us, for we are by nature carnal, sold under sin [Romans 7:14].

In Romans 7:15-25, Paul clearly demonstrates that God's holy law and our sinful nature are incompatible. Hence, "the carnal mind ... is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" [Romans 8:7]. It is for this reason that the first or old covenant was faulty, for the writer of Hebrews says:

"For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of

Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people” [Hebrews 8:8-10].

Therefore, in saving us from under the law, Christ did not abolish the law but He put an end to our sinful lives on His cross. In the resurrection He raised us from the dead with a new life, the life of the Spirit, that is in perfect harmony with the law. This He proved Himself in His humanity which perfectly obeyed God’s holy law.

During the 1980 Pastoral Conference conducted by the National Council of Churches in Nairobi, Kenya, the key speaker was the noted scholar and Biblical preacher, Dr. John Stott. He startled his 1,500 pastoral audience by stating, “We Evangelicals know how to preach the Good News but we have failed to preach the good life because we have done away with the law.” He then explained that while the law of God was never given as a means of salvation, it always will be the standard of Christian living.

In Romans 6:10, Paul tells us that Christ died unto sin once, but in that he lives, he lives unto God. Then in verse 11, he applies this same truth to the baptized believer: “Likewise, reckon [consider] ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

On what basis are we to consider ourselves dead to sin and alive unto God? As already mentioned, on the basis of what God did to us in the humanity of Christ. By sheer grace He put us into Christ at the Incarnation when divinity was united to our corporate humanity [1 Corinthians 1:30]. This means that when Christ died to sin so did we in Him. Thus the cross of Christ becomes God’s power unto salvation from sin [1 Corinthians 1:18] as well as from the dominion of the law [Romans 7:4-6]. Note how Paul applies this to his own life:

“So far as the law is concerned, however, I am dead — killed by the law itself — in order that I might live for God. I have been put to death with

Christ on his cross, so that it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. This life that I live now, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave His life for me” [Galatians 2:19-20, TEV].

This brings us now to the second point concerning our privilege of living under grace. Because Christians are under grace does not mean that we are free to live as we please. Grace does not give us any such liberty. While under law, our relationship was to the law. In other words, the law demanded certain things from us and we were under obligation to meet these demands or else suffer its penalty. So now, under grace, we are under the dominion and authority of grace.

This means that our relationship is to Christ, the source of grace, and we must live under His dominion and authority. How does this affect us in terms of Christian living? As Paul would say, “much in every way.” Here are two examples:

“What then? Shall we sin, because we are not

under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness” [Romans 6:15-18].

“For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” [Galatians 5:13-14].

This truth is also expressed by the apostle Peter: “For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and

gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully” [1 Peter 2:15-19].

Clearly then, to live under grace means allowing Christ to live in you through faith. This is what Christ meant when he said the following: “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” [John 15:4-5].

The final point I would like to bring out concerning this privilege of living under grace is motivation. The old relationship under law may be described as a relationship of fear. This is because the law can never sympathize with our weakness or inability to meet its demands, neither is the law capable of helping us in meeting its requirements. The law can only demand obedience and condemn us every time we fail. So our situation under law

was always to be in bondage to fear.

How different is our situation under grace! Unlike the law, Christ understands our weakness and inability to be really good; He also is able to sympathize with our struggles against temptation. He was made in all things like us and was tempted in all points like us so He understands, sympathizes, and is able to help [Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:15].

But more than this, He has delivered us from it all. He has delivered us from the fear of death, having died for us [Hebrews 1:14-15]; He has delivered us from the bondage of sin, having condemned sin in the flesh [Romans 6:22; 8:3-4]; He has reconciled us unto God so that we have the blessed hope of heaven and eternal life and can call God “Dear Father” [Galatians 4:4-6]. All these are the privileges of being under grace, and this means we no longer serve God “according to the letter, but according to the spirit” [Romans 7:6].

In other words, our relationship under grace is

one of love and appreciation. This is opposite to our situation under law. No longer does fear of punishment motivate our actions, but the love of God constrains and compels us to do right and live for Him [2 Corinthians 5:14-15]. Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” [John 14:15; 1 John 5:3].

Furthermore, being under grace delivers us from the self-centered motivation of seeking a reward. Neither fear of punishment nor hope of reward in heaven can deliver us from the “works of law.” We so deeply appreciate the agape that led the Son of God to His cross for us that we gladly serve Him and our fellow men with no thought of self.

Sinning Under Grace

One of the main concerns haunting many Christians is the problem of sinning under grace. The big question is: how does sinning under grace affect our relationship to God? Do believers become unjustified every time they sin or fall so

that they have to be reconverted each time a mistake is made or otherwise be eternally lost? Those who teach such a yo-yo type of doctrine have failed to understand the Biblical meaning of being saved under grace.

Actually, according to Paul, it is impossible for someone who truly is under grace through appreciating Christ's cross to go on living in sin [Romans 6:1-2]. Righteousness is by faith; and if the faith is there, the righteousness is sure to be there; and there is no sin in righteousness. However, many do not understand this pure truth, and think they continue to sin while under grace.

When Paul declared in Romans 6:14, "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace," he did not mean that a believer cannot sin, but that sin has no more authority to condemn or control a believer, since such a person is no longer under law but under grace.

