

**Through the prophets, God just as carefully foretold  
New Covenant salvation as He foretold His Messiah. . .**



*The  
Prophets'  
Gospel*

**Wayne Scott**

## **THE PROPHETS' GOSPEL**

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### **Abbreviations**

“ASV” – American Standard Version

“HCSB” – Holman Christian Standard Bible

“KJV” – King James Version

“NKJV” – New King James Version

“NLT” – New Living Translation

“NIV” – New International Version

“NASB” – New American Standard Bible

“Bethany Parallel Commentary” – The Bethany Parallel Commentary on the  
New Testament

“Strong’s” or “Strong’s Concordance” – The New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of  
the Bible

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## PREFACE

*(by Dr. Roger Cotton, professor of Old Testament, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary)*

I have interacted with [the author] on this biblical material on sin and Christians for several years. The more we have talked the more I have agreed with him. Wayne does very good, thorough, Bible study and has read from some of the significant theologians in church history. I highly commend his approach to studying the Scriptures even though he does not go deep into the scholarly tools and literature. He grasps the point of the writer's statements from context very well. I especially have been impressed with his effort to carefully define the words/concepts in the Bible according to their usage by the Bible writers in the various contexts. This is very neglected among Christians with the result that too many people have no clear understanding of the theology referred to by the Bible terms and tend to repeat traditional ideas that have drifted far from the original Scripture texts and the intentions of the Bible writers. Even though Wayne is not a trained Bible scholar and does not back up his conclusions with the writings of recent scholars, his thorough and thoughtful reading of the Bible texts deserves a respectful hearing. It is amazing how he can answer just about any question or objection with clear statements of Scripture. Being outside the scholarly guild has actually helped him to look at what the Bible is teaching more objectively and not assume what has been traditionally understood is clearly what the Bible teaches.

"I am still restudying some of the subjects and points he makes but I have yet to find any major theological or exegetical problem. When he explains what he means and why he believes what he does, I have consistently found that I not only agree, but I have been teaching the same idea myself, and know of scholars who have come to the same conclusion. I challenge any one to hear him out before making any judgment on what he is saying. I do struggle with some of his most extreme statements against some of the protestant theological tradition but these are important issues for us to deal with and to clarify.

"This book will grab people's attention and will lead them to a healthier understanding of the Bible and the Christian faith. I am very grateful for what our interaction has done to help me clarify my understanding of some very important theological points that make a big difference in the Christian life. I believe, properly marketed, Wayne's book could sell very well with Christians as well as nonChristians and be a great blessing from God to both."

Sincerely,  
Roger D. Cotton  
Professor of Old Testament  
Assemblies of God Theological Seminary

## Chapter 1

### CONSPIRACY THEORY

In 1988 one of America's most respected Christian teachers, Dr. John MacArthur, identified a dangerous new belief system that has infiltrated and now dominates the church:

The gospel in vogue today holds forth a false hope to sinners. It promises them they can have eternal life yet continue to live in rebellion against God. Indeed, it *encourages* people to claim Jesus as savior yet defer until later the commitment to serve Him as Lord. It promises salvation from hell but not necessarily freedom from iniquity. It offers false security to people who revel in the sins of the flesh and spurn the way of holiness. By separating faith from faithfulness, it leaves the impression that intellectual assent is as valid as wholehearted obedience to the truth. Thus the good news of Christ has given way to the bad news of an insidious easy-believism that makes no moral demands on the lives of sinners. It is not the same message Jesus proclaimed.

This new gospel has spawned a generation of professing Christians whose behavior often is indistinguishable from that of the unregenerate. . . . Theirs is a damning false assurance.

From the introduction to Dr. MacArthur's best selling book ever: *The Gospel According to Jesus*

Other respected Christian leaders are sounding similar alarms. They describe rampant immorality in all levels of the modern-day church. Dr. Howard Hendricks, a popular Promise Keepers speaker and legendary Christian teacher from Dallas Theological Seminary, wrote:

A number of Christian youth organizations have sponsored research with results indicating a surprising similarity between Christian and non-Christian kids in the areas of values, morals, and behavior. The only major difference is a verbal one. The Christians answer "no" when asked if they would lie or cheat or steal or go to bed with someone, while the non-Christian kids say, "Of course, if it's to my advantage." But at the actual behavioral level – there is essentially no difference.

*The Seven Laws of the Teacher*, pages 89–90

Dr. R. C. Sproul, a highly respected Christian teacher and president of Ligonier Ministries, charges:

Most Christians, according to the Gallup polls that we've seen recently, live according to the cultural social conventions and not according to the law of God. . . .

You can't tell the difference in a pagan and a Christian in our culture because the dominant basis of our morality is not coming from thoughtful meditation on the

law of God, but it is coming from what is acceptable in our environment.

Ligonier Ministry's CD album entitled *Blueprint for Thinking*, Lesson #5

In a taped interview hosted by Focus on the Family's H. B. London, Bruce Wilkinson, another highly respected Christian teacher and founder of Walk Through the Bible, gave this factual illustration to show the extent of the moral corruption among our leadership. He tells of a mainline denomination's ministers' conference in which each room of a large hotel was occupied by Christian ministers and leaders.

During the conference one of the speakers, a real statesman according to Dr. Wilkinson, had several opportunities to share his faith with the hotel owner. On the last day of the conference he asked the hotel owner if he had decided to give his life to Christ. The hotel owner replied:

“You know, I was so close to accepting Christ because of what He would do for my life until this morning before I came down here. I called my manager and asked him, ‘How many rooms watched pornography last night?’ . . . And he said, ‘More than half the rooms showed pornography.’

“And [the hotel owner] turned to this statesman and said, ‘If that's all your Christ means, I am not interested.’”

Focus on the Family's *Pastor to Pastor* audiocassette series, volume 39, entitled “The Pursuit of Personal Holiness”

The most reputable source I have found for the actual studies about the morality of our modern-day church is Barna Research Institute. You can read them for yourself at “barna.org”. They document the fact that there is no measurable difference in the morality of the average modern-day Christian and the average non-Christian, thus supporting the observations quoted above.

I do not know if Dr. MacArthur ever made the connection, but his description of this dangerous new gospel fits perfectly the biblical description of the antichrist. I do not mean the sensational one-person-yet-to-come antichrist made popular by the *Left Behind* series; I mean the antichrist described in the only books of the Bible where the word actually appears: I and II John. There John describes the antichrist as a spirit that manifests itself as a false belief system, complete with teachers and doctrines, which arrived almost two thousand years ago. I will talk more about this in the chapter entitled “The Antichrist.” There I will demonstrate that the one-person-yet-to-come antichrist is a decoy created by the biblical antichrist.

This book presents two study techniques that, with the precision of a surgeon's scalpel, separate the unbiblical salvation concepts and doctrines of the antichrist from those of the biblical gospel. The first is to use what God foretold through the prophets about New Covenant salvation as a foundation for understanding the New Testament. The second is to re-establish biblical definitions to biblical words. Let me briefly explain each.

Studying what God foretold through the Old Testament prophets about New Covenant salvation is not a new study technique; just a forgotten one. Our Old Testament is the Bible from which Jesus and His apostles read and taught New Covenant

salvation. It is the Bible used by the first Christians for the first few hundred years of Christianity. It is the “Scriptures” by which the Bereans measured Paul’s words and they are forever recorded as being “of more noble character” for doing so:

Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

Acts 17:11, NIV

Through the prophets, God just as carefully foretold New Covenant salvation as He foretold His Messiah. These prophecies are numerous, very clear and understandable, and all say the same thing. They foretold (as I will demonstrate later) that God would write His law (not the Mosaic law but the law of Christ, as in Galatians 6:2) on our hearts, put His Spirit in us to motivate us to live according to that law, and remove and destroy those who arrogantly refuse to live according to what He has shown them. Understanding what God foretold about New Covenant salvation, Paul wrote to the believers in Rome:

Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Romans 8:12-14, NIV

The problem is that the salvation foretold by the prophets is directly contradicted by what is taught in most churches today about salvation by grace through faith. This brings us to our second study technique: re-establishing biblical definitions for biblical words.

What is taught today about salvation by grace through faith contradicts the gospel foretold through the prophets because in two thousand years of Christianity, the definitions of “grace,” “faith,” and other foundational New Covenant words have evolved to the point that they no longer mean to us what they meant to the first Christians.

Going far beyond the seemingly innocent blunders of teaching us to call our sins “mistakes” and sinning “struggling,” this new gospel has redefined “faith,” “grace,” “justification,” “repent,” “sin,” “righteousness,” and many other words. This false belief system has redefined so many words that it can read from Scripture things that God never said.

If you write me a letter and then I take the liberty of making up new definitions to your words, I can make your letter say anything I want it to. This is what this dangerous new gospel has done with Scripture.

Re-establishing the biblical definitions for biblical words does two things: (1) It erases the apparent contradiction between the gospel foretold by the prophets and the gospel of the New Testament, revealing a tremendous continuity throughout all Scripture about what it takes to be saved, and (2) It exposes the gospel most commonly taught today as an impostor.

These two study techniques – (1) Using the gospel prophecies as a foundation for reading and understanding the New Testament, and (2) re-establishing the biblical definitions of biblical words, reveals that New Covenant salvation is the relationship with God that Adam had before he rebelled. The terms of that relationship have never changed. If you find such a relationship distasteful, I'm sorry. This is what God offers. And no, this does not contradict "salvation by grace through faith," as those who have redefined "grace" and "faith" would have us believe.

In the next few chapters you will begin to see that *the point of contention* between the Christ and the antichrist is the nature of the freedom offered by the gospel. The freedom offered by the gospel is the heart of the gospel. Change that and you have changed the gospel.

Now let me tell you how, as a new Christian convert, I came to God for and received genuine New Covenant freedom only to be convinced by mainline Christian teachers that it was not biblical.

## Chapter 2

### MY INITIAL CONVERSION EXPERIENCE

By the time I was 20 years old I was leading a very immoral life and was addicted to things that I knew were destroying me. Though I had tried valiantly to be able to live that way without feeling guilty, I was finally coming to the realization that I was not going to be able to. My guilt for the way I was using people in personal relationships and my fear of being destroyed by the things to which I was addicted are what drove me to God.

I knew that sin was “deliberately doing what I knew to be wrong, by commission or by omission.” I could not have used those words then, but the concept was there. Violating this standard was the source of my guilt.

I knew that if I would turn from my sins and commit my life to God, He would forgive me for all the things I had done and give me the power to stop doing them. I greatly desired the promised clean conscience but I was not sure I was willing to pay the price. Did I really have to stop doing *all* the things I knew were wrong? But deep within and with increasing clarity I knew that the terms of the relationship God was offering were non-negotiable.

How did I know these things? Because, just as God foretold through the Old Testament prophets, He had revealed them to me. The New Testament calls it grace and says that it is revealed to all people on a universal scale:

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age . . .

Titus 2:11-12, NIV

This is how we know the difference between right and wrong and that we should do right and not do wrong. This is why unbelievers can rightly judge carnal Christians as hypocrites. They know in their hearts that if we claim to be Christians that we should be committed to doing right. However, God did not reveal this to them *just* so they could rightly judge carnal Christians. He revealed it to them so that they could choose to order their lives according to it. The Bible says that if they continue to refuse to do so, they will be condemned by God in judgment along with the carnal Christians they are judging. The Bible says that those who are condemned in judgment will be condemned by their own standards (Ezekiel 7:27, Romans 2:3-11), not by a standard they did not know.

My guilt intensified, becoming more than I could bear. The conviction of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8) had brought me to the place that I was willing to yield to the instruction of God’s grace (Titus 2:11-14). The moment finally came when I was willing to turn from my sin and commit my life to God (repent).

To make it official, I found a Baptist church where I walked the aisle, signed the card, and received from God everything I had expected. I was forgiven. I suddenly had the power to stop doing what I knew to be wrong. I was amazed to see that what I believed could actually be lived out.

I had no delusions about suddenly being perfect or mature, but I also had no delusions about the fact that I was able to consistently resist the temptation to do anything that I knew to be wrong. I do not mean to imply that winning the victory was easy. I was enslaved by sin. I had fought against some of these things before and had lost. This time, however, I was able to fight with a strength that I knew was not my own, but I still had to do the fighting.

I fought instead of surrendering because my heart had changed. I belonged to Jesus and understood very well that in this relationship sin was spiritual adultery (Ezekiel chapter 16, James 4:4). I had been forgiven, freed *from the power and control of sin*, and was living each moment of each day with a clean conscience. It was a wonderful life-transforming experience.

I knew that God saw everything about me and found me acceptable because I was offering myself to Him, holding nothing back. I didn't want to hide anything. I knew that I couldn't if I wanted to, but I didn't want to. I wanted God to be able to see my flaws and bring them to my attention at the proper time. I knew that this was the path to maturity and increasing God-likeness and I was anxious to see it progress. Three decades later, as I sit here about to release this book, I realize just how biblical my attitude and actions were, as illustrated by the following passage:

Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.

John 3:20-21, NIV

This wonderful life-transforming experience lasted about two months. That's how long it took my pastors and teachers to convince me that everything for which I had come to God and received was unbiblical.

[Note: I do not mean to imply that the teachers in this church did anything other than what is done in most other churches. In the following years I attended primarily Wesleyan-based churches (like United Pentecostal, Church of God, Assembly of God, and Methodist) where I found many of the same unbiblical concepts, doctrines, and practices.]

The preachers and teachers in that church began by "correcting" my definition of sin. They taught me to define sin so broadly that it was practically unavoidable. I learned about accidental and unknown sins and learned that no matter how I tried, I was sinning many times everyday in thought, word, and deed. When my guilt returned, their solution was their doctrine of a covering for my ongoing inevitable sins. This is when I learned that the only way God could accept me was to cover me and my ongoing unacceptable behavior with the blood of Christ.

At first, something within me was screaming, "No!" But they patiently and persistently showed me numerous verses of Scripture to prove to me that the freedom for which I had come to God and received was not available to anyone on a practical level.

Every time I would find a verse that said it *was* available, they would counter with one that said it *was not*.

By convincing me that no matter how hard I tried, I could not live a life that pleased God, they took away the one reason I had to try. Then I began to remember the pleasure of sin. Eventually, the idea of having my eternal salvation guaranteed and still being able to sin occasionally began to look pretty good.

As my heart began to change once again, the voice inside me got quieter and quieter until I could hardly hear it. “Oh well,” I thought, “if this is what God has to offer, who am I to complain?” Under their guidance, I traded *freedom from the power and control of sin* for *freedom from the guilt and consequences of my ongoing inevitable sins*.

It took me almost 25 years to realize that those preachers and teachers had brought me full circle back to trying to not feel guilty for sinning. It worked better this time because I had a well-organized, Bible-carrying, Scripture-quoting support group.

What I just described happens today on an almost universal scale in main-line Christian churches. When I hear new converts testify during their baptism ceremonies, it is clear to me that they have received from God the same revelation knowledge that I received when I was 20 years old. They can hardly contain their excitement as they express their gratitude for being forgiven for what they have done and speak of their commitment to God and of their expectation of being able to live the rest of their lives for Him.

But then, they too are quickly assimilated, as I was. This is how the church maintains its stagnant level of immorality while the Holy Spirit is actively convicting people of their sins and bringing them to the point that they are willing to turn from their sins and commit their lives to God. (In this respect, the church reminds me of the collective consciousness called “The Borg” on “Star Trek: The Next Generation.” Individuals who had been assimilated by the Borg confidently, matter-of-factly, told those who stood in their way, “Resistance is futile!”)

Many years later, I found where Jesus addressed such religious leaders:

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.

Matthew 23:13, NIV

Paul and Peter go into much more detail (Acts 20:29-31 and II Peter chapter 2) exposing the motivation and mode of operation of these false teachers.

## Chapter 3

### PROMISE KEEPERS

Had it not been for Promise Keepers, I might have lived out my days as a carnal Christian.

I began attending Promise Keepers in Boulder, Colorado and attended later at the original Mile High Stadium in Denver. The speakers had one consistent message: They preached that, by the power of the Spirit, we could turn from our sins and live for God as “men of integrity.” Something in my heart responded.

Each year, along with thousands of other men, I would fall to my knees in shame for my sins and recommit my life to God just knowing that I would be able to live the rest of my life in Spirit-empowered victory and faithfulness. But each year I would see my emotional recommitment last about as long as it took to get back home, leaving me hurt and confused.

I would hurl my questions to heaven: “What was that I felt in that stadium?” “Was it God or just emotion?” “If it was God, wouldn’t it have lasted?” “If it was just emotion, what’s the point?”

I asked pastors and laypeople, some of whom attended Promise Keepers with me, if it were really possible to consistently resist the temptation to sin. They would laugh and give answers like, “Are you talking about ‘sinless perfection’?” and “If you could do that you wouldn’t need the blood of Jesus.” Then they would quote from Scripture to prove to me that God empowers no one to consistently resist the temptation to sin. This is when Christianity began to look to me like the worst kind of insanity.

I eventually stopped attending Promise Keepers. Some men seem content going through the cycle year after year, but once I figured out that the merry-go-round was going nowhere, I hopped off.

But the memories! I could not forget what I had felt in those stadiums. It felt far too powerful to have been just emotion.

This is when I began thinking. Instead of listening so much to Christian music on my car radio, I began listening more and more to Christian teaching. I heard some of the same preachers I had heard at Promise Keepers, but their preaching was different. They were preaching that Jesus came to cover our ongoing inevitable sins and that we will not be freed from the power and control of sin until His second coming. This *is not* what they had preached at Promise Keepers.

Why the difference? Were they just preaching to their respective audiences what each wanted to hear? Were they really just master con-artists who preached whatever it took to get gullible people like me to buy their books and tapes?

I began listening closely to sermons in my church and saw the same pattern. The pastors would *preach* one thing, sometimes getting an emotional response from the audience, and *teach* another. Some of the most emotional preaching against sin came from preachers who do not believe that God empowers anyone to consistently resist the temptation to sin.

*What did I believe* about Christianity and about the possibility of living a life of personal holiness? I try to approach questions and problems logically. Yet when I began

trying to organize my thoughts on the topic, I found that I too was holding to numerous illogical contradictions. Since truth will not contradict itself, I found this to be completely unacceptable. Contradictions are the clearest evidence of theological error. They keep us from being able to wholeheartedly commit one way or the other.

I began studying Scripture in earnest, looking for verses that explain what being a Christian has to do with our behavior. As I found and organized them, I noticed that I was holding to two contradictory categories of verses. One group says that God empowers us to consistently resist the temptation to sin and the other says that He does not. For example, the apostle Paul promised all the power of God to the immature Christians at Corinth to enable them to resist the temptation to sin:

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

I Corinthians 10:13, NIV

Yet I had been taught that he was describing his Christian life when he wrote to the Romans that he was unable to stop habitually sinning: “I practice the very evil that I do not wish.” (Romans 7:19, NASB). See the problem? Here we have a biblical teacher promising one group of Christians that God is faithful to empower us to stand against the temptation to sin while admitting to another group of Christians that he himself cannot stop habitually sinning. In “Biblically Defining ‘Hypocrisy’” I will demonstrate that this is what Jesus called hypocrisy.

[Note: Some of the chapters I reference, including the one I just referenced, are actually in *The Prophets’ Gospel – unabridged edition*. On my website ([prophetsgospel.com](http://prophetsgospel.com)) you can find ordering information for it as well as for some of the other books referenced here, that are not standard shelf items in bookstores. I consider these to be an excellent addition to any Bible student’s library.]

When I saw the contradiction between the two groups of verses, I knew that this called for closer inspection since both could not be right. My painstaking inspection revealed that the verses in the first group meant exactly what they appeared to mean. They promise all the power of God to enable us to live victorious overcoming Christian lives.

The verses in the second group, however, failed the inspection. Each one had either been (1) reinterpreted from its original meaning, (2) read out of context, or (3) had key words redefined. Later, when we examine these verses, I will demonstrate a consistent pattern of lies and deception.

Among other things, this book exposes the historically documented reinterpretation of Romans 7:14-25 (from which I just quoted), the out-of-context use of Romans 3:10, and the outright misrepresentation of I John 1:8. (In the unabridged edition we will examine the errant interpretations of Romans 8:7, Galatians 5:17, Philippians 3:12 and others.) Truth need not rely on such dishonesty.

The simple straightforward promises of the first group of verses describe the freedom for which I came to God and received when I was 20 years old. The twisted interpretations of the verses in the second group are what the church used to counteract and neutralize my confidence in that freedom. Their interpretation of those verses then became the foundation for my new Christian belief system which blurred and eventually erased the connection between my behavior and my salvation as I “matured in the faith.”

I never heard even one Promise Keepers speaker challenge anyone’s belief system. All they did was emotionally preach against sin. This is why, after each Promise Keepers event, I kept returning to the level of what I had learned in church. I was unable to consistently live differently than I believed.

## Chapter 4

### THE LONG ROAD BACK

My Promise Keepers experience first puzzled and then angered me. I was angry with myself because it had revealed that I was holding to illogical contradictions in my Christian faith. In the end, I learned that it was my belief system that kept me from being able to experience the freedom that Promise Keepers was offering.

I began to question everything. I began asking questions that no one, especially pastors, wanted to deal with. Because I didn't have a working definition of "sin" or a clear concept of New Covenant freedom, I didn't clearly understand what being a Christian had to do with my behavior. This is when I learned that many of our pastors, who look so confident and knowledgeable behind their pulpits on Sunday morning, do not have a clue. They are just as confused about essential salvation doctrines as I was.

As I said, I was holding to numerous contradictions in my Christian faith. Knowing (or at this point, hoping) that the truth of Christianity does not contradict itself, I determined to apply all the logic I possessed to this problem and then to learn more principles of logic so that I could apply them. I found some excellent mentors who were willing to coach me in this area and attached myself to them.

Somewhere along the way, I found myself holding desperately to the idea that logic, with the right input, leads to truth (God). I refused to any longer accept a Christianity that required me to check my brain at the door. No longer satisfied having someone else tell me what to believe, I began to study Scripture like never before.

I first became unwilling and then unable to ignore any verse of Scripture just because it contradicted what I believed. If it truly contradicted what I believed, without violating clearly established scriptural principles, then I adjusted my belief system. Sometimes the evidence dictated that I reject what I had thought were clearly established biblical principles.

Even though I was giving it all my attention, it was a slow, painful process. In the beginning it was painful because, like most of us, I was emotionally attached to what I believed. But as months turned into years the pain gave way to excitement as I began to see the big picture develop.

If I couldn't figure out what something meant, I called pastors, Bible school teachers, and/or seminary professors until I found someone who could and would help me submit my question to Scripture to find the answer. Month after month and then year after year I ran up huge phone bills. I couldn't just accept what they said because their answers were often contradictory, but this gave me a chance to hear opposing arguments for what it takes to be saved.

I submitted everything I believed to the Word of God, ruthlessly rejecting anything that did not measure up. I allowed no "sacred cows." This gave me a distinct advantage over most of the pastors and professors I talked to. They had ties to their respective denominations which were sometimes steeped in tradition. If I would present evidence that brought into question one of these traditions, they would often get silent. Because I just wanted to know truth, I was not afraid to question anything.

You might think that this was a hard thing to do, and in a sense you are right. It was painful. But in another sense I had no choice because I was dying a slow, painful death. My Christianity had become very distasteful to me and I knew that I was not going to remain where I was.

I really had nothing to lose. I was holding to an illogical belief system that was full of contradictions and was becoming increasingly intolerant of a God who would convict me of sin while leaving a walk of Spirit empowered faithfulness just out of my reach. This violated my sense of justice, which I now know comes from God.

I called Jesus my Lord while deciding if and when to obey Him, which I now know fits no legitimate definition of the word “Lord,” and sang “All to Jesus, I surrender . . .” while firmly convinced that He does not empower a surrendered life. Everything I was doing looked increasingly like the worst kind of insanity. Submitting everything I believed to Scripture and letting the chips fall where they may was one last desperate attempt to see if I was going to remain a Christian.

Here is an analogy that explains what I was going through. When I was nineteen years old I worked for a year as a roughneck and derrick man on an offshore drilling rig. One of our safety training classes featured another roughneck whose rig had been on a well that had blown out and ignited. With the rig quickly becoming a raging inferno, he went to the furthest point from the out-of-control blaze. Then, before the rescue boat arrived, he took the perilous jump into the waves below.

Later, when asked why he jumped when he did instead of waiting for the boat, he replied, “When the handrail got so hot that I couldn’t touch it, I knew I had to go.”

I felt like that man. If I was going to die, I was going to go down fighting. I was not going to just stand there and roast. In one sense jumping took courage because every pastor and Christian teacher I knew was warning me not to go there. “It will drive you crazy” they insisted. But in another sense I knew that, despite what they said, I was not going to just stand there and die a slow painful death.

Being completely unwilling to ignore the verses that my pastors had used to prove to me that God empowers no one to consistently resist the temptation to sin, I began my study. If there was a way to actually live what Promise Keepers was offering, it had to be straight through them.

As I began my inspection, I found that each of those verses had either been reinterpreted from its original meaning, read out of context, or had key words redefined. And then from this warped foundation sprang all sorts of unbiblical concepts and doctrines. Such a complicated lie I have never seen, much less attempted to unravel. But now, with the help of many quality friends I have picked up along the way, I have done so.

One thing that made it so hard is that I was Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. One moment I wanted to believe that I could stand firm against temptation to sin and the next moment I didn’t. I was just as addicted to sin as I had been before I came to God a quarter of a century earlier.

During those years, I would catch glimpses of the relationship God was offering me. I could tell that it was beautiful beyond expression and that it somehow looked familiar, but when I would turn to look into it, it would disappear. I knew in my heart that what I

was glimpsing was unavailable to me if I was not willing to turn from my sin and commit my life to God.

Then, on a Saturday morning in September, 1998, a new study technique rightly interpreted the last two verses I had been quoting to God to defend my right to be able to sin occasionally and still be saved. I saw very clearly that morning that they, just like the rest, had been misrepresented to me. I remember the panic I felt when I suddenly realized that I had nothing left to quote from Scripture to defend my carnality. I actually screamed at God, “Are You talking about ‘sinless perfection’ or what?!” (I had learned that in church too.)

Then, in my spirit, I felt God gently ask, “Now that all your arguments and logic have failed, are you going to stand on propaganda?” Along with that question came a definition of propaganda: “Propaganda is what you stand on when your logic has been demolished and you are still unwilling to accept the truth.” I was crushed.

So, there I was at a moment of decision. My options were to either walk away from Christianity or to actually follow the One I had been calling my Lord—a life that I had been convinced was not available to me.

I was scared. I felt weak and shaky as I took the step, against the advice of so many well-meaning Christians who had no idea that I so despised my Christianity that I was about to reject everything unless I could find something real.

The last part of the prayer I prayed that Saturday morning seems to have burned itself into my mind. I prayed, “Okay God. I think you have shown me that you have made a way for me to never sin again, but I’m not perfect and I’m not sure I even know what that means. But here is what I think it means: If I will commit to face You with every trial and every temptation, as I make my relationship with you the only thing that matters, then wherever that takes me You will meet me there and make this walk available to me. So right now I’m throwing myself into Your arms for You to catch me or drop me. Please don’t drop me.”

Just like the roughneck on the burning drilling rig, I turned loose of all that was familiar and jumped. I landed right back where I was when I first came to God at twenty years old, looking directly into the beauty of an undefiled relationship with God.

Only this time things are different—I know that it is biblical. Because of the path I have walked to return, the church cannot take it from me again, though it courageously continues to try.

### **On a Side Note . . .**

Years later I was having coffee with a close friend, Don Thurn, who was in the men’s group that I led during this time. We were discussing the disruptive effect it had on my life for me to learn that God empowers Christians to consistently resist the temptation to do what they know to be wrong, begin teaching it, and then to have the fury of a large pastoral staff unleashed on me. We discussed how this drove me deeper and deeper into Scripture to see if I was really right. Don had been amazed that I could defend this gospel against the fiercest challenges that anyone could bring. For the first time I explained to him in detail, as I just did to you, what I went through on that Saturday

morning. I finished by saying, “That is when all hell broke loose on my life.” Don replied, “No, Wayne. That’s when *all heaven* broke loose on your life.”

## Chapter 5

### RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE IN THE BIBLE

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.

Luke 1:5-6, NASB

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly.

Matthew 1:18-20, NASB

The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.

Proverbs 28:1, KJV

And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?"

Job 1:8-9, RSV

[Note: By the way, the biblical definition of "fear God" is to hate evil with a hatred that causes us to turn from it, as Job did. This is explained in the following verse: "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil . . ." (Proverbs 8:13, KJV). When a child of God is referred to as "God-fearing," this is what it means.

Now let's continue:

My covenant was with him [Levi], a covenant of life and peace, and I gave them to him; this called for reverence and he revered me and stood in awe of my name. True instruction was in his mouth and nothing false was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many from sin.

Malachi 2:5-6, NIV

We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people.

Acts 10:22, NIV

Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout . . .

Luke 2:25, RSV

Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

James 5:16, NASB

And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.

Genesis 7:1, KJV

. . . for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Matthew 5:45, NASB

Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life . . .

Revelation 3:4-5, NIV

We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful . . .

I Tim 1:9, NIV

I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

Luke 15:7, NIV

Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous.

I John 3:12, NIV

. . . he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

Matthew 10:41, NASB

[Note: Also see Psalms 97:10-12, Isaiah 3:10-11, Lamentations 4:13, Matthew 23:35-36, Ezekiel 14:12-14, 23:45, Psalms 33:1, I Peter 4:18, and John 3:20-21.]

The next time you hear a preacher read, "There is none righteous, no, not one . . ." (Romans 3:10, KJV) out of context and apply it to every person who has ever lived instead of to those under the law, as Paul did (vs. 19), ask him about some of these righteous people.

## Chapter 6

### PERFECT PEOPLE IN THE BIBLE

Jesus said:

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Matthew 5:48, KJV

The Bible describes people whose hearts are right with God as being perfect. “Heart,” in this case, does not mean the organ beating in our chest or feelings of romance or emotion. It refers to the seat of our will, commitment, and allegiance. This is the only thing of value we can offer God and is the only thing He requires.

Now let’s read some of the verses of Scripture that identify perfect people:

These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.

Genesis 6:9, KJV

God is my strength and power: and he maketh my way perfect.

II Sam 22:33, KJV

. . . Asa’s heart was perfect with the LORD all his days.

I Kings 15:14, KJV

Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy.

I Chronicles 29:9, KJV

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed [NIV – shunned] evil.

Job 1:1, KJV

Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity:

Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words:

That they may shoot in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.

Psalms 64:2-4, KJV

[Note: Also see II Kings 20:3, I Chronicles 12:38, Psalms 18:32, and Psalms 37:37.]

This does not mean that these people woke up one morning and realized that they had arrived; that there was no more room for improvement. It means that their hearts were wholly committed to God.

When God told Satan that Job was perfect (Job 1:1, quoted above), He did not mean that Job had achieved absolute God-likeness. That is not God's standard for us. The creature can never be like the Creator. He meant that Job had "shunned evil" and committed his life to God.

Long before I found all these verses, I was pondering the fact that Jesus commands us to be perfect. It was troubling to me because I had heard so many Christian teachers attach our modern-day definition of "perfect" to the word and present Jesus' words from Matthew 5:48 as conclusive biblical evidence that "God does not expect from us or empower us to do what He commands, therefore there must be a covering somewhere for our ongoing misbehavior."

I knew they could not be right because Job was just as human as I am and he lived a life that pleased God and was considered by God to be perfect (Job 1:1 and 1:8).

One day I was watching my dog Bandit eat and something clicked in my brain. I was not grieved or disappointed because my dog chewed with his mouth open and didn't sit up at the table and spread his napkin on his lap. Would I be more God-like if this did grieve me? I couldn't help but laugh at the idea.

There is much more difference between God and me than between my dog and me. The fact that God considered all these people in these verses to be perfect disproves the idea that He is the standard by which we are measured, which is what I hear Reformed preachers preach.

All I expected of Bandit is that he be a dog and not do what I had taught him not to do. It was that simple.

Bandit was a miniature dachshund. He was a good dog, but I never could get him to stay out of the trash can if someone had put food scraps in it. He would never touch it if anyone was looking, but if we left he would get into it every time. And when we would return and find the evidence all over the floor, he would act so guilty and sorry. No matter how much I would spank him, it had no effect other than to make him act guilty when he was caught.

He was fiercely loyal and protective. One day we were walking around the block with his sister Cloie when three very large dogs came charging down the hill toward us, snarling. I knew that they were wearing shock collars and would not come past the invisible barrier at the edge of their yard, but Bandit did not. He charged.

With me right on his heels yelling for him to stop, he met them on their side of the ditch bank. Effortlessly, one of the large dogs flipped him onto his back and stood over him until I could rescue him.

When the danger was past, I scolded him, but my heart was not in it. How could I punish him for what I had just witnessed? He had laid his life on the line for us. His heart was devoted to us. We had his undying allegiance.

The day I referenced earlier, when I was watching Bandit eat, it occurred to me that the question is not "Can I be like God?" The creature can never be like the Creator. The question is, "What does God expect of me?"

He expects my heart to be fully devoted to Him. If God has my heart, He has my loyalty and allegiance. And He expects me to stay out of the trash can even when no one is watching.

## Chapter 7

### THE CHURCH IN HISTORY

In this chapter I will demonstrate that church history reveals that earlier Christians embraced the New Covenant freedom that was foretold by the prophets.

In one of his popular books, Josh McDowell of Campus Crusade for Christ reminds us that early Christians were known for their standard of moral purity:

The historian Edward Gibbon in his famous work, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, gives the “purer but austere morality of the first Christians” as one of five reasons for the rapid success of Christianity.

*More Than a Carpenter*, page 66

John MacArthur wrote:

Prior to [the twentieth] century, no serious theologian would have entertained the notion that it is possible to be saved yet see nothing of the outworking of regeneration in one’s life-style or behavior. In 1918, Lewis Sperry Chafer [founder and first president of Dallas Theological Seminary] published *He That is Spiritual*, articulating the concept that I Corinthians 2:15 – 3:3 speaks of two classes of Christians: carnal and spiritual. Chafer wrote, “The ‘carnal’ Christian is . . . characterized by a ‘walk’ that is on the same plane as that of the ‘natural’ [unsaved] man.” That was a foreign concept to most Christians in Dr. Chafer’s generation, but it has become a central premise for a large segment of the church today.

*The Gospel According to Jesus*, pages 23-24

The Bible explains that sinners have always hated the righteous because the presence of one who will not compromise with evil makes sinners – especially carnal religious people – feel guilty:

Bloodthirsty men hate a man of integrity  
and seek to kill the upright.

Proverbs 29:10, NIV

So truth fails,  
And he who departs from evil [repents] makes himself a prey.

Isaiah 59:15, NKJV

For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; not as Cain, who was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother’s were righteous.

I John 3:11-12, NASB

In the early days of Christianity, the spirit of immorality was outside the church raging against it and trying to destroy it. It was offended by the church's moral purity. John Foxe recorded:

Jerome [an early historian] saith, "There is no day in the whole year unto which the number of five thousand martyrs cannot be ascribed, except only the first day of January."

*Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, page 12

Another non-Christian testimony to this wholesale slaughter of Christians is in these words of a Roman official named Pliny the second, as quoted here by John Foxe:

In the third persecution Pliny the second, a man learned and famous, seeing the lamentable slaughter of Christians, and moved therewith to pity, wrote to Trajan, certifying him that there were many thousands of them daily put to death, of which none did any thing contrary to the Roman laws worthy of persecution. "The whole account they gave of their crime or error (whichever it is to be called) amounted only to this, - viz. that they were accustomed on a stated day to meet before day-light, and to repeat together a set form of prayer to Christ as a God, and to bind themselves by an obligation – not indeed to commit wickedness; but, on the contrary, - never to commit theft, robbery or adultery, never to falsify their word, never to defraud any man: after which it was their custom to separate, and reassemble to partake in common of a harmless meal."

Ibid, pages 18-19

One of the early Christian martyrs to which Jerome referred was named Blandina. About one of her tortures, which preceded her martyrdom, Foxe recorded:

Blandina was endued with so much fortitude, that those who successively tortured her from morning to night were quite worn out with fatigue, owned themselves conquered and exhausted of their whole apparatus of tortures, and were amazed to see her still breathing whilst her body was torn and laid open. The blessed woman recovered fresh vigour in the act of confession; and it was an evident annihilation of all her pains, to say – "*I am a Christian, and no evil is committed among us.*"

*Foxes Book of Martyrs*, pages 25-26 (emphasis mine)

History reveals that this evil spirit of immorality, which you will see later is called "the antichrist," eventually succeeded in entering the church. The Christian church of the dark and middle ages was morally corrupt, hiding the Word of God and its freedom from the people by preaching in Latin, a language the common man did not understand. This church eventually made it illegal for anyone to read or preach from Scripture in the common language of the people. This was the state of organized Christianity when God birthed the original Protestant Reformation in England in the late 1300s.

## Chapter 8

### THE ORIGINAL PROTESTANT REFORMATION

In the thirteen hundreds, the people seemed quite happy having Scripture read to them in a language they could not understand. About the attitude of the common people of that day, this ancient book of early church history records:

The simple and unlearned people, being far from all knowledge of the holy Scripture, thought it quite enough for them to know only those things which were delivered them by their pastors . . .

*Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, page 51

[Those words perfectly capture the attitude that I witness in many Christians when I attempt to engage them in a discussion about biblical salvation doctrines.]

In the midst of this spiritual darkness, John Wycliffe (spelled “Wickliff” by John Foxe, and whose name and work are proudly carried on today by Wycliffe Bible Translators), defied the authority of the church by translating Scripture into the English language and teaching others to do the same. He even converted some priests to this practice. Wycliffe and his converts would hold church services in homes, fields, barns, and caves; wherever they could find an audience. This happened about the year 1371; more than 100 years before Martin Luther was born.

When church leaders saw their power structure deteriorating, they were infuriated and brought their grievances before the King:

The Church, they said, was hated. The diocesans were not obeyed. The ordinaries were not regarded. The spiritual officers, as suffragans, archdeacons, chancellors, doctors, commissaries, officials, deans, lawyers, scribes, and somners, were everywhere despised. The laws and liberties of Holy Church were trodden underfoot. The Christian faith was ruinously decayed. God's service was laughed to scorn. The spiritual jurisdiction, authority, honour, power, policy, laws, rites, ceremonies, curses, keys, censures, and canonical sanctions of the Church, were had in utter contempt, so that all, in a manner, was come to naught.

And the cause of this was, that the heretics and lollards of Wickliff's opinion were suffered to preach abroad so boldly, to gather conventicles unto them, to keep schools in men's houses, to make books, compile treatises, and write ballads, to teach privately in angles and corners, as in woods, fields, meadows, pastures, groves, and in caves of the ground.

[Here. May I pass you a tissue . . . ?]

This would be, said they, a destruction to the commonwealth, a subversion to the land, and an utter decay of the King's estate royal, if remedy were not sought in time.

Ibid, pages 85-86

[Note: "Ibid" means that the quote comes from the same source as the previous quote.]

The king, apparently quite moved by their emotional presentation, outlawed the Protestant Reformation. Foxe recorded:

Thus were Christ's people betrayed every way, and their lives bought and sold. For, in the said parliament, the King made this most blasphemous and cruel act, to be a law for ever: that whatsoever they were that should read the Scriptures in the mother-tongue (which was then called Wickliff's learning), they should forfeit land, cattle, body, life, and goods, from their heirs for ever, and so be condemned for heretics to God, enemies to the crown, and most arrant traitors to the land. Besides this, it was enacted, that never a sanctuary, nor privileged ground within the realm, should hold them, though they were still permitted both to thieves and murderers. And if, in any case they would not give over, or were, after their pardon, relapsed, they should suffer death in two manner of kinds: that is; they should first be hanged for treason against the King, and then be burned for heresy against God.

Ibid, pages 86-87

One priest who was converted to the doctrines and practices of Wycliffe was Lord Cobham. Here is an excerpt from his trial:

Then said one of the lawyers: "What is your belief concerning Holy Church."

The Lord Cobham answered: "My belief is, that all the Scriptures of the sacred Bible are true. All that is grounded upon them I believe thoroughly, for I know it is God's pleasure that I should so do; but in your lordly laws and idle determinations have I no belief. For ye be no part of Christ's Holy Church, as your open deeds do show; but ye are very Antichrists, obstinately set against His holy law and will. The laws that ye have made are nothing to His glory, but only for your vain glory and abominable covetousness. And as for your superiority, were ye of Christ, ye should be meek ministers, and no proud superiors."

Then said Doctor Walden unto him: "Swift judges always are the learned scholars of Wickliff!"

Unto him the Lord Cobham thus answered: "As for that virtuous man Wickliff, I shall say here, before God and man, that *before I knew that despised doctrine of his, I never abstained from sin. But since I learned therein to fear my Lord God, it hath otherwise, I trust, been with me*: so much grace could I never find in all your glorious instructions."

Ibid, pages 78-79 [emphasis mine]

These words indicate that the original Protestant Reformation was a revival of personal holiness built not upon emotional preaching but upon sound biblical salvation

doctrines. It was built upon the New Covenant freedom foretold by the prophets and described so well by the New Testament verses we have and will continue to read.

Refusing to repent of his “crime” of reading to people from Scripture in a language they could understand, Lord Cobham was martyred shortly thereafter. About his torturous execution, Foxe recorded:

Then was he laid upon a hurdle, as though he had been a most heinous traitor to the crown, and so drawn forth into St Giles’s field. As he was come to the place of execution, and was taken from the hurdle, he fell down devoutly upon his knees, desiring Almighty God to forgive his enemies. Then stood he up and beheld the multitude, exhorting them in most godly manner to follow the laws of God written in the Scriptures, and to beware of such teachers as they see contrary to Christ in their conversation and living. Then was he hanged up by the middle in chains of iron, and so consumed alive in the fire, praising the name of God so long as his life lasted . . . And this was done A. D. 1418.

Ibid, page 88

Wycliffe died a peaceful death, but his Reformation continued to incite the fury of the church. Finally, years after his death, they exhumed his bones, burned them, and threw the ashes into the river, thinking to finally be rid of him and his despised doctrines forever.

His understanding of the gospel, however, continued to re-surface throughout the centuries in the preaching of holiness preachers like John Wesley, Charles Finney, Oswald Chambers, and those who followed their examples and doctrines, in the days before “holiness” became synonymous with “legalism.”

[Note: In the previous two chapters I quoted extensively from Foxe’s Book of Martyrs. Though many Christians to whom I talk have never heard of it, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century it was the second only to the Bible in popularity. I’m sure you noticed, as I did, that some of the words do not fit our modern-day Christian belief system. They do, however, fit the belief system of past generations.]

## Chapter 9

### BIBLICALLY DEFINING “ARROGANCE” AND “HUMILITY”

In the most popular Christian daily devotional in history, Oswald Chambers charges that we have switched the definitions of humility and arrogance. To me, this is the most shocking lesson in a book filled with shocking lessons:

“The way we continually talk about our own inability is an insult to the Creator. The deploring of our own incompetence is a slander against God for having overlooked us. Get into the habit of examining in the sight of God the things that sound humble before men, and you will be amazed at how staggeringly impertinent they are. ‘Oh, I shouldn’t like to say I am sanctified; I’m not a saint.’ Say that before God; and it means – ‘No, Lord, it is impossible for you to save and sanctify me; there are chances I have not had; so many imperfections in my brain and body; no, Lord, it isn’t possible.’ That may sound wonderfully humble before men, but before God it is an attitude of defiance.

“Again, the things that sound humble before God may sound the opposite before men. To say Thank God, I know I am saved and sanctified is in the sight of God the acme of humility, it means you have so completely abandoned yourself to God that you know He is true. Never bother your head as to whether what you say sounds humble before men or not, but always be humble before God, and let Him be all in all.

“There is only one relationship that matters, and that is your personal relationship to a personal Redeemer and Lord. Let everything else go, but maintain that at all costs, and God will fulfill His purpose through your life. One individual life may be of priceless value to God’s purposes, and yours may be that life.”

*My Utmost for His Highest*, November 30<sup>th</sup> lesson.

When I measured Chambers’ charge by Scripture, to my surprise I found it to be absolutely correct. The Bible consistently describes an humble person as one who has submitted his will to God’s. An arrogant person, on the other hand, is one who decides if and when to obey God.

Arrogant believers are called adulterous enemies of God and are commanded to humble themselves before the Lord:

You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

“God opposes the proud  
but gives grace to the humble.”

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

James 4:4-10, NIV

It has been years since I have verified the truth of Oswald Chambers' charge that we have switched the biblical definitions of arrogance and humility. However, the idea that it is arrogant for faithful Christians like Blandina and Lord Cobham (as quoted in "The Church in History") to claim victory over the power of sin is still the most troubling unbiblical concept I have to deal with, personally. The church has hammered it into our brains. The Bible writers had no such problem as illustrated by the following two quotes:

I have more insight than all my teachers,  
for I meditate on your statutes.  
I have more understanding than the elders,  
for I obey your precepts.  
I have kept my feet from every evil path  
so that I might obey your word.  
I have not departed from your laws,  
for you yourself have taught me.  
How sweet are your words to my taste,  
sweeter than honey to my mouth!  
I gain understanding from your precepts;  
therefore I hate every wrong path.

King David. Psalms 119:99-104, NIV

You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed.

The Apostle Paul. I Thessalonians 2:10, NIV

## Chapter 10

### HOLINESS PREACHERS

When I look back in church history, it is easy to see that some of the most famous preachers were embracing and preaching a different gospel than the one taught today. In this chapter are five examples.

The first comes from the trial (about which we just read) of one of the original Protestant Reformers, Lord Cobham, who defied the authority of a morally corrupt church and became a follower of John Wickliffe (spelled “Wickliff” in the following quote):

“As for that virtuous man Wickliff, I shall say here, before God and man, that before I knew that despised doctrine of his, I never abstained from sin. But since I learned therein to fear my Lord God, it hath otherwise, I trust, been with me: so much grace could I never find in all your glorious instructions.”

*Foxes Book of Martyrs*, pages 78-79

My second example is from one of John Wesley’s sermons, preached at St. Mary’s, Oxford on June 11<sup>th</sup>, 1738. It is entitled “Salvation by Faith:”

Again, through this faith they are saved from the power of sin, as well as from the guilt of it. So the apostle declares, “Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not,” I John iii, 5, & c. Again, “Little children, let no one deceive you. He that committeth sin is of the devil. Whosoever believeth is born of God. And whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” Once more, “We know, that whosoever is born of God sinneth not: but he that is begotten of God, keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not,” chap. v, 18.

He that is, by faith, born of God, sinneth not, 1, by any habitual sin; for all habitual sin, is sin reigning: but sin cannot reign in any that believeth. Nor, 2, by any willful sin, for his will, while he abideth in the faith, is utterly set against all sin, and abhorreth it as deadly poison. . . . Thus, “He that is born of God doth not commit sin,” and though he cannot say, he hath not sinned, yet, now “he sinneth not.”

*Wesley’s 52 Standard Sermons*, page 6

My third example is a couple of quotes from a sermon preached by D. L. Moody in 1908:

No unrepentant sinner will ever get into Heaven. Unless they forsake their sin they cannot enter there.