In 1 Corinthians 15:56, we read, "The sting of

death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.” By this Paul says that sin itself has no power to destroy a person without the authority of the law; and since a believer is no longer under law, sin can no longer bring the condemnation of the law (which is eternal death), upon the believer. He is delivered from the power of sin.

Misuse of Grace

But that is a dangerous teaching, you say, one that will lead to loose living! Your fears are absolutely right.

That is why the apostle Paul spends all of chapter 6 of Romans warning Christians against the attitude that they can condone sinning. The gospel is not only Good News, but because of our sinful condition, it is also dangerous news. It can easily be perverted into licence to sin when faith becomes counterfeit.

The big question which Paul presents to the Christian in Romans 6 is, “Can a Christian condone

sinning since grace abounds more than sin and believers are no longer under law?” The answer is an emphatic No! Why? First, because in Christ we have died to sin, that is, terminated our relationship with it [verses 2 and 11]. Second, by our own choice we have become slaves of God who is the author of righteousness and not sin [verse 17]. On these two grounds the doctrine of salvation by grace will not permit a Christian to continue to cherish sin.

This does not mean that we babes in Christ do not stumble and fall. We all know that this is a problem in Christian living, and because we have not yet learned fully to understand the gospel and to walk unceasingly by the Spirit, we too often fall. In view of this, how do our failures affect our relationship with God? That question still deserves an answer.

Every believer must be aware that there is a world of difference between sinning under law and sinning under grace. To understand this we must see the contrast between the law as a written code

and Christ as a living reality. When we compare and contrast them we will discover that in one sense they are the same, yet in another they are opposites.

Let me explain. According to Scripture the spirit of the law is love [Matthew 22:36-40]. As such it can be identified with Christ, who is love [1 John 4:8; Ephesians 5:1-2].

However, when we consider the law as a written code, it becomes a set of rules binding legally on human beings. As such, the law cannot feel for, sympathize with, or help our weak situation. All it can do is command obedience and condemn every failure [Galatians 3:10].

On the contrary, Christ is a person who was made in all points like us and therefore feels and understands our struggles and is able to help; for He Himself was tempted in all points like us, except that He conquered every temptation [Hebrews 4:15]. So, in Christ we have one who is a faithful and merciful High Priest, and in this sense

the law and Christ differ.

All this throws an important light on the subject of sinning. To sin against the law means to sin against a moral code or a set of rules, resulting in punishment or the curse [Romans 1:18; Galatians 3:10].

This was our situation before accepting God's redemptive grace in Christ. But as believers we are no longer under the law but under grace, and if we sin we are not sinning against a code or a set of rules, but against a Person "who loved us and gave himself for us" [Galatians 2:20]. This realization makes a tremendous difference in our attitude towards sinning. Why is this so? Let me explain by an illustration.

Let us say there is a man driving his car along the highway breaking the speed limit. He is stopped by a policeman and he pleads for mercy, confessing his sorrow for over-speeding. You will agree with me that this man's confession and repentance have been motivated by egocentric

concerns, and not out of love for the traffic law or the policeman who represents the law.

This same man returns home and unintentionally offends his wife whom he loves and who loves him dearly. Immediately, he is sorry for his act and confesses in repentance. What was his motivation? Not fear of punishment. He is sorry because he has hurt someone who is dear to him.

Do you get the point? This is the difference between sinning under law and under grace. This, incidentally, was the difference between the repentance of Judas who betrayed Christ, and Peter who denied Christ. One was motivated by self, the other by love. Those who sin under the law can only repent in terms of fear of punishment or desire for reward, both egocentric concerns; whereas repentance and confession under grace result from a love relationship with Christ. We must constantly be aware of what our sins did to Christ on the cross — they killed Him.

How then can a Christian under grace condone

sin? That would mean deliberately crucifying Christ and that is unthinkable to one who appreciates God's "unspeakable gift."

The reason why we Christians learn to hate sin is not because we fear our sinning will deprive us of heaven, but because our sins put Christ on the cross [Galatians 3:13]. When we Christians realize how costly it was for God to save us in Christ, we will hate sin for what it is — crucifying Christ and putting Him to open shame [Hebrews 6:4-6].

Because God could not save us by ignoring the demands of His holy law, salvation from sin is costly. The wages of sin is death [Ezekiel 18:20; Romans 6:23]. In order to save us from the condemnation of the law, God had to meet its just demands. This He did when He laid upon Christ, our substitute, the iniquity of us all when He offered Him up on the cross as the only valid sacrifice for our sins [Isaiah 53:6, 10].

So while we may say that stumbling under grace does not deprive the Christian of

justification, or bring condemnation, it creates a deeper hatred for sinning if we have begun to appreciate the cost of our salvation. Why? Because every sin we commit was vitally involved in Christ's death on the cross.

Two Phases of Salvation

One reason why so many Christians are confused about their salvation under grace is that they have failed to realize that the New Testament speaks of two phases of salvation.

The first phase covers what God did in Christ some 1,900 years ago, and the second is what God is doing in every believer now and at the Second Advent. The first is expressed in the New Testament by the phrase "you in Christ," and the second is referred to as "Christ in you" [John 15:4-5].

While the two aspects of salvation are definitely related, like two sides of a coin, they are also distinct in at least four areas. Failure to note

these distinctions is the primary reason for so much confusion in the church today.