And,

If the unrighteous man says: “I will not turn away from sin. I will hold on to sin and have heaven,” he is deceiving himself.”

Dwight L. Moody, *Heaven: Its Inhabitants*, public domain

[Note: Both the above Moody quotes are from Dr. Daniel LaLonde’s *The Lying Promise*. This well-documented book is a real eye-opening study about the differences in the salvation doctrines being taught by the church today and in past generations.]

My fourth example is from a Baptist preacher from the early 1900s, Oswald Chambers. In his August 15<sup>th</sup> lesson in *My Utmost for His Highest* (the most famous Christian daily devotional in history) he wrote:

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.” (1 John iii. 9.) Do I seek to stop sinning or have I stopped sinning? To be born of God means that I have the supernatural power of God to stop sinning. In the Bible it is never – Should a Christian sin? The Bible puts it emphatically – *A Christian must not sin*. The effective working of the new birth life in us is that we do not commit sin, not merely that we have the power not to sin, but that we have stopped sinning.

In another collection of his lessons, Chambers teaches:

But the regenerated life is not an “up and down” life; it is a life “up and up.” Regeneration divorces the disposition of the flesh and the disposition of the Spirit; and it then can produce a wonderful thing in your nature – a life without sin (1 John 1:9). This is not sanctification; it is another aspect of salvation. Sanctification makes little difference in your external life, but it makes *all* the difference inside. Yet even before sanctification, every man or woman who is born again of the Spirit of God has victory over sin!

*Devotions for a Deeper Life*, May 12<sup>th</sup> lesson

My fifth example is Charles Finney, one of the greatest evangelists (if not the greatest evangelist) this nation has ever known. He wrote:

They [sinners who would be saved] must abandon *all* sin; they must give up *all* for Christ: they must turn with their whole heart and soul to him; and must make up their minds to yield a full and hearty obedience as long as they live. They must settle this in their minds; and must cast themselves for forgiveness for all the past, and grace to help in every time of need for the future. Only let it be settled in your mind fully that you will submit yourself to the whole will of God; and then you may expect, and are bound to expect, him to forgive all the past, however great our sins may have been.

*The Guilt of Sin*, pages 123-124

Modern-day Reformed preachers believe differently than did the original Reformers. They would remind Lord Cobham that he shouldn't be so arrogant and would remind Wesley, Moody, and Finney that we are justified "faith alone" and not by works. They would remind all of them, including Oswald Chambers, that everyone sins.

We do not believe the same things about Christianity that earlier Christians did because the unbiblical concepts and doctrines of this dangerous false gospel have entwined themselves in and among our biblical salvation doctrines. I've had preachers of various denominations tell me that if they preached things like we just read, they would lose their churches.

### **Modern-day Holiness Preachers**

Modern-day holiness preachers seem to be either cowering in their foxholes or to have joined forces with the enemy. They are not cut from the same cloth as the men we just read.

In church lingo, a "progressive holiness preacher" is one who has abandoned the doctrines of his fathers and has adopted the salvation doctrines of a corrupted Protestant Reformation. He is ashamed of his heritage. He is convinced that modern-day Reformed preachers are the true intellectuals of Christianity and that holiness people are its ignorant step-children.

In fairness to these preachers, I must say that they have rightly rejected legalism. Their grandfathers experienced a revival of personal holiness. By the next generation it had degenerated into legalism. This generation has rightly rejected legalism, but it has thrown out the baby with the bath water. Modern-day holiness preachers have thrown out biblical personal holiness along with legalism.

## Chapter 11

### JOHN WESLEY

This chapter contains things I have heard from modern-day preachers, both Calvinist and Wesleyan alike, about John Wesley. They seem to be common knowledge.

Wesley was an extremely brilliant logical thinker who wrote over 200 books in his lifetime; some of them medical books.

After having church after church close their doors to him because of his unwillingness to compromise his understanding of biblical salvation doctrines, Wesley took his message to the streets. He also trained an army of horseback evangelists to do the same, sending them throughout England in the 1700s. Their standard equipment included a Bible, a Wesleyan hymnal, and a copy of *Wesley's 52 Standard Sermons*.

One of these horseback evangelists, Adam Clarke, became a world-renowned Bible commentator. His commentary appears in *Bethany Parallel Commentary* along with those of Matthew Henry and Jamieson, Fausset, Brown.

Wesley would let anyone preach in his church under the condition that they stand there when they were through and answer his questions about their sermon. Apparently he understood that public debate, in which each party had a chance to present and defend his opinions, was an excellent way to determine truth. Preachers who believed differently than he did about salvation doctrines were not lined up to preach at Wesley's church.

He is credited with single-handedly starting a revival of personal holiness based on a sound presentation of biblical salvation doctrines, not on just emotional preaching. Out of this movement came the Methodists and the Salvation Army. He stressed that the only biblical holiness is "social holiness" meaning interacting with and loving each other.

Upon leaving home for college, his mother gave him a Bible with her handwritten note inside the front cover: "This book will keep you from sin. Sin will keep you from this book."

He seems to have been well versed in the salvation doctrines of Wycliffe's original Protestant Reformation, which put him at odds with Calvinism. Calvinists attacked his salvation doctrines viciously, and he theirs. Once he stopped on a street corner, pondering the fact that it had been several days since he had been attacked by anyone. He prayed, "Lord, am I still in your will?" At that moment, from across the street someone yelled at him and threw a tomato.

As a very old man (I think in his eighties) he wrote in his diary something like, "God, something is wrong. I find myself sleeping more and more often past 5 am."

As a young businessman, he established how much money it took to live and gave away everything else. He was commonly seen, even as a very old man, trudging the streets of London serving and caring for needy people. As his income grew exponentially, he continued to give away what he did not need for bare living expenses and died a pauper.

The tremendous revivals of the first part of the twentieth century, from which came the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement, were rooted in the salvation doctrines of John Wesley.

Even though the salvation doctrines you will read here are considered by most modern-day pastors to be heresy, I have been told by Wesleyan preachers and theologians that they are a pure form of Wesleyan doctrine and theology. They are amazed that I did not get them by studying Wesley but from studying Scripture. I count it an honor to be associated with such a great figure in church history as John Wesley.

Reportedly, Wesley was a man who was small in stature, but he proved to be a giant for the kingdom of God. His preaching rocked the world. Modern-day opponents to Wesley's salvation doctrines usually do not call them "Wesleyan" because too much is known about the man and the tremendous impact he had on England and the rest of the world. Instead, they call them "Arminian."

In the next chapter we will have Wesley introduce Jacobus Arminius and then explain the one significant difference between Calvinism and Arminianism.

## Chapter 12

### JACOBUS ARMINIUS

Modern-day holiness people trace their roots to Wesley. Wesley traced his roots to Jacobus Arminius; hence the term “Arminian. Both Arminius and Wesley saw in Scripture a gospel that is infinitely different than the gospel of Calvinism.

Today, just as in John Wesley’s day, I hear Calvinists using the term “Arminian” as a derogatory term to refer to those who hold to Wesleyan/Arminian salvation doctrines. To explain what it means to be an Arminian, Wesley wrote:

To say, “This man is an Arminian,” has the same effect on many hearers as to say, “This is a mad dog.” It puts them into a fright at once. They run away from him with all speed and diligence; and will hardly stop, unless it be to throw a stone at the dreadful and mischievous animal.

...  
The rise of the word was this: James Harmens, in Latin, *Jacobus Arminius*, was first one of the Ministers of Amsterdam, and afterwards Professor of Divinity at Leyden. He was educated at Geneva; but in the year 1591 began to doubt of the principles which he had till then received. And being more and more convinced that they were wrong, when he was vested with the Professorship, he publicly taught what he believed the truth, till in the year 1609 he died in peace. But a few years after his death, some zealous men with the Prince of Orange at their head, furiously assaulted all that held what were called his opinions; and having procured them to be solemnly condemned in the famous Synod of Dort [a Calvinist church council] . . . some were put to death, some banished, some imprisoned for life, all turned out of their employments, and made incapable of holding any office, either in Church or State.

...  
But there is an undeniable difference between the Calvinists and Arminians . . . . Here they divide; the former believe absolute, the latter only conditional, predestination. The Calvinists hold, (1) God has absolutely decreed, from all eternity, to save such and such persons, and no others; and that Christ died for these, and none else.

The Arminians hold, God has decreed, from all eternity . . . , “He that believeth shall be saved: He that believeth not, shall be condemned:” And in order to this, “Christ died for all, all that were dead in trespasses and sins;” that is, for every child of Adam, since “in Adam all died.”

The Calvinists hold, Secondly, that the saving grace of God is absolutely irresistible; that no man is any more able to resist it than to resist the stroke of lightning. The Arminians hold that although there may be some moments wherein the grace of God acts irresistibly, yet in general any man may resist, and that to his eternal ruin, the grace whereby it was the will of God he should have been eternally saved.

The Calvinists hold, Thirdly, that a true believer in Christ cannot possibly fall from grace. The Arminians hold that a true believer may “make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience;” that he may fall, not only foully, but finally, so as to perish forever.

Indeed, the two latter points, irresistible grace and infallible perseverance, are the natural consequence of the former, of the unconditional decree. For if God has eternally and absolutely decreed to save such and such persons, it follows, both that they cannot resist his saving grace (else they might miss of salvation) and that they cannot finally fall from that grace which they cannot resist. So that, in effect, the three questions come into one, “Is predestination absolute or conditional?” The Arminians believe, it is conditional; the Calvinists, that it is absolute.

Away, then, with all ambiguity! Away with all expressions which only puzzle the cause! Let honest men speak out, and not play with hard words which they do not understand. And how can any man know what Arminius held who has never read one page of his writings? Let no man bawl against Arminians till he knows what the term means . . . .

*Calvinism Calmly Considered*, pages 7-8

It is plain from these words that today’s ecumenical movement, led by para-church ministries like Focus on the Family and Promise Keepers, did not prevail during this period of church history. On one hand I respect these ministries for teaching us to get along and to love one another. Much of what Christians find to argue about is of no serious consequence.

But on the other hand, they worry me because it seems that a growing number of Christians have the attitude that it doesn’t matter what we believe the Bible says about what it takes to be saved as long as we believe. Wesley, Luther, and Calvin would never have tolerated such a lazy unbiblical attitude.

[Note: Please do not mistake the previous two paragraphs for a whole-hearted condemnation and rejection of these two ministries. It is my honest evaluation of their strengths and weaknesses. I have tremendous respect for James Dobson, founder and president of Focus on the Family, and the positive impact he has had on Christianity and family counseling. Everything I know about him indicates that he is wholeheartedly sold out to God.

I know much less about Coach McCartney (the founder of Promise Keepers) but I do believe he heard from God and respect the way he challenges men to be men as they live for God and lead their families.]

Neither did the apostle Paul tolerate such a lazy unbiblical attitude. He taught that we should be (1) tolerant and flexible on non-essential matters, and (2) non-yielding in our presentation and defense of biblical salvation doctrines. About the first, he wrote:

Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters.  
Romans 14:1, NIV

But about the second, “salvation doctrines,” his attitude was completely different. He wrote to Timothy:

Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

I Timothy 4:16, NIV

Then, when establishing the qualifications for elders, he wrote that an elder must:

. . . encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.”

Titus 1:9, NIV

Paul wrote to the Galatians about the importance of biblical salvation doctrines, saying:

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!

Galatians 1:6-9, NIV

## Chapter 13

### A TRIBUTE TO A GODLY TEACHER

When I moved to Ft. Collins, Colorado almost two decades ago, I found myself plugged in under a Christian lay-teacher named Dave Arns. What made Dave so unusual is the unyielding standard to which he held himself and his students. He patiently, firmly, and unapologetically demanded that we measure everything by the Bible. Though I had been a Christian for two and a half decades and had attended many different churches and sat under many teachers, I had never been held so firmly and consistently to that standard.

Dave likes to teach line by line and word by word through Scripture. He likes to do so while interacting with his students, allowing anyone who has anything to say to do so. I remember sitting in his home Bible study hearing his carefully prepared lesson, not liking his conclusion, and saying, “I believe . . . .” Dave would always respond, “And your scripture reference is?”

I was shocked. I was not a preacher or a teacher. I was just a person who knew what he believed and had the right to say so without being challenged. I had always gotten away with it before, but those were not Dave’s rules. In his class, he made the rules.

I was a slow learner. Time after time I would say “Well I believe . . . .” and Dave would follow it with, “And your Scripture reference is?” Sometimes I would get so frustrated that I almost wanted to hit him. I’m not sure how long this went on but it was at least months and maybe years. But something drew me to Dave and kept me coming back.

Dave loved to lay out apparent contradictions between two verses of Scripture especially if he did not have the answer. I remember him presenting a contradiction to see if anyone else had insights that he did not have and we would tackle the problem as a group. Dave was never embarrassed to admit that he did not know the answer.

Sometimes we would not be able to reconcile the apparent contradiction but this would never frustrate Dave. Patiently, he would acknowledge that there must be something we do not clearly understand, and we would go on. Months and sometimes years later he would bring us back to it to see if anything we had learned would bring clarification. Unlike most Christian teachers I’ve known, he never considered anything settled if it contradicted a clear statement of Scripture.

While he is a teacher, and a very gifted one, he is first and foremost a student. By watching Dave, I learned a lot about humility. I learned a lot about what it means to be a Christian man.

I finally learned my lesson. I finally learned that what I believe does not matter. What matters is what the Bible says. Thanks Dave. For teaching me that one lesson I owe you a deeper debt of gratitude than I owe every other teacher I have ever known.

## Chapter 14

### TRUTH IS LOGICAL

*In this book I use accepted terms to refer to the two belief systems that make up Protestant Christianity. One is known as “Calvinism,” Calvinist/Lutheranism,” or “the Reformed faith.” The other is known as “Wesleyan/Armenianism,” “Wesleyanism,” “Methodism,” or “the holiness faith.”*

*Today, because of the ecumenical movement led by ministries like Promise Keepers and Focus on the Family, the line between these two camps has been blurred. In one respect this is good because much of what Christians have found to argue about is of no serious consequence. But in another it is bad because it has combined two irreconcilable belief systems under the banner of just loving each other and getting along, with the unintended and undesired effect of minimizing the importance of salvation doctrine. I have observed that most pastors would rather take a beating than to have a public discussion about salvation doctrines because it exposes the inconsistencies in what they believe.*

*In the days of John Wesley, heated debates raged between him and Calvinists because they understood that they were presenting two different gospels in a world where there can only be one. They were presenting different ideas about what being a Christian has to do with our behavior and, ultimately, what the Bible says God requires of us for salvation.*

*My personal studies have brought me very near Wesleyanism, but without the contradictions that I hear and read in modern-day Wesleyanism or Methodism. I use sound Bible study techniques that bring into question some foundational Calvinist/Lutheran salvation doctrines while understanding that not all churches within that camp are in agreement about some of them. At the same time, I realize that some Calvinist/Lutheran theologians are some of the greatest thinkers and debaters of our time. I know of no Wesleyan scholar who even attempts to compete.*

*As we examine some of our foundational modern-day Christian doctrines, please do not mistake this as an attack on the people who attend churches that teach these doctrines. Some of them are the finest, most upright people I have ever known in my life. While they may say that they sin every day, in thought, word, and deed, when I see how they live I get the impression that they would rather die than do what they know is wrong. I admire them. I have heard many of them question some of these doctrines just as I am doing.*

*I am not, for one moment, questioning the relationship these God-fearing people have with our God.*

In “The Long Road Back” I stated that I found myself holding desperately to the idea that logic, with the right input, leads to truth (God). That idea has blossomed into a solid foundation of my faith. I am excited to be able to state emphatically that I no longer have

to check my brain at the door to be a Christian. Biblical Christianity is logical! It makes sense!

In a CD album entitled “A Blueprint for Thinking,” Reformed theologian, Dr. R. C. Sproul, states, “Logic has no content. Logic gives no information.” What this means to me is that perfect logic with the wrong input will yield the wrong answer. For example, a child who believes that “two” is really “three” will not be able to get the right answer when he adds two plus two. He will get “six” every time, even though he is using sound math principles (logic).

Here is another example: I once heard of a person, during the drug-crazed sixties, who was high on LSD. Convinced that he was a bird, he stepped off the top of a tall building and plummeted to his death on the sidewalk below. These are two examples of sound logic with the wrong input leading to the wrong answer.

I once heard Dr. Sproul reference the law of non-contradiction. He stated that “A” cannot be “A” and “non-A” at the same time. For clarification, he said that a telephone cannot be “a telephone” and “not a telephone” at the same time. He presented this law as absolutely foundational for all logic and reasoning, emphasizing that we must bring this principle into the study of our Christian faith. I had never heard it put this clearly before but it made perfect sense to me. I adopted it as a foundational principle.

In lesson one of “A Blueprint for Thinking” (mentioned earlier) Dr. Sproul explains the extent and seriousness of the problem that Christians do not think logically and therefore are willing to accept direct contradictions:

God’s truth cannot contradict itself. My seminary students, almost every one of them, come in their first year [and] I say, “Do you believe that truth of God can be contradictory?” The vast majority of them say, “Yes, of course.”

They don’t realize that they’re blaspheming God. They’ve made God a liar. But they come that way because they haven’t learned the rule of rationality in the pursuit of truth. Christianity is not *rationalism*, but it is by all means *rational*.

His students probably reached their conclusion the same way I did – by recognizing the contradiction between the verses that say that we can live in victory over sin and the ones that *seem to* say that we cannot. I do not care how much we try to convince ourselves otherwise, these two ideas do contradict.

I once heard a professor from Colorado State University lecture at my church about different world religions. He explained how most modern-day Christians determine truth: “I like him so I think I will believe what he says. But I do not like that other person so I do not care what he says, I will not believe it.” His point was that this approach to determining truth is infantile and that we must learn to think logically when examining the truth claims of the contradictory worldviews that are clamoring for our attention. Far too many of us are content to be told what to believe.

C. S. Lewis devoted the two opening paragraphs of *The Screwtape Letters* to addressing the same problem. In this magnificent work of fiction, Lewis has an experienced senior demon, Screwtape, referencing a former time when humans still knew how to think logically without holding to direct contradictions. Then he gives credit to

the powers of darkness for muddling our thought processes and bringing us to the point that we cannot tell the difference between a logical argument and jargon.

Lewis' book is a series of letters in which Screwtape is instructing a less experienced demon, Wormwood, about how to make sure that his "patient," a new Christian, does not stay on the right path and make it to Heaven. Screwtape writes:

My dear Wormwood,

I note what you say about guiding your patient's reading and taking care that he sees a good deal of his materialist friend. But are you not being a trifle *naïve*? It sounds as if you supposed that *argument* [logic] was the way to keep him out of the Enemy's clutches. That might have been so if he had lived a few centuries earlier. At that time the humans still knew pretty well when a thing was proved and when it was not; and if it was proved they really believed it. They still connected thinking with doing and were prepared to alter their way of life as the result of a chain of reasoning. But what with the weekly press and other such weapons we have largely altered that. Your man has been accustomed, ever since he was a boy, to have a dozen incompatible philosophies dancing about together inside his head. He doesn't think of doctrines as primarily 'true' or 'false', but as 'academic' or 'practical', 'outworn' or 'contemporary', 'conventional' or 'ruthless'. Jargon, not argument, is your best ally in keeping him from the Church. Don't waste time trying to make him think that materialism is *true!* Make him think it is strong, or stark, or courageous – that it is the philosophy of the future. That's the sort of thing he cares about.

The trouble about argument is that it moves the whole struggle on to the Enemy's own ground. He can argue too; whereas in really practical propaganda of the kind I am suggesting He has been shown for centuries to be greatly the inferior of Our Father Below. By the very act of arguing, you awake the patient's reasoning; and once it is awake, who can foresee the result? Even if a particular train of thought can be twisted so as to end in our favour, you will find that you have been strengthening in your patient the fatal habit of attending to universal issues and withdrawing his attention from the stream of immediate sense experiences. Your business is to fix his attention on the stream. Teach him to call it 'real life' and don't let him ask what he means by 'real'.

For Lewis, a Wesleyan theologian who is widely heralded as the greatest defender of the Christian faith of the twentieth century, to give this problem such a pre-eminent location in this great book, the problem must be serious. Just how far advanced is it? Could we be infected?

Let's take a test to see if we can recognize a direct contradiction. In John 8:34, Jesus makes a very simple, direct statement: "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin" (NIV). Does this mean (A) "everyone who sins is a slave to sin," or (B) "everyone who sins *is not* a slave to sin?" (What is at stake here is salvation. In the next verse, Jesus points out that slaves to sin [as defined in this verse] will not inherit eternal salvation.)

If you are a non-Christian or a new Christian, you probably picked “A” and are wondering why I would put such a stupid question in this book. But this question has been stumping more “mature” Christians for years.

It seems that the more educated a Christian is, especially if he has been to seminary, the more likely he is to choose “B” as did the famous Calvinist/Lutheran (Reformed) commentator Matthew Henry. In his commentary on this verse (from the King James Version) he wrote:

The truth is of universal concern: *Whosoever commits sin* [NIV – “everyone who sins”] *is the servant of sin* . . . ; yet everyone who sins is not a servant of sin, for then God would have no servants.

*Bethany Parallel Commentary*, page 569

At least he called Jesus’ words “The truth” before contradicting them.

The last time I showed this quote from Henry’s commentary to a pastor, he replied, “I agree with that.” I’m afraid that I raised my voice just a little in response: “You agree with Jesus or Matthew Henry? They contradict each other! Henry’s ‘is not’ directly contradicts Jesus’ ‘is’! Can there possibly be a more direct contradiction of ‘is’ than ‘is not’?”

After taking another look at Henry’s words, he finally conceded that there might be a contradiction in there somewhere. But, just like Henry, he was choking on the plain meaning of Jesus’ words.

So, what forced Henry to blatantly contradict Jesus’ words? The contradiction was forced by his concept of New Covenant freedom: *freedom from the guilt and consequences of our ongoing inevitable sins*. With this kind of freedom as his input, he logically concluded that everyone sins, which means that Jesus could not have possibly been right.

Being well schooled in logic and the law of non-contradiction, as are most Calvinists, Mr. Henry understood that Jesus’ words, “[E]veryone who sins is a slave to sin,” contradicted his doctrine “Everyone sins.” His way of resolving the contradiction was to reject Jesus’ words.

Where do some preachers get the idea that they can reject Jesus’ words if they contradict their preconceived concepts and doctrines? I do not know, but I am seeing a pattern of doing just that in that branch of Christianity.

On his nationally broadcast radio call-in program, I heard another one of them instructing a caller about why his Christian doctrine does not have to match the teaching of Jesus. He said, “You cannot build New Covenant doctrine on the teaching of Jesus because everything He said was before the cross.”

His statement was not even technically correct. After Jesus was resurrected, he appeared to His disciples, telling them to “go and make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20, NIV). He later appeared to the apostle Paul on the Damascus road, telling him to call people to repentance “so that they may receive forgiveness of sins” (Acts 26:18).

I have a CD album from another very popular Calvinist/Lutheran theologian (whose teaching I usually find very informative and inspirational) in which he points out that

what makes Christianity different than any other religion in the world is that *it is not based on the teaching of its Founder*.

Martin Luther found himself in a similar position, realizing that his doctrine of “justification by ‘faith alone’” contradicted the book of James, so he rejected James, denying its apostolic authorship. I will demonstrate in the unabridged edition that many preachers today are not as honest as was Luther. They *say* they accept James while misrepresenting and/or disagreeing with what he wrote.

One day I heard a famous Reformed preacher on the radio. He said, “I believe that once we are saved, we cannot lose our salvation, but there are some verses in Hebrews that I find extremely disturbing.” When I quote his words to Reformed preachers they readily agree that there are a few verses of Scripture that contradict their “once saved, always saved” doctrine. How can they be so willing to accept such a glaring contradiction?

They go on to explain to me that there is this “tension” (contradiction) between the many verses that tell us that we must repent (turn from sin and commit our lives to God) to be saved and salvation “by grace through faith.” The “tension” is forced by their unbiblical concepts and doctrines and by their unbiblical definitions for biblical words like grace and faith.

So we see that just like Reformed preachers of our day, Mr. Henry seems to have been extremely logical, understanding that his concept of New Covenant freedom (and thus his entire gospel) contradicted the teaching of Jesus. While I appreciate their unwillingness to hold to direct contradictions, I am horrified by their way of reconciling them.

While it is true that the Christianity we see today is not based on the teaching of Jesus, God intends for it to be. In the second messianic prophecy (which is also the first gospel prophecy), God spoke through Moses:

I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to [obey] my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account.

Deuteronomy 18:18-20, NIV

When Peter quoted this prophecy he explained what it means to be called to account by God for not obeying the words of Jesus. He said that such a person “will be completely cut off from among his people” (Acts 3:23, NIV). The writer of Hebrews wrote that Jesus “became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him . . .” (Hebrews 5:9, NIV).

Jesus came to teach New Covenant salvation. Salvation is in His words; not just in His atonement. His words teach individuals how to qualify for and activate His atonement in their lives. While God “reconciled us to himself through Christ” (II Corinthians 5:18, NIV), we must allow ourselves to “be reconciled to God” (vs. 20).

As long as those Christian teachers continue to reject the words of Jesus and continue using their unbiblical concepts, doctrines, and definitions of biblical words for their input, they will continue getting the wrong answer about what it takes to be saved. They will

continue to believe that salvation by grace through faith is God's way of accepting those who continue to rebel against His authority in their lives.

## Chapter 15

### WHAT WE MUST KNOW ABOUT THE EVOLUTION OF DICTIONARIES AND BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

Dictionaries follow the evolution of language – they do not dictate it. For example, people began referring to homosexuals as “gay” before the definition appeared in *Webster’s*.

Likewise, New Bible translations follow the evolution of our Christian belief system – they do not dictate it. For example, what we believed about the freedom offered by the gospel changed and then some modern translations of Scripture reinterpreted key words in order to accommodate what we had already decided to believe.

To illustrate my point, I will use I John 3:9, which was quoted by John Wesley and Oswald Chambers in the chapter entitled “Holiness Preachers.” False teachers seem to focus their attention on this verse as if it were the only one in Scripture to make this point. Very shortly I will demonstrate that it is not.

Consider how these popular translations of Scripture, some old and some new, translate the verse:

King James Version: “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin . . .”

New King James Version: “Whoever has been born of God does not sin . . .”

New International Version: “No one who is born of God will continue to sin . . .”

[Note: The word “continue” does not always mean “continually.” It can mean “to resume after a pause.” If an adulterer stops committing adultery and then, after a pause, commits adultery again, he has “continued.”]

New Living Translation: “Those who have been born into God’s family do not sin . . .”

Revised Standard Version: “No one born of God commits sin . . .”

American Standard Version (predecessor to the New American Standard Bible):  
“Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin . . .”

These translations of Scripture, along with others, interpret the Greek word for sin to mean “one sin.” What I want to point out here is that if any of these translators had thought that the original Greek meant “multiple sins,” they had the vocabulary to communicate it. Instead, they understood John’s original intent to be the same as did John Wesley and Oswald Chambers (as we saw in “Holiness Preachers”).

[Note: A relatively new Bible translation called the Holman Christian Standard Bible has recently come to my attention. It is heralded as an extremely accurate modern language version and is highly endorsed by Southern Baptist theologians. (My copy is a gift from a Baptist pastor in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma.) It translates I John 3:9 as, “Everyone who has been born of God does not sin . . . .” I have read the epistles of John and Peter and have briefly scanned other verses and am impressed with what I have seen so far.]

In 1971 the New American Standard Bible deviated from the interpretation put forth by its predecessor by reinterpreting the word “sin:”

No one who is born of God *practices* sin . . .

I John 3:9, NASB (emphasis mine)

To “practice sin” means to sin continually or habitually.

The translators of the New American Standard Bible simply did what preachers were already doing during their sermons. Long before the New American Standard Bible was published, “King James only” preachers were already re-translating the verse on the spot during their sermons to make it fit better with what they believed about New Covenant freedom.

They were doing this because “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin” (KJV) does not agree with their belief system; specifically what they believe about New Covenant freedom. As we have already seen in “Truth is Logical,” this belief system yields to nothing – not to the teaching of Jesus or to the words of Scripture.

For years, Lutheran/Calvinist preachers (who seem to prefer the New American Standard Bible) have tried to explain away the reinterpretation of I John 3:9 by saying to me: “You know, the King James translators did the best they could with their inferior Greek manuscripts and their inadequate knowledge of the Greek language but today we have older more accurate manuscripts and a better understanding of the Greek language. We know that the Greek word that was interpreted ‘sin’ is in the present tense and can only mean ‘sinning continuously.’”

I knew that what they were saying was bogus because even the NASB translators were not consistent with the thought. Instead, they translated the following verses from I John like this:

No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.

I John 3:6, NASB

We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him.

I John 5:18, NASB

It’s like the NASB translators decided to insert the word “practices” in just a few places and let preachers do the rest. It spread like wildfire, becoming the accepted way to interpret the word “sin” anywhere it appears in Scripture in relation to our salvation.

On a practical level, what it means to most Christians is, “Those who sin worse than . . . *something* are not born of God.” But worse than what? This is the great unanswered question. Until they answer that question they have rendered I John 3:9 and others like it meaningless on a practical level: “Those who sin ‘*worse than*’ are not born of God!” And according to I John 3:10, this is how we can know we are saved.

In an honest attempt to make sense of this nonsense, some Christians have decided that they are the standard. They seem to be comfortable believing that those who sin worse than they do have to stop sinning to be saved. Others realize that this position is

indefensible and have adopted, among other things, the unbiblical practice of ordaining practicing homosexuals. If these were the only two choices, I think I would have to vote for the second. There is something nauseating about a person who considers himself to be a respectable sinner telling another sinner that because his sins are worse, he must stop sinning to be saved.

One day I decided to try to determine once and for all if what these Lutheran/Calvinist preachers were saying had any validity whatsoever. If it did, I wanted to know. If it did not, then I wanted to know precisely how to expose their dishonesty. I called the ex-chancellor of a Calvinist Seminary (a man of impeccable reputation and character to whom I had talked before) and was referred to their resident expert in ancient languages and Bible interpretation.

When I told him that preachers had told me that the Greek word in question is in the present tense and can only refer to “sinning continuously,” he replied, “Whoever is telling you this is wrong.” Surprised by his confident abruptness, I answered, “Pardon?” He explained, “There is no way to tell, from the original Greek, if the word applies to one sin or to multiple sins.”

Even though I was impressed by (1) the straightforwardness of his answer, (2) the authority with which he spoke, and (3) the fact that he was telling me what I thought was scriptural, I still had to be convinced. I wanted this settled once and for all.

I then asked, “How then can the translator make his call?” He answered, “The only way to make the call is based on what we already believe about the gospel and since we know that everyone sins, we know that the King James translators could not possibly have been right.”

After taking a long moment to digest his words, I asked, “Does this mean that the King James translators reached the same impasse and had to make their call based on what they believed about the gospel?” After taking a moment to consider my question, he answered, “They would have had to. There is absolutely no other way.”

I replied, “Brother, you just gave me what seems to be the strongest evidence yet, which I will add to my growing list of evidence, that the church has been taken over by a different belief system.” He had no response.

“I have another question,” I said. “Is it true that the New American Standard Bible is pretty much the Calvinist Bible of choice?” He replied that he thinks it is and told me that it was his personal study Bible. He said that he and his colleagues find it to be extremely accurate.

I asked, “So you agree with what it says in I John 3:9: ‘No one who is born of God practices sin . . .?’” I did not know how he would answer because true Calvinists believe that our salvation is based on one thing only: whether or not God predestined us to be saved, regardless of our behavior. Others in that camp of Christianity believe that once you have a salvation experience, no matter how much sin you practice you are still born of God. But what could he say? I was quoting from his favorite version of Scripture. He replied, “Of course.”

I asked, “And you also believe that Paul was describing his Christian life when he wrote, “[B]ut I practice the very evil that I do not wish” (Rom 7:19, NASB). Once again he replied, “Of course.” Then he realized the contradiction.

I had deliberately put him in the position of having to decide whether to hold to his interpretation of the Romans seven passage (which is very important to Calvinist/Lutherans for reasons I will explain later) or to his “extremely accurate” version of Scripture.

When he realized the contradiction, he immediately exclaimed, “You just found a major problem with the NASB!” As I said, this belief system yields to nothing; not even to Scripture. I thanked him for his time and hung up. I must say, though, that my overall impression of this theologian is that he has a heart for God. Like so many others, he is grieved by the blatant immorality that is rampant in the church.

Here is my point: The reinterpretation of I John 3:9 has moved God’s requirement for salvation from one end of the scale to the other. Instead of God requiring faithfulness for us to be allowed into heaven, now we have God accepting unfaithful people unless they become faithful to Satan by continually sinning.

This violates the most common analogy used by Scripture to explain the relationship that we call New Covenant salvation – the relationship between a bride (me) and a Bridegroom (Jesus). Just as in an earthly triangle, it is the Bridegroom who requires faithfulness of the bride – never the seducer. Jesus communicates His requirement of faithfulness by saying:

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

Matthew 6:24, NIV

[D]o not sin anymore . . .

John 5:14, NASB

[G]o, and sin no more.

John 8:11, KJV

Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin [NIV: “everyone who sins] is the slave of sin.

John 8:34, NASB

Nowhere in Scripture are we told that Satan requires faithfulness of his children. In fact, he would probably rather they do what he does: masquerade “as an angel of light” (II Corinthians 11:14) by living lives that are full of religious activity while they decide if and when to obey God.

Scripture plainly declares that it is the Bridegroom, not the seducer, who requires faithfulness from the bride. The seducer’s only interest in faithfulness is that the Bridegroom does not get it. He doesn’t care, when he is through with the bride, if she runs back home to her Bridegroom, crying, saying she is sorry, and calling Him her Lord. He is not offended if she sings songs of her love and adoration. All he cares about is whether or not she will dance occasionally when he offers his hand. If she will, she does not meet the Bridegroom’s requirement of faithfulness.

The reinterpretation of I John 3:9 does violence to Scripture by teaching us that it is the seducer—not the Bridegroom—who requires faithfulness. *If a bride is unfaithful, does it really matter how often?*

So we see that just as dictionaries follow the evolution of a language instead of dictating it, Bible translations follow the evolution of our Christian belief system. The ones that we accept are the ones that most accurately reflect what we have already decided to believe.

Now let's take this principle one step farther. How do you think some of our most popular Christian teachers get to be the most popular? Could it be that they are popular simply because they preach what we have decided to believe? This seems to be true.

These men listen carefully to what the masses of people have decided to believe. Then they run to the front of the line and start shouting what they have learned, figuring out clever and creative ways to state it. Then the gullible masses honor them for their tremendous wisdom and insights.

If someone dares to question the doctrines and concepts put forth by one of these men, demanding that we measure them by Scripture, the masses respond, "You dare to question him? He is a great leader. Look how many followers he has!"

Great leaders *are not* those who run to the front of the line and shout what the people want to hear. Great leaders are those like John Wickliff, John Wesley, Charles Finney, and Oswald Chambers who, following the example of Godly teachers in Scripture, boldly and unapologetically confront the masses, turning them from their selfish sinful ways to the ways of God.

Explaining how to distinguish words that *are* from God from those that *are not*, God spoke through the prophet Jeremiah:

Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD. They keep saying to those who despise me, "The LORD says: You will have peace." And to all who follow the stubbornness of their hearts they say, "No harm will come to you." But which of them has stood in the council of the LORD to see or to hear his word? Who has listened and heard his word? See, the storm of the LORD will burst out in wrath, a whirlwind swirling down on the heads of the wicked. The anger of the LORD will not turn back until he fully accomplishes the purposes of his heart. In days to come you will understand it clearly. *I did not send these prophets, yet they have run with their message; I did not speak to them, yet they have prophesied. But if they had stood in my council, they would have proclaimed my words to my people and would have turned them from their evil ways and from their evil deeds.*

Jeremiah 23:16-22, NIV, emphasis mine

## Chapter 16

### WHO IS ISRAEL?

In the next chapter we will see what God foretold through the prophets about New Covenant salvation. But before we examine those verses we must understand who God considers to be Israel. This is because the prophesied promises are to Israel. Understanding who God considers to be Israel, for salvation purposes, is the key that unlocks the gospel prophecies.

In this chapter you will see that neither John the Baptist, Jesus, nor the apostle Paul considered unrepentant Jews to be Israel. You will see that the church, consisting of faithful Jews and faithful Gentiles [non-Jews], is spiritual Israel and therefore heir to the Old Testament promises. The church excludes no one except those who exclude themselves by refusing to turn from their sin (which I will demonstrate in “Biblically Defining ‘Repent’” to be Jesus’ definition of “repent.”)

This idea stands in stark contrast to an idea that has become popular in the last couple of hundred years that God will forever deal with people according to the racial distinction of whether they were born Jew or non-Jew.

To unrepentant Jewish religious leaders who came to be baptized, John the Baptist said:

Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruit worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our father.” For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Matthew 3:7-12, NKJV

Jesus foretold spiritual Israel when He said:

Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 8:10-12, NKJV

In that verse, we see that Jesus, just like John the Baptist, promised hereditary Jews no special treatment. In the following verse Paul continues the same theme, explaining that this new Israel (the church), made up of repentant Jews and Gentiles, was shown to him by divine revelation:

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. *This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.*

Ephesians 3:1-6, NIV (emphasis mine)

Throughout his letters, Paul expounds on the idea:

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter . . .

Romans 2:28-29, NASB

For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; neither are they all children because they are Abraham’s descendants . . .

Romans 9:6-7, NASB

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Galatians 3:28-29, NIV

Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.

Galatians 6:15-16, NIV

[Also see Matthew 3:9, Luke 13:22-30, Romans 4:11-12, 9:25-27, Galatians 5:3-6, Ephesians 2:11-3:12, Philippians 3:2-3, Colossians 2:11 and 3:11]

Paul makes an extremely strong argument that this “new creation” is the “Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16, quoted above) in Romans chapter eleven. There he acknowledges that some Israelites were “hardened” (v. 7) and “broken off because of unbelief” (v. 20), while believing Gentiles “have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root . . .” (v. 17). This new olive tree has been created by grafting in branches (believing Gentiles), which were in a wild olive tree (v. 24), into the root along with the remnant (v. 5) of faithful Jews. (All quotations in this paragraph are from the NIV.)

This new olive tree, consisting of believing Jews and Gentiles, is the Israel spoken of in verse 26: “and so [or, “this is how”] all Israel shall be saved” (KJV). To make the

word “Israel,” in this verse, apply only to hereditary Jews, we must read it completely out of context.

When Jesus and Paul told unrepentant hereditary Jews that they were not sons of Abraham (Israel), they were not denying their ancestry. They were telling them that they were not heirs to the prophetic promises of New Covenant salvation. They were referring to the only definition of “Israel” that matters for salvation purposes.

So, what does this mean to the unrepentant hereditary Jews? It means that if they repent they will be grafted in alongside repentant Gentiles who have been grafted in among the remnant of faithful Jews:

And if they do not persist in unbelief (*Strong's*: “unfaithfulness [disobedience]”), they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!

Rom 11:23-24, NIV

Otherwise, they will be rejected by God (Matthew 8:10-12, quoted above).

So, what does this mean to Gentiles who have been grafted in?

You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.” Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.

Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.

Romans 11:19-22, NIV

So we see that, for salvation purposes, God defines “Israel” according to spiritual, not hereditary, guidelines.

For me, the most decisive argument that the church is heir to the Old Testament promises is II Corinthians 6:16-7:1. There Paul quotes from several passages in the Old Testament which, when read in context in the Old Testament, seem to be to hereditary Jews. But then he applies them to the church, consisting of repentant Jews and Gentiles:

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

II Corinthians 7:1, NKJV

Paul was not promising Gentile believers that they would inherit the ancient land of Israel. He was explaining that the promises are metaphorical promises about New Covenant salvation and that they are available to anyone, regardless of nationality.

The verses quoted in this chapter explain that, like it or not, God will not deal with Israel as a nation for salvation purposes, but will deal with each person on his own merits; on the basis of whether he repented or continued in his sin. This is what He announced through the prophet Ezekiel:

Therefore, son of man, say to your countrymen, “The righteousness of the righteous man will not save him when he disobeys, and the wickedness of the wicked man will not cause him to fall when he turns from it. The righteous man, if he sins, will not be allowed to live because of his former righteousness.” If I tell the righteous man that he will surely live, but then he trusts in his righteousness and does evil, none of the righteous things he has done will be remembered; he will die for the evil he has done. And if I say to the wicked man, “You will surely die,” but he then turns away from his sin and does what is just and right— if he gives back what he took in pledge for a loan, returns what he has stolen, follows the decrees that give life, and does no evil, he will surely live; he will not die. None of the sins he has committed will be remembered against him. He has done what is just and right; he will surely live.

Yet your countrymen say, “The way of the Lord is not just.” But it is their way that is not just. If a righteous man turns from his righteousness and does evil, he will die for it. And if a wicked man turns away from his wickedness and does what is just and right, he will live by doing so. Yet, O house of Israel, you say, “The way of the Lord is not just.” But I will judge each of you according to his own ways.

Ezekiel 33:12-20, NIV

The nation of Israel was chosen to bring the Messiah into the world. This never has and never will guarantee the salvation of individual Jews.

Now that we understand who God considers to be Israel, for salvation purposes, let's examine the gospel prophecies.

## Chapter 17

### THE PROPHETS' GOSPEL

As I said in chapter one, God just as carefully foretold how to be saved under the coming New Covenant as he foretold His Messiah. These prophecies are largely ignored today because they are directly contradicted by what is commonly taught today about salvation by grace through faith. This contradiction is forced by the man-made definitions of “grace” and “faith.”

Just as the messianic prophecies expose every false messiah candidate as a fraud, leaving One standing, the gospel prophecies expose every false gospel. In this chapter I will present the gospel prophecies as a foundation for understanding the words of the New Testament, exposing as a fraud the false gospel that has taken over the modern-day church, wrecking its morality. The key to understanding these prophecies is understanding who God considers to be Israel for salvation purposes, as explained by the verses in the last chapter.

Now let's take a look at some of the gospel prophecies:

But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD  
 Jeremiah 31:33-34, RSV

And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

Ezekiel 36:27, NIV

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD,  
 as the waters cover the sea.

Habakkuk 2:14, NIV

Thus He [Christ] will sprinkle many nations,  
 Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him;  
 For what had not been told them they will see,  
 And what they had not heard they will understand.

Isaiah 52:15, NASB

Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression, He, your Teacher [the “Messiah” or “Christ”] will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your Teacher. And your ears will hear a word behind you, “This is the way, walk in it,” whenever you turn to the right or to the left. And you will defile your graven images, overlaid with silver, and your molten images plated with gold. You will scatter them as an impure thing; and say to them, “Be gone!”

Isaiah 30:20-22, NASB

Remembering the verse quoted above, consider the following New Testament words of Jesus as recorded by Matthew and John:

Nor are you to be called “teacher,” for you have one Teacher, the Christ.  
Matthew 23:10, NIV

It is written in the Prophets: “They will all be taught by God.”  
John 6:45, NIV

Now let’s continue with the gospel prophecies:

All your sons will be taught by the LORD,  
and great will be your children’s peace.  
In righteousness you will be established . . .  
Isaiah 54:13-14, NIV

Let the wicked forsake his way  
and the evil man his thoughts.  
Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him,  
and to our God, for he will freely pardon.  
Isaiah 55:7, NIV

And he will come to Zion as Redeemer,  
to those in Jacob who turn from transgression, says the LORD.  
Isaiah 59:20, RSV

[Note: The previous two verses from the prophets, and many others like them, explain why John the Baptist came to prepare the way of the Lord by preaching repentance and why we must follow the same pattern by teaching that repentance (as described here) precedes justification (salvation). This principle will be fully developed, with ample scriptural support, in upcoming chapters.]

I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the LORD. They will be my  
people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart.  
Jeremiah 24:7, NIV

They shall come with weeping,  
And with supplications I will lead them.  
I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters,  
In a straight way in which they shall not stumble;  
For I am a Father to Israel . . .  
Jeremiah 31:9, NKJV

The following lineup of verses, from the prophet Zephaniah, seems to tell the whole story:

I will stretch out my hand against Judah,  
and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem;  
and I will cut off from this place . . .  
those who have turned back from following the LORD,  
who do not seek the LORD or inquire of him.

Zephaniah 1:4-6, RSV

Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land,  
you who do what he commands.  
Seek righteousness, seek humility;  
perhaps you will be sheltered  
on the day of the LORD's anger.

Zephaniah 2:3, NIV

The nations on every shore will worship him,  
every one in its own land.

Zephaniah 2:11, NIV

I said to the city,  
"Surely you will fear me  
and accept correction!"  
Then her dwelling would not be cut off,  
nor all my punishments come upon her.  
But they were still eager  
to act corruptly in all they did.

Zephaniah 3:7, NIV

Then will I purify the lips of the peoples,  
that all of them may call on the name of the LORD  
and serve him shoulder to shoulder.  
From beyond the rivers of Cush  
my worshipers, my scattered people,  
will bring me offerings.  
On that day you will not be put to shame  
for all the wrongs you have done to me,  
because I will remove from this city  
those who rejoice in their pride.  
Never again will you be haughty  
on my holy hill.  
But I will leave within you  
the meek and humble,  
who trust in the name of the LORD.

The remnant of Israel will do no wrong;  
 they will speak no lies,  
 nor will deceit be found in their mouths.  
 They will eat and lie down  
 and no one will make them afraid.

Zephaniah 3:9-13, NIV

Then, after the Lord has purified His bride by removing the arrogant unrepentant sinners (not my overriding their free will and forcing them to serve Him) the prophet attempts to capture and put into words the Lord's feelings toward her:

The LORD your God is with you,  
 he is mighty to save.  
 He will take great delight in you,  
 he will quiet you with his love,  
 he will rejoice over you with singing.

Zephaniah 3:17, NIV

To summarize what we just read, these prophecies foretell three things about New Covenant salvation:

- (1) God will reveal His moral law (His will; His standard for our behavior) in people's hearts on a universal scale. This is the universal knowledge of right and wrong which the famous Wesleyan theologian, C. S. Lewis (widely heralded as the number one defender of the Christian faith of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) explained so well in the first few chapters of his best-selling book, *Mere Christianity*.
- (2) God will put His Spirit in us to motivate us to conform to His will.
- (3) God will reject those who refuse to conform to His standard.

These prophecies explain that New Covenant freedom is exactly that for which I came to God and received when I was 20 years old: *freedom from the power and control of sin*. The prophets do not foretell the freedom the church offered me: *freedom from the guilt and consequences of our ongoing inevitable sins*. This is why these prophecies are largely ignored today.

The gospel prophecies contradict what we have been taught about salvation by grace through faith only because the church has redefined grace and faith. When we re-establish the biblical definitions to these and other foundational New Covenant words (in the unabridged edition), you will see that what God foretold through the prophets about New Covenant salvation is *the real* salvation by grace through faith.

Now that we understand what God foretold through the prophets about New Covenant salvation, let's turn to the New Testament.