- **Complete versus Progressive.** What God did in Christ — the objective facts of the gospel — is a finished work. In Him we stand perfect, provided with every spiritual blessing pertaining to heaven [Ephesians 1:3; Colossians 2:10]. In contrast, what God is doing in us — the subjective experience of the gospel — is something that continues through life and will continue until the second coming [Philippians 3:12-14; Romans 8:24-25]. This is the aspect of salvation you see on some bumper stickers: “Be patient, God isn’t finished with me yet!”

- **Universal versus Individual.** What God did in Christ applies to all mankind so that in Him the whole world stands legally justified. This is the unconditional Good News of the gospel [Romans 5:18; 1 John 2:2]. What God does in us, on the other hand, applies only to the born again Christian who has by faith accepted Jesus Christ as his Saviour [Romans 8:9-10; Ephesians 3:17].

- **Divine and Human.** God's saving activity in Christ is a work that was accomplished entirely by God without any human help. This is why it is often referred to as an "alien righteousness" [Romans 3:21; Philippians 3:9]. In contrast, God's work in the believer involves their cooperation. For this reason, Christians are admonished to "walk in the Spirit" or "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" or "abide in me," in order to bear the fruits of salvation [Galatians 5:16; Romans 13:14; John 15:4-5].

- **Saving and Witnessing.** The righteousness God obtained for all mankind in Christ is full of merit. It is this alone that qualifies us for heaven, now and in the judgment [Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5]. The righteousness God produces in the believer, on the other hand, has no salvic value. It is the fruits of justification by faith demonstrating and witnessing the righteousness of Christ we have already received in Him by faith [Ephesians 2:10; Titus 3:8]. In many respects this is an important distinction, since many look to their own

performance for the assurance of salvation, and this should not be so.

Our righteous performance, even though it is of God and is well pleasing to Him, does not contribute one iota towards our title to heaven. However, it is a righteousness we must reach for since it is the most powerful witness of God's saving power.

As the famous pagan philosopher Nietzsche once said, "If you Christians expect me to believe in your redeemer, you will have to look a lot more redeemed!"

Chapter 12

Law and Grace (Part 2)

Standing in Grace

One of the great privileges that we Christians have, besides peace with God, is standing in grace [Romans 5:1-2]. What does this mean?

It means that not only is the legal justification Christ obtained for all men now made effective in us who believe so that we have peace with God and full assurance of salvation, but much more, we are now standing in a special way in the realm of grace. That is to say, now while we still possess sinful flesh we also possess a power within us through the indwelling Spirit of Christ which is able to reproduce in us the righteousness of Christ and overcome every temptation.

This is a truth of which all Christians must be aware. Not only does grace mean that we stand perfect in Christ but it also means that through Him

we possess the very life of God so that now He is able to work in us “both to will and to do his good pleasure” [Philippians 2:13].

Thus, as Christians we can “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Before, while under law and living in our own strength we all were coming short of the glory of God [Romans 3:23]; but now, under grace, this situation has been entirely changed so that we have the hope, not only of heaven, but also of experiencing the glory of God — this life of self-sacrificing love.

“Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” [2 Corinthians 3:17-18].

Paul often referred to this word “grace” in terms of divine power that fitted him to do the work and will of God. Note some of his statements:

- “Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power” [Ephesians 3:7].

- “But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” [1 Corinthians 15:10].

- “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” [2 Corinthians 12:9].

This is what it means to stand in grace, and this privilege belongs to all believers. During a Week of Prayer which I was holding at a Christian College in Ethiopia, an Egyptian senior student asked, “Is it a sin for Christians to bear arms and kill?” He was soon returning to Egypt to serve in the army as his country was at war with Israel.

In reply, I asked if he knew of any dead Egyptians fighting for his country. When he replied negatively, I reminded him that as a Christian he was dead and his life was hid in Christ [Colossians 3:3]. Unfortunately, he refused to accept this Biblical fact. Two weeks later he met with an accident when the school tractor he was testing capsized, pinning him underneath. After an examination at a nearby mission hospital, he was pronounced dead. A nurse went over to cover his body with a sheet. He blinked and she cried out in amazement, “He is alive!”

Further examination revealed that he had regained life — a miracle in answer to the prayers of his fellow students. He was transferred to our mission hospital in Addis Ababa. When I visited him sometime later, my first question was, “How are you?” Between bandaged lips he whispered, “I am dead and my life is hid in Christ.” I have always cherished that experience as an example of God’s Spirit working in a human life.

As Christians, we are debtors not to the flesh to

live according to the flesh but to the Spirit [Romans 8:12-13]. This means we have no business to live, even trying to be good, in the power of the flesh, which is our natural strength and ability. It is the Spirit of Christ which must live in us by faith. The life we now live in our bodies must be the life of Christ, which has been received by faith [Galatians 2:20]. This is all part of God's program of being under grace.

Grace demands that we have no right to live in and of ourselves, but Christ, who by His Spirit dwells in us, lives in us by our daily exercise of faith. The grace that has saved us from under the dominion of the law in Christ will now continue to live in us so that it may produce in us the fruits of the Spirit, which are: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" [Galatians 5:22-23].

Against such, says Paul in verse 24, "there is no law." It is in harmony with God's law. So, under grace, the law which we were incapable of keeping in our natural strength is now actually being

fulfilled in us [Romans 8:4]. As believers we should realize that while we have been saved in the sense that we stand justified before God so that He looks on us as we are in Christ, perfect, we still live in a wicked world. The law, or prompting of sin, still lives in our bodies [Romans 7:22].

But this law of sin cannot reign in us or dominate us as we are not under law but under grace [Romans 6:12-14]. Yes, in our own strength we are no match for the law of sin. Paul made this clear in Romans 7 — but the power of grace is greater than all the power Satan can muster through our sinful flesh, and that is part of the Good News of grace: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” [Philippians 4:13].

To be under grace is to be under the reign of Christ’s life and this life has conquered and condemned sin in the flesh [Romans 8:3]. Paul also says: “Who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” [Romans 7:24-25].

The law of sin whose residence is in our mortal bodies will always seek to dominate our bodies, and dominate us through the flesh. This is how we experience temptation [James 1:14]. Taking advantage of the self principle of our sinful nature, Satan turns the natural desires of the body (which are God-given) into lust, so that we become slaves to these natural desires instead of being masters of them.

But, being under grace, we possess the life and power of God by which we can “escape the corruption that is in the world through lust” [2 Peter 1:14]. Daily, hourly, by faith we allow Christ to live in us and “make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lust thereof” [Romans 13:14]. So we Christians standing in grace have the hope of the love of God being shed abroad through the Holy Spirit [Romans 5:5].

Every believer must realize that in becoming a Christian he has undergone a radical change. The apostle Paul declares: “Therefore, if any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed

away; behold all things are become new” [2 Corinthians 5:17]. Christians are not just people whose sins are forgiven so that we may have a ticket to heaven. Much more than that, we are people in whom everything that belonged to the old has passed away. Our old position under the law, our old lives of sin, all have passed away on the cross of Christ. And now through His resurrection we have become a new creation in a new position which is under grace.

This means we possess a new life and are partakers of the divine nature [2 Peter 1:4]. When we know these things, we shall know the constraint of His love to allow these truths to work in and through us so that we no longer act and behave as members of this world controlled by “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life” [1 John 2:16]; but as sons and daughters of God. We will be walking in the Spirit, reflecting the character of Christ.

The Law As Standard

In view of all this, how should a Christian view the law? Is it still binding on believers?

As a means of salvation, the answer is an emphatic No! But as a standard for Christian living, the answer is a most definite Yes!

To appreciate this fact we should remember the distinction between the old and new covenants. The measuring stick for righteousness in both covenants is the law. But in the old covenant it is man's promises that he thinks qualify him for heaven, but in the new covenant it is God's promises and righteousness realized in the holy history of Christ that save — and man's part is to believe as did Abraham, to exercise faith.

As already observed, the reason why the old covenant was faulty was not because of the law but because of the people [Hebrews 8:7-9]. For this reason, man's hope of salvation is in God's promise of grace offered in Christ through the new

covenant. But the new covenant did not do away with the law as some believe and teach. Search as much as you will, you will not find a single text in Scripture supporting that idea. What God does in the new covenant is to write the same law in the hearts of the believers, so that it becomes part of our new nature and not just a set of rules as under the old covenant. This is how the author of Hebrews puts it:

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people” [Hebrews 8:10].

One reason why there is so much misunderstanding and antagonism towards the law among many sincere Christians is because of misunderstanding Paul’s statements about the law. On the one hand, there are passages which superficially appear to imply that the law was done away with [Romans 7:1-10; Galatians 2:19; 2 Corinthians 3:4-17; Ephesians 2:14-16]. On the

other hand, Paul can be quoted to prove that he upholds the same law and totally rejects the idea that the law was abolished through the means of faith. Note the following:

“Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” [Romans 13:8-10].

Another of Paul’s passages is: “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even this; thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” [Galatians 5:13-14].

How do we solve this apparent contradiction in

Paul's writings? Much of the problem over his use of the word "law," says C.E.B. Cranfield, editor, *International Critical Commentary*, comes from our failure to realize that Paul had no separate word-group or term to denote "legalism." He used the identical term for both his positive references to Old Testament law (which he upheld) and his negative statements about the law when it was used by humans to produce their own righteousness (which he condemned). See, for example, *Philippians 3:9*.

Consequently, while Paul upheld the law as a standard of Christian living, he condemned anyone who used it as a substitute for faith, or as a means to gain that righteousness that can only come from God. It might be helpful to note that when Paul condemns what we call "legalism," he often uses the phrase translated in the KJV as "works of the law," which in Greek is "works of law" [*Romans 3:20; 9:30-32; Galatians 2:16; 3:10*].

Falling From Grace

In concluding this vital study of law and grace, it would be well for us to consider the great danger of falling away from grace, which every believer faces.

There are too many Christians who think and teach that once you are saved in Christ through faith nothing whatsoever can remove you from this saved position. This is a great deception, for Scripture does not support it.

It is true that the righteousness that saves us is always in Christ (and since He is in heaven where no thief can enter, it cannot be touched). But the faith that makes that righteousness effective is in us, and can be forsaken or renounced. This is why there is so much admonition in Scripture for believers to hold on to their faith at all costs [Matthew 10:22; Acts 20:24; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Galatians 6:9; Hebrews 3:6; 4:14; 10:23].

In becoming a Christian, every believer

becomes a traitor to Satan, the prince of this world. He will not stand losing one of his subjects, and will increase his efforts sevenfold to regain any believer lost to his domain [Matthew 12:43-45].

How does the enemy of souls, the arch-deceiver and father of lies, do this? There are three ways he can tempt a believer to fall away from grace. He will try one or another, or even all three methods if he thinks necessary.