## Chapter 18

### THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE MESSIAH

As I said in “What We Must Know About the Evolution of Dictionaries and Bible Translations,” most of those who object to the idea that Jesus came 2000 years ago to free us from *the power and control of sin* focus their attacks on I John 3:9, as if it were an anomaly. They act like it is the only verse in the whole Bible that describes New Covenant freedom as *freedom from the power and control of sin*, by which any believer who chooses to can consistently resist the temptation to sin.

It is not. We just saw that the freedom it describes matches perfectly the freedom foretold by the prophets. The New Testament verses quoted in this chapter further establish this freedom as New Covenant freedom, thoroughly refuting the idea that we will not be freed from the power and control of sin until Jesus’ second coming.

After the four hundred years of silence between the words of the last Old Testament prophet and the words of the New Testament, God announced New Covenant freedom through Zechariah, father of John the Baptist. These words actually fit with the gospel prophecies since they were spoken before the birth of Jesus, but I put them here because they are in the New Testament. They are actually an extremely accurate summary of what God foretold through the Old Testament prophets about New Covenant salvation. As you read these words, notice the nature of New Covenant freedom:

His [John the Baptist’s] father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,  
because he has come and has redeemed his people.  
He has raised up a horn of salvation for us  
in the house of his servant David  
(as he said through his holy prophets of long ago) . . .  
*to enable us to serve him without fear  
in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.*

Luke 1:67-75, NIV (emphasis mine)

The following verses, written by the apostles *after the cross*, teach us that this kind of freedom is what Jesus came to offer us two thousand years ago.

When God raised up his servant [Jesus], he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.

Acts 3:26, NIV

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation – if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from

the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Colossians 1:21-23, NIV

He himself [Jesus] bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness: by his wounds you have been healed.

1 Peter 2:24, NIV

You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. He who does right is righteous, as he is righteous. He who commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God commits sin . . .

I John 3:5-9, RSV

We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him.

I John 5:18, NASB

Those verses clearly explain that Jesus came two thousand years ago to free us from *the power and control of sin*, so that any believer who chooses to can consistently resist the temptation to sin. In fact, the apostle goes on to write that this is how to know we are children of God:

This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God . . .

I John 3:10, NIV

Now let's look at what the apostles insisted is the effect of this kind of freedom on the lives of Christians.

### **Christians Are Those Who Used to Sin**

For all *have sinned* [past tense] . . .

Romans 3:23, KJV (emphasis mine)

*For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.* But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us . . .

Titus 3:3-5, NASB (emphasis mine)

But thanks be to God that though *you were slaves of sin*, you became obedient

from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed . . .

Romans 6:17, NASB (emphasis mine)

And those who belong to Christ Jesus *have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

Galatians 5:24, RSV (emphasis mine)

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that *while we were yet sinners,* Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8, NASB (emphasis mine)

*For while we were in the flesh,* the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.

Romans 7:5, NASB (emphasis mine)

*For just as you once were disobedient to God . . .*

Romans 11:30, NASB (emphasis mine)

*And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world . . .*

Ephesians 2:1-2, NASB (emphasis mine)

Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. *And such were some of you . . .*

I Corinthians 6:9-11, NASB (emphasis mine)

*. . . but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God,* but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

II Corinthians 4:2-3, NASB (emphasis mine)

Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for *he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.*

I Peter 4:1-2, NKJV (emphasis mine)

*For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

I Peter 2:25, NIV (emphasis mine)

These verses describe New Covenant freedom as *freedom from the power and control of sin*, by which any believer who chooses to can consistently resist the temptation to do

what he knows to be wrong (which I will demonstrate to be the biblical definition of sin). This is the freedom for which I came to God and received when I was 20 years old. It is the freedom embraced by Christians in past generations.

It is not, however, the freedom accepted by the carnal Christians described by Dr. MacArthur in chapter one. Their belief system – the antichrist – has counteracted and neutralized their confidence in the freedom described in these verses, leaving them with *freedom from the guilt and consequences of their ongoing inevitable sins*, which God has never offered to anyone. This is why we can so easily document the fact that there is no measurable difference in the morality of the average modern-day Christian and the average non-Christian.

If the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) had accepted the freedom to which MacArthur's carnal Christians are clinging and are counting on to save them, instead of climbing out of the pig pen, traveling the road of repentance, and submitting to the father, he would have remained in the pig pen, up to his knees in filth, and learned to chant: "I'm forgiven; I'm free. I'm forgiven; I'm free."

Passersby might have stopped for a moment to observe the strange sight, but would have then walked away, holding their nose against the stench of his freedom the way the world does from the church today.

## Chapter 19

### MacARTHUR'S *THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JESUS*

I first heard of John MacArthur's *The Gospel According to Jesus* in 1999, when I began teaching that we must turn from our sins and commit our lives to God to be saved. On different days of the same week, two Baptist preachers objected to my salvation message. Each one asked me if I had learned it from *The Gospel According to Jesus*, of which I had never heard.

Each, in his own words, explained to me that MacArthur doesn't seem to understand that we are saved by grace through faith. But when I asked them to tell me the definitions of grace and faith and to back up their definitions by Scripture, neither of them could.

I didn't take them seriously because that was not what I heard MacArthur preaching on his radio program, "Grace to You." He preaches against sin, as do all preachers, but ultimately he teaches that our salvation is based on nothing except whether or not we were chosen or not chosen to be saved.

What is interesting to me is that the only comments I have heard from leaders within the Calvinist/Lutheran camp of Christianity about MacArthur's *The Gospel According to Jesus* have been negative. They object to his message of "lordship salvation." But is their charge accurate? Was MacArthur really teaching, in 1988, that we must turn from our sins and commit our lives to God to be saved?

Finally my curiosity got the best of me. In the summer of 2006, I read his book. In it he accepts his critics' label of "lordship salvation:"

No promise of salvation is ever extended to those who refuse to accede to Christ's lordship. Thus there is no salvation except "lordship" salvation.

*The Gospel According to Jesus*, page 28

God seeks people who will submit themselves to worship Him in spirit and in truth. That kind of worship is impossible for anyone sheltering sin in his life. Those who confess and forsake their sin, on the other hand, will find a Savior anxious to receive them, forgive them, and liberate them from their sin.

Ibid, page 58

His book is filled with those kinds of statements, but as I continued reading, I noticed that they were mixed with statements like this:

Those with true faith will fail – and in some cases, frequently . . .

Ibid, page 192

If those with "true faith" who sin "frequently" are not excluded from salvation, then what is MacArthur's point? Is it possible to sin more often than "frequently?"

The real question is, "Why does his book continue to incite the fury of so many of his Calvinist/Lutheran colleagues?" It is because they rightly understand that to even *hint*

that our behavior has anything directly to do with our salvation violates the foundational salvation doctrines of modern-day Reformed theology – specifically the doctrine of individual predestination and what they are presenting as “salvation by grace through faith.”

“Salvation is by grace alone!” shout these Calvinists. But they do not mean the saving grace that “has appeared to all men . . . teach[ing] us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions” (Titus 2:12), which is, by the way, defined accurately in *Strong’s*. They mean God’s salvation by “unmerited favor” that he grants *discriminately* to some sinners but not to others, regardless of their ongoing misbehavior.

The famous Reformed (Calvinist) theologian, R. C. Sproul warns against any “mixture of human ability adding dross to the pure gold of grace [unmerited favor]” (CD Album: A Blueprint for Thinking, lesson 3).

When Jonathan Edwards preached “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” he seemed driven to preach something that contradicted his Reformed faith. I heard Chuck Swindoll say that when he was preaching, preachers behind him on the platform objected, pulling on his coattails, saying “What about God’s mercy?” Swindoll commented that we have nothing to indicate that Edwards paid them any attention but continued reading his carefully prepared sermon.

It is plain to me that, just like Edwards, MacArthur has a heart for God. He wants people to fear God; to turn from sin. It is equally plain to me that what he feels in his heart is irreconcilable with his concept of New Covenant freedom and the foundational salvation doctrines of Calvinism.

## Chapter 20

### A TALE OF TWO GOSPELS

Wesley and those who follow in his footsteps believe and teach that a sovereign God granted to humans genuine free will so that anyone can accept God's gift of repentance and be saved. One of the many verses that describe this is:

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

II Peter 3:9, NASB

Wesleyans do not reject the biblical doctrine of "predestination," they reject the Calvinist doctrine of "individual predestination." They believe that God has predestined that those who yield to the conviction of the Holy Spirit by humbling themselves and turning from their sin will be saved.

The Calvinist/Lutheran camp, on the other hand, has always been strongly influenced by the doctrine of "individual predestination." Actually, those within this camp who teach and defend this doctrine represent a small minority but, because they are known as the "intellectuals" within the group, they have a disproportionate amount of influence. In such a prestigious position, the responsibility falls on them to write books about Christianity, including our Bible Dictionaries and commentaries. It is because we have accepted their unbiblical concepts and definitions to biblical words that the modern-day church has accepted direct contradictions about what it takes to be saved and is confused about what being a Christian has to do with our behavior.

So many times I have heard Christian teachers reference the "tension" between the verses that say we must turn from our sins and commit our lives to God (repent) to be saved and others that say we are saved by grace through faith. This "tension" is caused by their redefinition of "grace," "faith," and a host of other foundational New Covenant words.

"Tension" is a polite word for "contradiction." A preacher cannot preach, "The Bible does not contradict itself," and then refer to the contradiction between these two groups of verses. If instead he calls it a "tension," then most people will not notice that he just contradicted himself.

According to the doctrine of individual predestination, before the creation of the world God identified two groups of people: one that would go to heaven and one that would go to hell. If you happen to be in the first group, you have been predestined, chosen, and elected to be saved. If you are not in this group, you cannot be saved because Christ did not die for you. Inseparable from this doctrine is the idea that the behavior of those in neither group can alter their ultimate destiny.

Inherent to their version of the gospel is their concept of "the sovereignty of God." When they speak of God's sovereignty, they mean that He directly causes to happen everything that happens. "It is God," they say, "Who makes us do right or do wrong." Consider these words of MacArthur's:

“He [God] providentially controls everything that comes to pass, according to a plan He decreed before the foundation of the world.”

John MacArthur, *The Love of God*, page 50

“Nothing occurs but that which is in accord with His [God’s] purposes (cf. Acts 4:28). Nothing can thwart God’s design, and nothing can occur apart from His sovereign decree (Isa. 43:13; Ps. 33:11). He does all His good pleasure: “Whatever the Lord pleases, He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps” (Ps. 135:6).

“But that does not mean God derives pleasure from every aspect of what He has decreed. God explicitly says that He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 18:32; 33:11). He does not delight in evil (Isa. 65:12). He hates all expressions of wickedness and pride (Prov. 6:16-19). Since none of those things can occur apart from the decree of a sovereign God, we must conclude that there is a sense in which His *decrees* do not always reflect His *desires*; His *purposes* are not necessarily accomplished in accord with His *preferences*.”

Ibid, 109

This Calvinist idea is rooted in a quote by John Calvin himself, which I read and memorized years ago, but now cannot find. Here is how I remember it:

When I speak of God’s omnipotence [all-powerfulness] I do not mean that God could affect all those things He chooses not to. I mean that nothing happens that God does not directly cause to happen.

John Wesley objected vehemently to this concept of God’s sovereignty because of its inherent lack of accountability:

Can a stone be said to act when it is thrown out of a sling? Or a ball, when it is projected from a cannon? No more can a man be said to act, if he be only moved by a force he cannot resist.

But if the case be thus, you leave no room either for reward or punishment. Shall the stone be rewarded for rising from the sling, or punished for falling down? Shall the cannonball be rewarded for flying towards the sun, or punished for receding from it? As incapable of either punishment or reward is the man who is supposed to be impelled by a force he cannot resist

Justice can have no place in rewarding or punishing mere machines, driven to and fro by an external force. So that your supposition of God’s ordaining from eternity whatsoever should be done to the end of the world, as well as that of God’s acting irresistibly in the elect, and Satan’s acting irresistibly in the reprobates, utterly overthrows the Scripture doctrine of rewards and punishments, as well as of a judgment to come.

*Calvinism Calmly Considered*, Volume One, pages 39-40

In the same book, Wesley attacks this Calvinist concept of God's sovereignty in the teaching of one Mr. Toplady:

Mr. Toplady, a young, bold man, lately published a pamphlet, an extract from which was soon after printed, concluding with these words:

The sum of all is this: One in twenty, suppose, of mankind are elected; nineteen in twenty are reprobated. The elect shall be saved, do what they will: The reprobate shall be damned, do what they can.

A great outcry has been raised on that account, as though this was not a fair state of the case; and it has been vehemently affirmed, that no such consequence follows from the doctrine of absolute predestination.

I calmly affirm, it is a fair state of the case. This consequence does naturally and necessarily follow from the doctrine of absolute predestination, as here stated and defended by bold Mr. Augustus Toplady.

...

Indeed Mr. T. himself owns, "The sins of the reprobate were not the cause of their being passed by; but merely and entirely the sovereign will and determinating pleasure of God."

"O, but their sin was the cause of their damnation though not of their preterition;" that is, God determined they should live and die in their sins, that he might afterwards damn them!

Was ever anything like this? Yes, I have read something like it: When Tiberius has determined to destroy Sejanus and all his family, as it was unlawful to put a virgin to death, what could be done with his daughter, a child of nine years old? Why, the hangman was ordered first to deflour her and then to strangle her! Yet even good Tiberius did not order her to be strangled "because she had been defloured!" If so, it had been a parallel case; it had been just what is here affirmed of the Most High.

Ibid, p. 93-95

## Chapter 21

### LETTING SCRIPTURE INTERPRET SCRIPTURE

Let me explain, in general terms, the study technique that revealed to me the truths of what God requires for our salvation, which I am writing in this book. I call the technique “letting Scripture interpret Scripture.” This approach establishes the Bible as a self-contained unit, free from the corrupting influence of Bible dictionaries, concordances, and commentaries which are likely to contain the author’s prejudiced opinions. Let me give two illustrations to demonstrate how it works.

Since Scripture says that we are justified (saved) by “faith” and also says that we are not justified by “faith alone” (James 2:24), logic dictates that we look carefully to see if the terms are synonymous. This is not what the church world has done. If it had, then we would not have so many preachers preaching that *we are* justified by “faith alone.”

The terms are not synonymous. When we look to Scripture to find the difference in the two, we find that it is biblical repentance. I will demonstrate this (in the unabridged edition) in the chapters entitled “Biblically Defining ‘Faith Alone’” and “Biblically Defining ‘Saving Faith’.”

The second illustration is the biblical definition of “repent.” In “Biblically Defining ‘Repent’,” I will demonstrate that Jesus defined “Repent” as “stop sinning.” This is another perfect example to illustrate this study technique. I will show where Jesus pointed to a clearly described action of Old Testament people (in a passage where the word “repent” does not even appear) and called it repentance. The passage says that the people stopped sinning. The New Testament words of Jesus and the historical event to which He is pointing form a perfect closed loop. Though many object to this definition of “repent,” they are unable to figure out how to refute it without finding themselves opposing Jesus.

They are puzzled because nothing about Jesus’ definition of repent fits their belief system or their concept of New Covenant freedom. “How can people who have been freed from *the guilt and consequences of their ongoing inevitable sins* stop sinning?”

Many have objected to my assertion that the Bible clearly defines foundational New Covenant words. They insist that I am misusing Scripture because it was never meant to be used as a dictionary.

I pondered their words for a long time as I continued to see the evidence to the contrary become overwhelming. Very quickly the evidence became so convincing that I wholeheartedly rejected their argument as now have many of them.

Eventually I was able to clearly understand and put into words what I had been doing intuitively. **First**, I looked for any verse that gave description or definition to the word. **Secondly**, I looked carefully at how the Bible writers used the word. **Thirdly**, when I was satisfied that I was seeing consistency throughout, I would pen the biblical definition and broadcast it to pastors and theologians to see if they could find anything in Scripture that would dictate that I change or modify the definition. Sometimes this process yielded a definition that contradicted the ones penned by authors of popular Bible dictionaries but most often it revealed how to more correctly understand those definitions.

There are two things that I keep in mind during the entire process: (1) If I come up with a use for a biblical word that no Bible writer ever taught in Scripture I was certainly wrong, and (2) My definition must not contradict a clearly established biblical salvation principle. For example, I used to think that saving grace is God's way of making up the difference in my behavior and what He requires. Years of personal study and study with others has convinced me that this concept of saving grace has no biblical precedent whatsoever since no Bible writer ever used it that way. The only verse anywhere I can find to support this misconception is II Nephi 25:23 in the book of Mormon. The problem is that I am not Mormon.

The biblical definition of saving grace that emerged from the above three-step process is: "The free gift of the instruction and power that will support a walk of personal holiness." I base it on verses like I Corinthians 15:10 and Titus 2:11-14 and upon what God foretold through the Old Testament prophets about New Covenant salvation. This definition agrees with *Strong's* while going into more clarifying detail. It contradicts, however, the common understanding of the popular "unmerited favor" definition which is rooted in Calvinism.

In the end, I and a growing number of people are convinced that I am not misusing Scripture to use it to check the dictionary definitions and to sometimes re-establish the biblical definitions for foundational New Covenant words.

Establishing the biblical definitions to biblical words is an integral part of "letting Scripture interpret Scripture." As I was developing and experimenting with this part of the overall study technique, I quickly learned two things: (1) The Bible clearly defines "justification," "grace," and "faith alone," and (2) The biblical definitions contradicted the definitions I heard in church.

To put this study technique to a test, I opened my yellow pages to "churches," as I have done hundreds of times, and called two different Baptist preachers to whom I had never talked. The conversations were almost identical. I asked, "Is it good to establish the biblical definitions to foundational New Covenant words?" Each answered something to the effect of, "Of course. One of the rallying cries of Luther's Protestant Reformation was 'sola scriptura' ('scripture alone')." "

But then, when I showed them the biblical definitions to these three words and their supporting verses, they each quickly backpedaled, refusing to even show me from Scripture where my definitions could be disproven. These were extremely short conversations. I could tell that I had touched a nerve.

I then called a Calvinist seminary professor with whom I had had several stimulating conversations. When I showed him my biblical definitions, he yelled at me, "You are taking apart the Protestant Reformation!" and hung up on me. I really touched a nerve that time.

Now let's revisit and expound upon my first illustration. "Faith alone" is a term coined by James to refer to that which unrepentant believers are holding to and counting on to save them. (The term only appears in James. I will expound on what I just stated in the chapters entitled "Biblically Defining 'Faith Alone'" and "Martin Luther's Objection to the Book of James" (in the unabridged edition). He also calls it "faith without works" and compares it to the faith of demons. He lets these unrepentant believers know that

their “faith alone” will not even slow their progress to hell unless they repent. Faith with repentance is no longer “faith alone” but “saving faith.”

The book of James agrees perfectly with the most carefully documented salvation principle in all Scripture: “Repentance precedes justification.” It agrees with and supports the overall biblical message that New Covenant salvation is a relationship with God that is only available on the terms He offers and that the only terms He has ever offered is unconditional surrender to His oft repeated claims of lordship rights over our lives.

There is no logical way to get from James 2:24, which says that we are not justified by “faith alone” to the doctrine that says we are. When I listen to preachers try to explain how they arrived at their doctrine without contradicting Scripture, in the end I have to let them know that what they are saying makes no sense.

They look at me like I’m the old farmer who was asked for directions to a nearby town. After thinking for a moment, he shook his head and answered, “You just can’t get there from here.” I’m telling you that you cannot get there from Scripture.

The only way to get from the verse that says *we are not* justified by faith alone to the doctrine that says *we are* is to rely on Bible dictionaries and concordances as our final authority instead of letting Scripture interpret Scripture. This is one example among many to illustrate how far we have been led astray because we have been taught to rely on Bible dictionaries and concordances as our final authority.

Please do not misunderstand me. I am not against using Bible dictionaries and concordances – I use them a lot. Sometimes they provide valuable insights. What I am against is giving them authority over Scripture.

As we saw in previous chapters, the morally corrupt Christian church of the dark and middle ages hid the written word from people by preaching in a language they could not understand. The false gospel identified by Dr. MacArthur has just as effectively hidden it from us, while we hold it in our hands, by teaching us to ignore what God foretold through the prophets about New Covenant salvation and by redefining foundational New Covenant words.

Whoever controls the dictionary controls the text. Letting Scripture interpret Scripture gives the Bible authority over dictionaries and concordances. It requires diligent study and thought, but I have found that the results are well worth the effort.

## Chapter 22

### BIBLICALLY DEFINING “SIN”

The first word we must define if we are going to take seriously Jesus’ command to “[G]o, and sin no more” (John 8:11, KJV), is the word “sin.”

I remember years ago when I began teaching that God empowers Christians to consistently resist the temptation to sin. One of my pastors at the time, Frank Estep, told me repeatedly that if I was going to teach that, then I must define “sin.” His words were reasonable, but the problem is that I didn’t have a definition of sin. I just knew what it was. Because of his non-yielding insistence, I was forced to focus on biblically defining “sin.”

A years-long study of the verses that give definition to the word led me to pen this definition: “To deliberately do what we know to be wrong by commission or by omission.”

When I shared this, a few years ago, with a retired Free Methodist (Wesleyan/Arminian) minister named Ron Christian, in Ft. Collins, Colorado, he told me that my definition was synonymous with John Wesley’s definition. He quoted Wesley as saying that sin is “Willful transgression to a known law of God committed by a morally competent person.” We agreed that the two definitions were synonymous.

One verse of Scripture captures everything I have found that the Bible has to say about what God considers to be sin for a New Covenant believer:

Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.

James 4:17, NASB

Other verses that communicate to us God’s expectations are:

Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.”

Genesis 4:6-7, NIV

He has shown you, O man, what is good;  
And what does the LORD require of you  
But to do justly,  
To love mercy,  
And to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 6:8, NKJV

I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.

Acts 10:34-35, NIV

Under the Mosaic Law there were instructions about sacrifices for unknown or accidental sins. But there is not one word in the prophets, as they foretell New Covenant salvation, or in the words of the New Testament about such in the lives of New Covenant believers. The only objection I hear to this statement is Luke 12:47-48 but a closer inspection reveals that the passage is not dealing with Christians but with unbelievers. It describes different levels of punishment in hell which mirror the different levels of rewards in heaven.

In the unabridged edition of this book I go into much more detail backed up with many more verses of Scripture, but here I will summarize them by saying that the Bible clearly states that God expects no one to do what He has not communicated to them. Sin is disobedience. The whole concept of disobedience requires that we have been told in a way that we can understand. The Bible says that God has taken responsibility for that so that those who disobey “are without excuse” (Rom 1:20, NIV).

I remember visiting with a Baptist pastor who wholeheartedly agreed with me on this definition of sin. He laughed at his colleagues who taught about accidental and unknown sins, saying “Every sin I ever committed was because I wanted to.”

This does raise many questions that must be dealt with. Among them are, “What about the things we do, because we are not perfect, that hurt other people?” The fact is that while we are accountable and responsible for those things, God does not consider them to be sins against Him unless they involved rebellion against His oft-repeated claims of lordship rights over our lives. There is ample room within biblical Christianity for me to realize I unintentionally hurt someone, apologize and go to whatever lengths I can to make it right while realizing that my offense was against them and not against God. This is why, as we have seen, the Bible repeatedly says that those born of God do not sin. Sin is a heart issue. I have and will occasionally (accidentally) hurt someone without it involving rebellion against God. I expect to do it less and less as I mature and grow in wisdom.

The real danger here is to justify my sins by calling them “mistakes.” This is a temptation that we must resist. This calls for honesty driven by the knowledge that we are living before a Judge who sees our hearts. This is why Paul wrote (while apparently responding to unjust criticism from carnal religious people):

I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.

I Corinthians 4:3-4, NIV

No one – not Paul (as we just saw) or even Jesus – can pass the inspection of carnal religious people. Such people accused Jesus of being a glutton and a drunkard:

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, “He has a demon.” The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, “Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and ‘sinners.’”

Matthew 11:18-19, NIV

The best example I can think of to illustrate the difference in God's judgment and the unfair judgment of carnal Christians is the life of David. So many times, I have heard preachers say, "Even though David's entire life was marked by 'sin-repent, sin-repent,' he was a man after God's own heart." (They do this to try to prove that no amount of sin can cost a person his salvation.) Notice the difference in their judgment and God's judgment that was rendered after David died:

For David had done what was right in the eyes of the LORD and had not failed to keep any of the LORD's commands all the days of his life — except in the case of Uriah the Hittite [of course including the whole complex affair of lust, adultery, and murder].

I Kings 15:5, NIV

If you take a wrong turn here by defining "sin" so broadly that it is practically unavoidable (as the church has done) it drives you logically to the idea that we are only counted righteous by believing that our ongoing sins are covered by "the blood of Christ," "justification," "grace," "speaking in tongues," or something.

Just as Adam's sin caused him to run for the bushes and try to create a covering from things that God never intended to be a covering (Genesis 3:7), the church tries to create a covering for ongoing sins from things that no godly teacher in Scripture ever used for a covering. In "Examining the Covering for Ongoing Sins," I will demonstrate that God has been fighting against the doctrine of such a covering since way back in the Old Testament with the fight continuing into the New Testament.

Why does He not provide a covering for our ongoing misbehavior? Because He demands that we repent, according to Jesus' definition of the word, to be saved (as we will see in the next chapter).

## Chapter 23

### BIBLICALLY DEFINING “REPENT”

Jesus defined “repent” by pointing to a clearly described Old Testament action and calling it repentance. He said:

The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment, and shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah . . .  
Matthew 12:41, NASB

The implication is that “this generation” will be condemned in judgment for not repenting.

Jesus was pointing to what the Ninevites did that averted God’s wrath, which is summarized in the following verse:

When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.  
Jonah 3:10, NIV

In layman’s terminology, to “turn from our evil ways” means to “stop sinning.”

Now that we understand Jesus’ definition of repent, we see that when he told the healed invalid at the pool of Bethesda, “Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse may befall you” (John 5:14, NASB) and the woman caught in adultery, “[G]o, and sin no more” (John 8:11, KJV), He was commanding repentance.

The following passage begins with some people telling Jesus of Pilate slaughtering some Jews while they were doing their animal sacrifices. Maybe they expected Him to react by promising God’s wrath against Pilate but He didn’t. Instead, Jesus used it, and another tragedy, to warn of God’s wrath toward unrepentant sinners *with no regard for how much they sin but simply because they have not repented according to the biblical definition*:

There were some present at that very time who told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered thus? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Silo’am fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”  
Luke 13:1-5, RSV

Thus, we see that repentance has everything to do with our behavior. It is not “cutting down on sin” but “stopping sin.” The reason John could write, “We know that whoever is born of God does not sin . . .” (I John 5:18, NKJV) is because they have

repented according to Jesus' definition. This repentance is only possible with a right understanding of the freedom that Jesus came, two thousand years ago, to offer us. As we have seen, the Bible emphatically, repeatedly, and consistently states that Jesus came to free us from sin so that we can live for God.

Now that we see how Jesus defined "repent," we see it all through Scripture in verses that do not use the word "repent," as did Jesus when He said that the men of Nineveh "repented" when they "turned from their evil ways."

We have established that it is biblical to define "repent" as "stop sinning," but I find it helpful to get a little more technical to prevent any possible misunderstandings. False Christian teachers can get very creative in trying to figure out how to repent without having to change their behavior.

Some Bible dictionaries define "repentance" as "a change of mind." I think that, technically, they are correct if we understand that a genuine change of mind results in a change in behavior.

Every sinner is either sinning or is between sins. If he is between sins, then someone might say that he must begin sinning again to be able to stop. I'm sure you would agree that this is not what the Bible intends to communicate.

My point, though, is that technically repentance happens inside a person. It is "a change of mind" or "a change of heart." Only God knows if this change has happened. If I have truly changed my mind or heart, I will not sin when temptation to do so presents itself. This is why Jesus defined repent as "stop sinning." This is also what let Jesus offer salvation to the thief on the cross without violating the principle that we must repent to be justified.

Imagine being robbed at gunpoint. Then, with your wallet in his hand, the robber announced, "I changed my mind," and then ran off with your wallet. Would you believe he had really changed his mind?

Biblical repentance is a change of mind and a change of heart (or commitment) from "Satan" or "self" to God. The only way for us to know if this change has actually occurred is if we stop sinning, which is why Jesus defined "repent" as "stop sinning." Repentance is a change of mind that always results in a new life; a life committed to God:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

II Corinthians 5:17, NIV

What the "change of mind" definition of repent *does not mean* is "to agree with God that I am a sinner who cannot and will not stop sinning," as I have heard some preachers preach. This unbiblical idea does not contain the change in behavior that the biblical definition does. It does not agree with Jesus' definition of repent and does violence to Scripture.

Nothing here is to be construed to mean that we initiate or cause our own salvation. Repentance is our required response to God's offer of salvation. Repentance is our "I do" to God's offer of a covenant relationship. The right (or privilege) to repent is a gift (Acts 3:26, 5:31, and 11:18). It is only considered a gift by those who realize how desperately they need to be freed from sin so that they can live in right relationship with God.

I remember sharing with the pastor of a large church near Tulsa that Jesus came to bless us by turning us from our wicked ways (Acts 3:26). He responded by emotionally telling me, "That's not a blessing!" I was speechless.

As we have seen, Scripture says that He writes His law in our hearts and puts His Spirit in us to move, or motivate, us to live according to what He has shown us. The Bible consistently explains that our required response is to repent and abide, or remain, in that relationship.

The Bible says that we must respond to God's offer of covenant relationship by repenting. If we humble ourselves and do this, God will do His part. There is no such thing in all Scripture as a repentant person who is rejected by God. However, any old saint will testify to the fact that repentance is only the beginning. (See John 14:21).

## Chapter 24

### GOD DOES NOT HEAR THE PRAYERS OF SINNERS

There is a Calvinist/Lutheran radio talk show host, out of Dallas, to whom I used to listen quite a bit. When a caller would ask him about one of the many verses that say that God hears the prayers of the righteous but not of sinners, he would laugh and answer that if that were true then none of us could get saved since we are all sinners. It amazed me that this always seemed to satisfy his callers.

First let's read the following verses and then discuss what they mean:

We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing, and does His will, He hears him.

John 9:31, NASB

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.

John 15:7, NASB

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

II Chronicles 7:14, KJV

If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.

Proverbs 28:9, RSV

The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous.

Proverbs 15:29, RSV

“When I called, they did not listen; so when they called, I would not listen,” says the LORD Almighty.

Zechariah 7:13, NIV

The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry; the face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth.

Psalms 34:15-16, NIV

And this is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. Yet you say, “For what reason?” Because the

LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.

Malachi 2:13-14, NASB

Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

I John 3:21-22, NASB

But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God,  
And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear.

Isaiah 59:2, NASB

There they cry out, but He does not answer  
Because of the pride of evil men.  
Surely God will not listen to an empty cry,  
Nor will the Almighty regard it.

Job 35:12-13, NASB

And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

Isaiah 1:15, KJV

For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

I Peter 3:12, KJV

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered

I Peter 3:7, KJV

The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

James 5:16, NIV

Then the LORD said to me, "Do not pray for the well-being of this people. Although they fast, I will not listen to their cry; though they offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Instead, I will destroy them with the sword, famine and plague."

Jeremiah 14:11-12, NIV

He said to me, "Have you seen this, son of man? Is it a trivial matter for the house of Judah to do the detestable things they are doing here? Must they also fill the land with violence and continually provoke me to anger? Look at them putting the

branch to their nose! Therefore I will deal with them in anger; I will not look on them with pity or spare them. Although they shout in my ears, I will not listen to them.”

Ezekiel 8:17-18, NIV

The word “sinner” usually refers to a person who has not repented. That is the definition used in these verses. Since “all have sinned” (Romans 3:10, KJV), the righteous people whose prayers are heard, or responded to, are people who have repented.

In I Timothy 1:15, however, is a different definition of “sinner.” There Paul writes that he is a sinner because he used to sin; not because he still sins. He lists the reasons he considers himself a sinner and not one ongoing sin is on the list.

The word “hear” as in “God does not *hear* the prayer of sinners,” does not mean that He was not aware that the unrepentant sinners prayed or what they prayed. It means that he does not respond to their prayers. He responds to the prayers of humble people who have turned from their sins, committed their lives to Him, and been forgiven.

## Chapter 25

### BIBLICALLY DEFINING “JUSTIFICATION”

“Justification” is God’s act by which He declares the repentant sinner righteous. “Righteousness” is God’s standard for acceptance or rejection in this life and in judgment (Matthew 13:41-43, 47-50, 25:31-46, Acts 10:34-35).

The only biblical righteousness is the behavioral righteousness of the justified (or forgiven) person. John warns against being deceived into thinking that there is any other way to be counted righteous *except* by right behavior:

*Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning.* For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous.

I John 3:7-12, NKJV (emphasis mine)

I know that the church warns just the opposite of what John warned here in I John 3:7, warning us against being deceived into thinking that we will be counted righteous *by our right behavior*, but its warning has no biblical basis and contradicts Scripture, as we just saw.

First we will look at three New Testament verses that explain that justification deals with past sins. Then we will examine New Testament warnings of a forgiven person becoming unforgiven for sinning. In the following chapter, we will see that the Bible teaches that justification is preceded by repentance (stopping sin), which explains why it deals only with past sins.

The following three New Testament passages explain that justification (God’s forgiveness granted at salvation) deals with *past sins*:

For all have sinned [past tense], and come short of the glory of God;

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* . . .

Romans 3:23-25, KJV, emphasis mine

For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who

have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the *transgressions that were committed under the first covenant* [past sins], those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

Hebrews 9:13-16, NASB, emphasis mine

But if anyone does not have them [a list of godly qualities], he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his *past sins*.

II Peter 1:9, NIV, emphasis mine

The fact that these verses mention only “past sins” does not automatically prove that present and future sins are not pre-forgiven. But when we also see in Scripture the presence of repeated New Testament warnings of a forgiven person becoming unforgiven for sinning, the combination is conclusive. The idea that a justified person has been pre-forgiven for his ongoing sins is completely unbiblical.

As I referenced earlier, I heard a famous preacher say on the radio, “I believe that once you are saved, you can never lose your salvation! But there are some verses in Hebrews that I find very disturbing.” Not only does his doctrine contradict what seems to be the main point of the book of Hebrews, but many other verses throughout Scripture. Here are a few of them:

- 1) In Matthew 18:23-35, Jesus tells of a king forgiving a servant a huge debt and about that forgiven servant refusing to forgive his fellow servant (v. 23-30). The king called him back in, reminded him that he had been forgiven “all” that debt, and that he knew that he should have had mercy on his fellow servant (v. 32-33). In other words, the king reminded him that he sinned by refusing to do what he knew was right (see James 4:17).

The parable ends with the forgiven servant being turned over to the torturers (vs. 34) for sinning after being forgiven. Jesus then explained, “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart” (v. 35). He learned that his future sin had not been pre-forgiven.

- 2) In John 15, Jesus is speaking to his disciples who have already been cleansed by His spoken word (v. 3, NIV). Their sins have been removed. I know this is before the cross, but Jesus is “the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world” (Revelation 13:8, NIV). To me, this verse means that the only way anyone has ever been saved is by the blood of Christ.

Then Jesus warns them to remain in Him or they will be “like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up and thrown into the fire and burned” (v. 6, NIV).

3) The writer of Hebrews wrote:

For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgment, and a fury of fire which will consume the adversaries.

Hebrews 10:26-27, RSV

The words “no longer remains” indicate that the sacrifice was there, but is there no longer because they sinned “deliberately.” Just as in the other two examples, this verse warns that future sins are not pre-forgiven.

Some insist that since these were Jewish Christians, to “sin deliberately” in this context can only apply to returning to the sacrificial system, but I do not see this. The words are simply not there. Instead of warning about the one particular sin, the writer warned against sinning “willfully” (NIV). But even if the words were there, forsaking Christ and returning to the sacrificial system would still constitute a sin that had not been pre-forgiven.

The idea that justification is forgiveness only for past sins is incompatible with the Reformed doctrine of justification by “faith alone,” which we will see in “Biblically Defining ‘Faith Alone’” (in the unabridged edition) is defined by Scripture as “faith without repentance.” This is why modern-day reformed preachers preach that justification is forgiveness of all sins – past, present, and future. “It would be completely illogical,” they say, “to forgive a practicing sinner for only his past sins.” Once again, their logic is perfect but their input is wrong.

This does not mean that if a Christian sins that he is damned for all eternity. If a Christian sins, he is a sinner who must repent to be saved. The only way for any sinner to be saved is through biblical repentance and justification.

Wrong teaching about justification is so prevalent that when I question the idea that a Christian has been pre-forgiven of all sins – past, present, and future, I am often accused not believing in “justification” or in “the blood of Christ.” As you can see from reading this chapter, I do believe in these things. But I believe only what Scripture says about them. I refuse to any longer believe things about justification or anything else just because I heard someone teach it or because it is what everyone else believes.

Justification is forgiveness of all past sins so that we can “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16, KJV). No unrepentant sinner can stand in God’s presence.

In the next chapter, we will see the most carefully documented salvation principle in all Scripture – that we must repent, according to Jesus’ definition, to be justified.

## Chapter 26

### REPENTANCE PRECEDES JUSTIFICATION

The Bible teaches that repentance precedes justification, which fits perfectly with what we learned in the last chapter. Here I will quote a few New Testament verses to demonstrate this, but in the unabridged edition I will quote many more verses, both before and after the cross, to establish this as the most carefully documented salvation principle in all Scripture. Here are some of the New Testament verses:

Then he [Jesus] began to upbraid the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. “Woe to you, Chora’zin! woe to you, Beth-sa’ida! for if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Caper’na-um, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.”

Matthew 11:20-24, RSV

And Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 2:38, RSV

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you — even Jesus.

Acts 3:19-21, NIV

Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.”

Acts 10:34-35, NIV

[Jesus’ words to Paul] Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”

Acts 26:15-18, NIV

## Chapter 27

### BIBLICALLY DEFINING “ADVOCATE”

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father [“one who speaks to the Father in our defense” (NIV)], Jesus Christ the righteous . . .

I John 2:1, KJV

Many preachers look at the word “advocate” and let their imaginations run wild. They invent stories of the advocate standing at the side of believing sinners in judgment, arguing that the Father let them into heaven even though they continued to sin. This concept of “advocate” has no biblical support whatsoever and contradicts myriad verses like the ones we have already seen. Instead of following their example, we are going to examine what Scripture says about the work of the Advocate.

In Luke 13:1-5, Jesus explained that a couple of tragedies were God’s wrath against sinners with no regard for how much they sinned but only because they had not repented. Twice in those verses, He warned His listeners that if they do not repent, “you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3, NASB). Then He told them a parable to explain why they have not already been destroyed:

6 . . . A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. 7 So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, “For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?”

8 “Sir,” the man replied, “leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. 9 If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.”

Luke 13:6-9, NIV

The fig tree is a person. The vineyard owner is God. The expected fruit is biblical righteousness (Matthew 3:8, Philippians 1:11, Hebrews 12:11) which, as I said before, is God’s requirement for acceptance in this life and in judgment.

The man who took care of the vineyard is Jesus the Advocate. The wrath described in the last part of verse 7 is the pending wrath of God against unrepentant (and therefore “unrighteous” sinners) (See Romans 2:8).

In verse 8 Jesus explains what the Advocate argues, when He argues it, and when He steps aside for the wrath of God to destroy the unrepentant person, just as He had taught by the examples of the tragedies in verses 1-5 above.

Instead of arguing for God to accept the unrighteous person, the Advocate is arguing for more time to work with the person to cause him to repent and bear the fruit of righteousness. As we saw earlier, the only biblical righteousness is the behavioral righteousness of a forgiven person (I John 3:7).

The “Advocate in Judgment” story is a fairy tale told by preachers with good imaginations. It is another failed attempt to create a covering for ongoing sin so that they

can continue to build large churches by offering a false hope of salvation to unrepentant sinners. There is absolutely no getting around the fact that New Covenant salvation is a relationship with God that is only available on the terms He offers and that the only terms he offers is unconditional surrender.

## Chapter 28

### ARE YOU SAYING THAT IF I SIN, I'M NOT SAVED?

As soon as I realized that the Bible consistently teaches that God empowers Christians to consistently resist the temptation to sin, I began teaching it. Immediately people responded by asking me, "Are you saying that if I sin, I'm not saved?" Over and over I replied "Of course not. I'm just saying that we can stop sinning." Then they relaxed and continued to listen.

My studies continued, however, and I was beginning to see that whether or not we turn from our sins and commit our lives to God determines if we are saved. Then one day I sat down and read a copy of the Reformed preacher, Jonathan Edwards' "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," which a Baptist preacher friend had given it to me. That day I cried. In light of what I had learned from studying my Bible, that sermon convinced me that all these Christians who had breathed a sigh of relief when I assured them that they did not have to stop sinning to be saved were going to be rejected by God in judgment if they did not repent.

Today, people continue to listen to my words and ask me, "Are you saying that if I sin, I'm not saved?" When I respond by reading verses that say we must repent to be saved, they angrily accuse me of judging them. I am not judging anyone. The problem is that they are so used to being judged by their pastors and pronounced "saved" that they are offended when I refuse to do the same.

Since no godly teacher in Scripture ever judged a practicing sinner and pronounced him saved, but instead told him that if he doesn't repent he will be damned, I fear God too much to do otherwise.

In every letter that Paul wrote to churches, he included a warning to sinners that if they do not stop sinning they will be rejected in judgment. Let's look at I Corinthians as an example. He wrote to them as brothers and even as "mere infants in Christ" (I Corinthians 3:1, NIV) but he never pretended that his salutations were a guarantee of eternal salvation for sinners. To the sinful Corinthians (to which I just referred) he went on to promise all the power of God to enable them to resist the temptation to sin and to warn them that if they do not use that power to turn from sin and live for God, they will be rejected in judgment as indicated by the following verses:

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were.

I Corinthians 6:9-11, NIV

But remember that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it.

## I Corinthian 10:13, NLT

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

## I Corinthians 15:1-2, NIV

Many times I have heard preachers refer to the fact that Paul called them “brothers” and “mere infants in Christ” (I Corinthians 3:1) to prove that practicing sinners can still be saved. Think for a moment about the absurdity of this argument. When Paul wrote the letter he had no idea who would be there when it was read. He could not possibly have been meaning to guarantee the eternal salvation of each person in the church in Corinth who heard or read his words. As you can see, anyone who takes Paul’s salutation in I Corinthians 3:1 as a guarantee of eternal salvation for unrepentant Corinthian believers is reading the verses completely out of context.

The Bible is abundantly clear that we are not called or equipped to judge another person’s heart. We are, however, called to follow Paul’s example (II Timothy 1:13) of telling carnal believers, who have not turned from their sin and committed their lives to God, that if they do not stop sinning they will be rejected in judgment.

## Chapter 29

### EXAMINING THE COVERING FOR ONGOING SINS

I told you, in “My Initial Conversion Experience,” that Christian teachers taught me that the only way to be accepted by God is to believe that my ongoing inevitable sins covered by the blood of Christ. When I decided to stop just believing what I was told to believe and start studying for myself what the Bible says, this is one of the first doctrines I thoroughly researched. I have been looking for it for years and cannot find it. It simply is not there. I’m not saying that they do not point to a verse and claim that it is there, but I am saying that, when read in context, no verse of Scripture presents a covering for ongoing sins.

Let me tell you of my extensive search for this covering. First, I did a thorough reading of Scripture from Genesis through Revelation and could not find it. Instead, I found where God has been fighting against this doctrine since way back in the Old Testament, with the fight continuing into the New Testament. Here are some scriptural examples:

He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper,  
But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.

Proverbs 28:13, NASB

God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad.

Ecclesiastes 12:14, NLT

Woe to those who go to great depths  
to hide their plans from the LORD,  
who do their work in darkness and think,  
“Who sees us? Who will know?”

Isaiah 29:15, NIV

You felt secure in all your wickedness. “No one sees me,” you said. Your  
“wisdom” and “knowledge” have caused you to turn away from me . . .

Isaiah 47:10, NLT

My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from me, nor is their sin  
concealed from my eyes.

Jeremiah 16:17, NIV

You are very aware of the conduct of all people, and you reward them according  
to their deeds.

Jeremiah 32:19, NLT

Then He said to me, “Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of

Israel do in the dark, every man in the room of his idols? For they say, ‘The LORD does not see us . . .’”

Ezekiel 8:12, NKJV

But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. “Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.”

Luke 12:2-3, NASB

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Hebrews 4:13, NIV

Those are quite a few verses that deny the existence of a covering for ongoing sins, but it is hard to prove that something is not in the Bible. Maybe I just overlooked the verse that says our ongoing sins are covered. Surely they wouldn’t just make it up, would they?

The second step of my search for the covering was to interview pastors who teach about it. In one week I interviewed a Baptist preacher and an ex-Church of Christ preacher who both assured me that we are only counted righteous because our ongoing inevitable sins are covered by the blood of Christ. When I asked them to show me in Scripture, the first told me, “I’ll be the first to tell you that everything we believe cannot be proven by Scripture.” The second told me, “Of course I cannot show you in Scripture. You have to accept it by faith.”

Okaaaay . . . . So much for step number two.

The third step was to read George Eldon Ladd’s *A Theology of the New Testament*. For years I have heard that it was a textbook for Reformed doctrine and theology. Many preachers who admitted that they could not show me their covering for ongoing sins in Scripture, yet refused to negotiate on this critical point of salvation doctrine, told me that if I would read it I would be convinced that we are only counted righteous because the righteousness of Christ covers our ongoing sins.

I finally bought a copy. On page 491, under the subheading “Imputation,” which is the theological term for this covering, Ladd began by writing:

In classical Reformed theology, a corollary of justification is the doctrine of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to the believer. However, Paul never expressly states that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers.

That answered my question. I was completely satisfied that the doctrine is unbiblical and contrary to the plain teaching of Scripture. Ladd’s entire argument in defense of the doctrine of a covering seemed to be based on perfect logic with “Everyone sins” as his input. If everyone sins, then logic dictates that there must be a covering somewhere for those ongoing sins.

Later I read where John Wesley had reached the same conclusion I had reached, verbally attacking a man who presented this unbiblical, non-behavioral righteousness:

. . . Simon Magus appeared again, and taught, “that Christ had done, as well as suffered, all; that his righteousness being *imputed* to us, we need none of our own; that seeing there was so much righteousness and holiness in Him, there needs none in us; that to think we have any, or to desire or seek any, is to renounce Christ; that from the beginning to the end of salvation, all is in Christ, nothing in man; and that those who teach otherwise are legal [legalistic] Preachers, and know nothing of the gospel.”

This is indeed [wrote Wesley] “a blow at the root,” the root of all holiness, all true religion.

*Calvinism Calmly Considered*, volume 2, page 100. Emphasis mine.

In the days since Wesley, Simon Magus’ unbiblical views on righteousness and salvation have prevailed, even in historically Wesleyan based churches. Today’s body of Christ is literally crawling with Magusites.