1. Perverting the Gospel. The first method is by misrepresenting some portion of the gospel truth so that he succeeds in turning our eyes from Christ our righteousness to ourselves. In doing this, he makes it appear that salvation comes not by faith alone, but to some degree on our own works or behavior. This was the method the devil used to deceive the Galatian Christians [Galatians 1:6-7; 3:1-3]. Satan cannot succeed in this if we will simply believe the truth.

Having entered into the wonderful experience of righteousness by faith, the Christians of Galatia

were led astray into believing that they had to improve their standing before God by their own works of the law in order to be saved. The enemy of souls succeeded in turning their eyes from Christ and focusing upon themselves. They were in danger of falling away from grace. So Paul warned:

“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love” [Galatians 5:4-6].

According to the truth of the gospel, to be under grace means that Christ is our righteousness in every way and in every sense of the word. The gospel gives us the righteousness of Christ both as an objective fact (i.e., imputed righteousness) as well as a subjective experience (i.e., imparted righteousness). Further, both are to be received by faith alone and nothing can be added [Romans 1:17]. So any believer who tries to justify himself

before God, even in the slightest degree, in terms of his own actions or works, is really denying Christ to be his righteousness at that point and is fallen from grace.

In this sense, falling from grace means that we think we can make our own little contribution towards our justification by adding our goodness or works of the law. But this can never be. Such a believer, once trapped into this subtle form of legalism, is in a dangerous situation of losing Christ entirely.

You cannot have it both ways. It is impossible to receive Christ by faith (acknowledging you are spiritually bankrupt and cannot save yourself) and then add your good works towards your salvation, claiming that you can save yourself. Salvation as offered to fallen sinful man in the Good News of the gospel is not partly from Christ and partly our contribution.

To be under law and under grace are opposites, they cannot be mixed. You choose one or the other.

Man is not saved partly by grace and partly by keeping the law; that is impossible. Either we receive Christ by faith as our total righteousness both in terms of our standing before God as well as in our daily Christian living, or we must try to justify ourselves entirely by our own works of the law, which of course, is impossible. You cannot have both, nor some of each. It is either one or the other.

2. Love of the World. The second way Satan tries to cause believers to fall from grace is by dangling trinkets of this world before them, thus causing them to be gradually drawn away from Christ and back into the world. This was Demas' situation. According to Paul: "He hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" [2 Timothy 4:10]. The world is full of attractions which Satan uses to allure the believer. Money, materialism, position, self-glory, and fleshly enjoyments are but some of the devil's bait. But, again, Satan cannot succeed in this if we have seen and appreciated the glory of the cross, "the unsearchable riches of Christ" [Ephesians 3:8].

The believer whose hold on Christ is weak can be drawn away [note Matthew 13:22]. For this reason we should understand that even though we enter the experience of salvation by faith in Christ, it does not mean that our eternal destiny is forever secure, unless we cherish faith, love it unto the end. Having come under grace, faith becomes a fight [1 Timothy 6:12]. Only those whose faith endures to the end will receive the crown of life [Mark 13:13; James 1:12].

It is true that as long as we are united to Christ by faith our salvation is guaranteed. But this does not mean that our faith itself is guaranteed. Unless faith is allowed to grow, develop, and be strengthened by Bible study, prayer, fellowship, and witnessing, we will find ourselves objects for the devil to attack. He will try one way or another to snatch us out of Christ. Such a person who has forsaken Christ and the church and returned to the world has fallen from grace and is therefore in a lost state [Hebrews 6:4-6]. But don't forget: the Lord still loves him, and the Good Shepherd is still

seeking for His lost sheep!

3. Persecution. The devil may use persecution to try to get us out of Christ. The flesh does not like suffering, and Satan knowing this takes advantage of this fact. A Christian may be persecuted in various ways — physically, socially, and mentally. But, again, Satan can never succeed with this temptation if we prize “fellowship” with Christ in his “sufferings” [Philippians 3:10].

Persecution may even come from within the church, from the world, or even from our own family. Mistreatment, discrimination, or unfair practices within the church can cause a believer to become so discouraged and filled with self-pity that he becomes a target for the devil to try to attack.

Once in this condition, the devil will manipulate the believer so that not only does he fight the church but actually leaves it and becomes its bitter enemy.

Another way Satan persecutes believers is by making life extremely difficult so living becomes unbearable. The believer may lose a job or be deprived of one. The family may think it is impossible to stand up to the hardships of life. So the believer is tempted to compromise with truth and slowly lose his hold on Christ. But the devil can never succeed in this temptation if we remember how our Saviour had not where to lay His head even though the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests [Matthew 8:20]. We will never choose to renounce our “fellowship” with Him!

The hostility of the world may include threats of death. In writing to young Timothy, Paul declared, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” [2 Timothy 3:12]. Note also Peter’s counsel:

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are

accomplished in your brethren that are in the world” [1 Peter 5:8-9].

Finally a warning about the consequences of falling from grace: “The just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back my soul shall have no pleasure in him” [Hebrews 10:38]. However, may this be true of each one of us: “We are not of them who draw back unto perdition: but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” [verse 39].

Now as you rejoice in this wonderful truth of salvation by grace in Christ, may “the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it ... the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.” [1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, 28].