As I said earlier, when Adam disobeyed God, he ran to the bushes and tried in futility to create a covering from things that were never intended to be a covering. Today, unrepentant sinners do the same thing. They stretch “grace,” “justification,” “the blood of Christ,” or anything else they can get their hands on completely out of proportion to create a covering for their ongoing misbehavior, while God says:

You felt secure in all your wickedness. “No one sees me,” you said. Your “wisdom” and “knowledge” have caused you to turn away from me . . .

Isaiah 47:10, NLT

In Acts chapter five we find the story of Ananias and his wife, Sapphira. They sold a piece of property and offered to the apostles part of the proceeds, claiming that it was all they had received from the sale. God revealed their lie to Peter who confronted them: “You have not lied to men but to God.” (Their sin was not in keeping part of the proceeds but in lying about it.) God then struck them dead.

The passage *does not say* that they were killed because of their lack of faith that their lie was covered by the blood of Jesus. Instead it demonstrates the truth, which we have seen in this chapter, that there is no covering for ongoing sin.

The alarming thing is that any Christian who decides if and when to obey God, and believes that his salvation stays intact during that process, is relying on this imaginary covering for his ongoing sins for his eternal salvation. It did not work for Adam, Ananias and Sapphira, or the forgiven person in Matthew 18:23-35 and it will not work for us.

## Chapter 30

### THE CONTRADICTION

This book is written to expose the mother of all contradictions in the belief system of our carnal modern-day church. It is the contradiction between one group of verses that promise Christians a life of victory over sin and *interpretations* of another group of verses that have been used to counteract and neutralize our confidence in that promise. This contradiction is the root of the blatant immorality that is rampant among Bible believing Christians today.

There are two reasons why carnal modern-day Christians do not believe in the freedom foretold by the prophets, introduced by Jesus, and taught by the apostles. Either (1) They have been convinced that those verses do not really mean what they say, which we addressed in “What We Must Know About the Evolution of Dictionaries and Bible Translations,” or (2) Even though they *say* they believe those verses, their confidence in the freedom described there has been counteracted and neutralized by errant interpretations of a few other verses.

The verses we have read so far represent the freedom for which I came to God and received when I was 20 years old. The interpretations of the second group of verses, the most common of which we will inspect in the next three chapters, are what the church used to convince me that the freedom for which I came to God and received when I was 20 years old was not biblical. They form the foundation of the belief system that has corrupted the purity and simplicity of my early Christian faith and has corrupted the morality of our modern-day church.

I remember talking to a Presbyterian minister who was completely out of touch with anything I can relate to. She was so far out that she could have qualified for the space program. When I brought this contradiction to her attention, she replied that what makes the Bible so beautiful is that it is full of contradictions.

I asked her, “So I can be a member of your church if I believe the verses that say Christians have the power available to them to consistently resist the temptation to sin?” She answered, “Of course not. We all sin.” Being well versed in logic and the law of non-contradiction, she understood just as clearly as did Matthew Henry and the Calvinist linguistics expert that there is no way to reconcile the freedom we have read about so far with the doctrine “Everyone sins.” It would be just as easy to find a compromise between straight and crooked or between faithful and unfaithful.

You may be thinking that I am making much of nothing. “After all,” you may be thinking, “Everyone knows that ‘Everyone sins’.” And I would answer, “Everyone is living what they believe about the nature of the freedom offered by the gospel. But they have believed a lie about the reason Jesus came.” We are not saved by believing if we have believed a lie. I think it was Mark Twain who said, “The problem with most folks is not what they *don't know* – it's what they *know* that just ain't so.”

Now let's look closely at this seemingly innocent two word doctrine that is embraced by modern-day Christianity. “Everyone sins” means that “all Christians sin” which means that “*God has effectively freed no one from the power and control of sin.*”

Anyone who follows this ill-fated line of logic is robbed, as I was at 20 years old, of biblical New Covenant freedom. Then, like magic, another kind of freedom appears: *freedom from the guilt and consequences of our ongoing inevitable sins*. Do you see how perfectly this new freedom fits with the doctrine of individual predestination? No Godly teacher in Scripture ever offered this “freedom” to anyone.

Now let’s look at interpretations of verses that are most commonly used to *disprove* the freedom foretold by the prophets and taught so clearly in the New Testament by convincing us that everyone sins. In these chapters I will demonstrate a consistent pattern of lies and deception in the way these verses have been presented to us.

## Chapter 31

### ROMANS 3:10

In this and the following few chapters, we will inspect errant interpretations of verses that are most commonly used to disprove genuine New Covenant freedom. As we do, a consistent pattern of dishonesty and deception will become apparent. Let's begin.

Paul wrote:

As it is written:

“There is no one righteous, not even one . . .”

Romans 3:10, NIV

This verse is commonly quoted out of context and applied to every human since the fall of Adam to prove that God considers no one righteous because of his right behavior – in other words to prove that “everyone sins.”

Paul continues:

. . . there is no one who understands,  
no one who seeks God.  
All have turned away,  
they have together become worthless;  
there is no one who does good,  
not even one.  
Their throats are open graves;  
their tongues practice deceit.  
The poison of vipers is on their lips.  
Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.  
Their feet are swift to shed blood;  
ruin and misery mark their ways,  
and the way of peace they do not know.  
There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Romans 3:11-18, NIV

When Paul wrote these words, he *did not* apply them to Christians. He applied them specifically to those under the law – not to everyone who lived during the time of the Mosaic Law, but to those looking to that law for their righteousness – as the very next verse indicates:

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are *under the law* . . .

Romans 3:19, NIV (emphasis mine)

The larger context reveals that the passage in question (Romans 3:10-18) is part of Paul's brilliant three chapter argument (Romans 1-3) that is written to prove that whether a person is a Jew or a Gentile, he needs the Redeemer. It is only by taking verse 10 completely out of context that it can be used to prove that God does not empower Christians to consistently resist the temptation to sin.

I remember visiting the church of a friend that I have made during these years of research for this book. He preached a good sermon that night about personal holiness but ended by quoting Romans 3:10 to prove that everyone sins. Afterward, I asked if I could visit with him for a moment.

When we sat down in his office, I had him open his Bible to the verse and read it in context. He sat there in shocked disbelief as he read the entire passage. Then he replied, "But this is the one they all use [meaning, of course, to prove that "Everyone sins."]."

I answered, "Yes, I know. But read it in context. It does not mean what they say." He was perplexed but nevertheless nodded thoughtfully in agreement.

In his audiotope series, "A Shattered Image," Reformed theologian, R. C. Sproul repeatedly quotes Romans 3:10 to prove that "Everyone sins."

If we really believe that Romans 3:10-18 applies to Christians, then why don't we have t-shirts printed for our church youth group that say:

None of us are righteous, no not one;  
 none of us understand,  
 none of us seek God.  
 We have all turned away,  
 we have together become worthless;  
 none of us do good,  
 not even one.  
 Our throats are open graves;  
 our tongues practice deceit.  
 The poison of vipers is on our lips.  
 Our mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.  
 Our feet are swift to shed blood;  
 ruin and misery mark our ways,  
 and the way of peace we do not know.  
 There is no fear of God before our eyes.

## Chapter 32

### ROMANS 7:14-25

I hear Romans 7:14-25 quoted more often than any other passage to prove that everyone sins. Teachers who use this passage to support this doctrine say that it describes the apostle's "struggle" with sin. They are not being honest. "Struggling" against sin is what we are commanded to do as victorious obedient Christians (James 4:7, Hebrews 12:4, Revelation 2:10).

If a Christian decides to resist (struggle), the victory is promised (I Corinthians 10:13, James 4:7). "Sinning" is what we do if we decide to stop struggling and give in.

The first step in determining the correct interpretation of any passage is to read and acknowledge what it actually says. As we do so, notice whether Paul is describing "struggling" or "habitually sinning":

14 For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. 15 For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. 16 But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good. 17 So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. 19 For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. 20 But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. 21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good. 22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, 23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

Romans 7:14-25, NASB

The key verse is verse 19: "For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish." The NIV says, "For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do — this I keep on doing." Paul is plainly describing being unable to stop "habitually sinning."

The question is: "Is he describing (1) his life before he met Christ, or (2) his Christian life?" This question has been hotly debated throughout church history between Wesleyan and Calvinist theologians. Because of their different concepts of New Covenant freedom, Wesleyans have historically taken the first position and Calvinists the second.

Dr. Ronald C. Cottle, president of Christian Life School of Theology, wrote in defense of the Calvinist position:

Scholars of the Bible are divided almost equally on this issue, pretty much based on the presuppositions with which they ask the question. It is often true that the interpretation of what we see often depends on where we are standing when we look. This appears to be the case here.

Augustinians and Calvinists take the position that this is Paul the Christian since election is based on God's sovereign choice and not on man's personal goodness.

Wesleyans, Pelagians, and Arminians, on the other hand, say that it must be Paul the non-Christian because salvation depends on man's conduct [biblical repentance] and personal sanctification.

A third position held by Rudolph Bultmann and many others says that it is fundamentally the status of the man under the law that is characterized here and that as it is seen through the eyes of one whom Christ has set free from the law. The idea Bultmann conveys is that Paul is a Christian speaking about his sinner days. Against Bultmann are those of us who affirm that this passage deals with Paul as a Christian speaking about his Christian life.

*The Gospel According to Paul*, page 86

Actually there are only two positions. Bultmann's position is the Wesleyan position. (In "Biblically Defining 'Saving Faith'," in the unabridged edition, we will see that John MacArthur identifies Bultmann as a premier Greek Scholar, commenting: ". . . his brilliance as an authority on the Greek language is undisputed." [*The Gospel According to Jesus*, page 175])

When I showed Dr. Cottle's quote to Dr. Gordon Lewis of Denver Seminary, he objected to paragraph one, explaining that how we interpret this Romans passage *should determine whether we come out the other side* Arminian or Calvinist. I prefer Dr. Lewis' approach since it lets Scripture form our belief system instead of vice-versa.

Today, Calvinism (or, Lutheran/Calvinism) in its various forms, has taken over Christianity, becoming the belief system of even holiness churches that have historically been based in the Wesleyan concept of New Covenant freedom.

Many years ago I was standing in the foyer of my church, a Church of God, before the Wednesday night service. I shared with my mentor that I believed God was showing me that He has made a way for me to experience consistent victory over sin. I did not realize that an elder was within earshot behind me. The elder replied, "No way is that God. What about Romans chapter seven and I John 1:8 (which we will examine in the next chapter)?" In this historically Wesleyan based church, the elder attempted, and succeeded temporarily, in keeping me from experiencing the freedom described by the verses quoted in previous chapters.

In a subsequent phone conversation with Dr. Gordon Lewis of Denver Seminary, I told him that I had read Dr. Michael Brown's statement (in *Go and Sin No More*) that the church fathers understood that in this Romans 7 passage Paul was describing his life before he met Christ, but that I could find no documentation for it. Dr. Lewis said, "I have your documentation in my hands."

He was holding New Testament volume 6 of what was then a brand-new multi-volume work published by Intervarsity Press: *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*. He then read from the editors' Overview on pages 189-190:

In Romans 7:15 and the following verses Paul describes the plight of persons who know that they are sinners but who cannot escape from the sins they commit. Most of the Fathers believed that here Paul was adopting the persona of an unregenerate man, not describing his own struggles as a Christian. As far as they were concerned, becoming a Christian would deliver a person from the kind of dilemma the apostle is outlining here.

This is an extremely important point. Listen once again to what the research of these church historians revealed that these earlier Christians believed about New Covenant freedom:

As far as they were concerned, becoming a Christian would deliver a person from the kind of dilemma the apostle is outlining here.

They believed that Jesus came to free us from sin so that we can live for God just like the Bible teaches.

Today's overwhelming acceptance of the Calvinist interpretation, along with the well documented downward spiral of the church's morality, proves that we no longer believe what these earlier Christians believed about the freedom Jesus came to offer.

The Wesley-trained Bible commentator, Adam Clarke, also believed that "becoming a Christian would deliver a person from the kind of dilemma the apostle is outlining here." In his commentary on this passage, he blames the reinterpretation of this passage for lowering the moral standard of Christianity:

I believe it is agreed, on all hands, that the apostle is here demonstrating the insufficiency of the law in the opposition to the gospel; that by the former is the knowledge, by the latter the cure, of sin. Therefore by *I* here he cannot mean himself, nor any Christian believer. If the contrary could be proved, the argument would demonstrate the insufficiency of the gospel as well as the law. It is difficult to conceive how the opinion could have crept into the Church, or prevailed there, that "the apostle speaks here of his *regenerate state*; and that what was, in such a state, true of himself, must be true of all others in the same state." This opinion has, most pitifully and most shamefully, not only lowered the standard of Christianity, but destroyed its influence and disgraced its character.

*Bethany Parallel Commentary*, page 918.

This new interpretation of Romans 7:14-25, which Adam Clarke said has "crept into the Church, [and] prevailed there, that 'the apostle speaks here of his *regenerate state*'" provides us with *the only biblical example* of a born-again Christian who can identify the sin, resist with all his might, and still have the sin overcome him against his will (in direct

contradiction to I Corinthians 10:13, James 4:7, and many other verses throughout Scripture that describe New Covenant freedom as *freedom from the power and control of sin.*)

The interpretation of this Romans passage embraced by the earliest church fathers and defended by Wesleyan theologians throughout history (until recently) reflected what they believed the Bible has to say about the freedom that the Messiah came to offer. The Calvinist re-interpretation of this passage, which is taught almost universally in our carnal modern-day church, reflects a completely different understanding of the freedom that Jesus came to offer.

After forgetting the original interpretation of Romans 7 and adopting the new one, Christian teachers *have not* forgotten that Paul commanded:

The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things . . .

Philippians 4:9, NASB

What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching . . .

II Tim 1:13, NIV

Thus, this distorted image of the apostle Paul has become the only biblical pattern for preachers who preach against sin while misrepresenting verses of Scripture to prove that everyone sins and offering themselves as examples of Christians who try not to sin but just cannot help it – in “humility” of course. Even their concept of humility is not biblical, as we saw in “Biblically Defining ‘Arrogance’ and ‘Humility’.” There we saw that men who teach against sin this way are really displaying their unrepentant arrogance.

The reason the reinterpretation of this Romans passage is so important to Calvinists is that they need a biblical example of a practicing sinner whose salvation no one would dare to question. The problem is that such a person does not exist, so they created one.

In their passionate attempt to sever any connection between our behavior and our salvation, they created a practicing sinner who is born of God, in direct contradiction to I John 1:9 and numerous other verses of Scripture (some of which we have seen). If their interpretation of this Romans passage is correct, then we must conclude, as they have, that our behavior has nothing at all to do with our salvation. It’s only logical.

## Chapter 33

### I JOHN 1:8

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

I John 1:8, NKJV

The way I most commonly hear this verse quoted is “If we say that we *do not sin*, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” But because the word “sin” is a noun and not a verb, the verse cannot possibly mean what they say. Even when I hear it quoted correctly, they treat it as if the word “sin” were a verb. The only times I ever hear this verse brought up are to counteract and neutralize our confidence in other verses that describe New Covenant freedom as *freedom from the power and control of sin*, by which we can stop sinning – in other words, to prove that all Christians sin.

I have interviewed many Bible-school and seminary graduates who are shocked to see what I just told you. How could they get through their formal educations without being shown this? I know that some of their teachers do not know what you just read but others do and choose to remain silent. They plainly see no need to correct a wrong interpretation of a verse that provides so much support for the false belief system that has taken over the church. They do not mind letting us believe a lie if it supports their agenda. While the ignorance of the former group may be excusable, the dishonesty of the latter group is not.

Now that we have established what the verse *does not say*, let’s determine what it *does say*. We will do so by first looking at its immediate and then broader context.

The immediate context is verses 7-9. Verses 7 and 9 promise that the blood of Christ “cleanses” or “purifies” us from all sin and unrighteousness. To “purify” means “to remove all impurities.” If we apply verse eight to the purified person, we have just told him that the blood of Christ did not purify him.

What this means, when coupled with what we learned in “Biblically Defining ‘Advocate’,” is that I John 1:8-2:1 is an invitation for sinners to come to Christ. These verses cannot rightly be used to prove that if a Christian says he *does not sin*, he has deceived himself.

Now let’s look at the broader context – the five short chapters of I John. Let’s let the author tell us why the epistle is written:

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

I John 5:13, NIV

This is the only book in the Bible that is written specifically for this purpose – to tell believers how to know that they are saved. So, how does John tell us how to know that we are saved?

If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth;

I John 1:6, RSV

And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He who says "I know him" but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps his word, in him truly love for God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him: he who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

I John 2:3-6, RSV

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides for ever.

I John 2:15-17, RSV

No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him.

I John 3:6, RSV

He who commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God commits sin; for God's nature abides in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God. By this it may be seen who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not do right is not of God, nor he who does not love his brother.

I John 3:8-10, RSV

Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them.

I John 3:24, NIV

We are of God. Whoever knows God listens to us, and he who is not of God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

I John 4:6, RSV

If any one says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also.

I John 4:20-21, RSV

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith.

Who is it that overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

I John 5:2-5, RSV

There is an argument I have heard quite often that says, “The word “purifies” (NIV) in I John 1:7 refers to “a present act with ongoing effects.” What they mean is that the process is started but not complete. The practical application would be that the blood either removes some of each kind of sin or all of some kinds of sin but not others (or maybe some mixture of both).

Before entering this argument, it is helpful to understand their motivation. They are still trying to make the word “sin” in I John 1:8 a verb, and create some justification for continuing to sin occasionally. The fact that the word is a noun and not a verb invalidates their motivation and thus their entire argument.

Having said that, I do believe that what they say about the word “purifies” referring to “a present act with ongoing effects” is true. But we must let the context define that concept. When we do, we see that the present act is “to completely purify us” and the ongoing effects are “to keep us clean,” as indicated by the following verse from I John:

We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him.

I John 5:18, NASB

What “a present act with ongoing effects” *does not mean* is that as Christians we can try our best to cut down on our sinning, by the power of the blood.

So we see that if I John 1:8 said or even meant “If we say that we *do not sin*, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” it would contradict the rest of I John. The verse does not even address whether or not a person says he does not sin (verb). It addresses whether or not the blood cleanses him of his sin (noun).

## Chapter 34

### THE OFFENSIVENESS OF JESUS

About the offensiveness of Jesus, Dr. F. F. Bruce wrote:

It is all too easy to believe in a Jesus who is largely a construction of our own imagination - an inoffensive person whom no one would really trouble to crucify. But the Jesus whom we meet in the Gospels, far from being an inoffensive person, gave offence right and left. Even his loyal followers found him, at times, thoroughly disconcerting. . . .

But in those who were not put off by him he created a passionate love and allegiance which death could not destroy. They knew that in him they had found the way of acceptance, peace of conscience, life that was life indeed. . . .

From the introduction to *The Hard Sayings of Jesus*

Jesus was offensive because He defined “repent” as “stop sinning,” taught that everyone must repent to be saved, and (as we will see in the following passage) rejected even believers who refused to stop sinning:

30 Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him.

31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

33 They answered him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?”

34 Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. 35 Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. 37 I know you are Abraham’s descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word. 38 I am telling you what I have seen in the Father’s presence, and you do what you have heard from your father.”

39 “Abraham is our father,” they answered.

“If you were Abraham’s children,” said Jesus, “then you would do the things Abraham did. 40 As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. 41 You are doing the things your own father does.”

“We are not illegitimate children,” they protested. “The only Father we have is God himself.”

42 Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. 43 Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. 44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. 45 Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! 46 Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don’t you believe me? 47 He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.”

John 8:30-47, NIV

For years I have been familiar with excerpts from this passage, but the day I first saw this entire dialogue I was shocked. Jesus rejected believers who refused to stop sinning? Was I reading it correctly?

To check myself, the first thing I did was go to my bookshelf where I had a series of booklets where one of our most popular evangelical preachers taught through the entire New Testament. Knowing that what I had just read contradicted his Calvinist/Lutheran belief system, I opened the booklet on the gospel of John and was shocked to see that he skipped all the way from vs. 11 to verse 48 without touching this passage. That told me that I was reading the passage correctly. It also told me something about his lack of credibility and honesty.

The essential elements of the passage are:

- 1) The Greek word interpreted “faith” in vs. 30 and “believed” in vs. 31 is the same word that appears in John 3:16: “that whosoever *believeth* in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (KJV, emphasis mine). Verse 31 reveals that Jesus was speaking “[t]o the Jews who had believed him.”
- 2) In verses 31-35, Jesus tells them that if they do not repent (stop sinning) they will not inherit eternal life. The freedom Jesus offered in verse 36 was *freedom from the power and control of sin* by which they could stop sinning.
- 3) During this lesson, their faith turned to murderous hatred which is acknowledged by Jesus in verses 37 and 40. The only reason the passage reveals for this change is that Jesus communicated to them, in a way they could understand, that they had to stop sinning to be saved.
- 4) When these believers refused to hold to Jesus’ teaching (vs. 31) and repent, He rejected them by stripping them of their title of “Abraham’s descendants” (v. 39) and assigning them another title: “You belong to your father the devil” (v. 44). Then, to make sure they understood, Jesus told them, “[Y]ou do not belong to God” (v. 47).

Just like the book of Jonah, this John chapter eight passage does not use the word “repent” but it describes it perfectly. It is the action, not the word, that offended these unrepentant believers. The call to repent (turn from your sin and commit your life to God) to be saved is quite possibly the most offensive sound that a carnal believer can hear.

Luke 19:1-10 tells the story of Jesus going to the house of Zacchaeus – a tax collector. Luke describes Zacchaeus’ exuberant repentance:

And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold.”

Luke 19:8, RSV

Once again, the word “repent” does not appear in the passage, but the action does. When Jesus sees this, he freely bestowed upon Zacchaeus the title he had stripped from the unrepentant believers in John 8:30-47:

Today salvation has come to this house, because *this man, too, is a son of Abraham.*

Luke 19:9, NIV (emphasis mine)

In Mark 10:17-27, a rich young man ran up to Jesus, fell on his knees, and asked, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? After a short dialogue, Jesus told him what to do. Because he was unwilling to do what Jesus told him, he “went away sad” (v. 22, NIV). Jesus let him go. There was no “Plan B.”

This was a fulfillment of the Old Testament gospel prophecy as quoted here by Peter:

For Moses said, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to [obey] everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people.”

Acts 3:22-23, NIV

Had a false teacher been lurking nearby, he could have whispered, “Psst! Over here. I heard what Jesus said, but I think He was being a little legalistic, don’t you? Come to my church where we preach salvation by grace through faith.”

## Chapter 35

### GOD'S CONDITIONAL LOVE AND MERCY

There is a sense in which God's love is unconditional. His unconditional love caused Him to offer us salvation, as indicated by the following very popular verse:

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

John 3:16, KJV

This love is given universally, yet the Bible clearly teaches that all people are not saved, demonstrating that this love does not guarantee anyone's salvation.

There is another kind of love, however, that is reserved for those who respond to this unconditional love by turning from their sins and entering into covenant relationship with God. The difference can be compared to the difference in the love a man might have for his wife compared to the love he has for others.

This deeper love **is not** unconditional, as demonstrated by the following verses:

Many are the woes of the wicked,  
but the LORD's unfailing love  
surrounds the man who trusts in him.

Psalms 32:10, NIV

But from everlasting to everlasting  
the LORD's love is with those who fear him,  
and his righteousness with their children's children —  
with those who keep his covenant  
and remember to obey his precepts.

Psalms 103:17-18, NIV

For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so great is his love for those who fear him;

Psalms 103:11, NIV

My inheritance [the nation of Israel] has become to me  
like a lion in the forest.  
She roars at me;  
therefore I hate her.