Chapter 13

The Sabbath Rest

The good news of salvation, realized in the holy history of Jesus Christ, is often described in the New Testament by the word “rest” [Matthew 11:28; Hebrews 4:2-3]. Since the Fall, this promised rest in Christ has been linked with the Sabbath. For this reason, the major feast days in the Old Testament, pointing to the Messiah and His redemptive activities, was designated a Sabbath day of rest. The Sabbath, therefore, is more than a day of rest or even worship, but has definitely a redemptive significance. Hence, it becomes obvious that the recovery of the full gospel necessitates the restoration of the Sabbath doctrine.

In this final study of the dynamics of the everlasting gospel, we shall first attempt to discover the significance of the Sabbath to God; then its relevance to mankind, in the context of the plan of redemption.

Once this is established, we will proceed to see the place and importance of the Sabbath in the law of God, as part of the new covenant promise [Hebrews 8:10-13], and finally, we will conclude with the end-time conflict of the last days, when the Sabbath will represent God's seal of righteousness by faith in contrast with and in opposition to Sunday symbolizing Satan's mark of the beast, representing self-righteousness or salvation by works [Revelation 7:2-4; 14:9-11].

Significance of the Sabbath to God

The word Sabbath means rest and the first thing we discover about it, in the Old Testament, is that it belongs to God: “the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God” [Exodus 20:10]; “my Sabbaths ye shall keep” [Exodus 31:13]; “my holy day . . . the holy of the Lord” [Isaiah 58:13]. In view of this truth, that the Sabbath belongs only to God, it is unscriptural to label it as the Jewish Sabbath, as some Christians do. Yes, the Sabbath was made for man [Mark 2:27], but it does not belong to man, Jew or Gentile.

Having established this fact, that the Sabbath is God's rest day; why, we must ask, does an almighty and an all powerful God, who obviously needs no rest day, set aside the seventh day as His special day of rest? The answer we get from the Word of God is because the Sabbath was to signify His perfect and finished work [Genesis 1:31; 2:1-3; Hebrews 4:4]. This fact is extremely important to our understanding of the Gospel and the doctrine of Righteousness by Faith, as the next point brings out.

The next thing we must keep in mind about God's Sabbath is that it is His seventh day and not ours. According to the Biblical record, God took six days in creating all that constitutes this planet earth and then set aside (sanctified) the seventh day as His Sabbath [Exodus 20:11]. Man was created at the very end of the sixth day [Genesis 1:26-31] and, therefore, God's seventh day Sabbath was actually Man's first whole day. This is a most important distinction, especially when we consider the Sabbath in the light of our redemption in

Christ. Let me explain.

God first worked six days in creating this world, and only when His work was perfect and finished did He rest from all His work [Genesis 2:1-3]. Adam and Eve, on the other hand, did not begin by working but resting on God's Sabbath, which was their first whole day, and then followed it with six days of work. The significance and importance of this distinction is that mankind, in Adam, began by first receiving God's handiwork as an entirely free gift, and then only could they enjoy it during the rest of the week.

In setting aside or sanctification the Sabbath [Genesis 2:3], God was entering into an everlasting covenant relationship with man — that he was always to be God-dependent. Hence, when Adam sinned and turned from God-dependence to self-dependence, he actually broke this God-dependent covenant, symbolized by the Sabbath. The result was: “In the sweat of thy face shall thou eat bread” [Genesis 3:19].

Today, history has proved that when man lives without God things get worse [Romans 1:18-28]. But Jesus Christ came into this world for the express purpose of restoring this rest which mankind lost at the fall [Matthew 11:28]. In doing this, He restored the significance of the Sabbath and we will discover that, in receiving the good news of salvation, we must return to this fundamental principal given to our first parents.

Salvation, like creation, begins not by doing something but by resting in the perfect and finished work realized in the doing and dying of our Lord Jesus Christ. Only then can we enjoy the benefits and blessings of salvation. In view of this, the Sabbath rest becomes the very foundation of the glorious truth of Justification or Righteousness by Faith alone.

When we turn to the New Testament, we discover that both creation as well as redemption was accomplished by God through Jesus Christ [Creation – John 1:3; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 3:14. Redemption – John 3:16-17;

Romans 3:24; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Galatians 3:13; Colossians 1:14; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 9:12; 1 Peter 1:18; Revelation 5:9]. Just as Christ finished creation at the end of the sixth day and rested the seventh day, likewise He finished redemption on the cross on the sixth day and rested in the tomb the seventh day [John 17:4; 19:30].

Further, Christ's work of restoration [1 Corinthians 15:24-26; Hebrews 2:13], which will be realized at the end of His heavenly ministry, is also linked with the Sabbath [Isaiah 66:22-23]. This is because it will also be a perfect and finished work as was creation and redemption. Thus, to fallen man the Sabbath has a threefold significance — Creation, Redemption, and Restoration.

Since Christ is both our creator as well as our redeemer and restorer, He had the perfect right to claim to be the Lord of the Sabbath day [Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5; Revelation 1:10]. Therefore, when the Jewish nation rejected Christ as the Messiah, their Sabbath keeping became meaningless. It is for this reason the writer of Hebrews, referring to the

Jewish nation, declared: “there still remains a keeping of the Sabbath (Gk. sabbatismos) for God’s people” [Hebrews 4:9]. Hence, any Sabbath keeping that is not motivated by a faith response to Christ’s perfect atonement on the cross is a sham and still belongs to the old covenant of salvation by works.

Significance of God’s Sabbath to Man

While the Sabbath belongs to God, both the Old and the New Testaments teach it was made for mankind’s benefit [Exodus 31:13; Ezekiel 20:12; Mark 2:27]. As already indicated, God created the world through Christ for mankind [Genesis 1:26,28; Psalms 8:5; Hebrews 2:6-8]. However, mankind made no contribution to creation, but was only its recipient. Therefore, the Sabbath rest was set aside (sanctified) for mankind as a constant reminder that God is the loving provider and man must be solely dependent on Him for all his needs. Even the garden on Eden, for example, was planted by God for our first parents [Genesis 2:8].

It must be noted that this Sabbath covenant was made with mankind before the fall. Therefore, had there been no fall we would still be keeping God's Sabbath as a day of rest. It is the entrance of sin that destroyed the significance of the Sabbath rest, since sin is rebellion against God, in exchange for self-dependence [Romans 1:21; Philippians 2:21]. Thus, when sin separated us from God [Isaiah 59:2], no longer did His Sabbath have any significance.

Man therefore, had to introduce His own rest day, which is Sunday, the day which is recognized today internationally as man's rest day. However, unlike God's Sabbath, man's rest day does not point to a perfect or finished work. This, too, is of great importance when we come to the final showdown in that great controversy between salvation by faith, symbolized by God's Sabbath, versus salvation by works, symbolized by man's Sunday, of which God's Sabbath and man's Sunday will symbolize respectfully.

God knew that it was impossible for fallen

mankind to save himself by His works [Romans 3:19-20; Galatians 2:16]. But because He is a God of love and did not desire that any perish, He sent His only begotten Son to redeem mankind and restore that rest which we were deprived of by the fall [Matthew 11:28; John 3:16-17; Galatians 3:13; 4:4-5; Hebrews 4:3]. At the cross, man's justification and reconciliation was completed and perfected [John 17:4; 19:31; Hebrews 10:14]. This perfect and finished redemption was realized at the end of the sixth day just as creation was [Luke 23:54]. Thus, the Sabbath rest was restored and all who by faith receive the good news of the gospel do enter into God's rest [Hebrews 4:2-3]. Through the gospel, God's new covenant, mankind can once again enter that rest of which the Sabbath is the sign [Exodus 31:13; Ezekiel 20:12; Isaiah 58:13-14].

In the sermon on the Mount, Christ taught clearly that if we first seek His kingdom and His righteousness, which is by faith, all our needs will be supplied; that is to say, the gospel has made for us a way of escape from self-dependence, which is

the source of all our problems, to God-dependence, which is the source of all our joy and happiness. But one thing is clear, we cannot serve two masters — self and God [Matthew 6:24-34]. When we enter into God's rest, His day of rest must become our day of rest; this is the outward sign that we have chosen to live by faith alone. Such motivation of keeping the Sabbath is true Sabbath keeping.

The Law and the Sabbath

Before we can consider the Sabbath in relationship to the law of God, we must first be clear about the distinction between the right and the wrong use of the law. God never gave the law as a means or method of salvation [Romans 3:28; Galatians 2:16]. This is the error the Jews fell into, the error of the Old Covenant, which ended in miserable failure [Romans 9:30-33; Hebrews 8:7-11]. Therefore, anyone who keeps God's Sabbath in order to be saved, is repeating the mistake of the Jews and, therefore, perverting the very purpose of the Sabbath rest.

When we make Sabbath keeping a requirement for salvation, we are not really entering into God's rest, which points to a perfect and finished salvation, but have turned His Sabbath into salvation by works, the very opposite of what the Sabbath was intended for. And since by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight, such Sabbath keeping becomes meaningless. How, then, should a Christian, saved by grace through faith alone keep the Sabbath?

The New Testament, and especially the apostle Paul, clearly teaches that, while God never gave the law as a method of salvation, He certainly wants Christians to consider His law as a standard for Christian living [Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:13-14; 1 John 5:1-3; 2 John 6]. In fact, when the law was first given to the Jews at Mt. Sinai, it was for this very purpose. The preamble to the law clearly indicates this: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" [Exodus 20:2]. God first redeemed Israel and then gave them the law. Moses especially applied this principal to Sabbath

keeping [Deuteronomy 5:15].

Jesus made it very clear that the true motivation for keeping His law was love [Matthew 22:36-40; John 14:15]. This was also clearly taught in the Old Testament [Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18]. Any law keeping, therefore, that is motivated by either fear of punishment or desire for reward belongs to paganism. But this love, that is the fulfillment of the law, we must be clear, is something sinful man cannot generate; for it is agape, the love that seeketh not its own (see Chapter 2 for a detailed study on agape).

However, God's agape love is the supreme gift of the Holy Spirit to the believer [1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13]. And since there is no self in agape, God does not pour this agape love into the Christian in order that it may return back to Him (that would make God eros or self-centered). Rather, this love is given that it may be shed abroad towards our fellowmen, as evidence of the saving power of the gospel over self [John 13:34-35; Romans 5:5; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15]. This is

what it means to have the law written on our hearts, the promise God made in the New Covenant [Hebrews 8:10].

This leads us to a very important consideration regarding the law as a standard of Christian living. You will notice, in examining God's moral law, that the first four commandments have to do with our relationship with God, while the last six with our neighbor. Since agape seeketh not her own [1 Corinthians 13:5]; how does one obey the first four commands through God's gift of agape without making God self-centered! It has already been pointed out that God does not pour His gift of agape into the believer in order that it may return back to Him, but that it may go out towards our neighbors. In view of this, the only way we can obey the first four commandments is through faith.