Jeremiah 12:8, NIV

For thus says the LORD: Do not enter the house of mourning, or go to lament, or bemoan them; for I have taken away my peace from this people, says the LORD, my steadfast love and mercy.

Jeremiah 16:5, RSV

I love those who love me,  
and those who seek me diligently find me.

Proverbs 8:17, RSV

Every evil of theirs is in Gilgal;  
there I began to hate them.  
Because of the wickedness of their deeds  
I will drive them out of my house.  
I will love them no more;  
all their princes are rebels.  
E'phraim is stricken,  
their root is dried up,  
they shall bear no fruit.  
Even though they bring forth,  
I will slay their beloved children.  
My God will cast them off,  
because they have not hearkened to him;  
they shall be wanderers among the nations.

Hosea 9:15-17, RSV

He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he  
who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest  
myself to him.

John 14:21, RSV

If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my  
Father's commandments and abide in his love.

John 15:10, RSV

The following passage explains that God's mercy (as it relates to salvation) is also  
conditional:

Seek the LORD while he may be found,  
call upon him while he is near;  
let the wicked forsake his way,  
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;  
let him return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on him,  
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Isaiah 55:6-7, RSV

So we see from these verses that God's unconditional love, which is given to  
everyone, does not guarantee a person's eternal salvation. They explain that His saving  
love and mercy are reserved for those who humble themselves and accept Him as their  
Lord.

Scripture gives no support to the idea that God gives unconditional saving love and mercy to some practicing sinners while withholding it from others, as many teach today.

## Chapter 36

### THE ANTICHRIST

**anti:** a prefix meaning: **1.** against, hostile to, as in *anti-Semitism*. **2.** that counteracts, that operates against, as in *antiaircraft*. **3.** that prevents, cures, or neutralizes, as in *antitoxin*.

*Webster's New World Dictionary*

One day I wanted to find one of the verses that contains the word “antichrist,” so I looked in the abbreviated concordance in the back of my study Bible. I was surprised to find that the word only appeared five times, all in the books of I and II John. Knowing that this could not be right, I opened my *Strong's Concordance* and was shocked to get the exact same results.

The reason I was shocked is that everything I had been taught about “antichrist” came from the books of Daniel, II Thessalonians, and Revelation where I had just learned that the word does not even appear. This called for closer inspection, so I read I and II John several times to see if I had misunderstood anything else of significance. What I saw shocked me.

Here is what I learned that day: (1) John identified the antichrist as a Spirit that manifests itself as a false belief system, complete with teachers and doctrines. (2) He called certain people “antichrists” only because of their affiliation with this false belief system. (3) Twice he wrote to those who had heard that the antichrist was coming that it had already arrived. (4) If the antichrist is one person (or anything else) yet to come, the thought never occurred to John, the only person in Scripture to pen the word “antichrist.”

I'm not denying the possibility that the “prince” of Daniel 9, the II Thessalonians chapter 2 “son of perdition (lawlessness),” or the “beast” of Revelation might be a literal person yet to come, but I am stating that whether the figure described in those books is literal or figurative, Scripture does not call it “the antichrist.” I am also stating that those who do so are guilty of diverting our attention *from* the biblical antichrist.

In this chapter I will demonstrate that the one-person-yet-to-come antichrist is a deception, or a decoy created by the biblical antichrist. I will also demonstrate that the biblical antichrist is the false belief system that has taken over the church and wrecked its morality. Many of the unbiblical concepts and doctrines of the antichrist seem to have come together in the belief system called “dispensationalism” which sprang up about two hundred years ago within Calvinism.

It is widely believed today that the main issue addressed in I John is whether or not Jesus came in the flesh. While this is an important point, it is not the main point. The apostle mentions it only three times on his way to stating what Jesus accomplished by coming in the flesh (See I John 3:8-9). In fact he devotes more than half the verses of I John to explaining that by Jesus came in the flesh to free us from the power and control of sin so that we can consistently resist the temptation to sin. In these verses he insists that we can know that we are born of God by the fact that we are morally pure in our relationships with God and with man, stating three times that those born of God do not sin.

I was able to reach my conclusion about the one-person-yet-to-come antichrist only because of what I had recently learned about I John 1:8-2:1. Those are the verses I hear quoted more than any others in I John, but the way I hear them interpreted directly contradicts the rest of the book. If you don't remember what you read in "I John 1:8" and "Biblically Defining 'Advocate'," please go back and refresh your memory before going any further.

At this point let me point out four things: (1) I John is the only book in the Bible that is devoted to telling Christians how to know that they are saved, (2) The only way John writes that we can know we are saved is that we are morally pure in our relationships with God and man (which I demonstrated in "I John 1:8"), (3) John is fighting against the antichrist which he describes as a Spirit that manifests itself in the form of a false belief system, complete with teachers and doctrines, that he said had already arrived (2:18, 4:3) at the time he wrote these two books, and (4) What many of us have been taught about 1:8-2:2 directly contradicts the rest of I John (which I demonstrated in "Biblically Defining 'Advocate'" and "I John 1:8"). By my count, 53 % of the verses in this book tell us that we can know we are saved by the fact that we are morally pure in our relationships with God and man.

If you have not already done so, I invite you to stop here and read the five short chapters of I John to verify these four points. (It should take the average reader about 20 – 30 minutes.) As you do so, notice two things: (1) what is commonly taught about 1:8-2:1 contradicts the rest of the book, and (2) the total absence of any reference whatsoever to the one-person-yet-to-come antichrist.

I remember presenting my findings about the antichrist to a dispensationalist pastor (I think now an ex-dispensationalist) whom I had heard repeatedly using the word "antichrist" to refer only to one person yet to come. It took him quite some time to understand what I was saying, but when he finally did, he was just as shocked as I had been. I asked him, "Why have I never heard one lesson about the biblical antichrist?" He replied, "I guess preachers just like sensationalism."

Now glance back to the beginning of this chapter to the definition of "anti." You will see that it derives its complete meaning from the word to which it is attached. For example, before we can understand "antiaircraft" we must have some concept of aircraft. By the same token, before we can understand "antichrist" we must understand John's concept of "Christ." Our concept of Christ is what theologians call our "Christology."

Remember (1) John is the only person to pen the word antichrist and that the word only appears in I and II John, (2) He identified the antichrist as a false belief system, complete with teachers and doctrines, which had already appeared and was attacking the church's morality, and (3) He called certain people antichrists only because of their affiliation with this false belief system.

John waged his war against the antichrist by stating the mission statement of the Messiah, or his "Christology:"

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin . . .

I John 3:8-9, NKJV

This verse is one of many that we saw in “The Mission Statement of the Messiah” which all agree that this is why Jesus came. Now, as you consider the reality of blatant immorality rampant in the church, ask yourself how effectively this mission statement has been counteracted and neutralized.

John got his Christology from two places: (1) from his Bible, the Old Testament (the only Christ [Messiah] foretold there is One who would come to free His people from *the power and control of sin*), and (2) from hearing Jesus reject anyone, even believers, who refused to accept this freedom and stop sinning (as we saw in “The Offensiveness of Jesus”).

In other words, his only concept of Christ is the One who came to free people from *the power and control of sin* so that they can live for God. To deny this mission statement, or “Christology,” or to replace it with another (such as “to free us from *the guilt and consequences of our ongoing inevitable sins*”), is to deny that Jesus is the Christ, as John charges in the following verse:

Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.

I John 2:22, NKJV

Let me summarize by making two points. First, all the antichrist wants to do is compromise. It wants a compromise between “Whoever has been born of God does not sin . . .” (I John 3:9, NKJV) and “everyone sins.” As I said earlier, you can just as easily find a compromise between straight and crooked or between faithful and unfaithful.

Secondly, directly contradicting I John 3:7-10, the antichrist offers salvation to unrepentant sinners by means of a non-behavioral righteousness: “Don’t be deceived into thinking that you will ever be counted righteous because of your right behavior,” insists the antichrist. “You are only counted righteous by believing that your ongoing inevitable sins are covered by the blood of Jesus.”

It has counteracted and neutralized our confidence in verses like “Whoever has been born of God does not sin . . .” (I John 3:9, NKJV) with the doctrine “Everyone sins” and changed the mission statement (or Christology) of Jesus by convincing us that He came to free us from *the guilt and consequences of our ongoing inevitable sins*. By doing so, it denies that Jesus is the Christ while calling Him the Christ.

As I stated earlier, the one-person-yet-to-come antichrist is a decoy created by the biblical antichrist. This decoy first appeared around the year 1830 within dispensationalism which appeared within Calvinism. Like the proverbial dumb blonde, the church has fallen for the decoy while the biblical antichrist has crept in the back door in the form of unbiblical salvation concepts and doctrines, thoroughly corrupting her morality as demonstrated in chapter one.

In *Calvinism Calmly Considered* (available at <[CalvinismCalmlyConsidered.com](http://CalvinismCalmlyConsidered.com)>), John Wesley identifies and attacks the foundational salvation concepts and doctrines of Calvinism, insisting that they are without biblical basis and actually undermine a person’s ability to live for God. As far as I know, though, he never called it the antichrist.

I am charging that Calvinism is the false Christian belief system that is manifested by the spirit of the antichrist. My charge is based on these three facts:

- 1) (As I have demonstrated throughout this book with verses that appear both before and after the cross) The Christ of Scripture is the One Who came, 2000 years ago, to free us from sin so that we can live victorious overcoming Christian lives.
- 2) I stated and demonstrated in this chapter that the main point of I John is to establish what the apostle says that Jesus accomplished by coming in the flesh. John insists that Jesus came to free us from the power and control of sin so that we can stop sinning. Calvinist misinterpretations of a few Scripture passages (the most common of which we examined) are meant to counteract and neutralize (from the definition of “anti”) our confidence in that freedom.
- 3) The Christ of Calvinism, who came to cover our ongoing inevitable sins, does not appear in Scripture except by (a) ignoring what God foretold through the prophets about New Covenant salvation, (b) reading verses out of context, and (c) redefining biblical words.

Calvinism is found primarily in Presbyterian and Lutheran churches but is influential in many Churches of Christ and Baptist churches. I interviewed one Southern Baptist senior pastor near Tulsa and was shocked to hear him openly admit to being a five point Calvinist. When I responded that I did not know that Southern Baptist preachers (who I thought all believed that we have a free will) could be Calvinist, he answered, “There are a growing number of us.” I’ve since learned that the doctrines of Calvinism are being hotly debated within the Southern Baptist Convention.

The unbiblical salvation concepts and doctrines of Calvinism have broken out of bounds and become the gospel of choice of a church whose morality has been demonstrated over and over again to be identical to that of non-christians. As Dr. MacArthur said about the assurance of eternal salvation of carnal Christians (as quoted in chapter one) “Theirs is a damning false assurance.”

[Note: For a more detailed synopsis of the easily verifiable facts that led me to the inescapable conclusion that Calvinism is the antichrist, visit <[CalvinismIsTheAntichrist.com](http://CalvinismIsTheAntichrist.com)>. It is a short website – only five pages of easily verifiable facts that all point in the same direction. These pages can be downloaded and forwarded to your pastor and Bible teachers for their opinions.]

## Chapter 37

### FALSE CHRISTIAN TEACHERS

Some of the most emotional preaching against sin comes from preachers who do not believe that God empowers a walk of faithfulness. They emotionally preach against sin while misrepresenting Scripture to prove that everyone sins and offering themselves as examples of Christians who try not to sin but cannot help it (in “humility,” of course). As we have seen, their concept of humility is no more biblical than their “do-as-I-say, not-as-I-do” teaching method.

After convincing their people that God empowers no one to consistently resist the temptation to sin, they say, “But don’t use that as a ‘license’ to sin,” as if the issue was whether we sin with or without a license.

When such preachers are confronted with the increasing body of evidence that proves that there is no measurable difference in the morality of the average modern-day Christian and the average non-Christian, they appear to be genuinely concerned: “How can this be? We preach against sin.” Of course they do, as they deliberately keep a walk of Spirit empowered faithfulness out of our reach.

Like pit bull terriers, they stand guard from their pulpits to make sure that no one approaches too closely to the idea that, by the power of the Spirit, we can live lives of victory over sin, consistently resisting the temptation to do what we know to be wrong.

If one of their flock approaches too closely to believing one of the many verses of Scripture describe New Covenant freedom as *freedom from the power and control of sin*, they beat him back with unbiblical propaganda like, “Are you talking about ‘sinless perfection’?” In the face of aggression, the intimidated Christian beats a hasty retreat, muttering under his breath, “Of course not! What could I have been thinking?”

These preachers seem to know instinctively that even one such person, if allowed to pursue the possibility that Jesus died to free us from the power and control of sin, could do irreparable damage to the peace and unity enjoyed by the carnal Christians in their churches who have embraced *freedom from the guilt and consequences of their ongoing inevitable sins*.

I have talked to many such intimidated Christians. The idea that they could be perfect never crossed their minds. Instead, they are usually being torn apart inside by guilt for one particular sin that they are embarrassed to talk about and are wondering if God offers them freedom from its control.

These false teachers seem to reserve this knowledge that Jesus came to free us from *the guilt and consequences of our ongoing inevitable sins* for more mature Christians. They still want their youth pastor teaching the children and teenagers about “radical obedience” to Jesus. They want their children to memorize verses like these that describe *freedom from the power and control of sin*:

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

I Corinthians 10:13, NIV

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

James 4:7, NIV

Maybe they are trying to make sure their children at least get out of high school without getting pregnant.

### Re-defining “Repent”

False teachers, just like the rest of us, can easily see in Scripture that Jesus and His apostles were tortured and killed because they insisted that everyone repent, according to Jesus’ definition, to be saved. In other words, they refused to offer salvation to practicing sinners. They realize that if they present the same plan of salvation, they too might suffer the same fate.

Being firmly convinced that God is “not willing that any should perish” (II Peter 3:9, KJV), especially themselves, they apply all their collective intelligence and logic to the problem. They quickly realize two things: (1) They cannot avoid the word repent – it is presented all through Scripture as being prerequisite to salvation, and (2) It is not the *word* but the *action* that is offensive to sinners. This means that all they have to do is come up with a more sinner-friendly definition of repent and the problem is solved!

Three new definitions of repent that I have been able to isolate are (1) a certain attitude that we should have toward our ongoing inevitable sins, (2) something we do each time we are through sinning, and (3) “a change of mind,” not necessarily accompanied by a change in behavior. Now they can boldly demand that everyone repent to be saved, just like Jesus and His apostles, only without offending anyone. Brilliant!

This is why there is no measurable difference in the morality of the average Christian and non-Christian. This is also why, in today’s culture, a repentant Christian is sort of like a pack-a-day smoker who quits smoking 20 times a day. “Repent early and often,” instruct these teachers. “Keep short accounts with God.”

Actually, there is disagreement in the camp about definition #2. Some of them logically conclude that since, at the moment of salvation, a Christian is forgiven for all his sins – past, present, and future, that to repent for ongoing sins is an insult to God. “After all,” they reason, “hasn’t He cast our sins as far from us as the east is from the west? To repent when we sin proves that we do not really believe in ‘justification’ or in ‘the finished work of Christ on the cross’.”

Once again their conclusion is perfectly logical, but based on the wrong input.

### Summary

As teachers, we can and will disagree about many things. I know honest sincere Christian teachers who believe that God is a Trinity and others who insist that He is not. Some believe we should keep the Sabbath on Saturday, some believe that we should keep it on Sunday, and others believe that every day should be considered the same. Some of these issues will never be resolved in this life, but they are not salvation issues.

What makes someone a false teacher is his salvation message. In other words, does he follow the biblical principle that a person must repent (according to Jesus' definition) to be saved or does he offer believing sinners forgiveness of all their sins – past, present, and future?

## Chapter 38

### THE PRACTICAL CONCLUSION

I hope I have clearly demonstrated that salvation is not a “do this’ or ‘experience that’ so you don’t go to hell,” it is a relationship with God that is only available on the terms He offers. As you have seen by the numerous verses quoted throughout this book, the relationship He offers requires unconditional surrender to His oft repeated claims of lordship rights over our lives. You read where Christian martyrs testified to the end that Christ had freed them from sin so that they could live their lives for God.

The reason the terms of the relationship called “New Covenant Salvation” are non-negotiable is that only in this relationship can our deepest need be met. As I said earlier, the deepest need of every human born since the rebellion of Adam is to be able to live in peace with God with a clean conscience. Unfortunately, far too many churches today teach us how to not feel guilty for sinning, which Scripture calls “searing our consciences” (I Timothy 4:2).

The famous Baptist preacher, Dr. Neil Anderson, expressed his concern about the church’s immorality by writing:

James 4:7 tells us, “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you” [NIV]. We are correct in confessing our sin, but we have failed to follow the biblical formula which breaks the cycle: sin-confess-*resist*. We must resist Satan and command him to leave if we are going to experience victory over sin.

*The Bondage Breaker*, page 139

The only way to experience the life of victory that Dr. Anderson describes is to believe the truth about the reason Jesus came:

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

John 8:31-32, KJV

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

John 10:10, NIV

When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.

Acts 3:26, NIV

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God commits sin . . .

I John 3:8-9, RSV

I intend this book to be an axe blow to the root of Calvinism – the false belief system that has demolished the morality of the church by twisting Scripture in order to be able to offer salvation to practicing sinners. Based on the early feedback from people who have read the manuscript, it accomplished its purpose. In the unabridged edition, which you can order online at “[prophetsgospel.com](http://prophetsgospel.com)”, I go into much more detail answering the hardest, most complicated objections I have ever heard from those who oppose the clear biblical facts that Christ died for everyone and that anyone can turn from his sin to God and be saved.

Nothing about the biblical gospel is complicated. It is just as simple as I thought it was when I was twenty years old (as I explained in “My Initial Conversion Experience”). The only complicated part is being able to identify, understand, and reject the unbiblical concepts and doctrines that have counteracted and neutralized our confidence in the life-transforming power of the biblical gospel. I hope I have demonstrated this in a thorough yet understandable way.

Whether I’m teaching or writing, it is with the knowledge that the Spirit of God has already been there, convicting of sin and urging the listener or reader to live according to what he knows to be true and right and to reject the wrong. With no exception, I find this to be true. The reason people react so strongly, either positively or negatively, to this gospel is because what you have seen in these verses is what God has revealed in our hearts and consciences.

If you are a person who decides if and when to obey God and feel genuinely guilty when you do what you know is wrong, then rejoice! God has not withdrawn His offer of a saving relationship. The Holy Spirit is still knocking. God has communicated to you the terms of the relationship we call New Covenant salvation. Your required response is repentance, according to Jesus’ definition. (See the chapter entitled “Biblically Defining ‘Repent’”). Regardless of what you have been taught, God’s terms really are non-negotiable. Humble yourself before God.

There is no such thing as a person who tries to live a life committed to God but cannot. In the December 1<sup>st</sup> lesson of *My Utmost for His Highest*, Oswald Chambers wrote:

When we choose deliberately to obey Him, then He will tax the remotest star and the last grain of sand to assist us with all His almighty power.

I remember teaching a class one semester and seeing a lady begin crying. When I asked what was wrong she smiled and said, “God has brought me to this moment of decision many times, but I could not get past the glass ceiling the church had constructed by misrepresenting verses of Scripture to convince me that God does not empower a life of victory over sin. But you have shattered that glass ceiling!”

While many do respond the way she did, most respond angrily at having their belief system challenged. They find the very idea of surrendering and living in right relationship with God very distasteful. No one else dares to challenge them to measure their salvation doctrines by Scripture so why should I?

I do so because they have been deceived. They think that Jesus came the first time to free them from *the guilt and consequences of their ongoing sins* and that He will not free them from *the power and control of sin* until His second coming. This is not how the Bible describes the second coming of Christ. About His second coming, Jesus said:

As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom *everything that causes sin and all who do evil*. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

Matthew 13:40-43, NIV (emphasis mine)

And,

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

Matthew 7:21-23, NIV

It is God's way to patiently, persistently, and firmly bring each of us to the point that we must choose between propaganda and truth – to a moment of decision. This may be yours. I could find no better words with which to close than these from the apostle Paul and Jesus followed by comments by C. S. Lewis:

For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

Paul. I Thessalonians 4:7-8, NIV

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Jesus. Revelation 3:20-22, KJV

Why is God landing in this enemy-occupied world in disguise and starting a sort of secret society to undermine the devil? Why is He not landing in force, invading it? Is it that He is not strong enough? Well, Christians think He is going to land in force; we do not know when. But we can guess why He is delaying.

He wants to give us the chance of joining His side freely. I do not suppose you and I would have thought much of a Frenchman who waited till the Allies were marching into Germany and then announced he was on our side. God will invade. But I wonder whether people who ask God to interfere openly and directly in our world quite realize what it will be like when He does. When that happens, it is the end of the world. When the author walks on to the stage the play is over. God is going to invade, all right: but what is the good of saying you are on His side then, when you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream and something else – something it never entered your head to conceive – comes crashing in; something so beautiful to some of us and so terrible to others that none of us will have any choice left? For this time it will be God without disguise; something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side. There is no use saying you choose to lie down when it has become impossible to stand up. That will not be the time for choosing: it will be the time when we discover which side we really have chosen, whether we realised it before or not. Now, today, this moment, is our chance to choose the right side. God is holding back to give us that chance. It will not last for ever. We must take it or leave it.

C. S. Lewis. *Mere Christianity*, pages 50-51

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The spirit of worship in these prisons is amazing, but when I would open my Bible they would lean forward. Men who have given their lives to Christ in prison take Bible studies much more seriously than most men with whom I attend church outside of prison. The men who are really interested sit on the front row. They are not shy. If I said something that they disagreed with, they were quick to challenge me to see if what I said could stand their inspection. This is what should happen when a Christian teacher is teaching. I remember your faces but unfortunately not your names. Thanks for your boldness, your love for God and His written word, and your willingness to humble yourselves before our Lord. May this Spirit remain with you as you finish your terms, re-enter society, and make an impact for the kingdom of God.

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Many heartfelt thanks to all of you. If this book succeeds, it is because I sought out and surrounded myself with people like you who allowed me to learn from you. A part of each of you is in these pages. I am forever in your debt. I salute you.

### A Note from the Author . . .

This copy of *The Prophets' Gospel* is a free gift that can be downloaded, forwarded, and/or printed (subject to guidelines on the copyright page). It is my prayer that by offering it this way it will be read by people all over the world who would not have otherwise had access to it.

From those of you who are as grieved by the blatant immorality that is rampant in our modern-day church as I am, and who believe that this book contains a timely message, I ask two things:

- 1) Help me spread the word. I suggest emailing a personal note to people on your email list with an attachment containing the text from <CalvinismIsTheAntichrist.com>. I know that the charges there are “in-your-face” but their accuracy is easily verifiable by any Bible student. You do not have to endorse what you read there. Instead, just ask your friend to check them out and help you measure them by Scripture.

There is a link on that website to my main website, <ProphetsGospel.com>, where your friends can get their free copy of *The Prophets' Gospel*. And,

- 2) Only if you feel led by the Lord to do so, and can do so comfortably, please consider making a donation of any size to help offset the cost of my eight and a half years of full time research and writing and my continued research. You can do so through <ProphetsGospel.com>.

One way you can support this ministry while also continuing your Christian education is to visit <CalvinismCalmlyConsidered.com>. It is another website devoted to marketing John Wesley's brilliantly written two volume set entitled *Calvinism Calmly Considered* (from which I quoted in this book). I buy them in bulk and retail them currently for \$18 per set. I wholeheartedly recommend this work. It is very worthwhile reading and could be used for a small group study with an open discussion format. You will be shocked to see just how far modern-day Methodists and others who claim to be followers of John Wesley have deviated from his straightforward salvation message.

May our God richly bless you!

Your brother in Christ,  
Wayne Scott

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