In 1 John 3:23 we read: "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." Genuine faith is synonymous with obeying the first four

commandments; this, in turn, results in the new birth experience and with this experience comes the gift of agape. The result is love for our neighbor, which is synonymous with keeping the last six commandments [Romans 14:10].

The reason why the New Testament has very little to say about Christians obeying the first four commandments is because all that God wants from us, in regards to our relationship with Him, is faith [John 6:28-29; Hebrews 11:6], faith that is motivated by a heart appreciation for His supreme love gift, Jesus Christ [Galatians 5:6]. In view of this, the only acceptable way one can truly keep the fourth commandment, the Sabbath, is by a faith obedience or entering by faith into God's rest. Hence the Sabbath, in this context, becomes the seal of righteousness by faith. With this clear insight, we can now turn to the end-time conflict between Sabbath and Sunday.

The Sabbath-Sunday Controversy

Whenever the issue of the Sabbath-Sunday is

brought into focus, one's attention is immediately turned to the Sunday keeping Christians versus the Sabbath keepers. This, I believe, is not the real issue. There are today many sincere Christians who are fully resting in Christ for salvation but are Sunday keepers. They are keeping the wrong day for the right reason. Likewise, there are many sincere Sabbath keepers who believe their Sabbath keeping will save them. They are keeping the right day for the wrong reason. Both need correction and this the Holy Spirit, who is to lead us into all truth, will do.

When this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations [Matthew 24:14]; it will polarize or divide the human race into only two camps — believers and unbelievers [1 John 5:19], those who are fully resting in Christ and those who have ultimately rejected Christ. All who come under the banner of Christ will in the end-time worship the Lord of the Sabbath and their Sabbath keeping will be the outward sign or seal of the righteousness they have already received by faith, just as circumcision was

to Abraham “a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised” [Romans 4:11].

Those who have deliberately and ultimately turned their backs to the free gift of salvation in Christ will all worship the dragon which gave power unto the beast [Revelation 13:3-4]. These will exalt Sunday as man’s day of rest in defiance of the Sabbath, God’s rest day. The issue then in the final conflict will not be between two groups of Christians or even two rest days, but two opposing methods of salvation: the Sabbath, signifying salvation by faith alone, versus Sunday, signifying salvation by works or human effort.

When man turned from God-dependence, at the fall, and consequently had to eat his bread by the sweat of his brow [Genesis 3:19], a human rest day became necessary. Today, Sunday is that international day of rest, established by the world under Satan. Since man was also created a spiritual being, his departure from God-dependence to self-dependence also meant a departure from God-

worship to subtle forms of self-worship [Romans 1:21-23; Isaiah 53:6; Philippians 2:21].

This spiritual departure led man from righteousness by faith to righteousness by works [self-righteousness – Genesis 3:7; 11:4-9]. The New Testament describes this as the religion of Babylon based on the claims of Nebuchadnezzar, the great king of ancient Babylon [Daniel 4:30,31; Revelation 14:6-11]. [It must be noted here that the word Babylon derived its name from the ill-fated tower of Babel, meaning Gate (Bab) of God (el), symbolizing man trying to reach heaven by works.] The fundamental issue in all of scripture is salvation by faith versus salvation by works. At the heart of the Bible message is salvation by grace made effective through faith alone [Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 3:28; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Hebrews 10:38-39; 11:1-40]. At the heart of every false religion is salvation by works.

In ancient times, Sunday not only became man's day of rest from physical and mental work but, above all, symbolized man's spiritual day of

rest and worship based on the pagan belief that the sun was the god of gods. This became prominent in Christ's day in the Roman Empire. Hence, at its very foundation, Sunday rest is a pagan institution representing self-righteousness; this is in complete contradiction to God's Sabbath, His sign to man of righteousness by faith [Exodus 31:13, 16; Hebrews 10:14]. These two opposing concepts of salvation can never be reconciled and have been in conflict ever since the fall.

When the true gospel of righteousness by faith will be fully recovered and preached into all the world, every person will have to make the choice, either for or against Christ [Deuteronomy 30:19,20; Joshua 24:13-15; Romans 9:30-33; Philippians 3:3-9]. At that time, the Sabbath will become the seal of God, representing righteousness by faith. In contrast, Sunday will represent the Mark of the Beast, signifying man's rejection of God's saving grace in Christ [Revelation 14:10-11]. Therefore, when the Sunday (blue) law will be legally established, it will indicate the world's deliberate and ultimate rejection of God's loving offer of

salvation through His Son.

This is the “abomination of desolation” Christ spoke about [Matthew 24:14-22]. Those who will then insist on Sunday rest, in willful opposition to God’s Sabbath rest, will receive the plagues, the wrath of God poured out without mixture [Revelation 14:9-11]. In contrast, those who will stubbornly keep the Seventh-day Sabbath will be manifesting a faith in God that is unshakeable. They will go through the great time of trouble and wash their robes white in the blood of the Lamb.

Because of the mixed, confused ideas of salvation, the true controversy between God’s Sabbath and man’s Sunday is today still foggy and not clearly understood. But when the two opposing methods of salvation come into clear focus, then the true importance of the Sabbath will be seen clearly. May God give us, at that time, the grace and courage to stand for truth.